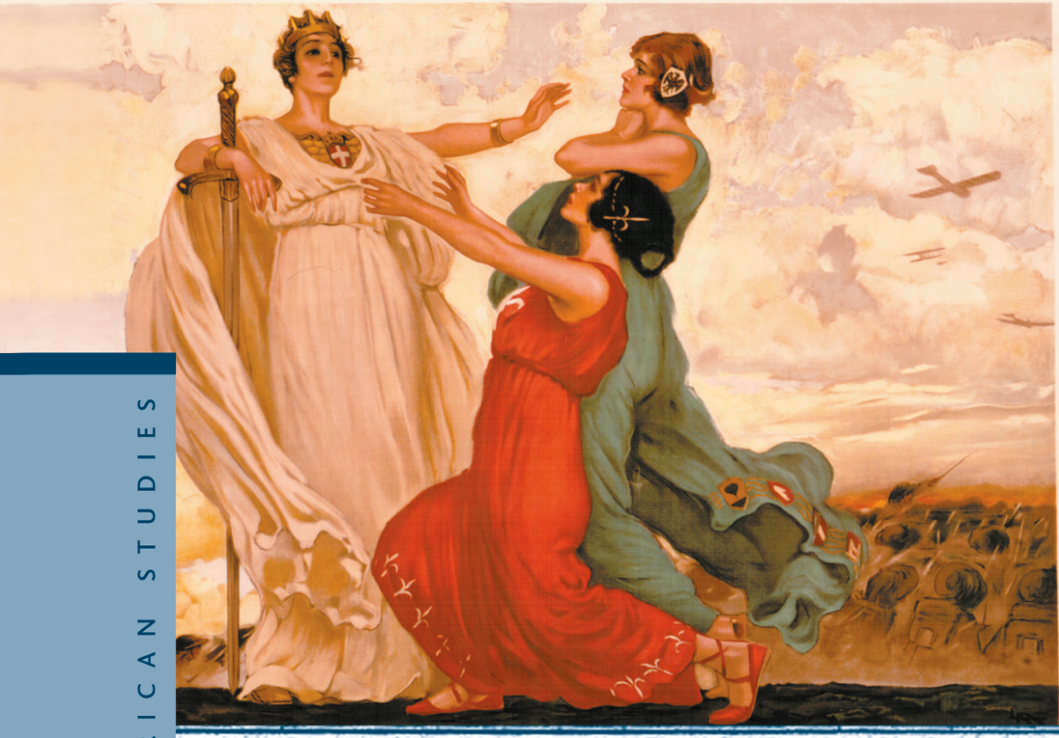

ITALIAN AND ITALIAN AMERICAN STUDIES

WOMEN AND THE GREAT WAR

Femininity under Fire in Italy

ALLISON SCARDINO BELZER

Italian and Italian American Studies

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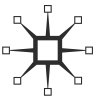

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Introduction

Women and War

The war is here!

—Anna Menestrina, *La guerra di Anna Menestrina*

The Great War arrived literally on Anna Menestrina's doorstep when her hometown, Trento, became one of most contested areas along the Italian Front. Thirty-three years old, Menestrina volunteered for the Red Cross and saw firsthand the violence of war and the regimentation of military occupation. Her diary tells of air raids, quartered soldiers, and food shortages. Her story is fascinating but not unique; thousands of women lived alongside the battlefields. Yet women living far from the front also found the war difficult to avoid. At the home front, Italian women were expected to boost morale, conserve goods, buy war bonds, and take care of everyday activities. At the fighting front, women worked as nurses and medical technicians, lived as aides-de-camp with husbands, or were drawn in because they failed to evacuate before it was too late. The intersection of wartime and women is a busy crossroads where issues of femininity, politics, and patriotism collide.

In order to understand the complex relationship between women and war, it is essential for historians to examine the discourses of gender in order to study how gender roles were constructed and to what end. Yet the experience of individual women living with war cannot be ignored. Learning how the Great War affected women and notions of womanhood over the long term and how women participated in the war requires looking at both public discourse and lived experience. Whether acting as volunteers, munitions workers, nurses, or consoling wives, individual Italian women (like their sisters throughout Europe) participated in the war, at home and at the front. The Great War politicized Italian women and the concept of femininity when women became part of the body politic. Their status as mothers (whether real or potential) facilitated this new place for women. In an almost literal sense, the women at the home front mothered the nation by taking charge of the consumer side of the war economy. In a more figurative sense,

they acted as mothers in their ability to soothe the fears of society and soldiers by proclaiming that the war was just and necessary.

For the first time, Italian society (i.e., the state as an entity and the public as revealed in published discourse) openly recognized that women were part of the nation. After the war, there was no going back. That the government enlisted women only because they needed something from them does not make the act of recognition any less notable. During the Great War, women were midwives who brought a new Italy to life. When the Fascists took over in 1922, they only had to tweak the wartime model of politicized femininity to ritualize motherhood in the service of the state. Discourse and experience overlapped as many women seized this opportunity to participate in a state that would recognize them as more than guardians of the hearth; they would be the guardians of the nation.

Four Models of Femininity, Circa 1900–1945

Because of its all-encompassing nature, war provides an excellent site for studying gender and culturally constructed ideals of femininity. It reveals prewar ideals of gender roles as it simultaneously allows citizens to transgress them. Postwar efforts to return to normalcy glaringly highlight societal expectations of both men and women, which were difficult to sustain after the trauma of war. Throughout the Western world and in Italy, in particular, the Great War shifted traditional understandings of appropriate female behavior.

In Italy, war changed the model of femininity, as women who had been ignored by the state became citizens courted by the state. As historian Silvana Patriarca astutely observes, "Identity is never a stable entity, but a project."[1] These images of feminine identity changed over time, responding to current cultural concerns. I have created four models of the ideal Italian woman (occurring chronologically) that reflect how society expected actual women to act: the *donna brava*, *donna italiana*, *donna nuova*, and *donna fascista*. Each epitomizes cultural constructions of what society wanted from women at a particular time, albeit with some overlap. The generation of women who came of age during the Great War moved away from older models of womanhood to forge their own balance between independence and family.

The prewar feminine archetype praised the obedient wife whose life was restricted mostly to the home and family responsibilities: the *donna brava* (good woman).[2] Although these women felt class and regional loyalties, gender was usually their paramount identity.[3] Throughout the West, a belief in biological essentialism consigned women to the home, where they

could best contribute their innate skill as mothers. The *donna brava* was expected to put her own needs behind those of others. A scholar of turn-of-the-century Italian women, Ann Hallamore Caesar has noticed that the idealized Italian woman from this era occupied "a space outside history."[4] Her life was sequestered, and her exposure to the public was limited.

During the Great War, she entered history, and a new prototype developed: the politically active female patriot sacrificing for victory—the *donna italiana* (Italian woman). Pamphlets, speeches, and essays of the day implored women to act with civic pride and elevate their *italianità* (Italianness).[5] Female work was recast as civic work (although it remained less impressive than any kind of men's work), and women were reconceived as Italian citizens striving for victory. Because Italy was a young country and had a fragmented past, national identity had not nullified regional ties, and *italianità* was an ill-defined concept. Identifying oneself as Italian generally meant supporting Italy's war needs, rooting for Allied victory, and prioritizing the Liberal government's goals over personal ones.[6]

Despite many similarities, the *donna italiana* was fundamentally incompatible with the *donna brava*. During the war, the government and prescriptive literature called on women to put the state's needs ahead of those of their own families, a direct contrast to the priorities of the *donna brava*. A *donna italiana* was supposedly willing to send a loved one to the front with a smile or deny children a filling meal. She had to reorder her priorities. For the war to succeed, it was necessary for her to see herself first as Italian, sacrificing for an Allied victory, and only second as female, sacrificing in an appropriately feminine manner. During the war, patriotism trumped gender as women's predominant identity.

Many Italian women, especially among the middle and upper classes, ingested and propagated nationalist ideals. In her analysis of women's paramilitary units in Britain, Krisztina Robert has reflected eloquently about patriotism's role in the Great War. She explains that historians "have to treat patriotism not only as an ideology but also as a language employed by different social and political groups to further their own interests." In Italy and in Britain, patriotism was not "a ruling-class ideology imposed on society by elites for purposes of manipulation," although much of it might have emerged from government-sponsored propaganda.[7] In fact, international enthusiasm for the war effort began even before governments organized their public relations campaigns.[8] Many Italian women (like others across Europe) asserted their political consciousness in their writings and speeches.

The outburst of patriotism and nationalism created a new concept of female citizenship. To argue that the war made a place for female citizenship requires a clear definition of what *citizenship* means. Scholars have

defined the term differently, but recent studies conclude that the concept goes beyond the rights belonging to a member of a polity. Gender historians Kathleen Canning and Sonya Rose demonstrate that it can be understood as "a set of social practices that define the relationships between peoples and states and among people within communities."[9] In their work on the United States and Western Europe, both Linda Kerber and Rogers Brubaker emphasize that a state often grants some rights and benefits only in exchange for certain obligations.[10] The politicization of femininity in Italy did not result in many tangible gains for women. For women living during the war, the cost of citizenship outweighed the benefits; they had no vote and no equal rights. Although the Great War neither liberated nor emancipated Italian women, it did give many a new consciousness of themselves as political actors.

The Great War's nationalization of women occurred in a variety of places. Discussing southern European, Middle Eastern, and Irish women, historian Billie Melman has written, "Nationhood was invested upon them on account of their ethnicity, or on account of a gender-specific social production (maternity), or as producers of culture."[11] In Italy (as elsewhere) women were brought into the project of nation building because of their unique biological ability to bear children and their societal responsibility to indoctrinate them. Melman and others have noted that women were not equal partners in the nation, but their contributions allegedly were of equal importance. To contemporary women, that praise was an improvement over their prewar exclusion from the political realm. In the Western world, society underwent a double transformation: women came onto the national stage as contributors and as citizens at a time when politics itself was changing. Melman analyzes the evolution of mass politics during the Great War, identifying a "feminization" of the public sphere as the requirements of the war blurred public and private boundaries. The state, "everywhere, made inroads into areas considered as domestic and 'private.'"[12] Simultaneously, total war could not exclude women from the war zone. Women were involved with war, at the home front and the war front, and they acted as agents of their own destiny, not as passive recipients of government mandates.

Negotiating national identity was a two-way street, with the state and the public each offering its own version of what it meant to be a good citizen. In discussing Britain, Nicoletta Gullace demonstrates how the Great War made patriotism and war service, rather than gender, the hallmark of a good citizen.[13] Although the results were different in Italy (women got the vote in Britain in 1919 but first voted in Italy in 1946), a similar change occurred as the government and mass media came to recognize women as participants in the nation.[14]

The political scientist Ursula Vogel has defined citizenship as "active involvement in the affairs of the community," and it is this wide notion of citizenship that I apply here.[15] The public discourse of the period confirms this idea. For example, Baroness Carla Lavelli Celesia, head of an umbrella organization dedicated to civilian aid in Italy, accurately predicted that female war efforts would "accustom women to the very new concept of civil and social responsibility."[16] In 1916, Ottorino Modugno published a book on women's roles in wartime; he felt the time had come for women to "be something in the social organism." He wrote, "Woman can and must be something concrete and useful, other than for man, other than for family: for society."[17] That Italy failed to take full advantage of women's potential to contribute (and that women failed to squeeze civil and legal rights from a state in dire need of their services) should not discount this important moment of transition as women became aware of their civic identity.

During the Great War, Italian women became visible; as individuals and as a category, they formed a constituency the state and public opinion had to address. The advent of the patriotic female citizen provides a first glimpse of the archetype that would rise to national prominence during the Fascist era. The Great War began the process of nationalizing women, priming many to accept Fascism and its insistence on merging the personal with the political. It created the possibility for full legal citizenship they would achieve in the post-World War II era.

Women's continued subordination is less significant than the fact that they enjoyed a period of increased importance in society. Understanding how women participated in the war and how cultural shifts occurred helps chart the evolving status of Italian women in the twentieth century. Lucia Re, a scholar of Italian women writers, notes how "social and cultural turmoil caused by the war jump-started a new generation of young women" whose literature reflected their response to the war.[18] In her study of Italian women workers during the Great War, Barbara Curli demonstrates that the war economy created female job opportunities that did not disappear when the war ended.[19] Women's contribution to the war and, conversely, the war's effects on women were political, cultural, and economic, with consequences that outlasted the war.

Recent studies of the cultural legacy of the Great War focus on what remained intact more than what changed.[20] But such a conclusion, one corroborated by Susan Grayzel in her excellent study of European ideas about femininity, minimizes the evidence of change.[21] Grayzel has uncovered much of the same rhetoric in France and Britain as existed in Italy, yet she emphasizes how society kept women in their traditional roles as mothers rather than how it gave women new standing in the public arena. Their

new roles were based not only on their status as mothers but also on their ability to keep the home front running smoothly.

The armistice in 1918 ended Italy's need for total mobilization, and Italian women found themselves in an awkward place. The government and mass media had celebrated female contributions as crucial to the war effort. What feminine ideal would replace the feisty and patriotic *donna italiana*? Many Italians called for women to return to their prewar personae. Unlike governments in Great Britain, Germany, and the United States, the Italian Liberal government (after some debate) refused to grant female suffrage even though women had helped in critical ways with the war effort. But it was too late to turn back the clock.

The postwar ideal woman was socially and financially independent: the *donna nuova* (new woman). Fearing the allure of money and the diminishing of patriarchal power, postwar critics complained that these liberated new women were not interested in domesticity and self-sacrifice. Some vehemently encouraged women to choose family and domesticity over independence and public activity. Mary Louise Roberts has demonstrated how French anxiety about gender roles escalated in the 1920s.[22] Roberts correctly identifies gender as the site where much of the confusion caused by the war played itself out in the postwar years; this insight applies not just to France but to Italy, too. Ironically, this fiercely independent woman existed more prominently in the European public's imaginations than in reality. Nevertheless, as in France and England, many Italians had misgivings about permanently changing traditional feminine ideals.

The postwar Liberal era did not last in Italy, and neither did the *donna nuova*. The Fascists, led by the hypermasculine Benito Mussolini, took charge of the government just four years after the Great War ended. Rather than rejecting the changes the war had brought to women's status in society, Mussolini capitalized on them. Rebuffing the new woman as selfish and decadent, Fascists encouraged the wartime model of a politically engaged woman who prioritized the state's needs over her own: the *donna fascista* (Fascist woman). The societal schism caused by the Great War made the return of the *donna brava* impossible. Fascism combined the different models of femininity uniquely and, for many women, irresistibly. Like the *donna brava*, the *donna fascista* was expected to return to traditional tasks, such as having many children. Like the wartime *donna italiana*, she was glorified for sacrificing for the needs of the state, as opposed to those of her own family, region, or class. And like the *donna nuova*, she was expected to be modern in her physical fitness and her desire to see Italy reborn. Many historians of modern Italy locate the advent of Fascism as the key turning point in modern Italian history. In doing so, they underestimate the powerful effect the Great War had on Italian society and the direct link that

exists between the culture created by total war and the one forged by Benito Mussolini. In eliding the personal and the political, Fascism co-opted the cultural models created during and shortly after the war.

In theory, the same woman could have been exposed to all four of the types I describe here, changing her own vision of femininity along with the times. A teenager when war broke out, an individual woman might have rallied to the national cause (*donna italiana*), rejecting her childhood teachings that would have stressed female obedience and compliance (*donna brava*). Elated with her newfound sense of self, she might have resisted leaving the public sphere after the war ended, keeping a job that provided her some personal income (*donna nuova*). Perhaps Fascism beguiled her as she grew older; she might have enjoyed the responsibility of patriotic motherhood and supported Mussolini's rigid gender roles as she raised her own daughters (*donna fascista*). The generation of women born around 1900 could possibly have fit into this chronology, but many women born at other times also lived through these events. In reality, there is no one woman who stepped through all these stages in precisely this manner. These models targeted women young enough to be influenced by popular culture, but the evidence about how they engaged with these images is fragmented and incomplete. We can read the personal narratives of women electrified by their war experience, but other women were weary of the burdens of violence. Many women wrote books and articles encouraging others to find happiness in difficult times, but others published critiques of that very same advice. Above the polyphony of voices sound certain refrains. When we listen, we can hear the answers to important questions about what women did in the war and what the war did to them.[23]

Women's Wartime Reality

These changing images of ideal femininity did not occur in an abstract vacuum; they took root in women's day-to-day lives. During the war, most Italian women lived at the home front and undertook a range of jobs designed to keep society running smoothly while the men were off fighting. Conditions at home were hard, and they grew increasingly difficult each year the war dragged on. Working-class women tended to contribute by doing paid war work, whereas upper- and middle-class women volunteered or set up charities to help soldiers and their families. For the most part, Italians had a specific idea of what constituted proper work for women, and while their conception of femininity expanded during the war, it still precluded granting women too much independence or indispensability. Women both learned new skills (although their contributions

were usually deemed inferior to men's) and were targets of policy and propaganda.[24] In light of the evidence of women's broadened opportunities and abilities, the changing definition of femininity allowed women more latitude to see themselves as valuable individuals of a nation instead of as the least important member of a family.

While almost all women at the home front were engaged at some level in Italy's war effort, not all women lived a comfortable distance from the fighting. By choice or by accident, thousands of women lived along the Italian Front. They personified women's encounter with war, and examining their lives allows historians to compare the rhetoric of war with the reality of women's experiences. They were there for a variety of reasons. Most women lived at the front because that was their home when the war came to them. Wives and prostitutes sought out soldiers for personal or economic motives, but most nurses and medical technicians went out of a sense of duty to the *Patria* (motherland) and to find adventure. They saw themselves as citizens, responsible for helping their side win the war.

Some historians have overemphasized the division between the home and war fronts, a mistake that this study and others by recent scholars seek to correct. In writing about Germany, Belinda Davis identifies the "blurring of soldier/civilian status" that existed during the war. The same phenomenon was present in Italy. Among others, the work of Davis, Benjamin Ziemann, Annette Becker, Helen McPhail, Susan Grayzel, and Maureen Healy (studying Germany, France, Britain, and Austria) demonstrates women's close involvement with the war. Similarly, Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau (on France) and Michael Roper (on Britain) have approached the question of soldier-civilian connectivity by listening to soldiers' voices, proving that the troops maintained a strong bond with the home front.[25] This "blurring" even existed for the majority of women who lived far from the action; despite their status as noncombatants, many women experienced air raids, and all women engaged in wartime sacrifices.[26] For women living at or near the front, the violence of war and the militarization of daily life were inescapable. The war inscribed the nation on the bodies of the male soldiers, nurses, and female civilians living at the front.

Personal narratives (published and unpublished letters, diaries, and memoirs written by men and women from Italy, Austria, Britain, and the United States) flesh out women's war experiences along the Italian Front. No matter their nationality or motive, women at the front remained *women*, and studying their perspective helps complete history's picture of what happened in the Great War. Autobiographies are incredible resources to historians searching for the past. To read the daily details of someone's life (and to note the silences) is to see a life unfolding as a process rather than as a finished product. In her analysis of diaries, Suzanne Bunkers

notes how personal narratives publicize the private, as the author selects which details to include about the world around her. In addition to recording facts, a diary or memoir testifies to how one individual reacted to the world around her. The personal becomes the political when the author describes her interactions with the public sphere. In essence, diarists could "rewrite what it meant to be female" by choosing what to record. Their narratives tell of what mattered to the writer, not what social custom or cultural norms expected of her. The "dailiness" of diaries exposes the connections between the individual and society.[27]

Reading firsthand accounts of war begs the question of how people use ordinary language to describe extraordinary events. Finding a vocabulary shocking enough to convey the reality of catastrophe overwhelms most chroniclers. Part of the problem is that when writing during crisis, it is easy to be consumed by daily life. Because the usual forms of communication fail to portray adequately the reality of disaster, many writers fall back on common tropes. This phenomenon is not unique to the Great War. As historians like Sarah Maza have noted, stereotypes populate culture. Stock characters and situations, learned from folk tales, novels, theater, and other media, tend to stand in for actual people.[28] Like soldiers' writings, women's diaries were informed by popular rhetoric.[29] In *The Plague*, Albert Camus provides an excellent explanation for the difficulty of communication: "By reason of their very duration great misfortunes are monotonous."[30] Camus's narrator remarks that either the "attempt to communicate had to be given up" or the quarantined had to resign themselves "to using the current coin of language, the commonplaces of plain narrative."[31] Neither solution was ideal. Paul Fussell's groundbreaking study of language used by British officers in the Great War makes a similar point; it was almost impossible for these soldiers to convey the horror of their experience to those who were back home.[32]

Formulaic conventions abound in many women's writing. In diaries and memoirs, but especially in essays and pamphlets intended for publication, we see the stereotypes of the grieving mother or widow, the patriotic sister, and the innocent child. Many diaries report war news, rumors of when it might end, or how the troops are faring, but they leave out personal reflections. Discussions of weather, food, and family networks often crowd out social commentary and inner thoughts. It was the rare writer who conveyed her personal responses to powerful world events.

Both personal and prescriptive writings are important to this study. Texts that propagate a vision of women as great martyrs or great patriots tell much about what the ideal for women was during the war years. In his study of Italian wartime propaganda, Thomas Row explains how dramatically the war transformed state and societal relations. He analyzes

how propaganda, defined as "a set of messages from the 'state' to the 'society,'" allows "the amorphous world of civic society" to participate in the war effort, recasting social norms in the process.[33] But propaganda only goes part of the way toward helping us understand the wartime experience of women. Diaries and memoirs written by women who lived at the front overturn many generic images of women. However, not all women could read and write, making the responses of the educated middle and upper classes disproportionately represented in the body of wartime diaries. About two-thirds of Italian women were literate in this period.[34] The question of why some wrote while others stayed silent is unanswerable. The war was obviously a unique moment for Europeans. Many people who recorded their experiences had never written about their lives before the war and would never write about them again. The sheer act of writing reveals the significance these individuals attached to the war. Many had a compelling desire to bear witness.[35] Some wrote as an attempt to explain to themselves what they had endured, hoping that the act of writing would normalize the extraordinary event. That women wrote at all is significant. In 1911, Emilio Cecchi, a well-known Italian intellectual, compared women writers to strippers, emphasizing the taboo of women baring all in public. Cecchi misogynistically criticized confessional writing as superficial and applied his condescension equally to women's technical abilities and the content of their work.[36] In the early twentieth century, many Italians perceived women who published as living outside the mainstream, not to mention women who wrote about themselves.

That many of these women wrote only about this one period of their lives is problematic for historians. In most cases, it is impossible to know more about the writer's life than what she reveals in her personal narrative.[37] After reading her war story, the reader begs to know what happened next. How did she fare under Fascism or in World War II? How did she apply what she had learned from her Great War experience? What did she teach her children and grandchildren? The written record is rarely up to the task of conveying such slippery legacies.

Occasionally, female writers did reveal their motives for putting their thoughts down on paper. Menestrina, the Red Cross nurse who lived in occupied Trento, saw her diary not as an "instrument of self-representation but as a mirror of facts, of external reality" as observed during the war. She wanted to avoid remembering her subjective reaction and instead tried to report events as she saw them unfold around her. Other women used their diaries as emotional outlets. Isabella Sperti, an older woman who stayed in Belluno (a small town in the Trentino region) to protect her house, even though it was situated close to the fighting, called her diary "my dearest friend of the moment" and "the friend of my thoughts." Maria Juretigh

of Udine (like Trento, a center of military activity) was in her mid-forties during the war. She felt the act of writing unburdened her, calling her diary "the *libretto* of my worries." But writing was often forbidden. Ironically, Pina Bauzon, a young, single woman from the village of Versa, recorded a conversation she had with a lieutenant who told her it was "severely prohibited" to keep any type of notes during the occupation. Carmela Timeus of Trieste also noted that she had to hide her diary. Fortunately, such restrictions did not prevent these women from writing. A teenager from the Trentino region, Valeria Bais, eloquently remarked, "I can't suffocate in my throat the voice of my heart."[38]

Diaries created during the war differ from memoirs written after the fact. Scholars often consider the former to be more accurate, in the sense that in focusing on daily events the writer is likely to record more correctly what happened. Accounts written later offer a more panoramic and reflective view of events, but they are less likely to reveal what the writer actually felt at the time. Knowing which side will win, when the war will end, and who will survive deeply affects the memory of war events. Neither approach, however, guarantees perfect source material for the historian.[39] In his quest to tell *The Soldiers' Tale*, Samuel Hynes expresses a preference for memoirs, because they have the advantage of hindsight and allow authors to set their war experiences in the wider context of their lives. Hynes correctly notes that memoirs do not express a true history of war but a true story of one person's war experience; these "personal narratives will always be fallible authorities" and are "restricted, biased, afflicted by emotion, and full of errors."[40] For Italy, narratives published during the Fascist era cast a shadow over the text. Was the author an avid Fascist? Was her message particularly relevant to the Fascist program? In spite of these inscrutable questions, women's writings remain among the best sources for historians to recapture what life was like during the war. Considering the paucity of works penned by women, the most thorough way to evaluate female experience is from a variety of sources: diaries, memoirs, letters, government records, and works aimed at women, written by both men and women.

The writings of female civilians who lived in close proximity to the front expose how entangled their lives were with military matters. Nurses who volunteered at the front, for example, lived a different war than women behind the lines. For most of these adventurers (who hailed almost exclusively from the nobility and middle classes), the war was a grand exercise in nationalism, which played itself out in bloody, brutal battles. Many of them believed that they had more in common with their soldier-patients than with other women who saw little of the war. Robert Wohl has described the self-conscious affinity veterans of the Great War felt with each other; he

has argued that the cohesiveness of the "Generation of 1914" marked them as separate from men who had not fought in the war.[41] Many women who chose to live at the Italian front clearly believed they also belonged to the "Generation of 1914" as much as the servicemen did.

Female civilians caught at the front also saw firsthand the vicious side of war, but they responded much more cautiously than the adventurers. With a lesser sense of patriotism, most of these women (largely from the middle and lower classes) did not enjoy their brush with war and did not align themselves with male soldiers or see them as comrades. As Menestrina succinctly noted, "The war is here!"[42] Because both Austria and Italy drafted most able-bodied men, the civilians who did not escape from advancing or retreating armies were largely women and children. In the *retrovie* (the area around the front), civilians were militarized, and troops were, to some extent, civilized when they lived side-by-side with local women.[43] But this cohabitation often spelled disaster for women. Soldiers attacked locals, treating them as enemies or as objects. Diaries, memoirs, and the Italian Royal Commission's *Inquest into the Violations of Civilians' Rights* demonstrate the everyday violence of life in the *retrovie*.[44] The official record of the inquest devoted an entire chapter to "crimes against female honor," offering ample evidence that rape and attempted rape were not isolated incidents for women living at the front.

Unable to see the war as a great adventure, most of these civilians expressed an ardent desire to have their prewar lives back. They dreaded the extra burdens brought on by the absence of men, as well as the deprivations and violence caused by living in the war zone. Yet almost all accepted the patriotic messages endorsed by their home governments (whether Austrian or Italian), and they saw themselves as contributors to national victory through their ability to endure scarcity and their refusal to cooperate with the enemy. Their writings overflow with expressions of patriotism. Seeing themselves as citizens but not men's equals, many of these civilian women took pride in their ability to be good *donne italiane* in much the same way as the nurses who went to the front on purpose.

Prologue

The Great War

We are all combatants.

—Gemma de Daninos, *Impressioni di guerra 1915–1918*

The Outbreak of War

The assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand on June 28, 1914, created a wave that soon crested across Europe. After a series of standoffs and half-hearted negotiations, the Great War began in earnest in August when Austria declared war against Serbia, Germany invaded Russia and France, and Britain jumped in to support her allies. History books typically describe the elation exhibited in most belligerent nations as citizens jammed into town squares to celebrate the beginning of a war that was supposed to end quickly and victoriously.[1] Recent scholarship has cast doubt on how widespread such enthusiasm was, but in any case, Italians clearly remained more hesitant than exhilarated.[2]

In 1914, Italy was allied with Austria-Hungary and Germany, but neither side consulted Italy as it moved forward for war against Serbia. Italian political leaders were split about the outbreak of war. A member of the Triple Alliance since 1882, Italy also had agreements with France. A long-standing frustration with Austrian diplomacy and its occupation of periphery areas just beyond northern and northeastern Italy contributed to Italian hesitation to get involved on Austria's side. Furthermore, both Germany and Austria were unsupportive of Italy's aims during its Libyan War (1911–12). At the outbreak of war, Italy declared itself neutral, avoiding for a time participation in the Great War, much to the relief of the population.[3] Yet behind closed doors and in the press, Italians debated possible involvement in the war as the Allies courted Italy, offering to expand her borders at Austria's expense.[4]

Italy had a constitutional monarchy, but in practice, the king operated more as a figurehead under the influence of Parliament, which worked as a bicameral legislature consisting of the Senate (officials appointed by the

king) and the Chamber of Deputies (elected officials). The Roman Catholic Church retained a strong influence, and it traditionally opposed the existence of Liberal Italy. The Gentiloni pact of 1913 finally encouraged Catholics to participate in politics, as long as they were steered toward non-Socialist deputies. Most scholarly studies of Liberal Italy have depicted a gap that existed (and perhaps continues to exist) between "real" and "legal" Italy, meaning that what happened in politics did not always reflect public opinion. Historian Richard Bosworth notes that to live in Liberal Italy would have felt more like being in contemporary France or Britain than in Austria-Hungary, Germany, or Russia. The freedoms of a Liberal parliamentary system existed in Italy as they did in France and Britain. However, until the election of 1913 when men gained universal suffrage, only about 7 percent of the population was eligible to vote.[5]

The government and the public remained split about involvement in the war. Old rivalries came into play as current and former prime ministers attempted to outmaneuver each other in negotiations. Many people committed to keeping Italy out of the war felt it was not ready militarily, and almost no one wanted to help strengthen Austria-Hungary, Italy's traditional rival. Furthermore, Italy's domestic situation was precarious; it had a weak economy and striking workers. It was hardly a united country. Others, however, were enticed by the Allies' offer to cede the Irredenta to Italy, thus weakening Austria-Hungary. The Irredenta, literally meaning "unredeemed," was land that Italy had failed to annex during the Risorgimento: the region around Trento in the north (Trentino) and Trieste in the east (Friuli). Figure 1, a map from Sidney Low's 1917 book, indicates the borders of prewar Italy and Austria. Italian-speakers in Trentino made up about 97 percent of the population; in Trieste, they were about 62 percent.[6] Culturally Italian but living under Austrian rule, these territories had been in dispute for some time.

Those who supported intervention in the war tended to be liberals from the middle classes, intellectual circles, and industry. Although they were a minority of the population early on, they exerted disproportionate influence on the public debate. Reports of German atrocities in Belgium spurred their call for Italy to get involved on the side of the Allies. A committee of three Belgians crisscrossed Italy publicizing the "German atrocities" and receiving widespread sympathy. In addition to anger about attacks against civilians, the destruction of historical buildings and fine art inflamed public opinion against the Germans.[7] As the war raged on, even those who had been committed to neutrality found their position increasingly difficult to maintain as support for intervention became synonymous with patriotism. Reflecting the mood of the times, most of the voices in the following chapters come from supporters of the war.

Unlike socialists elsewhere, the Italian Socialist Party maintained its neutrality, yet it lost prominent members, like Benito Mussolini, who abandoned international pacifism in favor of national intervention. Their philosophy of "no support, no sabotage" reflects their weak antiwar position. Historians of the left have tended to exaggerate the role neutralists played. To Bosworth, the Socialists "were, by nature, little more immune to nationalism than were their brothers in Germany or in Britain." He sees their rejection of the Libyan invasion of 1911 and maintenance of neutrality during the Great War as "caused more by the mistakes and greed of the Italian ruling classes and by the social underdevelopment of the Liberal state than by some special virtue of the Italian people."[8] It is true that the population remained divided, and many of the would-be conscripts from the peasantry certainly would not have favored war had anyone bothered to ask their opinion. Strikes escalated during the war, and the working class remained the most vocal in its opposition to the war, in large part because they suffered economically.[9]

Italian pacifists, who had enjoyed success in the prewar decades, mostly abandoned their commitment to peace. Prewar Italian pacifists had exercised about the same influence as the French at international conferences and had about as many adherents as Germany. Peace activists actively recruited women to spread their message, and several women played prominent roles in official activity. But the movement began to fall apart with the invasion of Libya.[10] Almost all peace activists, in Italy as well as throughout Europe and the United States, abandoned their pacifism when the Great War began. For some, this decision was difficult, and major peace organizations split over the issue of whether to support the war. Eventually, most decided to support their national government and rally around the war effort, tossing aside their long-held belief in international unity.[11]

Feminists, albeit a small group, also moved to support Italy's war effort. Although some women discouraged Italian entry into the war, once Italy took sides, almost all of them adopted a pro-war stance. Mirroring the example of Britain, even the most notable Italian feminists of the era, Anna Maria Mozzoni and Anna Kuliscioff, became vocal interventionists. The siren call of patriotism was difficult for most to resist.[12]

Finally, the Italian government entered the war on May 24, 1915, on the side of France and Britain, declaring war against Austria-Hungary. This announcement, like the others in Europe ten months earlier, prompted public celebration. Across Italy, people congregated to celebrate the entrance into the Great War. Nationalists cheered the government's commitment but did not represent the majority of the population.[13] Historian Luigi Tomassini notes that Italy entered the war "with her home front less cohesive and united than that of the other major allied and enemy nations."[14] But the voices of

nationalism, patriotism, and intervention clearly drowned out the others. Regardless of the position taken before the war, most educated Italians, and certainly almost all those publishing opinions during the conflict, remained ardently pro-war.

Italy's declaration of war resulted from the Italian foreign minister's negotiation of the Pact of London, allowing Italy to acquire the Irredenta. Held by Austria, that land became the Italian Front, where an army of mostly Italians (later supplemented with British, French, and American troops) fought against an army of mostly Austrians (supplemented in 1917 with Germans). Even today, some Italians view the Great War more as the Second War of Unification (the first being the Risorgimento) rather than as part of the larger world war.

Fighting at the Front

In contrast to guerrilla-style civil wars and the more mobile World War II, the Great War was mostly fought as a border war, with armies battling across clearly demarcated fighting zones. As on the Western Front, the fighting along the Italian Front consisted mostly of trench warfare. This type of combat resulted primarily in stalemate. Once squared off in defensive positions, each side attempted to use technology to gain the advantage. During the Great War, machine guns, airplanes, poison gas, hot-air balloons, and tanks made their first bellicose appearance. One scholar speculated that if nuclear weapons had been available in the last years of the war, the generals probably would have used them, too.[15] The goal was to slaughter as many of the enemy's men as possible, sometimes without too much concern about how many Allied troops were lost at the same time. For anyone who knows even a little about the Great War, the list of battle sites conjures up images of incredible destruction: Marne, Verdun, Somme, Ypres, Passchendale, Isonzo. Ernest Hemingway considered how language failed to convey the enormity of death: "There were many words that you could not stand to hear and finally only the names of places had dignity. . . . Abstract words such as glory, honor, courage, or hallow were obscene beside . . . the names of rivers, the numbers of regiments and dates."[16] The statistics are staggering. At Verdun, the Germans and the French each lost about three hundred thousand men between February and September 1916. At the Somme, the tally for dead and wounded equaled five hundred thousand for Germany, four hundred thousand for Britain, and two hundred thousand for France.[17] On the first day of battle alone, the British lost twenty thousand men.[18] Beyond the technological advances that made more rapid killing possible, the organization of the trenches made death from wounds more

likely. If a soldier was shot down in no-man's land, which was probably a hundred yards or more wide, he could not easily return to his side to get medical attention. This expanse of wasted land, used only once for the folly of a Christmas Truce soccer match, became a vast graveyard of bodies and body parts—a few yards fought over for months, then years.[19]

Almost all able-bodied Italian men of military age served in the war, totaling about 5.9 million men.[20] Over half came from the peasantry (and these hailed disproportionately from the South), and they made up about 95 percent of the casualties of the war.[21] The peasantry remained mostly illiterate, living what Bosworth called a "premodern" existence.[22] Prefectural reports from the time show peasant men had no enthusiasm for the war and were hostile toward the state for conscripting them. Their loyalties were "local, familial or institutional," not national.[23] The Great War hurried along the process of nationalizing the peasantry, giving the government a direct opportunity to teach them standardized language, mores, and values.[24] But it also rushed the process of politicizing them.

By the end of the war, all nations had suffered tremendous loss of life. The raw figures become more astounding when considered alongside the total population of each country. Italy lost 600,000 of a population of 36 million, France lost 1.7 million of 40 million, the British Empire lost 1 million of 50 million, and Germany lost 2 million of 70 million.[25] The total destruction of the Great War is measurable in numbers but fathomable only when heard in the individual voices of its participants.

Whether in fiction, diaries, letters, poetry, or history books, the trench soldier's life is universally described as all but intolerable. Oscillating between long stretches of boredom and hasty calls to battle, soldiers found no sense of rhythm or stability when stationed in the trenches. Given infrequent leave and inadequate rations, the men on the front suffered from bad weather as well. As a parsing of trench newspapers reveals, one of the men's biggest annoyances was the rain and resulting mud. How did they handle being far from home, many in a foreign country, under military rule? Although books such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* emphasize male camaraderie as the vehicle through which soldier's kept their sanity, historians have not found overwhelming proof that the men built strong emotional friendships.[26] Death was never far away, and taking time to forge ties to other humans could prove more trouble than it was worth. Nevertheless, the sense of futility that strikes us looking back on the war armed with statistics instead of machine guns was not as prevalent as we might imagine. Only in the later years of the war did a collective sense of disaster overwhelm individual armies. Consider the breakdowns in 1917: the French mutinies, the Italian retreat at Caporetto, the Russian Revolution.[27] From the point of view of the soldiers slogging it out along the fighting

front (whether in Italy, France, or Russia), the focus was on getting through the day and getting done whatever job was assigned them. For too many days, that involved the building of trenches.

In the Italian plains, trenches were dug out of the mud and over time became cement fortifications. Along the Carso in the east, trenches were carved out of rock. E. V. Lucas, a British Red Cross volunteer in Italy, summed up the Herculean feat of trench making: "Marvellous indeed it is that kings can get men to fight for them, but (to me) more marvellous that they can get them to dig for them."[28] An Italian-American woman visiting the trenches in Trentino in August 1915 described them, perhaps revealing as much about herself as a noncombatant as about the trenches:

> Two sorts of trenches are seen, those built with cement and those dug out in the ground, earth filled up on top.
>
> The cement ones are like catacombs, they are more comfortable and probably better than the other, but they are infinitely less picturesque, also they give the impression that war was becoming an institution, and that in the new order of things, to build a permanent trench as up to date as possible, was to be the ambition of many rising young architects and engineers. . . .
>
> The old fashioned trench gives the war a less permanent feeling. It is open at the back, the walls are of earth, the rain enters, the wind blows through, and the sun shines on it, but though more primitive, it is more comforting as one feels that it is only a hurried makeshift as quickly abandoned as built.[29]

Either type of trench was prone to becoming a gutter filled with rats, lice, and the stench of dead and wounded bodies. In Redipuglia, concrete trenches remain standing and are open to tourists. It is an experience that defines the word *oxymoron* to walk through the trenches carrying a camera instead of a gunnysack on a crisp and quiet fall day 85 years after their construction.

Much of the Italian Front followed the Alps. The four hundred-mile-long front hosted the greatest mountain battlefield in history. In the winter, soldiers built the trenches with snow. The Italian Alpini dug trenches out of the sides of glaciers. Material scaled the side of the mountain only with the incredible efforts of people and mules, or it was lifted up on ropes. Compared with the lower altitude trenches, fewer creatures shared the space, but the bitter cold ensured that no one envied the troops stationed there. Lucas noted a lack of fighting; the "energies of the army" focused instead on preparing for the spring campaigns because of the cold winter. He remarked that the troops there lived in conditions "that are not only harassing but as perilous as those of the fighting men themselves."[30]

The Italian Front is distinctive in at least two respects. First, whereas the fighting along the Western Front was infamously immobile, the battles along the Italian Front involved more movement, especially after the Caporetto retreat. Second, the geographical location of Italy made towns near the Mediterranean easy prey for air raids throughout the war. In general, air raids during the Great War were less threatening than those of World War II because of inferior technology. Bombs that actually did hit their targets often did not explode. Nevertheless, civilians who originally lived miles from the front were caught up in the violence because of frequent air raids and the Caporetto retreat.

From May 1915 to spring 1916, fighting along the Italian Front was concentrated in the region along the Isonzo River from Trieste through Gorizia to Caporetto (Figure 1). According to historian John Schindler, the Isonzo is notable "more than any other front of the Great War" for "the harshness of the terrain, the viciousness of the fighting, and the relentless cycle of disastrously failed offensives."[31] A second front arose near Trento, and in May 1916 the Austrians advanced in the Trentino region and occupied Asiago. The summer of 1916 saw an Italian counteroffensive, and the Italian army captured Gorizia, the one major victory for the Italians in the first years of the war. In response, German troops arrived to help the Austrians, forcing Italy to declare war against Germany on August 27, 1916, over a year after entering the war. Throughout that year and into 1917, heavy fighting continued along the Isonzo River, but the front remained relatively stable. In the summer of 1917, another Italian offensive succeeded, taking Bainsizza and Monte Santo on the Carso plain.

In the autumn, however, the Italians suffered a massive defeat at Caporetto. Beginning on October 24, 1917, a joint German-Austrian offensive broke through the Italian line. The attackers gained important footholds at Caporetto and Tolmino, where the Piave River crossed the front lines. Thousands of troops retreated into Italy, falling back behind the Piave. The ensuing chaos left the reserves as the new frontline soldiers, but they, too, continued to retreat. In two weeks the Italian military fell back 60 miles. Civilians in towns such as Udine, Vittorio Veneto, and Belluno had not expected to be overrun by the military and faced such prospects suddenly. As Gemma de Daninos wrote in her poem *Caporetto!*: "We are all combatants."[32] From October 23, 1917, to November 10, 1917, the following towns moved from being safely behind the front lines to being captured by the Austrians: Auronzo, Santo Stefano, Comeglians, Moggio, Gemona, Tarcento, Cividale, Forno di Zoldo, Longarone, Tramonti, Ampezzo, Tolmezzo, Clauzetto, San Daniele, Agordo, Maniago, Spilimbergo, Codroipo, Latisana, Portogruaro, Motta, Oderzo, Conegliano, Sacile, Aviano, Pordenone, Feltre, Fonzaso, Arsiè, and Cismon. By late November, the following towns found themselves

newly situated within 20 miles of the front: Treviso, Asolo, Montebelluna, Bassano del Grappa, Marostica, Cittadella, Camposampiero, Mestre, Venice, and Campolongo. The Austro-German force not only recaptured the land previously lost but also gained new ground in the Veneto. By the end of the retreat, almost three hundred thousand Italians had become prisoners of war, and the new front was about 15 miles from Venice.[33] At the time, General Luigi Cadorna publicly blamed the defeat on low morale caused by Socialists, pacifists, and *imboscati* (literally "hidden," but used to refer to shirkers). A more reasonable explanation for the loss is that the enemy outflanked the Italians. Having lost communication with each other and with the high command, the officers who were not killed believed they had to surrender. Many soldiers welcomed what they anticipated would be an end to the grueling war, even if it meant Italy's defeat.

Italian soldiers were motivated by the harsh discipline imposed from above by Cadorna. According to Hew Strachan, one in seventeen Italian soldiers faced disciplinary charges, and 61 percent of them were found guilty. Seven hundred and fifty soldiers suffered execution for disobedience. The troops, "normally outnumbered two-to-one," fought 11 battles at the Isonzo River front over a 27-month period from 1915 to 1917, advancing a total of less than seven miles. Desertions and mutinies rose throughout 1917. Strachan maintains that at least one hundred thousand deserters were at-large even before the rout at Caporetto. General Armando Diaz replaced Cadorna after Caporetto, and the Italian government finally made changes to make the war easier on the military and civilian populations. Soldiers were given longer leaves and more food, and Diaz endorsed better and safer tactics.[34] In addition, the government established a propaganda office (*Servizio P*), elevated the oversight of military industry to a ministry position, and began to organize food rationing at home.

In November and December 1917, the war effort turned around for the Italians. Having achieved major gains for Austria, the German troops withdrew. Simultaneously, British and French forces arrived to help hold the new line along the Piave River.[35] In the summer of 1918, another Austrian offensive occurred, this time stretching from Asiago to the Piave. The Austrians could not break through the line, and by autumn the Italian Army waged its own offensive. After a hard fight at Mount Grappa, the Italians finally gained the advantage and continued north to victory at the appropriately renamed Vittorio Veneto. The war with Austria ended on November 3, 1918.

Part I

Femininity at Home

1

Becoming Italian

Models of Femininity from 1900–1918

Go outside the hearth, in order to save the hearth.

—Donna Paola, *La funziona della donna in tempo di guerra*

Prewar Standards of Femininity and the *Donna Brava*

Italian society defined femininity in the prewar years along the same lines as most other Western nations. In prescriptive literature (i.e., conduct books, handbooks, advice magazines, and novels with a moral message), the ideology of separate spheres dominated. Although historians have emphasized the myriad ways people subverted this model, contemporary discourse highlighted a rigid divide between female and male and between public and private.

During this era, popular ideas about femininity and masculinity derived from allegedly scientific assumptions that assigned essentialist natures to women and men. One of the most influential practitioners of this essentialism was the positivist Cesare Lombroso, a prolific Italian writer interested in how biological nature determined everything from gender roles to crime. His well-known study of female behavior, *The Criminal Woman, the Prostitute and the Normal Woman*, originally published in 1893 with the assistance of Guglielmo Ferrero, provided an allegedly scientific basis for essentialist ideas about gender. Modern historians call it "perhaps the most extended proof of women's inferiority ever attempted" and connect its "preoccupation with female crime" to the "growth of the women's movement" in the last decades of the century, when calls for female emancipation grew louder.[1] Lombroso and others rejected the idea of women carving out a public space for themselves and prescribed motherhood as women's goal. According to essentialist theory, because of her biology, a

woman should find supreme contentment in the domestic sphere of home and family; she should strive to be "the one who inspires domestic life," as Lombroso's daughter Paola proclaimed in her important work on female character.[2] Her own individuality should have no place in the family; her own fulfillment should come in noble acts of self-sacrifice for the benefit of her husband and children.

Regarding the Italian case, this ideal of female behavior created the *donna brava*, the good woman.[3] The historian Flavia Zanolla used this term to describe the peasant ideal in the early twentieth century in Friuli (an area of northwest Italy particularly affected by the Great War), but this type of femininity prevailed in the prewar years among even noble and middle-class women, those most thoroughly examined here, and I apply the term more widely.

The reality of Italian women's experience in the prewar era underscores the basic tenets of gender division. In contrast to the postwar period when mature but unmarried females were allowed to enjoy some freedom, most girls of the prewar era lived at home under strict parental supervision until they married, usually in their midtwenties. In her study of Italian conduct books written in the late 1800s, Ann Hallamore Caesar explains that social codes rigidly limited women's freedom of movement and opportunities to meet men. Even a walk to the neighborhood church had to be well supervised. Segregation of the sexes permeated society and was the norm for middle-class Italians. A spinster in her thirties still had not outgrown the surveillance and supervision of her family.[4] For many parents, the most important gift they could give their daughters was to settle them in marriage. Only marriage offered young, middle-class women the opportunity to enter the public sphere without inciting gossip. As Caesar acknowledges, marriage was a significant improvement over spinsterhood in terms of female freedom, yet even married women endured second-class status compared to their husbands. For example, the Pisanelli Code, enacted in 1865, made adultery a crime that could be committed only by women and gave a husband full control over family finances, including his wife's dowry.

Unequal to men in the domestic arena, women also lacked power in the public sphere. Illiteracy was widespread in Italy. Only about half of the population could write in 1901, and women remained far less educated than men. With only a narrow field of jobs open to women in the prewar era, they found employment as agrarian or industrial factory workers, schoolteachers, telegraph operators, domestic servants, and prostitutes.[5] Of course, suffrage remained an exclusively male province. Both long-standing social codes and the Liberal government allowed women to express themselves mostly within the confines of the family and church-related activities.

In Italy and throughout the Western world, attitudes of the day proclaimed that it was a woman's mission to subordinate herself to the needs of her family. Caesar calls attention to the rapidly expanding number of books written by women for women in late nineteenth-century Italy that defined attitudes about proper female behavior. Writers like Matilde Serao, Neera, and Marchesa Columbi concentrated on stories about married women, setting up models of correct behavior and proper feminine values, including cleanliness, purity, and moral living. Caesar notes that another branch of literature emphasized female emancipation, citing Anna Maria Mozzoni and Gualberta Beccari as two "important cultural figures."[6] But most writing aimed at the mass market did not seek liberation for women.[7] Instead, popular texts stressed that women's biological nature should determine their behavior and keep them in a subordinate position with regard to men.

Looking further back, the era of the Risorgimento provided a brief opportunity for some upper- and middle-class women to participate in politics as patriotic mothers. According to historian Judith Jeffrey Howard, a small group of women "were raised in politicized families, read revolutionary literature, took up arms, hid fugitives, went to prison, and fled into exile in Italy and abroad."[8] At this time, as with women during the French and American Revolutions, some Italian women appropriated the ideal of the *civic* or *patriot mother* to justify their excursions into politics.[9] Noted female writers offered competing descriptions of how women could build on the patriot mother ideal to secure higher status in both the private and public realms in the post-Risorgimento era. Howard concludes that this "image dominated women's literature in the 1870s."[10] Yet these early attempts to broaden women's horizons were more about "creating possibilities for change" than affecting widespread transformations in the status of Italian women.

Established conventions and biological-based views of women continued to occupy mainstream Italian culture into the twentieth century, as Paola Lombroso's *Caratteri della femminilità* (1909) reveals. Published as part of a series devoted to making new ideas in the sciences more widely available, it was popular in Italy and was translated quickly into French, English, German, and Dutch. In the book, Lombroso stressed the central importance of marriage and children in women's lives. As the daughters of Cesare Lombroso, Paola and her older sister Gina were among the leading female intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[11] They came from a nonobservant Jewish background and socialized with Europe's intellectual elite. Perhaps influenced by their father's positivism and belief in female inferiority, the Lombroso sisters continued to link biology with social mores. Somewhat ironically, they both enjoyed long

careers as writers and public intellectuals. Paola wrote numerous essays, short novels, and articles on psychology in a variety of journals. She started a popular Italian weekly magazine for children, *Corriere dei piccoli*, and occasionally wrote under the pen name Zia Mariù. Like her father, she was interested in uncovering scientific ideas about human nature, especially about women and children of the lower classes.[12]

Published when the author was 31 and already married to Mario Carrara (an intellectual who would become a notable anti-Fascist in the 1930s), the ideas expressed by Paola Lombroso in *Caratteri* concisely depict the ideal type of woman popular in the prewar years: the *donna brava*. Lombroso believed that once in a marriage, a woman must have no needs or goals apart from those of her family. Lombroso observed that in all aspects of biology (except reproduction) women are subordinate to men. Thus women's only real contribution to society and to the species comes through procreation. It was not enough for a woman to marry and reproduce; a good woman had to sacrifice her own needs for those of others.

Lombroso marveled at this female ability to sacrifice one's self "not for one thing, but for everything . . . and not for a moment, but for always." In contrast, she believed that men lack the capacity for abnegation: "He does not know how to devote in this way all of his life and his activity to one person." According to Lombroso, women are not able or willing to acknowledge the importance of abstract causes. She explained that whereas women "can sacrifice themselves completely for an individual," men "can consecrate themselves [only] to an idea, to a cause."[13] This type of assertion, however, would become increasingly difficult to maintain once the Great War began because many women, through their willingness to sacrifice, demonstrated the ability to subordinate personal loyalties to patriotism. Lombroso's text shows that before the war, for a combination of biological and societal reasons, men were neither expected nor encouraged to sacrifice for other people in the same way as women were.

It is important to note that the middle class was not the only group that encouraged women to seek fulfillment exclusively in the domestic sphere: peasant women also found their main source of recognition and power in motherhood. Using archival records, Flavia Zanolla has examined what femininity meant to peasants living in Friuli in the early twentieth century.[14] Because living arrangements revolved around men, new brides moved in with their new husband's extended family, completely removing themselves from their own biological family. Scarce resources caused competition among the families, and a woman's duty was to make sure her family got their share. The peasant wife had no identity other than that prescribed by family duties. For the pregnant woman, a successful birth assured the continuation of the in-law family lineage and thus secured her

place in the family. For everyone else, the new baby was more of a hindrance, another mouth to feed. The pregnant woman usually received no special exemptions from farm chores and no advice from women who had already given birth. Yet individual women expressed pride in their ability to survive such circumstances. The apex of womanhood was to be a *donna brava* who suffered in silence and was able to care for her family within the existing system. No one, male or female, encouraged rebellion from prescribed roles. The women's socially assigned goal was to have children and to struggle for their maintenance. The women found a certain power in their children, not only because they exercised some control over them, but also because they could ask more from extended family. And in time, they might become mothers-in-law, the most powerful women in the household, who vied with their daughters-in-law for their sons' loyalties.

Other studies corroborate Zanolla's findings. Anna Bravo provides a similar picture of peasant life in her account of oral histories collected among women from the Langhe in Piedmont who had lived through the Great War.[15] Women's value came from their labor power and reproductive power. Forbidden to own land, women brought a dowry of clothes and furniture to a marriage. Like Zanolla, Bravo sees peasant women's major social power coming from their psychological influence over their families. Linda Reeder, in her study of peasant women's lives in a small area in Sicily, notes similar phenomena as Zanolla and Bravo.[16] She portrays a world where widespread illiteracy was the norm. Women worked but only on jobs gendered female, such as cooking and weaving. Unmarried women could help in the fields, but married women performing agricultural wage work was a sign of poverty or immorality. Reeder remarks that even "during the First World War, when customary taboos were loosened, women who chose to work in the fields were condemned by other women."[17] Just like the middle class, peasants had strict boundaries for male and female behavior.

Working-class women slipped outside the confines of separate spheres ideology more easily than their peasant and middle-class counterparts. Because many already had to work outside the home for a wage, it was nonsensical to insist they did not belong in the public sphere. Nevertheless, working-class women were far from being men's equals. The husband was the final authority in the family, and his pay was considered a family wage, even if the wife also worked. Relatively few women in Italy belonged to the urban working-class; over 50 percent of the population remained rural and agrarian in the early twentieth century. Although Italy's industrial revolution began in the 1890s, with the Liberal State supporting extreme laissez-faire polices, it progressed slowly. In the prewar years, industrialization was concentrated in only a few areas. Women who worked in factories or workshops made up a small percentage of the Italian population. One historian

has described the prewar working class as "small, heterogeneous, Northern, and mostly unskilled."[18] Much of the prescriptive literature written in Italy before and during the Great War did not address them or their concerns. In fact, during the war, working-class Italians were generally antagonistic to the government's war aims, as noted by the frequent strikes and other forms of protests.[19]

Although Italian women came from many regions and classes, stereotypical attitudes about female nature usually transcended these differences. The characteristics that defined a *donna brava* were believed to be rooted in biology and behavior, and Social Darwinism shored up essentialist ideology. Never as popular in Italy as in Britain and France, Italian Social Darwinists nevertheless attempted to link societal and individual characteristics to biology.[20] For example, in their important work on women, Cesare Lombroso and Giuglielmo Ferrero prefaced their study with the bold statement: "Maternity, together with women's lesser intelligence, strength, and variability, explains why women are not only less moral but also less criminal than men." In explaining their viewpoint, they reminded readers, "we blindly followed the facts, even when they appeared self-contradictory."[21] The popular ideas about women's nature stemmed from a belief that their maternity underscored all other traits.

Despite this deep-seated belief in the biological differences between the two sexes, contemporaries acknowledged that societal expectations also determined behavior. For instance, Paola Lombroso believed that women's innate flirtatiousness was enhanced by prospective husbands' seeking of flirty females. And she imagined that women tend to be more avaricious than men because they lack their own source of income. She theorized that even though they are reluctant to pay expenses that are not in exchange for goods, such as doctors' fees, women will spend freely on their appearance because society values pretty women.[22] Despite the fact that Italians were a diverse group, made of individuals from different classes, from different regions, and of different generations, sexual division was paramount. In the prewar era, a woman could not escape her status as a female because assumptions about behavior were tethered to a belief in essentialist biology.

In addition to a belief in biological determinism, the other characteristic shared by almost all Italians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was a strong tie to the Catholic Church. Although not everyone participated in formal religious ritual, Catholicism extended considerable influence throughout Italy. Even Jewish families felt the overwhelming influence of Catholic society.[23] Although religious teachings had lost some of their luster of infallibility since the Enlightenment, the twentieth-century Church still resisted change in its attitude toward women.[24] The Church was a strong advocate of family values, and its mother-centered

focus on the Virgin Mary permeated Italian culture. In her study of Sicilian peasant women, Reeder discusses the important status of Mary as an intermediary with God. Marian cults existed alongside popular celebrations of her feast days.[25] Mary serves as an important focal point for Catholic belief, and her status reflects the Church's attitudes about women: they have "distinctive gifts, to be used under the supervision of males," according to one gender historian.[26] In Roman Catholic culture, women and men, because of their essential natures, have different roles to play in society; they are complementary partners, not equal ones. The Church traditionally has emphasized women's literal and figurative role as mothers. The image of the Virgin Mother serves as a model, albeit an impossible one to imitate, for appropriate Catholic motherhood. As Howard explains, speaking of the late nineteenth century, Catholic women privileged "self-abnegation, prayer, and suffering as the foremost female virtues."[27] A papal encyclical from 1891 reinforces this view: "Women, again, are not suited for certain occupations; a woman is by nature fitted for home work, and it is that which is best adapted at once to preserve her modesty and to promote the good bringing up of children and the well-being of the family."[28] The Code of Canon Law from 1917 reminded Catholics that the goal of marriage was primarily procreation, not mutual aid. To further that end, the Church discouraged female independence.

In such a climate, it is not surprising that feminism did not gain a strong following. For tradition-minded theorists, such as Paola Lombroso, feminine qualities could allow women to succeed in a male-dominated world. Lombroso praised women who used their feminine wiles to get what they wanted, but she vilified the new feminists who took on masculine qualities to get ahead. She rejected contemporary feminism because it encouraged women to venture outside the domestic sphere and to seek rights in the larger social and political world. Lombroso was not alone in her criticism.

Prewar Italy lacked both a strong, organized feminist movement and a tradition of vocal support for feminist issues. In her history of women and the Great War in Italy, Simonetta Ortaggi emphasized that Italian women had advanced at a much slower pace toward emancipation than other European women, an insight commentators noticed at the time.[29] In a 1912 interview with the *New York Times*, Giuseppe Garibaldi's granddaughter, Italia, claimed, "The Italian women as a whole are indifferent to suffrage. They are more conservative than you in America."[30] And literary critic Lucien Kroha notes that whereas British women were looking for intellectual independence, Italian women in Liberal Italy "still yearned for the more basic freedoms of movement and of choice."[31] Indicative of its small scale, prewar Italy gets nary a mention in Karen Offen's monumental survey of modern European feminism. Organized Italian groups

advocating female emancipation appeared only late in the nineteenth century. Mainstream women's magazines discussed the "woman question," but most well-known women writers espoused moderate political positions.[32] Despite the presence of a few radical feminist leagues in major cities, feminist contacts were made individually and through journals.[33] Over a dozen liberal women's journals sprang up in the post-Risorgimento era, most catering to the upper classes. Compared with the Anglo-American experience, Italian women were slow to join civic associations; in fact, no Italian equivalent existed for the words "club" and "meeting."[34] But that did not stop feminist leaders from trying to rally women together.

Anna Maria Mozzoni and Anna Kuliscioff stand out as model feminists. Mozzoni, called "the most important Italian emancipationist" by literary historian Silvana Patriarca, started her own women's journal, *La donna*, in the late nineteenth century. At its height, about 1,200 people subscribed. She translated John Stuart Mill's *On the Subjugation of Women* and wrote against the legal restrictions Italy imposed on women.[35] She was an outspoken critic of the restrictive Pisanelli Code when it passed in the 1860s because it continued women's legal subordination to men.[36] She represented Italy at the 1878 International Congress on the Rights of Women in Paris and founded the League for the Promotion of Women's Interests in Milan in 1881.[37] Kuliscioff, who befriended the Lombrosos and was a regular dinner companion, introduced Gina and Paola Lombroso to socialism and gave them their first glimpse of Mill's essay.[38] Perhaps because she was one of the founders of the Italian Socialist Party, it is not surprising that she favored socialism over women's rights. Both women are outstanding female figures in prewar Italian political history, but their advocacy for women's emancipation was not shared by wider society.

The historian Victoria de Grazia has divided early twentieth-century Italian feminist groups into three categories: socialist, Catholic, and lay bourgeois.[39] The socialist feminists allied with the Marxist and Socialist parties, but they were unable to make headway in their goal of female emancipation, since the struggle to solve workers' problems took precedence over women's issues. The Catholic women's groups served more as a countermovement, intent on hindering the popularity of the socialist groups. Supported by the entrenched Church hierarchy, Catholic women's groups, such as the Unione delle donne founded in 1910, remained conservative. The lay-bourgeois organizations grew in number in the prewar years, perhaps because most embraced common definitions of womanhood. They claimed citizenship based on women's importance to society as mothers, not on the inherent equality of the sexes. They offered the state their talents as females, especially their natural inclination for sacrifice, in exchange for suffrage. It was this attitude that prevailed during and after the Great War.

Despite the small presence of feminism in Italy, it faced strong opposition. Prominent intellectuals like Giovanni Papini and Gabriele D'Annunzio opposed feminism and female emancipation.[40] Few popular cultural figures organized for women's rights. For example, Italia Garibaldi opposed female suffrage, saying, "I think it tends to take women away from the home, and I think it far better for women to concentrate on the work that has to do with the home than to try to take part in the Government."[41] Even Futurism, which supported in theory the idea of women's liberation, made little room for women to participate as equals.[42] Italy had a longstanding masculine culture that celebrated virility. In his study of dueling, Steven Hughes makes clear "the critical role of masculinity in the self-conception and worldview of Italian elites."[43] De Grazia's work corroborates this view, attributing the widespread antipathy toward feminism to several factors. She has observed that "Latin sexism" and the "exasperated masculinism" of the early twentieth century allowed no place for the concept of women as equals.[44]

Other factors contributed to the small feminist movement in Italy. The lack of national homogeneity caused confusion—would peasant women all of a sudden want to dress and behave like the Milanese middle class? Social mores differed across Italy, a country that was only partially urbanized before the Great War began. Another cause of anxiety about feminism came from the influence of positivism. Exemplified in the ideas of the Lombroso family, positivists saw in feminism an attempt to elevate the individual woman, contributing to the destabilization of family life. A final concern was Italy's problem of demographic decline. Italy's birthrate began dropping in the last decade of the nineteenth century, one hundred years later than France's but decades earlier than that of other Mediterranean countries.[45] Statistically, the birthrate fell from 33 per thousand at the turn of the century to 29 per thousand after the war.[46] In 1916, the rate fell to 24 per thousand then to 18.1 in 1918.[47] Historians are still trying to understand the timing and extent of this decline. Nevertheless, the real drop in births was not matched by decreasing emphasis in society on the sanctity of motherhood. Instead, recognition of the decline led to increased stress on women to perform their appropriately feminine role, a topic Benito Mussolini would take up with zeal in the 1920s.

For all Italian women living in the prewar era, self-sacrifice remained the primary ingredient to being a good woman, a *donna brava*. Women's ability and willingness to perform great acts of sacrifice defined femininity. In the prewar era, tradition, the ideology of separate spheres, biological determinism, and the Roman Catholic Church viewed women as subordinate to men in the public and private realms. The ideal feminine traits of piety, modesty, and virtue granted women the moral high ground, their

right to exert the *forza morale* (moral strength) that marked them as superior in this one area. Their alleged ability to sacrifice was praised as their most valuable and most unique gift. Thus, a woman attained superiority only in complete subordination of her own individuality.

Wartime Femininity and the *Donna Italiana*

The outbreak of the Great War shattered traditional understandings of appropriate gender behavior. The war became a total war effort, calling on both men and women to contribute, albeit in different ways. A rigid sexual division of labor remained, but both the government and society greatly expanded women's opportunities.[48] As masses of women entered the public sphere for the first time, the definition of femininity shifted. Whereas the goal of the prewar era had been to be a respectable *donna brava*, the goal of women in wartime was to be the patriotic *donna italiana*. Essays, pamphlets, and speeches of the day implored women to act with civic pride. Many of the same characteristics of the *donna brava* appear in the definition of a *donna italiana*—most notably the emphasis on sacrifice. But a crucial difference exists. Before the war, women were to sacrifice for the benefit of their husbands and children. During the war, the beneficiary of female sacrifice became the state. Thus, women were accepted into, even required to participate in, the public sphere.

As the war changed the common definition of femininity, writers and speechmakers continued to insist on defining a woman's proper role in the war effort. Rarely were women to be as energetic or as ferocious in their defense of Italy as men. In one famous propaganda poster designed by Giovanni Capranesi in 1917 (Figure 2), a strong but civilized Italia aggressively confronts the barbaric Austrian and keeps him from crossing the Alps. The poster stirs up feelings of nationalism and self-defense, encouraging people to buy war bonds. Italia combines strength and grace. Dressed in Roman armor, wielding a sword, and wearing the royal Italian flag, she is the opposite of the malevolent Germanic male. The idea of portraying Italy as a woman was typical, like Marianne in France. The "*Finalmente*!" poster from 1918 by Leopoldo Metlicovitz (see book cover) shows Italia "finally" getting to embrace Trento and Trieste (also shown as women). Italy wears white; Trento is in green, and Trieste is in red: the colors of the Italian flag. Although this female Italy holds a sword, she is not the one fighting. In the background, the male soldiers march off to war while planes swoop overhead. As scholar Thomas Row explains, it is "practically impossible to determine with any precision either the intentions of the propagandists or the reactions of the recipients."[49] Yet

propaganda poster images clearly reveal that women were participating in the war, just not in the same ways as men.

Prewar views of women did not disappear; instead, they were modified and adapted to fit the crisis brought on by the Great War. One of the most significant purveyors of wartime femininity was Paola Baronchelli Grosson, a noblewoman born in Bergamo who wrote under the pen name Donna Paola. A feminist and interventionist, she was a coeditor of the journal *Scena Illustrata* in Florence for 20 years and an established author before the war began. According to a contemporary dictionary of prominent Italian journalists from 1922, Baronchelli had published "innumerable" articles, short stories, and conversations, plus three dramas, two novels, and two children's books.[50] One modern scholar has called her book *Io e il mio elettore: Propositi e spropositi di una futura deputata* "an early feminist *cahier de doleances*."[51] During the war (when she was about 50), she wrote two important books examining the roles of women in wartime.[52] Her works are among the most cited sources on Italian women's contributions to the war effort. In them, she described Italian women's work and explained how middle-class society understood wartime femininity and female labor. She evaluated paid and unpaid work, covering both working-class and middle-class women, always with an eye to the rewards that wartime service would give women after the peace. Her justification for the new place women occupied was that women had to go "outside the hearth, in order to save the hearth."[53] Relying on homespun wisdom as well as hard evidence about what women were actually doing, Donna Paola advised women to seek fulfillment during the war by caring for others, in hopes that the state would elevate their standing in society as a reward afterward.

Donna Paola was not the only woman calling for sacrifice. Another upper-class woman, Countess Maria Gauthier Panzoja di Borio combined biology with religion in her prowar pamphlet *La fede e la vittoria*.[54] A popular and prolific author, di Borio called on women to sacrifice in large and small ways. She forecast trouble in the family and the state if women limited themselves to helping only with "small" things. She advised women to behave like the Virgin Mary by prioritizing faith and abnegation. Women must sacrifice their men, as Mary did her son, for the larger cause: "Our sons are not for us."[55] Similarly, Carla Cadorna, General Luigi Cadorna's daughter, wrote her own patriotic book. In it, she asked, "Why is the prejudice still alive that a strong woman is a horrible thing without a heart?" Her goal was to provide historical models of strong women and to convince readers that love and courage stem from the same source. She called on women to cooperate with men by becoming collaborators in the war effort. She argued that even though they could not play a direct role in the war, women should be moral supporters of the war; they should turn

tears into faith, hope, and patriotism.[56] As these examples show, even as the Great War brought women into the public eye more than ever before, it did not release them from earlier models of womanhood.

As was the case earlier, wartime discourses of gender assumed men and women would, by their very natures, play different roles in the war effort. Sacrifice remained an essential ingredient in wartime femininity. One propaganda pamphlet reminded women to obey the commands of "those who have the fortune of being more educated," regardless of whether the women themselves understood the rationale.[57] Another author told a story that epitomized female self-sacrifice. A Milanese woman had lost her only son in the war. When volunteers came to her door asking for donations of wool for the soldiers, she pulled the stuffing from her own mattress and offered it in his memory. The author saw her as a heroine and cheered her selfless act.[58] Sounding a similar note, the mayor of Pavia believed that even after the war ended, women would be valued for the same qualities as before: "gently strong in life and love, an uninterrupted example of devotion and sacrifice."[59] Of course, even at the home front, sacrifice during the war involved much more than before—money, time, supplies, and most tragically, loved ones. Di Borio approvingly cited a priest who had advised Italian mothers, "You need to know how to sacrifice. . . . Only by giving, giving much of your time, of your heart, of your mind, of your money can you help the work of the government."[60]

Most wartime texts encouraged daily acts of sacrifice. Donna Paola claimed that being feminine no longer demanded that women spend time and money making themselves pretty. She bragged that women who were used to being complimented on their beautiful appearance now were praised for their virtue as citizens.[61] This overstatement seems more of a dream than a reality, but many did realize the war would alter women's place in society. Since more women than men remained at the home front, most wartime propaganda aimed at civilians targeted women. Therefore, women, historically the guardians of morality and moral strength, shouldered most of the burden of normalizing civilian life during wartime.

For many Italians, this *forza morale*, emphasized by Paola Lombroso in 1909, was an attribute particularly tied to women. Many writers extolled female virtue and moral strength. Argelia Butti, a pacifist, remarked in her book about women and the war, "In science, in art, in invention, in work, men reach peaks so far unattainable by female valor; in one field only does woman equal him: in moral greatness."[62] To most authors, women possessed superior moral virtue. Di Borio believed that, because "virtue is founded on sacrifice," women were key players in the war effort. In her lengthy patriotic tract, di Borio warned that the country would be harmed if women did not exhibit proper faith and enthusiasm in the war effort.[63]

She stressed that men had special duties and that women's mission is to vigilantly support these efforts.

Because men physically had to go off to war, their sacrifices were obvious and more easily lauded than women's. Therefore, many essays about women and war focused specifically on the wide variety of female sacrifices, both as self-congratulation and as reminders to men who were not appropriately appreciative. Sacrifice became a female duty in wartime, and society remodeled its understanding of feminine traits by nuancing older notions. The Great War marked the first widespread attempt to convince Italian society that women were capable of being good citizens, and that they genuinely want to help the Patria. The war effort required *donne brave* to become *donne italiane*.

This wartime emphasis on women as citizens was new in Italy, especially for the middle class. Contemporary writings prescribed patriotic behavior to women, attempting to elevate their national identity over their sense of gender. For instance, the Unione Femminile Nazionale (National Female Union) called on "women of every party and every condition—farmers, workers, managers, teachers, professionals, social work volunteers—[to be unanimous] all in only one thought: to save our land, our houses, our future and our sons."[64] Even though it appears that womanhood was what this target audience had in common, it was also their *Italianità*. In another essay, the female author explained that women's "great and primary duty is that of being above all, previous to everything exclusively Italian."[65] Women were not to feel feminine alliance with their German or Austrian counterparts. Instead, pamphlets and essays advised Italian women to keep their other identities (class, regional, generational, etc.) submerged beneath their loyalty to Italy. They could not escape their female status, nor should they attempt to be unfeminine. As Adriana D'Oria Tron explained in her pamphlet advocating female patriotism, a woman "with modest ardor in the temple of her own thoughts and of her own conscience, and in the first place, in circle of her own home, [must] learn to be *woman* and *Italian*."[66] The new definition of femininity encompassed a type of female citizenship that allowed for patriotism to trump gender as the predominant identity for women. In order for the war effort to succeed, women had to see themselves first of all as Italian, so they were willing to sacrifice, and second as female, so they would sacrifice in the appropriate manner.

Because personal loyalties, especially to male loved ones, could undermine the national war effort, propagandists encouraged women to place love of country above individual interests. In order to maintain home front morale, it was essential that women respond stoically to whatever personal suffering the war might cause. A woman who wept when her male relative went to war was not only *una cattiva donna* (a bad woman) but also *una*

cattiva cittadina (a bad citizen). Citizenship and feminine responsibilities were linked; he will be a better soldier if she is a better wife or mother. In the words of Donna Paola, a good woman would "learn to sacrifice without crying in order to instill courage in the soldier."[67] In a poem glorifying the war, Gemma De Daninos portrayed a wife receiving a letter from her dead husband. He had counseled her not to cry for him because he died content, happily spilling his blood for Italy. De Daninos did not describe the wife's reaction, but the poem would be a balm for any widow whose husband neglected to send a similar notice home before his death. For many writers, the best way to show patriotism was for women to deal courageously with the temporary and sometimes permanent loss of their loved ones. In her paean to women's wartime contributions, Donna Paola saw these widows and grieving mothers as Italy's true heroines.[68]

In assuming that women held great influence over their sons and husbands, some writers held women responsible for the morale at the fighting front in addition to that of the home front. They implied that men would lose their nerve if the women they loved did not offer continual encouragement. One official propaganda pamphlet on the subject of soldiers' leave warned women it would be their fault if men lost their resolve to fight and win: "Each man that comes home must find you a fount of new force and of new generous energy."[69] In the pre-Caporetto era, when the government had almost no organized propaganda commission, the burden of keeping soldiers committed to fighting the war fell on individuals. As Row explains in his examination of wartime Italy, propaganda was "a complex web of messages sent, on a broad level, from the authorities to the people, and on a micro level, among individuals and within social groups."[70] Many prowar writers realized that without constant reinforcement from home, soldiers might desert the battlefield, making women share responsibility for maintaining the loyalty of the troops.

Numerous pamphlets and essays reminded women of their duty to provide emotional support for military men. For example, an essay aimed at mothers of fallen soldiers counseled them to encourage other soldiers to keep fighting and to be proud of their ability to support the war despite losing their sons.[71] In another article, designed to comfort women whose loved ones were away at the front, the well-known writer Anna Franchi quoted from a soldier's letter that reminded "*mamma dolorosa, mamma gloriosa*" (sad mom, glorious mom) of the tremendous influence she wielded over her sons. Because Italy's soldiers were strong, Franchi implied, their mothers had to be equally strong. When a soldier died for his country, the duty of fulfilling his legacy fell on the survivors, male and female alike. Therefore, Franchi recommended that just when events seemed too painful to discuss, women had the obligation to speak out for the war, because

it was precisely their sacrifice that would add weight to their prowar stance: "The voice of Italian mothers will be the very voice that will guide the Italian nation to victory."[72]

Although Italian women had always been expected to sacrifice their personal goals for others, wartime popular opinion required them to place patriotism ahead of personal loyalty. This idea undermined the prewar sense that women could not embrace abstract concepts. Most writers during the war encouraged women to demonstrate their patriotism in appropriately feminine ways, such as performing small acts of charity and not opposing the war. Di Borio likened patriotism to religious zeal, a special province for women, and accused those who opposed the war of lacking a sense of piety and charity. To fail to support the war was to fail at being a proper woman. Beyond the heightened sense of patriotism that is perhaps common in modern societies during times of war, the Great War raised expectations for a new kind of female participation. Di Borio believed women's patriotism had "a spiritual rationale."[73] Other writers also underscored the importance of female patriotism. D'Oria Tron wrote of women's "silent patriotism," daily affirmations of their love of Italy. To her, it was not enough to buy war bonds, listen to speeches, and join committees. Women had to express their *Italianità* by embracing all things Italian and teaching their children to value Italian culture.

Donna Paola would have liked to have it both ways. She acknowledged that many women worked for the war out of an "evangelical spirit of mercy" instead of from an individual sense of loyalty to the national cause. But she also insisted that they were acting out a determination to be good *cittadine*, female citizens.[74] She expected the war to renew femininity by allowing women into a virile environment while keeping intact their innate feminine sweetness and by making "wives and mothers truly Italian and truly women."[75] Italian and female identity fused as women entered the formerly all-male public sphere under the guise of performing work traditionally sanctioned as feminine. However, the new demands on them did not remove the old idea that biology was the key ingredient in determining ability.

Almost all writers and speechmakers debating women's capability for patriotism attempted to imbed previously held ideas about female nature into their arguments. Despite their differences, both pro- and antiwar women often relied on motherhood to make their case. One pacifist, the elderly artist Argelia Butti (sister of the writer Adele Butti), invoked women's unique position as mothers to justify her refusal to support the war, claiming, "Love of the *Patria* is good but love of the family is a sacred thing."[76] Butti argued that women's true maternal natures, both figurative and literal, required them to abhor human destruction, no matter what the

justification. She wrote, "Your government teaches them [Italian youth] to repeat: the Patria above everything; you must teach them another phrase: above everything God, who is justice and truth."[77] Butti exhorted women to refuse to support the war effort out of a sense of feminine alliance with women of enemy nations. But Butti's was a rare voice in wartime prescriptive literature aimed at the middle class. Most other women writers came to the opposite conclusion: loving their children meant loving their country and sacrificing their families.

Among the working and peasant classes, antiwar sentiment ran deeper and was less likely to dissolve in wartime. Ortaggi, in her analysis of Italian women during the war, notes the "sharp opposition" that developed between middle- and working-class women, calling their joint efforts "popularist." She finds a "common hatred of the war" among the peasants and working classes, made stronger by the bond some shared because they came from the same villages. Calling them deeply rooted pacifists, Ortaggi focuses on women workers who shared the "antiwar mood which characterized the climate on the shop floor." Her study calls attention to the gap in support for the war between the middle and lower classes.[78] Marc Ferro charts the number of strikes in Italy and compares the statistics with those of other belligerent nations. He finds that Italians had the third highest ratio of strikers to factory workers (behind Russia and Great Britain, ahead of France and Germany) for most of the war. Although the war was not very popular among the workers in Italy, "neither was defeatism."[79] The harsh penalties put in place against strikers and absenteeism contributed to limiting overt antiwar sentiment.

In studies of peasant culture, historians have depicted similar widespread opposition to the war, speaking volumes about how indigestible the middle-class prowar rhetoric was for others. In a country where agriculture made up 55 percent of gross national product, peasants lived outside the world of political debate.[80] Ortaggi describes female participation in traditional *jacqueries* against material deprivation and open revolt about paltry military benefits that were erratic and slow in coming. In the middle of the war, "all the provinces of Italy witnessed peasant protests against the benefit, and demands from women that their husbands should be sent back home."[81] In her study of Sicily, Reeder shows that peasant men openly avoided the draft. Both Ortaggi and Bravo have documented widespread support for the deserters (the very *imboscati* that middle-class propaganda essays condemn vociferously) who were hiding out in the hills near their farmhouses. The farming communities tended to protect the Italian deserters, providing them with food or jobs and keeping their identity secret from the authorities. Bravo reveals that almost all her female interview subjects regretted that their own men had not also thought to desert.[82]

Despite this distaste for the war, peasant women forged new friendships and new identities during the war. Almost all the women Bravo spoke with described the Great War as a vital cultural event that reshaped their outlook. The "massive call-to-arms, . . . material difficulties, and . . . the increased interference of state authorities in the fabric of daily life" brought chaos to the peasant communities. But it also changed the way the women thought about their standing in society. As Bravo's work demonstrates, a woman acted as the "representative and defender of the family" in dealing with the state. The complications of organizing a mass army created a new bureaucracy. Women mediated with the state, filling out forms required for husbands' leaves and for family subsidies. These new tasks brought peasant women into the "public sphere of life." The end of the war, however, marked the end of peasant women's entry into this public world. When the men returned from the front, so did the old order: men monopolized the public sphere and women retreated to the home.[83]

Yet the ideal of a patriotic peasant woman did exist. Reeder locates the origins of a proto-*donna italiana* in the decades before 1915. Looking at a variety of materials, including textbooks, advertising, and newspaper stories, she identifies how peasant women ingested the ideals promulgated by wider society. These sources connected women's private lives (as consumers, as cooks, as mothers) to a public duty to be good Italians. Reeder concludes that the "new national figure" was "linked to the nation through her position as a wife and mother in her family and community." Her duty to Italy required her to raise children who were culturally Italian and connected to the nation, even though she herself would not travel far from home. Peasant women began joining the nation, according to Reeder, as they absorbed these ideals of female behavior. A rising literacy rate and increased schooling for girls show that peasant women's lives were changing.[84] Reeder's study reveals that this nationalization campaign began in the prewar years. But as the citizen-state interactions described by Bravo reveal, the Great War itself made this image of the *donna italiana* come to life and solidified its prominence.

The image of the patriotic woman was key for middle-class propagandists who were anxious to defend women's "natural" ability to be enthusiastic supporters of Italy. Almost all of the important women writers and journalists over the period published patriotic and prowar texts.[85] Donna Paola used the theme of women-as-mothers for the opposite ends as the pacifist Butti. She affirmed that because of women's capacity for maternity, women naturally have a deep sense of personal history and of being linked to the past and the future. She maintained that women feel a strong connection with their family trees. Therefore, they could easily view Italy as the homeland of their ancestors and descendants; situating

themselves within this wider context made them proud to be Italians.[86] For Donna Paola and most other wartime commentators writing in a context of Social Darwinism, reproduction was a serious responsibility. Women were the guardians of the race and were literally responsible for Italy's fate.

During the Great War, propagandists advised women to put all their energies to work for Italy and to let patriotism infuse all aspects of life. "Only those that can sacrifice themselves for their country have a real country," wrote di Borio.[87] When taken further, this new understanding of women's position in society freed them from previous obligations. In her call for mandatory female mobilization, Elma Vercelloni explained, "Woman is not the property of man, woman is not an object of a harem . . . she must be like a man—instrument-weapon-valor-property of the Nation."[88] Vercelloni was a radical, but her sense that women belonged to the Patria during the war, instead of to their male relatives, reveals the larger changes that occurred in female identity. The *donna italiana* had to remain loving and sensitive to others' needs while acting with courage and patriotism. She had to be stoic in her sacrifice but vocal in her support for the national war effort.

Essayists offered women a wide range of choices by which they could show off their prowar sentiment. Most basically, they were the guardians of home-front morale. Civilian life had to continue, despite the international crisis of war and the personal crisis of losing male relatives. Donna Paola maintained that even from home, "her kingdom" and "the source of her power," a woman should actively propagate prowar sentiment.[89] Since women are responsible for their sons' moral and physical growth, they must exercise their influence prudently. Prescriptive literature stressed that a mother should teach her children to love the homeland and that the war, a sad necessity, would bring honor for Italy. Elementary school teachers were called upon to emphasize Italy's great history and to teach how the war would fulfill the legacy of the Risorgimento. Incumbent on women (as teachers and mothers) was "the duty to inculcate into little minds a love of the Patria," observed Ottavia Occhipinto Cabibbo in 1916, recalling the Patriot Mother ideal of the nineteenth century.[90] Another pamphlet on the duties of women in wartime asked women to do more than speak Italian and live in Italy; they must "serve Italy scrupulously with facts more than with words."[91] As the noted writer Ada Negri reminded women, "Discipline in war. It does not impose itself only at the front."[92]

At the home front, civilians had to learn new types of discipline. A conference on the wartime duties of women offered the following advice to women: be thrifty, refuse to complain about war shortages, report women

who spread false rumors, help refugees and other victims of war, encourage loved ones who are at the front to keep their spirits up, stay calm, do not make political alliances in this era of common goals, trust the leaders, and forsake all luxury and leisure.[93] One author reminded women that wartime conditions were in many ways better than peacetime conditions a generation or two ago. If that were not enough to convince, she also compared the scarcity of food and supplies for soldiers and prisoners of war with the relative bounty of the home front.[94] More than just acts of self-sacrifice, this litany of proper home front behavior implored women to take an active role in maintaining morale at home.

Other essays encouraged women to engage in positive thinking about the war and to be hopeful about victory. "Only those who believe in the possibility of miracles have a right to [experience] one," cautioned di Borio.[95] Most writers agreed that material aid was essential for victory, but few slighted the importance of home-front sentiment. In a conference on women and war, one presenter stressed women's important role: "We will win, and not only because of the virtue of our men who are strong like the Romans, but also because of the virtue of our women who are worthy of their men; and our population will cover itself in glory because families will sacrifice themselves."[96] Women had a special, but not always subordinate, role to play in helping Italy triumph.

It was precisely because of their femininity that women were assigned the obligation of maintaining the morale of civilians and soldiers. In a vivid image of the life of soldiers at the front, Donna Paola demonstrated how important the image of women became in soldiers' minds: "At the bottom of the cold and humid trenches, . . . amidst the stench of dead bodies, . . . between the pangs of hunger, of thirst, of unsatisfied sleep, he will have comfort in a sweet and altogether reassuring vision . . . far, far away, in the quiet home, in the middle of well-known and dear things, he will see his woman, his mamma, his sister, . . . who waits for the return of her loved one who is far away with faith, with hope, with love."[97] The danger and horror of the battlefield stood in dramatic contrast to the peaceful domestic scene. Yet Donna Paola also acknowledged the difficulties facing those left behind, "To remain at home is, maybe, more painful to tolerate than leaving for combat."[98]

As a palliative to the regimented values of the military, women were in charge of celebrating soldiers' humanity. For example, as *madrine* (godmothers), women sent mail and packages to soldiers at the front, including little extras like candy or erasers. In one postcard image (Figure 3), young women examine the list of soldiers who will receive their homemade packages. Their recipients lie to the right and left, squared off in their own militarized worlds: on the left, a soldier is dressed for the freezing

weather (of the Alps or perhaps the Russian Front); on the right, soldiers wear uniforms suitable for the trenches (maybe the Carso). In both cases, the packages sent by the women clearly brighten the soldiers' lives; note the glowing star and sun. The packages connect these two worlds and bring a touch of home to the front. Femininity was served up as an antidote to war: "The war is so gloomy: love is such a gracious comfort!" exclaimed the well-known writer Matilde Serao.[99] Many female authors saw themselves as maternal figures for the soldiers. Serao spoke of "my maternal heart," and another woman claimed, "today the Italian woman feels within herself the greatness of maternity."[100]

When writers celebrated women's motherhood, some went further, portraying male soldiers as children. In her writings, Donna Paola described a wounded man as "a boy, a childish being that needs caresses . . . as when he was five years old." She celebrated the joy brought by female nurses who organized Christmas parties in hospitals for the "boy-men," the "*uomini fanciulli*."[101] An article devoted to a group called La Mamma del Soldato, based in Milan, encouraged women to treat soldiers as children, with no thought to the condescension probably felt by the men on the receiving end of such attitudes. The soldiers' thank-you notes were "simple and ungrammatical" and the men were "humble heroes" who craved love, attention, and small surprises. The focus of La Mamma del Soldato reveals the deliberate way people thought about femininity during the war. The female author of the article scolded female nurses who were so overworked they forgot the "most natural debt of love" that they owed the soldiers, whose job was portrayed as much more difficult than the women's work. It reminded the nurses to be gentle and caring, more like mothers. She emphasized that the work of making packages was a perfect expression of "feminine foresight and delicacy" because it is "silent, busy, simply modest." And through the little sister group La Piccola Sorella del Soldato, even young girls could participate in the effort, aiding soldiers and participating in proper socialization.[102] Some women obviously enjoyed the opportunity; one madrina kept 135 letters and postcards thanking her for sending gifts and notes.[103] Helping soldiers was not completely selfless; Serao reminded women that adopting a soldier as a pen pal might be a good way to find a husband.[104]

For many, a major female role was to prepare the way for men to be heroes. Di Borio commented that fighting a war allows men to realize their true masculinity and makes them worthy of being called *men*. In this view, war is natural and even beneficial, despite its destruction of normal civilization. Prescriptive literature discouraged women from revealing any negative sentiment about the war, including sadness or loneliness. Writers specifically advised women not to burden the troops

with their own worries.[105] Women must avoid corrupting the men's will to fight; they must remain "on their feet, vigilant and ready, working without complaint, without weakness, full of faith."[106] They must express disapproval of *imboscati* and not tolerate such shirking by any of their male relatives. As the war hero Cesare Battisti attested, it was important for soldiers to know that their women were behind them: "We know that the heart of the women of Italy is with the soldiers at the border risking their lives for the Patria."[107]

Even though much of the prowar literature aimed at women distinguished between male and female contributions, not everyone saw them as unequal. Men and women often were portrayed as partners in the war effort. Especially after the disastrous Caporetto retreat of 1917, pleas for female involvement became urgent. There was a sense that the war would be lost if women failed to do their part. Donna Paola believed that a woman who participated in the war effort, "in the marvelous work of political and spiritual redemption," was an "indispensable collaborator."[108] Calling women to help, di Borio warned, "There is not a creature, however modest, that in this hour of danger . . . cannot do something useful."[109] After Caporetto, Italians shared a belief that the defeat stemmed more from morale problems than from military ones—if the *imboscati*, pacifists, and Socialists succeeded in spreading their defeatist antiwar propaganda, Italy would lose the war. Since women allegedly wielded extraordinary influence at the home front and the war front, their role in stemming the defeatist tide grew. If she did not pull her weight, a woman could become an *imboscata* herself.[110] It was the job of "each and every man and woman, united in duty and in sadness," to save "sacred and eternal" Italy, proclaimed Umberto Baione in the proceedings of a Conference on Women and War.[111]

In some cases, writers directly equated male and female experience, making women seem more important than ever. Speeches and essays proclaimed that the domestic sphere was not far removed from the political one; therefore, women were not really transgressing when they entered public life. In her book about women and the war published in 1918, Regina Terruzzi made the case: "Women are not soldiers, but they make soldiers; they do not shed their own blood, but give that of their sons, which is more precious than their own; they do not know politics, but they must suffer or enjoy it just as men do. . . . But the politics of the home are intimately bound to those of the state, as the family is bound to the nation. Thus women are not just passive spectators but actors in the life of the country."[112] Terruzzi was a lifelong radical. A socialist at the outbreak of war, she sided with Mussolini for Italian intervention and later began the Fascist league for Rural Housewives. Her celebration

of the active female reflected the belief that the crisis of the Great War required women to remain actively involved in helping the state. "We are all combatants," wrote Gemma De Daninos in her war poetry, "we are fighting today with faith and ardor."[113] This sense of shared suffering erased some of the generalizations about gendered experience. In the case of women who lived at or near the front lines, the boundary between male and female war experience became even more permeable.

2

The Other Army

Women's Wartime Home Front Opportunities and the Debate over Female Mobilization

> The war is not fought just on the fields of battle and the destinies of a Nation are not based solely on military might and victory.
>
> —Donna Paola, *La funziona della donna in tempo di guerra*

In her book *The Duty of Women in War Time*, Donna Paola (Paola Baronchelli Grosson) argued that women were making significant contributions to help Italy achieve victory. Her insight exemplifies the important role Italian women saw themselves playing during the Great War. Across Europe, women who lived safely behind the lines participated actively in the war effort. Asked to boost morale, conserve goods, buy war bonds, and take care of everyday activities, women at the home front formed the "Other Army," as Minister of Munitions Alfred Dallolio described them.[1]

The escalating needs of total war made a deep impact at home, further destabilizing an already unsound society. Homer Folks, an American Red Cross Special Commissioner during the war, estimated that over three hundred thousand more Italian civilians died during the war than the normal rate of death would have been, excluding those lost to influenza and those living in occupied territories.[2] During the war, the Italian ration for civilians was seven ounces of bread per day, while workers were allowed nine (although each city distributed according to its own supplies and actual amounts tended to vary). Almost no fats and very little sugar were available. Meat consumption was restricted to one ounce per day, four days a week, but few towns could supply enough to meet this amount, and prices remained very high.[3] Beyond the physical toll it took, rationing

also contributed to a fearful mindset. Women at home became the primary agents who addressed the effects of these shortages and the anxieties caused by the war.

Italian women's contributions to the war and, conversely, the war's effects on women were not just economic; they were also cultural. The wartime definition of femininity grafted the idea of female citizenship and patriotism onto older notions of "naturally" feminine behavior, and women in Italy entered the public sphere not as gatecrashers but as invited guests. Even though their stay was meant to last "for the duration" only (and in many cases, both men and women accepted this limited term), their presence on the public stage changed women's place in society.

The war economy opened new avenues to Italian women, from volunteer charity work and nursing to salaried employment in factories and businesses. A few feminists called for mandatory mobilization of women along the same far-reaching lines as the mobilization of men. Most Italians, however, resisted equating the two sexes and their wartime responsibilities. The new view of femininity allowed women more flexibility but not unlimited independence, giving them more latitude to see themselves as valuable individuals. In Italy, the *donna italiana* was a collaborator in the war effort: a loving mother to the troops and an indispensable citizen of her nation.

Two patterns emerge in the way Italian society viewed women's wartime work. On the one hand, women were seen as capable of making valuable contributions within the limited context of their innate femininity. The belief was that they were "naturally" suited for organizing charity aid for other women and children and for caring for the male troops as nurses and morale boosters. In this view, the war brought out the best in women, and the match between Italy's needs and women's capabilities justified the extended scope of their activities for the duration of the war. On the other hand, women were seen as partners in the war. Their time, money, and moral support were crucial to Italy's mobilization. Women learned new skills (although their contributions were usually deemed inferior to men's) and were targets of policy and propaganda. In light of the evidence of women's broadened opportunities, the definition of femininity expanded. Women enjoyed new positions and responsibilities in wartime society, but the old ideals of female sacrifice continued to be reinforced, albeit in the new context of society as a whole.

Volunteer Work for the War Effort

The war was a paradox for women; they were, as Susan Grayzel has noted, excluded from the "main business" of fighting while actively participating in the total war effort.[4] In the prewar years, middle- and upper-class women had found ways to work outside the home through charity activities. They justified their decision to enter the wider world by claiming to be extending their natural ability for motherhood to the community at-large. After war broke out, these same women (who had the time and financial means to work for free) found many opportunities to help without having to justify themselves, and the variety of women's wartime charity aid in Italy is astounding.[5] The producers and consumers of the *donna italiana* model of femininity are the same kinds of women who volunteered for the war effort. Drawn by patriotism, these female volunteers were also responding to the climate of the times, which encouraged war work. According to Augusta Molinari's study of what she called the "patronesses," noble women and those from the middle classes, especially students and teachers, made up the bulk of this "Other Army."[6]

Unlike many other belligerent nations, it was not state-sponsored welfare but civilian-organized assistance that kept Italian society functioning during the war and elevated the morale of the troops near the front. As Donna Paola wrote, "The war is not fought just on the fields of battle and the destinies of a Nation are not based solely on military might and victory."[7] The Italian government did not organize rationing cards until 1917; until then, various volunteer agencies in the major cities ran food distribution networks.[8] In the same year, an official propaganda office was created to boost spirits at home and at the front.

Getting women to support the war became a primary function of interventionist agitation. As war broke out elsewhere, Italians debated whether to get involved. Prowar women formed the Comitato femminile per l'intervento italiano (Female Committee for Italian Intervention) to support their cause. In a grander scheme, the prominent lawyer (and future Fascist) Teresa Labriola set up the Lega Patriottica Femminile (Female Patriotic League) as the first all-female patriotic league in Italy.[9] Like her father Antonio, a famous Marxist philosopher, Teresa was a public intellectual who published frequently into the 1930s. She was the first Italian woman admitted to the bar when she became a professor of law at the University of Rome in 1912, and she had a history of supporting feminism.[10] She wanted the League to encourage women to understand how to be patriotic; she believed years of neglect by the government had left women with an underdeveloped sense of nationalism. Seizing the moment, she saw the war as the first opportunity in Italian history for women to participate

"directly in the political life of the nation."[11] She hoped the League would encourage women to help Italy establish its place in history.

Labriola avoided embracing the common justification of the war (that it was one of "justice and liberty"). Instead, she saw the war as an opportunity for Italians to affirm the value of the state: "The ideal of the nation is expressed in war but not exhausted there." The seeds of her later conversion to Fascism are visible here. The goal of the League was "to choose the moment of transformation and re-edification of the Italian nation in order to affirm the need for a new nationalism." She scolded women who offered only "servile imitations of the male war instinct," calling on them to create their own kind of sincere patriotism. But she failed to explain in what ways female and male patriotism would differ. The League was designed to get women onto the national stage by involving them in the creation of a new Italy. Labriola saw the war as a second Risorgimento and expected women to be active participants. Her later writings, especially those done during the Fascist era, attempt to model a nationalized mother figure as a role model of Italian women. Labriola called for Italian society to fundamentally change its view of women. Rather than wanting equality with men, Labriola demanded women create a space of their own that kept maternity at the center while allowing women to use their intellects.[12]

Meanwhile, other women's volunteer groups targeted the military and their dependents. The *Dame Visitatrici*, for example, provided psychological comfort for servicemen and their families throughout northeastern Italy. Members ministered to the emotional needs of soldiers by visiting them in the hospitals, distributing comfort supplies, and writing letters home. They provided a twofold service in that they eased the pain and loneliness of soldiers while lessening the anxiety of family members far from the front.[13] Other organizations set up rest stations, *posti di restoro*, in train depots, where women wearing distinctive uniforms served refreshments to traveling servicemen. The uniform itself made the women stand out, especially from other women. Even before she arrived at the Italian Front, Sybil Reeves, a British Voluntary Aid Detachment (VAD) nurse, reported, "My uniform caused the greatest curiosity." Another British volunteer, Vera Woodroffe, had a similar experience in Milan where, she reported that the "general public" was "terrifically interested" in her uniform.[14] In one 15-month period of the war, 750,000 soldiers passing through Milan received coffee or juice, postcards, and "a good smile," according to Donna Paola.[15] Significantly, the entire operation was funded through private donations. The Red Cross also provided similar aid. In a letter home, one Italian soldier commented, "At every important station crowds of young girls attacked the train, offering wine, cigars, postcards, soft drinks and medicaments with admirable activity. The service of the

Red Cross is perfect everywhere."[16] At the railheads along the front, British women set up canteens. According to George Trevelyan, it was a British woman who first suggested to the Italian military to set up *case del soldato* (soldier's houses) as recreation huts for soldiers at the front.[17] At home, volunteers created their own *case del soldato*, borrowing space in local universities or hospitals filled with books, refreshments, and perhaps a piano.[18] In providing these services, women satisfied needs that the government itself had overlooked.

Along the same lines, the *madrine dei soldati* (Soldiers' Godmothers) corresponded with servicemen, acting as pen pals and sending care packages to keep their spirits up. Here was an easy way to get involved with the war effort, and thousands of women participated (see Figure 3; postcard image of women making packages). In the first ten months of the war, one group in Genoa sent 89,014 letters to the front, soliciting soldiers who received no mail from home. They received 14,559 responses.[19] In her study of the thank-you notes received by one *madrina*, Molinari showed how much the exchange meant to both parties. To Molinari, elite women's correspondence helped soldiers from the lower classes mediate the "tragic 'modernity' of the war experience with traditional values and reassurances of peacetime."[20] The letters saved by one Genoese noblewoman reveal the soldiers were grateful for the attention and goods they received—items like wool, socks, shirts, and scarves. The *madrina* program allowed women at home to meet the psychological and material needs of the soldiers stationed at the front. In return, they became active participants in the national war effort.

Many women's groups collected clothes and linens to be distributed to soldiers and their families, while still others made important items such as gas masks, uniforms, and scarves at workshops organized and run by women. The war brought about a renewal of handmade clothing, forcing many women to learn to make items from scratch that they previously had bought in stores.[21] Women constructed all kinds of items, from portable heaters for the snowy trenches to papier-mâché cosies used to keep food warm in transit.[22] Sewing for victory was popular, especially because knitting and needlework transformed traditionally feminine activities into something beneficial for the war effort. Baking for servicemen was similar. For example, a cooperative bakery in Florence sent out thousands of packages of bread to the trenches and hospitals.[23]

Other charity organizations drew women even deeper into the public sphere. Women donated money and time to help disabled veterans, making sure they could readapt to civilian life. Societies, such as those in Naples and Milan, offered a comprehensive education program for blinded veterans, teaching them necessary skills from reading braille to operating machines.[24] Women also acted as guidance counselors and educators.

This role reversal gave women new authority over men in the same way that charity work in the nineteenth century gave middle-class women a certain amount of control over the lower classes. When female volunteers helped male soldiers, especially when there was a class imbalance, women usually assumed the more authoritative role. Some women felt they knew best what the servicemen needed and saw themselves as mothers caring for infants or little boys.[25] For example, the American volunteer nurse Grace Cleveland Porter (grandniece of President Grover Cleveland) opened her memoir: "Imagine me with one hundred and fifty children!" Her children were Italian servicemen. Making her hospital rounds was "just like going into a nursery, early in the morning"; she was "quite convinced" that "cheer," jokes, and her guitar playing were a "large part of the cure" for wounded men, all of whom were from the "peasant and artisan classes," distinctly not her own.[26]

Women also organized civilian aid. Shortages caused many problems for people at the home front. The monthly journal *Assistenza civile* recorded the variety of activities undertaken by Italian women to alleviate wartime problems at home. Based in Milan and published by the Federazione nazionale comitati assistenza civile (National Federation of the Committees for Civilian Assistance), the journal published articles in 1917 and 1918 by notable writers, especially women, and included local committee reports. The journal examined issues important to women at the home front, discussing everything from maintaining morale to assuring that the government and society supported female work. An article in 1917 by Bruna Guarducci endorsed the necessity for *cucine materne*, soup kitchens set up to feed nursing mothers.[27] Guarducci, who was in her early twenties and would become a well-known novelist in the 1920s, emphasized that the war should be fought at home, in the cities, as well as at the front.[28] She recognized that the psychological and material needs of civilians had to be met in order for the war to continue. Umbrella groups, such as the Comitato nazionale femminile (National Female Committee), set up in 1914, worked to keep the "social and economic life of the Country" running smoothly.[29] The local branches wanted women to replace the men called to serve in the military and to coordinate activities "to promote social welfare, to relieve the hardship of poor families, . . . [and] to give protection to children without guidance."[30] For instance, members of the Comitato femminile in Milan met trains at the station and offered places for refugees to wash and get clean clothes.[31] Once again, civilian women attended to quality-of-life issues that the government had failed to anticipate.

As individuals and as part of charity groups, women set up nurseries, orphanages, kindergartens, clinics, and shelters all over Italy to benefit soldiers' children and refugees. Clearly, civilians endured a decreasing

standard of living and weakening health while living at the home front.[32] Women sought appropriate locations, often the palazzi of wealthy aristocrats, and made arrangements to take over the buildings. For example, Venetian women converted the Grand Hotel des Bains into a children's hospital and convalescent home to provide a sea-cure.[33] Local women found the staff (often made up completely of volunteers), managed the schedules; and solicited donations to pay for expenses. Activities on this scale made women more visible in society. Italians celebrated female mobilization in magazines, speeches, and pamphlets. This public exhibition of middle-class women at work in nontraditional fields was new. Many women clearly reveled in the ample opportunities provided by the war for them to improve the lives of others and gain public recognition for their good works.

Some groups made even more radical departures from traditional feminine charity work. One countess set up a bureau to notify families when servicemen were wounded, an invaluable service since the Italian government did not produce daily casualty lists.[34] Another group, the Comitato Nazionale per l'assistenza legale alle famiglie dei richiamati (the National Committee for Legal Aid to the Families of Recalled Servicemen), founded in 1915 by women in Rome, offered legal aid to soldiers' families to assure that they got the military pensions they deserved.[35] Furthermore, the committee worked to legitimize marriages and births that the state otherwise had not acknowledged, a task made especially difficult when a man died in battle who was unaware that he had fathered a child. The group acted as advocates for widows and orphans, who often had no other place to get help in negotiating with governmental bureaucracy. By one estimate, the war left about 512,000 children fatherless.[36] The Liberal government was overwhelmed by the demands of total war, but with the commitment of their energy, time, and money, Italian women created a charity network that augmented the state's efforts.

Another new role for women came in the form of nursing. Like charity work, nursing allowed women to work outside the home without seeming unfeminine. Nursing schools, established in Italy in the first decade of the twentieth century, provided women with formal training to care for the sick.[37] Female nursing was not a paying career, and Italian nurses were well educated but nonprofessional. The requisite qualities for nursing included a strong character, good health, and enough money to work without a salary.

After Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary in 1915, almost every city formed its own nursing corps to staff local hospitals, usually sponsored by a local volunteer organization such as the Croce Rossa Italiana (Italian Red Cross or CRI), the Green Cross, the Samaritane, the Dame della

Misericordia, or the Stella d'Italia.[38] Figure 4 shows a nurse and her two patients on the cover of the popular magazine *La Donna* in an issue from 1916 devoted to Italian women's war work. The most famous and frequent sponsor of nurses was the Red Cross, which had been established before the outbreak of war but reached its full potential only after 1915. The CRI came under the control of the Ministry of War, and as a result, these nurses were subject to increased discipline and regulation. Most nurses worked in hospitals that were set up in towns far removed from the everyday dangers of war, and this chapter will examine only their experience; Chapters 3 and 4 discuss nurses stationed at the war front. Around eight thousand women volunteered as Red Cross nurses and served in hospitals both near to and far from the front lines.[39] The Red Cross operated about 270 hospitals, 3 mobile surgical ambulance units, and 24 trains for transporting the wounded.[40] The nurses saw their service as a mixed blessing. They were horrified by the injuries suffered by the soldiers, but they also appreciated the opportunity to contribute to the war effort.[41]

Despite the fact that female nursing was a novelty, it fit the current definition of appropriate feminine war work. Nurses did not learn to diagnose or treat illnesses on their own. They tended to the wounded soldiers' minor medical needs and administered to their larger psychological ones. The aspects of nursing that did not fit with the idealized vision of female nurses as hygienic hand-holders—such as contact with germs and disease, the exposure to male vulnerability, and the strenuous, long hours and high anxiety—remained unmentioned.

Nurses crossed traditional gender boundaries in two ways: they went to work outside the home (although not for a wage), and their experience with wounded and sick soldiers put them in intimate contact with the war's destructive nature. Yet contemporary accounts of female nurses emphasize feminine qualities—their desire to sacrifice themselves, their unselfish devotion, and their ability to provide spiritual comfort. Of course, male soldiers were also expected to sacrifice and be devoted unselfishly to fellow soldiers and the national cause. The war demanded that all citizens subordinate themselves to the state's needs, but accounts of women's actions tended to emphasize ladylike aspects of their behavior instead of actions or qualities that might be associated with men, such as physical courage.

Several contemporary stories of wartime nurses reveal this reluctance to recognize masculine qualities in women. The famous author Matilde Serao wrote about a Red Cross nurse working at a military hospital in Genoa who offered, "in the purest spirit of sacrifice," to undergo a skin graft operation to help a badly wounded soldier. Although Serao mentioned her "physical courage" and "moral valor," she concluded that the nurse provided a perfect example of "*virtù muliebre*" (feminine virtue).[42] This nurse's action

was obviously unusual, but Serao presented it as archetypal of female selflessness. She easily could have highlighted the courage of the act of submitting voluntarily to the pain of an operation. Serao could have compared this nurse's bravery with that of the soldiers in the trenches who also endangered themselves. Instead, she saw the act as prototypically female and refused to find meaning in it outside of traditional understandings of naturally feminine qualities. Serao, called the "best known women's writer of liberal Italy" by the literary critic Silvana Patriarca, was a prominent antifeminist who campaigned against women's suffrage even as she published her own newspaper. Her wartime writings, according to Patriarca, adopted a "moralizing and emphatically patriotic tone."[43] Serao's outlook was widely shared.

A children's book of short stories by Amilda Pons told the allegedly true story of a young, unmarried Red Cross nurse who learns that her father has been killed in battle.[44] She falls ill but is determined to "die like her father," on her feet performing her duty. She ministers to the needs of the wounded men in her ward, ignoring her own pain. Like Serao's story, this tale offered the author a chance to present women acting outside the boundaries of traditional femininity. Instead, the quality of self-sacrifice was praised, not the nurse's attempt to equate her own work with her father's. The story is especially significant because it was aimed at children and was a conscious effort to create an impression of what women were and should have been doing during the war. But the spin that Pons puts on the nurse's decision to "die like her father" does not preclude other interpretations that would have emphasized her similarity to men.

Other works written during the war also portray nursing as a feminine activity, assuming a female sensitivity to soldiers' humanity that fellow soldiers or male doctors and orderlies lacked. One author believed the nurses were "good Angels of Nazarene charity" who "invoke the sweet name of the mother or wife [who is] unfortunately far away." She claimed nurses provided "true solace" for the servicemen by acting as their absent female relatives.[45] Another writer, Gemma De Daninos, extolled the feminine virtues of Red Cross nurses in her poem "Caporetto!"[46] She described them as angelic (their uniform literally resembled white wings), sweet, and, like the Virgin Mary, offering unselfish love and compassion. De Daninos's poem emphasizes the belief that nurses' primary function was to soothe servicemen with a calm spirit and a ready smile. Her nurses were not at all equals of the male soldiers; they existed to provide comfort. She made no mention of bravery, medical knowledge, or female sexuality.

Despite the fact that women came into daily contact with male bodies, sexual feelings between patient and nurse were considered taboo, or at least taboo enough not to acknowledge in public or private writings.[47] The rule

that forbade nurses from attending to officers, the men most likely to be from their same social class, except in emergency situations contributed to the apparent lack of sexual coupling. Romantic relationships between patients and nurses, like the one Ernest Hemingway portrayed in *A Farewell to Arms*, were rare. Even Hemingway's famous affair with a 26-year-old American Red Cross nurse may not have happened. One biographer concluded that their bond was emotional not sexual. Because he was only 18, she may not have taken his interest seriously.[48] Although many patients may have imagined themselves in love with their nurses, historians have documented few real-life love affairs between wartime nurses and their soldier patients.

Like much other work that the war opened to women, nursing reinforced traditional views about femininity, even as it allowed women the new freedom of entering the public sphere. They learned about the extradomestic world and their contact with servicemen introduced them to the reality of war. But the popular press highlighted the traditional femininity of nurses instead of dwelling on the novel features of their wartime contributions.

Paid Work in the Wartime Economy

Not all women worked for free. The pressing demands of the military economy required Italian women's assistance in agriculture, business, industry, and the public sector. Minister of Munitions Dallolio congratulated their efforts, saying, "The women are always brave, active, heroic, industrious."[49] As a British article about Italian women observed, "It was generally held that their proper sphere was the home, and the women were content to exercise their influence through domestic channels. But war is no respecter of persons, nor of traditions."[50] Despite objections to middle-class women working outside the home, the national economy and the war effort depended on women taking paying jobs. A whole range of opportunities opened for women during the war as Italy's economy revved up for total war, complicating popular views of the ways in which women should involve themselves with the war effort. Across Europe, women went to work for the war effort, and critics expressed anxiety about women receiving their own wages and competing with men for jobs.[51]

Because Italy was a predominantly rural nation at the outbreak of war, the largest gap that women had to fill was in agriculture. Although no formal Land Army organized Italian women to work in the fields the way one did in Britain, women kept up production. With some rhetorical flourish, Serao, writing in 1916, evaluated the workload of country women. Before

the war, "their work was limited to that of the household, in the flower and vegetable gardens, taking care of the animals." Now they have "doubled, tripled their daily work: the heaviest, the hardest, the most extenuating work of men, they have taken on with tacit courage, with mute firmness."[52] Despite the absence of over 3 million male workers, Italy's national agricultural output remained constant during the war.[53] Women took over the management of farms and performed many of the manual labor tasks themselves. In her study of peasants in northern Italy, Anna Bravo underscored how the disappearance of male workers resulted in females working harder and longer in a wider variety of tasks. Some women left the countryside for the first time, seeking nonagricultural jobs in more urban areas: working in nearby factories or in towns as domestic servants. The older daughters often took over daily household chores on the farm, sometimes even taking in children from other families whose mothers worked and whose fathers were away fighting.[54] The burden of these added responsibilities was offset by a sense of independence most rural women had never before experienced.

In Italy, as in the rest of Europe, women filled some of the vacancies left by conscripts. When Donna Paola claimed that "the duty of women in wartime is to extend herself into other fields ordinarily reserved for male work," she exaggerated the degree to which women replaced men.[55] Barbara Curli's extensive study of labor patterns proves that female participation in industry was much lower in Italy than in other belligerent nations; for the most part, Italian women were not replacing men who had been sent to the front. Because Italy's prewar economy was based primarily on agriculture, conscription allowed a large number of men who had been chronically unemployed or underemployed agricultural workers to be absorbed by industries created by the wartime economy. Repatriation and a wartime ban on emigration further added men to the labor pool. Therefore, men filled most of the vacancies at factories created by the draft, or the work became obsolete and the jobs were simply not done by anyone. Curli notes that the Great War created almost full employment in Italy and restructured and diversified the economy. The industrialized economy became more geographically concentrated. The war favored the growth of heavy industry (creating jobs that were performed by men, not women) in Italy and elsewhere. But it also brought about a new level of female mobility, as young women migrated from the countryside to urban centers in search of salaried jobs. The "rural exodus," as Curli calls it, allowed cities to maintain their prewar populations despite the military draft.[56]

During the war, more women from all classes worked outside the home than ever before in Italian history. And unlike charity work and nursing, most of these jobs were paid, often allowing a woman to earn enough to

live on her own or to support her family. Italian women worked for wages in a variety of jobs: mail carriers, telegraph operators, bus and tram conductors, railway ticket collectors, bank tellers, private secretaries, assistants in scientific and medical laboratories, agricultural managers, editors, farmers, and factory workers. In addition, the military employed women in exclusively noncombatant jobs, in positions involving typing, stenography, and answering telephones. After the war, Italian men (like their European counterparts) took back most blue-collar jobs, including those in public transportation. Meanwhile, many of the white-collar positions, such as secretary and receptionist, held by women during the Great War remained the province of women afterward.[57]

Because Europe had become "an immense workshop for feeding, clothing and arming the soldier," as one Italian described it, many women worked in war-related industries.[58] The Italian military was the principal employer of women during the war, and women themselves felt they were making a vital contribution through their war work. In an article from *Assistenza civile*, Bruna Guarducci explained that a man "can give his life with maximum thoughtlessness, with the most enthusiasm, but nothing stings him" like material deprivation. She assumed that soldiers could endure wounds, but not thirst, cold, and hunger. When women increased production at home, Guarducci claimed they were helping the soldiers in the best possible way.[59] But it was not just that women helped men. She made the more egalitarian claim that without women's help, men would not survive the war. Women could not control the trajectory of bullets, but they could, she believed, keep Italian men from freezing or starving to death by increasing production.

In the munitions industry, women made the weapons of war, as images from the era attest. Figures 5 and 6 are images from the official Italian photographic record of the war, published in 1917 in an issue devoted to munitions.[60] In Figure 5, a woman wearing protective eye gear sharpens a projectile in a factory, her bobbed curls falling around her face. Figure 6 shows the employees of a fitting shop that made fuses for bombs; clearly they are almost all women. As these iconic images show, women were hard at work winning the war. Yet historians need to be cautious about analyzing photographs of women's war work. In this issue, only a handful of images show women working; most of the photographs show men. In part, this reflects the reality of the workforce. In August 1918, women made up about 22 percent of employees in the munitions industries, although clearly one-fifth of the official photographs in this volume are not of women.[61] It is difficult to decipher what contemporaries made of the image of the female munitions workers. Clearly, the few photographs included in the issue did not represent the variety of female contributions to the war effort. But they

do impress on viewers, perhaps sensationally, that women were involved in the business of war. Figure 7, from Britain's Imperial War Museum, is an unpublished photograph of a group of Italians, predominantly women, holding projectiles. Their smiles perhaps reflect pride at participating in Italy's war effort, or at least the desire to show excitement or happiness to the photographer. The startling incongruity of these young women confidently holding the giant shells that will be heading to the front exemplifies the blurring of soldier-civilian boundaries.

Regardless of how female munitions were portrayed in published media, the women working in the explosives industry faced real dangers and felt considerable affinity with male soldiers in combat. According to Angela Woollacott's study based on British experience, female munitions workers, like male soldiers, felt they were engaged with killing and recognized that their work resulted in enemy deaths. These women crossed prewar gender boundaries by wearing uniforms, handling heavy machinery, and doing skilled work. Woollacott reveals that although the women workers did not see themselves as less feminine, some people worried that women were becoming masculinized. In response, the work itself was feminized. For example, shells were compared with babies to make the work seem more appropriately feminine.[62] This process of reclassifying jobs by gender allowed employers to separate women from men; the work performed by women became "female" even if men had done it previously.[63] A new sexual division of labor developed, based on essentialist arguments popular in the prewar era. Woollacott points out that the munitions industry distinguished between "women doing jobs previously done by women and those who were 'dilutees' doing men's jobs."[64] In Italy, fewer women worked in munitions than in Britain, but the gendered implications remain the same across international borders.

As Curli has meticulously demonstrated, higher levels of production required more personnel, and in almost every field, the percentage of female employees rose during the war in Italy.[65] Female salaries, however, remained below male salaries. When women replaced men, such as in the field of tram operation, their presence reduced wages across the board.[66] As elsewhere, many considered women's work of lesser importance than that done by soldiers on the battlefield. Margaret Higonnet and Patrice Higonnet apply the model of the double helix to demonstrate how Western societies have assigned a lesser value to women's work than men's work.[67] A skill that was valued when it was performed by men is granted only secondary importance when learned by women. If each strand on the double helix represents one sex, the female strand always remains subordinate to the male, keeping gender segregation firmly in place. Curli makes it clear that during the Great War, female labor, especially blue-collar factory work, was considered supplementary and temporary in Italy.[68]

Although some people were anxious about women being in charge of their own money, others saw a new resource the government could draw on to fund the war effort. The organized effort to persuade women to buy war bonds tapped this new financial independence. One pamphlet, titled *Alle donne d'Italia* (To the Women of Italy), consisted of 18 letters written by the most famous women of the day imploring other women to do their part. The striking cover image shows a woman in military dress flanked by roses on her left (Figure 8). The act of buying war bonds was presented as a duty—the lives of soldiers and the fate of civilians caught behind enemy lines depended on women's decision to contribute. The well-known writer Anna Franchi had lost her only son in the war, so her appeal carried the extra weight of coming from one who shared other mothers' pain. In her letter, Franchi implored women to "give gold for Victory. This we ask you—we mothers, who love the Patria despite the sadness it costs us."[69] The message was clear: from one mother to another, everyone must do all they can to help Italy. In another letter, the poet Ada Negri (who would later be the only woman officially honored by Mussolini for her literary skill) stressed the power of money: "In a time of war, money can miraculously become love, poetry, arms, victory. Blessed is the Italian woman who in this most grave moment for the country is giving, giving, giving in degrees. And the more she gives, the more she will be blessed."[70] Negri presented the act of buying war bonds as a duty; the lives of soldiers and the fates of civilians caught behind enemy lines depended on women's decision to contribute. "No sacrifice is too great for the triumph of civilization," wrote another woman.[71] These authors treated each other as essential figures in Italy's war effort and in the preservation of the Italian way of life. In their own writings, they hinted that women were responsible not just for the family budget but for the budget of the Italian government as well. Many equated the home with the nation—the one could not survive without the other.

The war made putting women to work inevitable but not uncontroversial. Traditionally, a stigma had been attached to women who earned more money than the family needed to subsist.[72] While the war somewhat lifted that taboo, a new debate began about how women's presence would change the nature of the workplace. Numerous articles in *Assistenza civile* aimed to convince a skeptical public that women's work was beneficial and praiseworthy. In one piece, the author remarked that negative attitudes about women working were being washed away by their valuable contributions to the war effort.[73] Perhaps the most publicly conspicuous job for women was that of *tranviera*, tram operator and ticket collector. It was a new phenomenon in Europe to see women working in public transportation. Because it was clear that women would only be doing this work temporarily, they were not well trained. They worked long days for low wages,

and they faced a hostile public.[74] In this particular field, Italian women really did replace men required for more pressing duties. The first female transit employees appeared in 1916. By 1919, the workforce was back to being all-male. Even though their numbers were small, the wartime *tranviere* drew a lot of attention as symbols of modernity.[75] A postcard by the noted wartime artist Umberto Brunelleschi (who also started the trench newspaper *La Tradotta*) shows the new tram operator as modernity incarnate (Figure 9). With her fashionable hair and sleek uniform, she towers over the tram in the lower left.[76] A poem by Nina Macdonald about British women expresses the novelty of the sight:

> Girls are doing things
> They've never done before.
> Go as 'bus conductors,
> Drive a car or van,
> All the world is topsy-turvy
> Since the War began.[77]

In general, women had not worked in positions of authority, so society appeared "topsy-turvy" when women in uniform assumed responsibility for public transportation. When the Italian government sponsored a survey about women working in public transportation, it found an overwhelmingly negative reaction. People complained that women were too promiscuous, too chatty, too absent-minded when running trams, and that they were too fatigued to do a proper job. There were also reports of hostility from male coworkers. Curli explains that the *tranviere* were a special case in Italy, because the position was very public and was one of the rare cases in which women really did replace men.[78] Their visible presence in Italian public life sparked discussion over the propriety of women working outside the home.

Articles written in general support of women's work expose the prejudice against women that still existed.[79] Doubters believed that women were too weak to work hard and were untrainable. If they did work outside the home, critics claimed work would corrupt women's morals and lead them to devalue domestic life and family. Some were also suspicious of what women would do with their wages and accused them of bathing themselves in luxury. Paolina Tarugi, the director of the Milan-based Federazione comitati assistenza (Federation for Assistance Committees) and editor of *Assistenza civile*, strongly defended women from the attacks that claimed working women were living too well, making life uncomfortable for men, and not acting appropriately feminine.[80] Similar anxieties about unchaperoned, independent women arose throughout Europe.[81] Nevertheless, such

rhetorical attacks became irrelevant as the war progressed and it became obvious that belligerent nations needed to employ women in order to continue fighting. At this point, the language of patriotism served to justify female labor. Women contributed to the national cause and government officials and fellow civilians lauded them.

While antifeminists insisted that women should focus on the responsibilities of motherhood, public debate revolved around not whether women should work but how to govern their employment. In two *Assistenza civile* articles from 1918 defending women's right to work, Bice Viallet equated male and female talent while still defining a need for special regulations for women laborers. She thought both men and women underestimated the potential of women in the workforce. She wanted extra schooling for them and complained that when women's work was inferior, it was the result of a lack of proper instruction rather than a lack of ability. Women also needed government-sponsored classes, she observed, to teach them their rights so they could become informed worker-citizens. Regarding the safety of factories, Viallet called for more stringent hygiene and cleanliness laws. She advised the government to embrace female labor for the long term, and she discussed specific policies for pregnant workers, breast-feeding mothers, and child laborers. She recommended looking to France and Britain for inspiration for managing a female workforce.[82]

Italy was changing in the same ways as France and Britain, especially regarding rising urbanization, causing two major shifts in female employment patterns. First, some previously artisanal trades became industrialized, ending the nineteenth-century system that favored trades over industry. Curli correctly asserts that the war merely accelerated economic changes that had already begun. Work in the textile industry became increasingly gendered female. Indeed, the textile industry, making uniforms and other military gear, employed more women than any other war-related industry. Second, urbanization brought a wartime increase in administrative positions, creating a new female middle class.[83] The appearance of *impiegate* (white-collar administrative positions, such as secretaries, stenographers, and bank tellers) allowed women to enter the middle class based on their own labor. For the most part, daughters of middle-class families took these jobs, which offered a higher salary and more prestige than any other job previously open to women with some education. The prevalence of women in these positions during the war caused the jobs to become, like those in textiles, gendered female even after 1918. Curli marks the feminization of such office work as a wartime event. Her study illustrates that although the concept of women working was not completely new to Italy, the war expanded the number of women who received an individual salary and had a variety of geographical and

occupational options. And most important in considering the cultural impact of the war, it made working women more visible to the rest of Italian society, even though their numbers were small.

Debates over Female Mobilization and the Rise of Female Citizenship

For many Italian feminists, the central question regarding women working was not whether women should be *allowed* to work, but rather should women be *forced* to work through a national mobilization. One limitation in this debate is the fact that Italy lacked both a strong, organized feminist movement and a tradition of vocal support for feminist issues. For a variety of reasons, Italian women advanced at a much slower pace toward legal, political, and social equality than other European women.[84] Feminist activity was further limited in its impact because of obvious divides, especially along the lines of class and religion. Many early feminist groups began as offshoots of the Socialist party or were affiliated with the Catholic Church. Although they had called for many of the same reforms (most notably female suffrage and the opening of the professions), they disagreed over family and educational issues.[85] The influence of feminists in mainstream Italian society was limited, especially compared with that enjoyed by the suffragists in Britain. Across Europe, the war changed the focus of feminist and Socialist groups; the majority of them chose to rally around nationalism rather than fight for increased rights for their particular group. During the war, the Socialist Party did not endear themselves to women when it refused to advance their right to work.[86]

Some Italian feminists consciously tried to alter women's political position in society by arguing for compulsory, war-related service by women in a certain age group. The Liberal government did not seriously entertain this idea. A pamphlet by Elma Vercelloni published the proceedings from a conference held in Rome in 1918 endorsing female conscription held. Vercelloni claimed there were "three or four" men in the government who supported obligatory female mobilization.[87] The official view was that enough women were already actively engaged in the war effort and that female mobilization was unnecessary and unwarranted.[88] Nevertheless, advocates continued to embrace the cause in articles, pamphlets, and speeches.

Supporters of this movement hoped to silence critics of women's work. Vercelloni explained how prejudices against women working had hindered the ability of females in traditional areas, such as Sicily, to contribute because a *padrone* (master or boss) could forbid his female relatives from working. If service were mandatory, she argued, the *padrone* would be forced to relinquish some patriarchal control. The *padrone*'s loss would

be the gain of both the state and individual women—the state would gain power to overstep traditional prejudices and women would gain increased mobility outside the home. Vercelloni saw that the war, to some extent, integrated women into the state. Other supporters of women's right to work felt only official recognition of female contributions would offset prejudices against women. For example, Donna Paola (who did not call for conscription of women) criticized the government for not taking a more prowoman stance.[89] She complained that old biases against women remained dominant, discouraging women in small towns from doing their part. She wanted the government to recognize women's wartime contributions and provide a structured pay scale. Like Vercelloni, Donna Paola wanted to harness the power of the state to solve the local problem of male resistance to female wartime work.

To those with an eye on long-term gains for women, complete mobilization also seemed a way to place women on a more equal footing with men after the war. Vercelloni viewed the government's refusal to institute obligatory female conscription as typical of its antiwoman stance. "As a woman, a mother, and citizen," she claimed that she "directly" took part in forging the destiny of the Nation because "she fights with the blood of her children." Instead of claiming that women were entitled to equality with men because men and women are exactly the same, she argued that women's contributions be equated with men's for the good of the war effort and for the long-term goal of female emancipation.[90] Other authors, such as Stefano Conio, supported her view that women would show men how much they could do only when there were enough of them at work to make a visible difference.[91]

No one doubted that the war divided men and women. Susan Kingsley Kent has described a "sex war" that raged in Britain before, during, and after the war.[92] Her theory that men and women often viewed each other with hostility has resonance in Italy during the war, when society seemed separated into two parts: home front and war front.[93] Studies of Britain have emphasized how differently men and women experienced the Great War.[94] Male servicemen appeared less powerful than men ever had before because they were immobilized in no man's land. Meanwhile, because of increased mobility and financial independence, women became more powerful than they were before the war. But Britain did not see fighting on its own soil. On the continent, in places located near the front lines, male-female distinctions were harder to maintain. And as the Great War dragged on to become a total war, civilians, especially those in areas susceptible to air raids or invasion, became militarized. War ceased to be a wholly masculine preserve, yet tension between men and women remained.

Writers in favor of female labor protested that government's limited actions had only increased the gender gap. Paolina Tarugi cited the official prohibition against women and children riding on public transportation.[95] She complained that women were equated with children, and she was frustrated with the idea that any male, politician and shirker alike, was more important to the war effort than any female. Although she stopped short of calling for mandatory wartime service for women, Tarugi wanted the government to organize women's war work into five formal categories: military, agriculture, public service, industry, and propaganda. She advocated replacing the men who performed noncombatant jobs just behind the lines with women. She suggested women could cultivate untilled and abandoned land in the countryside, and, in cities, women could replace male workers to allow men to serve at the front. In addition, she wanted women to disseminate prowar propaganda. Like Vercelloni, Tarugi hoped that proper government involvement would get the public to accept the prospect of women working and allow women to enter fields previously closed to them.

These authors fully recognized that the war gave women an opportunity to stake a claim to citizenship. Donna Paola, for example, praised women who performed war work; she saw them as citizens putting their minds and muscle to work for the Patria. She asked, "Is it a blow against the traditional construction of the family? . . . Is it a revolution? Certainly." She warned the "decrepit bureaucracy" that if it did not start to promote women's work, the state would lose a valuable productive force.[96] But some others saw her position as too opportunistic. In a review of *La donna della nuova Italia* (The Woman of the New Italy), Donna Paola's lengthy account of women's wartime contributions, Bruna Guarducci criticized Donna Paola for trying too hard to prove that women were capable and worthy of reward.[97] Guarducci saw war work as its own end. She believed the war would end up advancing women's position in society only if the tragedy created a spirit of unity instead of individualism and if women were seen as the companions of men instead of as rivals or inferiors. Presciently, she was less optimistic than Donna Paola that all women needed to do was prove themselves during the war in order to receive full citizenship. According to Guarducci, Donna Paola made too direct a connection between material and social progress. The end of economic subservience, she cautioned prophetically, did not necessarily mean social or legal emancipation for women.

Advocates of female conscription had more immediate reasons for their position, aside from seeing women's war work as a prelude to postwar equality. In response to the belief that voluntary female participation was sufficient for Italy's needs, supporters of compulsory service noted that because Italy had not yet achieved victory, more must be done. In a speech

reprinted in 1917 in *Assistenza civile*, Ernesta Fasciotti emphasized that war needs were simply too great to be handled by conscripted males and female volunteers. She wanted women from all generations to assume extra responsibilities so men would be free to go to the front. In her mind, male and female wartime contributions should be valued equally. Total mobilization would make civilians and soldiers recognize the other's sacrifices. Fasciotti advocated putting women to work in civilian assistance and civil administration offices, hospitals, factories, workshops, warehouses, and agriculture. She called for a "great feminine army" to "fight the industrial and economic battle at the home front." She wanted women to have a wartime mission, and by couching it in the language of war, Fasciotti equated female and male duty.[98] Along the same lines, Vercelloni theorized that if all women had been mobilized from the first day of the war, they would have been exposed to more discipline and the Caporetto disaster of 1917 would not have happened.[99] She saw Caporetto as evidence that Italy needed a new approach. Vercelloni believed women and men were capable of equal accomplishments, and she saw the war as an opportunity for women to improve their standing in society.

Another article in *Assistenza civile* echoed the calls made by Fasciotti and Vercelloni. Baroness Carla Lavelli Celesia foresaw a long war and wanted the government to begin conscripting women immediately so the women would have time to adjust to the "very new concept" of civil and social responsibility.[100] She was concerned that male service was compulsory and paid, while female service remained strictly voluntary. She wanted the government to match women's skills to job vacancies, allowing for an easy female mobilization when the time came. Celesia implied that the Great War had the potential to make women equal citizens, and she called for compulsory mobilization as a way to solidify women's new status. Donna Paola pointed out the irony that it was war, seemingly so far removed from the female sphere, which might provide the means by which society would start to value the contributions of its female population.[101]

Vercelloni played on stereotypes about Italians in presenting another reason for Italy to mobilize women. Using the language of Social Darwinism, she argued that the Italian national character demanded prodding. She noted that the women in Britain did not need to be forced to join the war effort because the English have a different "temperament, maybe more virile than ours, maybe colder, maybe more constant." They readied themselves at the first sign of danger. In contrast, Italians were "distracted by the sun and azure sky" and had not steeled themselves accordingly for war. She asked her audience to throw out the idea that voluntarism is "characteristically Italian" and that compulsion has a "German mark." It is fine to use German methods, she noted, if they get Italians to Berlin and keep

Germans out of Udine. Vercelloni's reliance on clichés to justify her cause may sound hollow today, but she wrote in a climate of acute nationalism and heightened patriotism.[102] She fervently believed female conscription was necessary, and she tried hard to sway a doubting public.

In fact, Italy was hardly likely to construct such a new place for women. It had a long political and cultural tradition of male authority and female inferiority. Even if it had been able to see women in a new light, the government was not well organized enough to handle a double mobilization; it had sufficient trouble enforcing male conscription. In 1917, over forty-eight thousand soldiers mutinied and another fifty-six thousand deserted.[103] Half of the 5 million men drafted were peasants or agricultural workers, disproportionately from the South. Unsure of their motives for fighting, other than the fact that harsh discipline, even death, awaited those who disobeyed, these men made up what historian Martin Clark has called a "sullen, often illiterate, ill-equipped army."[104]

The issue of how the war could change women and their status in society lingered. In a *Nuova antologia* essay published after the war ended, one author, F. Scaduto, noted "i tempi sono mutati"—the times had changed, indeed. Women had demonstrated abilities that surpassed expectations. Scaduto speculated that the old prejudices against educating women were wearing thin and that the laws that had kept women in the "slavery" of unequal status were changing.[105] Legal standing alone, however, was not enough. In an article about the Congresso Femminile (Female Congress), the influential intellectual Giuseppe Prezzolini advised women to focus on public opinion as well as on more tangible gains.[106] He criticized the Congresso Femminile for overemphasizing legal recognition; he believed such victories would be hollow if they were not matched by public support. For Prezzolini, the Congresso had to convince Italian men that women deserved a new place in postwar Italy. Male resistance was not the only bar to women gaining new political standing; class differences also contributed. Optimists hoped in vain that after women had fought, worked, and suffered together, class distinctions would break down, creating an organized movement for female emancipation.

In fact, the Liberal government never granted women suffrage and made few concessions to demands for greater rights for women. Most notable was the passage in 1919 of the Sacchi Law that empowered women with legal rights. Although one feminist believed this legislation was the "prize of demobilization" and an important affirmation of women's rights, some historians today see it as an exclusionary decree designed to limit women's work opportunities.[107] In sum, the Sacchi Law decreed the sexes equal with regard to professional and public employment opportunity with some caveats. It made a wife financially independent from her

husband, allowing her to receive government aid without his authorization, and it gave women more of a voice in family matters. But it continued to keep women out of certain public sector jobs, such as in the Colonial Ministry and in investigative agencies, and it barred them from attaining positions in fields ranging from ship captains to judgeships to certain university chairs. Even though the Liberal government withheld suffrage, the attention women received during the Great War politicized them by raising their public consciousness.

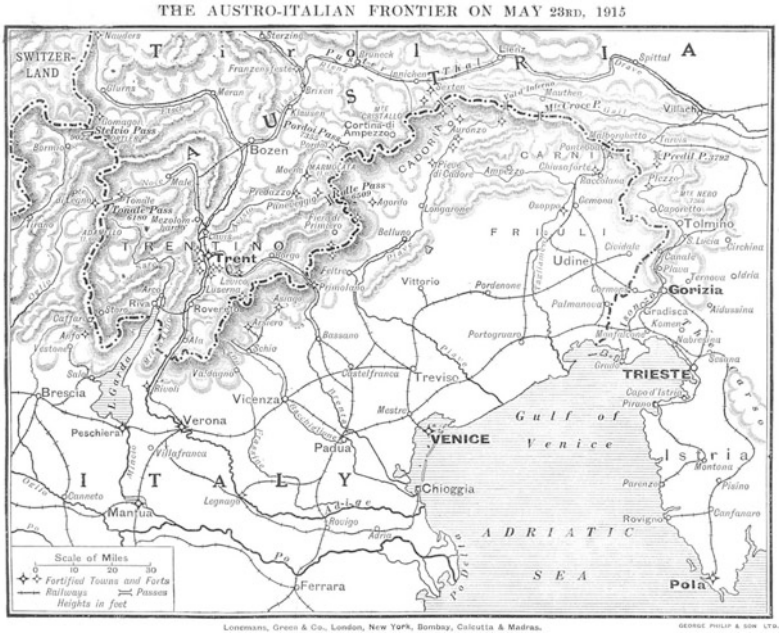

Figure 1 Map of prewar Italian-Austrian border as it was in 1915.

Source: From Sidney Low, *Italy in the War* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1917), facing p. 31.

Figure 2 Propaganda poster encouraging war bonds: Italia slaying the Austrians ("Subscribe to the Loan").

Source: Giovanni Capranesi, "Sottoscrivete al Presitito" (Bergamo: Officine dell'Istituto Italiano d'arti grafiche, 1917).

Figure 3 Postcard image of women making packages to send to soldiers.

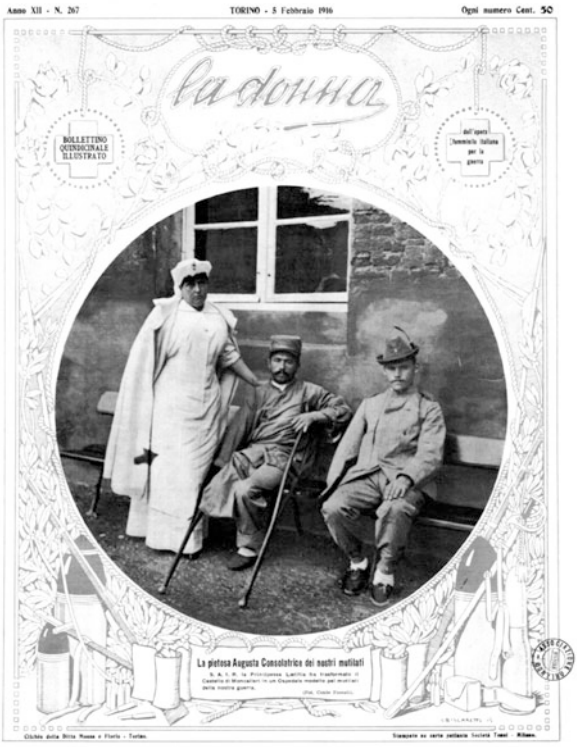

Figure 4 Magazine cover showing a nurse with wounded soldiers.
Source: La donna: Rivista quindicinale illustrata 13.267 (February 5, 1916).

Figure 5 War photograph of a young munitions worker sharpening projectiles. Included in the official photographic record of the war.

Source: La guerra: dalle raccolte del reparto fotografico del Comando supremo del R. esercito, vol. 9 (April 1917) (Milan: Treves, 1917), 552.

Figure 6 Photograph of women in a fitting shop making fuses. Included in the official photographic record of the war.

Source: La guerra: dalle raccolte del reparto fotografico del Comando supremo del R. esercito, vol. 9 (April 1917) (Milan: Treves, 1917), 567.

Figure 7 Photograph of women holding shells at a railhead ammunition dump.

Source: W. J. Brunell, Official photograph, taken between August 1918 and February 1919. Used by permission of Imperial War Museum, London.

Figure 8 Cover image from a propaganda pamphlet aimed at women that included letters from prominent women soliciting support for the war effort ("To the Women of Italy").

Source: Alle donne d'Italia (Milano: Casa Editrice l'impressa moderna, 1918).

Figure 9 Tram operator postcard designed by the artist Umberto Brunelleschi.

Figure 10 Cover image of 1922 *Almanacco della donna italiana* (Florence: Bemporad) showing a woman sewing a tricolor Italian flag.

Part II

Femininity in the War Zone

3

When the Home Front Is the War Front

Contextualizing Women's War Stories of the Italian Front

It is a brutal awakening, but we are in war!

—Berta Allatini Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni 1915–1919*

Berta Allatini Friedmann volunteered as a nurse in Livorno during the war, but it was her trips to the front lines to visit her husband, Guido, that showed her the reality of total war. She traveled three times to visit him, twice bringing her children along for the journey. Her published diary, *Ricordi e impressioni 1915–1919*, highlights her experience as a nurse, a mother, an officer's wife, and a *voyeur* during the Great War. She juxtaposed the home front with the fighting front as she described how she survived bombardments, loneliness, and the military retreat of Caporetto.

Friedmann's story is unique, yet it reflects common threads in other women's diaries. Historians who want to reconstruct the past face an incredible challenge. Generalizing is problematic because historical subjects see events from multiple points of view; one person may hold contradictory thoughts and ideas. Nevertheless, historians cannot abandon the goal of trying to depict how it felt to live in another time or place. In her study of France, historian Margaret Darrow explains that during and after the Great War, one static story summed up men's war experience—the tale of the infantryman fighting in the trenches along the Western Front. Although many men performed alternative duties, the image of the trench fighter loomed largest in the public's imagination. In contrast, Darrow noted, multiple shifting stories described how French women participated in the war. A variety of female stories were told to demonstrate

what women did, and no one story was canonized.[1] Darrow's observations apply to the Italian case as well. If it was difficult for contemporaries to create a prototypical war story for women, it is even harder for historians to reconstruct one. Yet women living along the Italian Front shared similar experiences, even if no one story encompasses them all. Before analyzing how the war affected particular women and their ideas about femininity, it is important to document the kind of daily life most women living at or near the front endured during the war. And in order to understand that daily life, we must situate them in the larger picture of the Italian Front.

The Great War raged throughout Europe. For English speakers, the Western Front overshadows all other fronts in our collective memory. Because most British and American troops fought along the Western Front in France, the bulk of Great War diaries and memoirs available in English recounts the experience of life along the Western Front. But that is not the full story of the war. Along the Italian Front, some people experienced trench warfare, but many others found themselves in the center of a more fluctuating war zone.

The *Retrovie* along the Italian Front

Most civilians who experienced the war firsthand endured one of two types of occupation and militarization. Trento provides an example of a town that endured militarization more than occupation. Currently situated in northern Italy, it belonged to the Austrian Empire at the outbreak of war and remained under Austrian control for most of the war (Figure 1). Compared with the rest of the home front, Trentino civilians endured an extreme war economy. They had to turn over almost all goods to the Austrian military and had to quarter troops upon request. When caught, Italian sympathizers, called *Irredentisti* because of their desire to join Trentino with Italy, were punished with deportation (usually to internment camps in Austria) or incarceration. Many of these so-called traitors were imprisoned in the Castel Buon Consiglio, now the site of the Museo Storico, then sent away or executed. A climate of fear pervaded Trento—fear of requisitions, reprisals, and renewed violence. Neighboring areas, like Belluno and Arco, were similarly militarized. Venice and Trieste typified the least intrusive type of militarization. These major urban centers were never occupied by the enemy (until the end of the war when Italians marched into Trieste), but military needs were paramount. Thousands of French, British, and Italian servicemen flowed through Venice, for example, changing the economy and the familiar pattern of social relations. In addition, the city was extremely vulnerable to air raids; over three thousand bombs fell on

Venice during the course of the war.[2] On the other side of the Adriatic, Trieste, under Austrian control, endured a similar wartime experience.

Gorizia, a town in the Friuli region of about 21,900 people when the war began, provides an example of a place subjected to extraordinary violence and direct occupation. Currently situated near Italy's northeast border with Slovenia, during the war it sat along the border between Austria and Italy. It was thrice captured during the war. Originally Austrian, Gorizia fell into Italian hands in August 1916, then the Austrians took it back after Caporetto in 1917; it finally became part of Italy in late 1918. In addition to all the deprivations that affected areas like Trento and Venice, the civilians who remained in Gorizia were living in a literal war zone, always under attack by the other side's military.[3] Bombardments killed people and destroyed buildings. Meanwhile, the local population remained under military command, subject to martial law. Legal requisitions existed side by side with personal robbery by the troops. Locals had little recourse in either case. Women especially suffered under enemy rule as victims of rape. Nearby towns, such as Cormons and Udine, had similar wartime experiences.

Although direct occupation introduced the most brutal treatment of civilians, all the populated areas near the Italian Front encountered the violence of war in one way or another. For a variety of reasons discussed in detail in the following two chapters, women remained in all these places as volunteer relief workers and civilians.

Daily Life along the Italian Front

The routine of daily life continued in communities located at or near the front, but people faced special circumstances. Even before Caporetto, when most areas near the front had been evacuated, some residents had remained at home. Businesses continued to operate, but the civilian population was dramatically reduced. According to Friedmann, Gorizia was "not deserted, but tranquil, silent." The "middle class and some women" remained in their homes, "but everything had that air of quasi-mystery."[4] For the most part "deserted save for a handful of inhabitants and many Italian soldiers," Gorizia endured bombardments around the clock.[5] Josephine Schebat, a pro-Italian civilian who stayed in Gorizia through 1916, described how her house was bombed. In her unpublished diary, she wrote, "Disaster in the city. 5 bombs in our house, one broke the roof off my room."[6] E. V. Lucas saw signs of civilian life in Gorizia in early 1917: "a score of tiny children at a kindergarten drill, . . . a small class of fair-haired girls being taught by a nun," and another classroom full of "smiling boys," all observing classroom

procedure despite the constant roar of nearby cannons and the "almost monotonous sound of exploding shells."[7] On the surface, daily life continued as before, but most writers acknowledged living in "a continual state of anxiety," as one woman from Belluno reported. She explained, "One breathes, walks, lives in a whole other way" under occupation; "I have the sensation of having passed one whole life with the conquerors and liberation would seem to me a miracle."[8] Schools, cafes, and some businesses reopened, but life was hardly the same as it had been in peacetime.

One of the most obvious differences between prewar and wartime ways of life was the shortage of food and other supplies. Especially at the end of the war, civilians rightly worried they would starve to death. Rations were meager, and the occupying army, whether friend or foe, requisitioned all extra food, including most farm animals. Even an Austrian soldier stationed in Italy admitted that requisitioning "was a form of thievery . . . carried out by—what else?—force."[9] Conditions seemed to worsen by the day. One resident of Trieste described seeing civilians and soldiers begging for bread; she felt lucky to find horse or mule meat to eat. When a bomb destroyed the local water supply in March 1917, she believed conditions could not deteriorate any further in her hometown.[10] The situations were similar across the Italian Front.

Once captured, towns along the front fell under military control. They were, according to Lucas, "swiftly and thoroughly transmuted into neat and orderly and efficient houses for . . . fighting men."[11] The occupiers made immediate cosmetic changes, such as renaming the streets, and more serious ones, such as taking control of rationing.

The militarized life that women living along the Italian Front experienced was not unique. In occupied France, civilians endured similar conditions. Studies by Helen McPhail and Annette Becker catalog the harsh conditions suffered by the local population of northern France after the German military took over, and they highlight many of the same phenomena that existed in Italy.[12] McPhail discusses the basic facts of survival, especially focusing on how the German and French bureaucracy compelled obedience from locals. In contrast, Becker places the occupation in the larger context of the history of the war. She portrays a local population that had lost all contact with the rest of the nation. They lived amidst the constant sounds of war, under the threat of air raid attacks, with no knowledge of how the war was progressing and no ability to gauge what was to come. The scarce food supply resulted in starvation, and the invaders requisitioned almost everything. The men in the area had to join work gangs, and men and women could be sent to internment camps at the whim of a German officer. She concludes that the Germans waged total war on the population, including women and children. As along the Italian Front, the

first weeks of occupation in France saw the highest incidence of violence. The occupiers committed crimes such as rape, execution, arson, and theft. After the Germans had established control over the population, life became easier for the local civilians, but the invaders continued to extract whatever they wanted from the populace until the war ended. The pattern in northern France mimicked that of northeastern Italy.

Comparisons can also be made with the Italian front of World War II. The Anglo-American Iris Origo kept a splendid war diary that documents the tensions facing civilians living in a home front war zone.[13] Married to an Italian aristocrat, Origo lived on a villa in Tuscany and interacted with a variety of military troops, including German Nazis, Italian Fascists and Resistance fighters, and British prisoners of war. Origo managed, despite the limited food supply, to feed her own two children plus over 20 refugee children under her care. In addition, she and her husband negotiated with soldiers and locals over requisitions and partisan activity. Origo's diary reveals the constraints war places on daily life and the power of the individual to shape her or his own fate, topics as relevant to the Great War as to World War II.

Along the Italian Front in the Great War, the Austrians took back most of the land Italy had gained within two years of Italy's victories. For towns that endured militarization by both Italy and Austria, Austro-German occupation was harsher. First and foremost, the Austrian Empire faced a severe economic crisis in the last years of the war. Shortages inside the Empire were extreme, and when the military took over a new area, soldiers stripped the local population of everything valuable. Outraged and impoverished, the local population could do nothing to resist the orders of the new command. In diary after diary, women expressed shock over the incredible hunger that plagued their town. Many diaries focused exclusively on the matter of food and supplies. Obsessed with the minutiae of daily survival—weather, food, clothes, et cetera—some people wrote next to nothing about their psychological response to the situation of living in the war zone. Yet there was no mistaking that female civilians found themselves in the most anomalous of places: women in the war zone, living at home under military command.

Civilians had to create a normalized life for themselves and for the troops stationed in their town. Women worked outside the home when necessary. Discussing Venice, in particular, George Trevelyan observed the myriad responsibilities at the home front that had become a war front:

> The Venetians were very valiant and patriotic, though the war hit them harder than any one else in Italy. . . . A Citizens' Committee . . . had in good time procured vast war orders from Government of the kind that could be done

> in Venice, and had distributed the work and the requisite raw material among the small workshops and private houses of the popolani. Woodwork for shell cases and barrows, soldiers' clothing, small iron work and children's toys, to replace the German, were the chief. The Citizens' Committee had also set up a scientifically-managed relief system, and a distribution of milk for infants.[14]

His cataloging of the organized system of mutual aid reveals how civilization continued despite the obstacles caused by the war. Similar to women's work on the home front discussed in Chapter 2, female civilians living in the militarized zone worked as manual laborers and clerical workers.[15] In addition, locals and foreigners collaborated to protect Venice's art treasures from air raids by hiding them behind sand bags or removing them entirely from the city.

Many women living in towns or working in field hospitals frequently endured shelling. Friedmann referred to the "almost incessant" sound of the cannons firing at night when she was at the front; they were so close she could see explosions light up the sky. She described how everything shook with the "ta-ta-ta-ta" of machine guns.[16] Women's diaries resound with attempts at onomatopoeia to recreate the noises of the war.

These bombardments posed real dangers to the populace. People grew concerned about children playing with unexploded shells.[17] Accounts of the damage done by air attacks fill diaries and memoirs. In the worst attack on Padua, for example, 93 people, about half male and half female, were killed in November 1916. Families collapsed along with buildings, and three children were orphaned. The survivors rallied together and held a huge funeral four days later. The government compensated people affected by air raids, and bureaucratic records detailed the loss of life and property.[18] These documents, along with those from diaries and memoirs, make it clear that thousands of women lived in areas targeted by air raids. The Italian government even awarded a handful of women the Medal of Valor for their bravery during enemy attacks.[19] As Susan Grayzel has observed about the French case, making civilians a target for attack challenged the definition of "noncombatants," widening society's understanding of women's roles in modern warfare. Through praise of stoicism, public voices in France encouraged female civilians to act like male soldiers by accepting fear, injury, and death with courage.[20] Women in Italy spoke of their exposure to violence with the same sense of reserved courage.

Often, women grew so accustomed to the sounds of war that they overcame logical concerns about safety. Traveling with her children through Gorizia, Friedmann expressed difficulty getting up in the middle of the night because of an air raid. She remarked to herself, "It is a brutal awakening, but we are in war!"[21] People grew weary of late-night evacuations. At one point in 1917, the area near a hospital was shelled every

night between midnight and four. One nurse reported that on the first night, to obey her superiors, she and the other nurses evacuated. But after that "we decided to stay in our beds and, if ever, to die there. . . . After two nights the blows did not wake us up anymore." She claimed that when the Austrians fired shells near her hospital, the "great noise" did not bother her at all.[22] Friedmann and her children eventually came to the same conclusion, as did civilians living near the Western Front. When in Verdun, Colette noticed a woman who displayed "complete imprudence" by coming home "under a veritable hail of shrapnel that didn't touch her." Colette heard her exclaim, "Oh what a nuisance, what a nuisance!"[23] Because it was impossible to find a perfectly secure hiding place during an air raid, most gave up the inconvenience of trying.

Even though writers claimed they grew accustomed to being under fire, they portrayed other people as less stoic. An Australian war correspondent in Italy, A. G. Hales, wrote of a "little group of frightened women and children in more or less undress uniform [who] appear out of the night. They stand just on the outer edge of the patch of moonlight and gaze with horror in their eyes at the unwelcome stranger lying in the road-way; pious ejaculations in Italy's liquid tongue break from the lips of the mothers who thank the Madonna for life preserved." The author was a man, and his use of "little group" and "frightened" reveals something of his own bias. The women were not crying, nor were they hysterical. Instead, they offered "pious" prayers. Shaken, the women maintained their composure, perhaps for their children's sake as much as their own. Hales continued the tale of the nighttime air raid in language that trivialized the women's response. With "their nerves all on edge," they "scatter like hens at the sight of a hawk." Yet their worries were not in vain; Hales revealed that "four of the women and two of the children are to die by bombs within a few short hours."[24] He was clearly touched by the death of civilians, male and female, but his insistence on focusing on the nerves of the women (with no mention of male civilians' response) suggests that his writing may have relied heavily on common tropes. Did his analysis reflect only what he was expecting? It would certainly not be surprising for men to show fear as well. Hales' descriptions clung to traditional ideas about femininity, but women were not so stereotypical in their own writings.

In general, the cliché of the hysterical woman does not appear in first-person accounts of life in the war zone. When confronted with the threat of enemy bombs or violence, women described themselves as calm. Like Hales, some women wrote about others' panic. For example, Helena Gleichen, a British volunteer radiographer, commented on an Austrian attack on the village of Cormons: "The first few shells brought streams of peasants and townspeople carrying babies, and dragging small children by any portion

of their persons or clothes that first came handy. They came running under our windows wailing and crying, all making for the dug-outs that were in the hill about half a kilometre behind our house."[25] Gleichen would have the reader believe that she (unlike Italian civilians) was rarely agitated by war. The people who were at the front on purpose, including the women discussed in Chapter 4, might have been braver than the civilians around them because they had chosen to live in the middle of the Great War and they expected danger. The civilians who were living at home when the war came were less prepared for and less enthusiastic about their encounter with war. These women, discussed in Chapter 5, truly might have panicked more, especially because they had family members and personal property to protect in addition to themselves. Or perhaps what looked like fear and irrationality to bystanders did not feel the same way to those involved. I found no example of a woman writing that the bombardments made her act hysterically; it might be that the responses to attacks felt more logical and calculated from inside a woman's head. Also, diaries, even ones kept daily, were never written at the moment of an air raid. So the memory of the event, especially the fact that the author survived uninjured, might have influenced how she depicted it.

The war's violence did affect the women who witnessed it, just as it did the men. The Italian writer Mercedes Astuto volunteered as a nurse and acknowledged, "How different life is after these experiences!"[26] Nurses admitted being frightened, but for most, the daily duties overshadowed the fear. Gleichen's claim of being more tired than afraid could apply to many women. As Astuto said, women grew matter-of-fact about death, but the strain of war took its considerable toll.

Psychological and physical damage coexisted. In Gorizia, every building in town sustained at least minor damage during the war, and the outskirts of Gorizia suffered even more than the city itself. Soldiers' letters express sympathy toward the civilian women left in the wake of war. In June 1915, an Italian soldier described what he saw in the villages near the front:

> So we go from one village to another with our wire, while over our heads pass the Austrian shells with an angry hissing. This life would be interesting enough, if in every village where we go we did not find such misery. Poor Italian villages, how they have suffered! One never sees a man, only some woman with a face which, though haggard and pale, is cheered in these days, looks out from a doorway and smiling as she murmurs: 'Bless you!' and in that smile shows us all her gratitude.[27]

Like the soldiers, this woman would have heard daily the hissing shells. Furthermore, the Italian troops were poorly equipped, and it is important

to note how the soldier worries for the villagers as well as for himself. Typically, few adult men remained at home as most were away serving in the military or in hiding to avoid the draft. This woman lived alone, yet the soldier portrayed her not as lonely or weak but as patriotic and gracious. According to him, she saw the soldiers as her saviors.

As Chapter 4 demonstrates, many women chose to experience the war first-hand. Whether for hours or months, journeys to the Italian Front allowed women to experience war as men saw it. The following description of Gorizia under Austrian control could have been written by a soldier; in fact, it comes from the personal diary of the Marinaz sisters, Austrian nurses at the front: "A mass of tents, horses, oxen, wagons of munitions, cannons, wagons of provisions, a sea of soldiers and of wounded[.] [I]n an open field is an improvised hospital where the wounded come newly medicated before being carried on the rail car. A room of sadness and of blood, a room that one cannot forget . . . that shows us the true face of war."[28] Although these sisters did not fight in the war, they knew its trappings well. So did other women. While trying to visit a cousin, Friedmann took a tour of the battlefield. She was pleased to get a chance to view "the real war," which for her meant seeing the massive organization required to conduct war: wagons, mules, troops, and horses crisscrossing each other.[29] Other women witnessed actual fighting. Caught up in the bellicose moment, Gleichen watched the taking of Gorizia in August 1916 and called it "the most wonderful sight imaginable." Working just off the front, Gleichen and her staff observed battles up close. She remarked, "Our house in Gorizia had a most convenient roof, and when we had time to spare we used to lie flat on the top of it, so as not to show above the parapet, and watch the troops assaulting San Marco and San Gabriele. So near were we that we could hear them shouting as they ran to the attack." Gleichen described other military maneuvers as well.[30]

For civilians living in the war's path, its destructive nature was indubitable. In a letter written in 1915 and published in a collection by Klyda Richardson Steege in 1917, a soldier described a village after the Austrians had retreated through it: "We are advancing: the burned villages which the cruel enemy have left behind are proof of this. I saw the other night, on coming back to camp, from a hill dark with cypresses and deserted by all life, an Italian village in flames; and I encountered the inhabitants, driven out, in groups along the road; old men, women and babies, cows (mothers too) with their calves. . . . Under a hedge an old woman with her frightened grandchildren sat lamenting: what pain! and under the starry sky their homes were burning. Oh human grief!"[31] The soldier displayed naïveté in blaming the "cruel" nature of the Austrians for acts that the Italians themselves would commit only two years later during the Caporetto

retreat, but his empathy for the civilians is touching. His letter provides yet another example of the image of the homeless matriarch sheltering children. Perceived as the ultimate innocents, women and children hurt by the war melted soldiers' and journalists' hearts.

Not all women were viewed as passive victims; many forged their own relationships with the troops. In describing his experience capturing Cormons, another Italian serviceman cited by Steege reported in his letter, "the women came around the soldiers offering them drinks and postcards, and showing them every attention."[32] Informally and formally, women acted as hostesses to the troops when they arrived. Residing in an occupied town made contact with soldiers unavoidable.

Women lived at the crossroads of war. The British Red Cross Society hospital at Villa Trento in Cormons, staffed by British men and women, was one such place.[33] In her diary, Sybil Reeves, a VAD nurse, laid out the scene she regularly encountered: "This is on the principal high road to the trenches so all through the twenty-four hours men and cars of all descriptions pass up and down to the firing line—soldiers are billeted all round [and] the guns hardly ever cease firing. At night one can see the shells and star rockets bursting in the distance—this house is within range of the big guns—but no one thinks of the danger which is not very great." She later added, "We are really in no danger of being killed here."[34] Reeves clearly de-emphasized the level of personal danger; perhaps she could not anticipate the effects of her service. After almost two years in Italy and another two years in England, Reeves was given six months sick leave for what she called "acute neuritis." She eventually "invalided out" in August 1920. Because women rarely traveled to the trenches, they did not experience the war as male soldiers did. But because of their encounters with the violence of war and the militarization of daily life, they had their own war stories to tell.

Caporetto

The hallmark event of the Italian Front occurred in the fall of 1917. Despite early gains, the Italians had not won a permanent victory along the eastern side of the front. The Caporetto defeat caught everyone off guard—soldiers, volunteers, and civilians alike. Many accounts relate what it felt like to be caught up in the Italian retreat.[35] The experience of the battle was unmatched by any other along the Italian Front.

After months of the usual standoff, Austro-German forces broke through the Italian line near the town of Caporetto in Venezia-Giulia in October 1917. The Italian Front, locked in position by a veritable

stalemate that had lasted for years, suddenly became a fluid line. No similar wave of movement swept the Western Front until the last year of the war, when the Allied forces finally moved the Germans back. Military historians continue to discuss how the break occurred and why the Italians, in historian Martin Clark's words, turned "defeat into rout" with their mass exodus.[36] The Italians lost about half their men and *matériel*. Able to concentrate on two particular areas, the Austro-German troops shelled the Italian artillery into submission. As Clark explains, their strategy took advantage of the terrain and weather to push back the Italians. However, instead of retreating a short way, the Italian military rolled back for miles. Weak defenses were not supported by fresh reserves, and communication lines crumbled. Luckily, the Piave River had flooded, and the advancing Austro-Germans could not get as deep into Italy as they would have liked. Historian Mario Morselli offers a new view regarding Italy's retreat. Rather than focusing on the shortcomings of the Italian government and military command, he commends the Italians for being able to recover at all.[37] One year later, it was the Italians chasing out the Austrians, this time for good.

The scale of destruction affected military troops and civilians alike, forcing most people to flee the area. The soldiers acted with surprising discipline, considering most were without orders. Clark notes that "Viva la pace! Viva il Papa! Viva Giolitti!" (Long live peace! Long live the Pope! Long live Giolitti!) was the rallying cry rather than anything overtly revolutionary.[38] Many soldiers expected this defeat to end Italy's participation in the war; instead, it ushered in a new era of Italian military strategy that catered more to the psychological aspect of the war. After Caporetto, an official propaganda department appeared, and it focused new attention on maintaining morale at home and at the front.

For Italians, the chaos of the retreat cannot be exaggerated. In a hasty evacuation, the local towns emptied as civilians became refugees. An American Red Cross delegate described what he saw as civilians fled their homes. His account serves as a prototypical description of the event.

> The civilian population of farms and villages, seeing the retreating troops and hearing the booming of the cannon of the pursuing enemy were thrown into a panic, and abandoning all they possessed, rushed to join the moving throng that congested the highways. Mindful perhaps of the fate of the Belgians, they fled to escape a similar rule of terror. They fled as they were. There was no time to collect household goods, clothing, food or money. Mothers taking their babes in their arms or carrying them as baskets on their backs, started on the weary journey that led they knew not whither,—only that it was away from the dreaded invader.[39]

About 500,000 refugees streamed southward from the Veneto region into the rest of Italy: 200,000 from invaded territory, almost 90,000 from territory cleared for the new fighting area, and 130,000 from territory in danger because of constant air raids. The refugees headed to railway stations where they crowded into cattle cars and troop transports. The Sanità Sections of the Italian military organized the evacuations of the towns.[40] The government distributed the refugees all over Italy, forcing some to stay on the road for two weeks straight. They arrived in new towns as strangers and moved into barracks, deserted factories, and requisitioned hotels and villas. The government and the Red Cross provided the main sources of aid for the refugees.[41] They went to both coasts as well as the big, industrial cities in the north. Few went to Rome, so as to keep the disaffected refugees from making scenes in the capital. Almost no one went past Rome into the south.[42]

Another large group of refugees went the other direction into the Austrian Empire. As in Italy, refugees did not find new homes but relied on the goodwill of locals and aid organizations to provide shelter and supplies for them. People without enough money to finance their journeys followed the command of the Austro-Hungarian government and were resettled in the interior of Austria in makeshift camps. The government deported men and women it considered overt supporters of Italy to internment camps, mostly to the "City of Wood" in Katzenau where they lived under close supervision with minimal rations.[43] A study of the deported population finds that although the Austrians mostly chose men, some women were included. For example, of 147 people deported from the Friuli region, 34 were women. The grueling voyage to the camps affected people both physically and mentally.[44]

Nurses stationed with troops also evacuated or faced being taken as prisoners. At first, the news of the Italian defeat was thought to be a rumor. Official bulletins trickled in gradually, giving the locations where the Austrians had overrun the Italians. But it was the arrival of the retreating soldiers, especially the wounded, that made the defeat real. As the Italian nurse Maria Antonietta Clerici portrayed it, the scene was completely chaotic. Ambulances kept arriving filled with evacuated wounded. Her own hospital could not handle the overflow. She had to evaluate two thousand wounded in a few days. As the din of battle grew nearer, the medical staff received their own orders to evacuate. All personnel were exhausted; Clerici "could not hold herself up" any longer. The nurses helped the wounded leave ward by ward. Clerici wrote, "I felt that my person disappeared in front of those most unhappy souls."[45] At that point, Clerici made the radical decision to stay behind with those patients too wounded to travel, and she soon became a prisoner of war herself.[46] She stayed put, but the land

she was on became Austrian territory, although it took a few days for the Austrian troops to march in and take control. Strict rationing began immediately, and within days, the Austrians stripped the hospital of all its supplies. Clerici was most concerned about the low rations and kept a count in her diary of patients who died. She avoided stereotyping the Austrians as evil, instead describing the officers she had contact with in individual terms. She remained for two months but was sent to an Austrian concentration camp at the end of the year.

Whereas Clerici began her story with the Caporetto disaster, another nurse, Merecedes Astuto, ended hers with it. Astuto counted 14 bombs falling near her hospital, one just missing her ward. The Italians did not understand fully what was happening, but they followed the order to withdraw that came on the morning of October 27, 1917. Astuto oversaw the evacuation of the hospital before leaving herself. She and the other staff rode in a long caravan of wagons to the nearest train station. Within three days, they were back home. A British nurse, Vera Woodroffe, like Clerici, chose to stay behind during evacuation procedures. She described the chaotic process. The medical staff picked up those from other units who were stranded. Her commander, a man, stayed "behind on the road extracting the other units whose cars were breaking down[,] picking up stray VADs from trains[,] towing ambulances[,] etc[.], etc." He also "picked up wounded, rescued war-correspondents, towed broken down cars." He worked for "three nights on the road without sleep." Everyone had to help evacuate the area. Woodroffe wrote that, like Astuto, most women who had been stationed in hospitals at the front returned home. She remained on duty until the hospital itself had left the area. She explained, "it is very important politically we shouldn't all clear out."[47] For most nurses and medical technicians, the Caporetto disaster disrupted their service. Speaking of the British volunteers, Trevelyan explained that it "appeared inadvisable to keep more women in the country than were necessary for service," so all but four "were sent back direct from Padua to England."[48]

Other accounts of the retreat emphasized the confusion that engulfed the personnel. The bombardments and gunfire seemed inconclusive at first. Friedmann related how her husband escaped Udine only hours before the Austrians arrived. A "sad stream of soldiers and refugees" poured out of northeastern Italy in the rain. Friedmann tried unsuccessfully to get closer to the front. She ended up on a train going away from the front, traveling through Florence and Ferrara to Padua. Everywhere, the evidence of Caporetto was clear. Friedmann could not find a hotel, breakfast, or even a phone to use because Padua was so crammed with refugees. Once she reunited with her husband, he promptly told her, "You were brave to come,

but you absolutely cannot stay here." When she returned to Livorno she saw "a true invasion of refugees."[49] Friedmann could not believe how many people had been displaced.

From the other point of view, Caporetto was an advance not a retreat. For pro-Austrian sympathizers, the defeat of the Italians allowed them to return home. Having fled in August 1916, Virginia and Enrica Marinaz were jubilant about being able to live in Gorizia again. In their early thirties, the unmarried sisters had volunteered for the Austrian Red Cross. Virginia had been a schoolteacher, teaching Italian and French in Rovereto before the war. For their war work, they received medals from the Red Cross.[50] Their short diary was unpublished during their lifetimes. It includes immediate responses to their encounter with the war.

At three o'clock on October 28, 1917, Austrian soldiers retook Gorizia. The diary described the ruined city. Roads were almost impassable because of the craters, houses were destroyed, and the land was devastated. Shells had damaged both the main castle and the seminary. They were shocked by what they saw: "Trenches, shelters, barracks, tombs interrupted the uniformity of these sad lands." One sister commented, "For a long time I was prepared, but a ruin such as this was unimaginable."[51] The city sat as "silent as death," and they did not see a single civilian. Although some locals had remained, to them the only sign of life came from rats. The city seemed beyond repair, as did the nearby villages; it was as if civilization had been destroyed.

The Great War damaged both the geographical and psychological landscape. It affected everyone in the area, whether they were Austrian or Italian sympathizers, men or women, soldiers or civilians. The female civilian population was at a disadvantage compared to the women in the war zone on assignment, because they lacked access to official information. Many civilians lived in towns near the Italian Front before the Caporetto disaster forced them to evacuate. For nurses and other medical staff, the government provided transport back home. But refugees had no such organized network. Instead, they had to flee with no designated destination or remain at home under the control of enemy invaders.

Although these noncombatant women encountered the violence of war directly and indirectly, they did not all have the same experience. The category *woman* itself dissolves when trying to describe the experience of women in the Great War.[52] Women who were at the front on purpose had a different level of engagement with the events going on around them than did women who found themselves trapped when the war came to their homes. The war story that narrates the experience of the nurses, journalists, wives, and prostitutes who made their way to the Italian Front has more in common with male combatants' story than with that of local

female civilians. Dividing people by gender can be a useful approach, especially in looking at war, because the state itself divided citizens that way. Upon closer examination, however, the idea that women are a group unto themselves undermines other important factors, notably intent—the reason that noncombatant females were living in the war zone. In this case, women's rationale for being there looms as large as their gender in determining how they experienced the Great War.

4

Adventurers

Women Seeking out the Front Lines

> We are the instruments of the immortal life of the Patria; we are part of a generation that sacrifices itself.
>
> —Maria Luisa Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale (giugno 1915–novembre 1916) Note di un'infermiera*

Along the Italian Front, women lived in the war zone and encountered the violence of war. The literary historian Samuel Hynes has analyzed how ordinary soldiers "bear witness to modern war" in their writings. In *The Soldiers' Tale*, Hynes puts women in a different category from soldiers, believing they did not participate in the culture of war because they did not experience combat.[1] He is right that few women have taken up arms and gone to battle as millions of men have, but he is wrong to make combat the defining characteristic of a war story. Hynes offers a chapter on civilians, the "sufferers," and writes of creating a "Literature of Atrocity" that would coexist with the war stories written by military "agents" of war. The problem with Hynes' approach comes in his delineation of people in only two groups—agents and sufferers. Agents must see or anticipate seeing combat in order to qualify; sufferers must be affected by a war in which they are not actively engaging. The women of this chapter went to the Italian Front voluntarily and thus fall into neither category. They did not use firearms or participate in killing, but they did repair broken bodies to go out and fight again. They lived close enough to the front to experience air attacks, to hear guns firing, and to smell rotting flesh, but they were not soldiers and were not trying to be. They did not think of themselves as the servicemen's equals and probably would have resented an attempt to equate male and female wartime contributions. One male contemporary called them "adventurous altruists," but many women harbored political motivations as well.[2] The

stories of women in the war zone reveal much about male-female relations, social understandings of femininity, and female patriotism.

Approximately 1,300 Italian women volunteers saw action on the front, and those who left a written record provide us with an excellent vehicle for the study of gender roles.[3] Balancing feminine identity with wartime demands was difficult because these women had to act as both womanly caregivers (old-fashioned *donne brave*) and brave patriots willing to risk their lives for the needs of the Patria (wartime *donne italiane*). To immerse herself in an overwhelmingly all-male environment took a certain kind of woman. In some ways, the medical staff, wives, prostitutes, and female journalists at the front were the least likely women to hold onto prewar notions of femininity because they lived among men and had to maintain a sense of duty even in crisis. Yet their status as outsiders also reinforced their femininity. In her study of American women who volunteered to go abroad during the war, historian Susan Zeiger identifies a tension that also existed for women at the Italian Front. Were they in the war zone to "domesticate" the front (i.e., to mitigate its destruction with their nurturing instincts) or were they there to help the Allies win?[4] If it were the former, they would be playing an exclusively female auxiliary role; if the latter, they would become partners with the men working together for the same goal. In reality, women at the front fulfilled both agendas.

Traditionally "Feminine" Work in a New Environment: Nursing

As discussed in Chapter 2, Italian women contributed in numerous ways to the war effort from behind the lines. According to George Trevelyan, who was himself stationed at the Italian Front, the Italian government had wanted to forbid female nurses in the war zone. He claimed the rule was "set aside" for his British staff at Villa Trento in Udine beginning in August 1915, only a few months after Italy's entrance into the war. Eventually, his hospital had 180 beds under the nursing care of British women. For him, "Nothing was more interesting than to see the employment of women nurses begin to take root in the Italian field hospitals around us." Trevelyan found Italian women at the front to be "capable and devoted . . . struggling each to do the work of ten women."[5] Appointed in April 1915, the Duchess Elena of Aosta served as head inspector of Italian nurses and nursing schools. She had served in a similar capacity during the invasion of Libya and had the support of the queen behind her.[6] Trevelyan had nothing but praise for her leadership, calling her "a lady of great wisdom in management and of tireless energy and devotion."[7]

Stefania Bartoloni has mapped out the origins of nursing in Italy in her work derived from her study of the Italian Red Cross (CRI) archives.[8] She describes the first two Italian women sent to the war zone by the CRI, Lydia Tesio and the Marchesa Alberta Marazzani Visconti. They arrived in Palmanova, near Udine, just three days after Italy joined the war. Tesio found her duties difficult: caring for sick men, running the operating room, and having to organize on a moment's notice. Serving at the front with the CRI was an honor that was reserved for women of the highest class and most distinguished service record.[9]

What brought some women to the war zone? Bartoloni explains that women voluntarily went to the war zone for a variety of reasons. Some were curious about what it would be like to live in a traditionally all-male environment; others wanted a break from the monotony of everyday life. Most women combined a sincere desire to contribute to Italy's "just war" with a humanitarian impulse to help: the "adventurous altruist." Some individuals acted on a basic need to be near loved ones, especially those who had been wounded.[10] Most women writing about their reasons cite patriotism. Those who chose to go to the war zone went most often as medical staff—nurses, ambulance drivers, Red Cross inspectors, and radiographers. They served in field hospitals and traveled in hospital trains with wounded men.

Technically, the Italian government banned women from visiting the front, but the military enforced the order infrequently. Devoted wives profited from the lack of surveillance. For example, Berta Allatini Friedmann, married to an Italian officer, made three trips to the front to visit him in person. She saw herself as "a new type of sportswoman" and documented her trips in words and photographs.[11] Similarly, a British ambulance driver noted that the wife of a member of their team was able to elude the authorities in 1915. At first thinking she had come to bid her husband goodbye, he soon realized she was along for the entire trip: "She travelled all across France with Phillip Baker in their 'Ford,' and by a series of most ingenious maneuvers turned up with the rest at Italian headquarters!"[12] She remained there, working as the housekeeper until she accompanied her husband back home to England after he had a nervous breakdown.

Clearly the idea of easing suffering motivated many women to go to the front. Among the almost three hundred British nurses who worked at the Italian front, Sybil Reeves commented on her commitment, "I was so pleased but it made me feel very small and unworthy of this enormous task of representing English gentlewomen's care for the sick."[13] Particularly daring women with few ties at home might have chosen to do their war work close to the front. Most frontline nurses were young and single, often from family backgrounds similar to those of the officers. Hynes concludes

(regarding male volunteers): "A young man goes to war because it is there to go to."[14] In this desire, these women were similar to the men.

Even those without a political agenda maintained a loyalty to their country. Patriotism buoyed the women who lived in and visited the war zone and, to some degree, mitigated the violence they witnessed. Vera Woodroffe, a British woman who volunteered for service in Italy with the British Red Cross, epitomized this mix of personal and patriotic motivations. She believed she was serving her own country by helping Britain's ally. She explained herself in a letter written just after the Caporetto defeat had forced her withdrawal from the front lines: "It has been an [*sic*] most awfully interesting experience and absolutely unique from a woman's point of view. I wish I could tell you all one has done and seen. I do feel it is not everyone's job, and that, swank apart, I am very useful here from many points of view and am frightfully keen on the entente part of it too which is important."[15] Most Italian nurses, such as Mercedes Astuto, Maria Luisa Perduca, and Antonietta Giacomelli, wanted to alleviate the suffering of the wounded Italian soldiers and work for Allied victory. Teresa Garbari became a nurse in order to be allowed to return to her home, which was newly situated near the front, but she worked for Italian victory even against orders from her superior. The British Countess Helena Gleichen went to practice her special skill, radiography, in the Allies' service, and other British women, such as Woodroffe, worked in her unit. Luisa Zeni was a patriot who crossed through the front into Austria in order to spy for the Italians. All of these women, and unnamed hundreds of others, chose to live in the war zone even when it would have been more acceptable for them to stay at home.

Nursing was a popular choice for women who wanted to contribute to the national war effort. "In time of war, no satisfaction can equal that of nursing," wrote Friedmann, who volunteered as a nurse at home when she was not at the front visiting her husband. She believed many women turned to nursing as a way to lose themselves, "to forget the ego that suffers for her dear ones who are far away." Helping others, Friedmann remarked, gave nurses serenity and courage.[16] She correctly noted that nursing connected women with the war and gave them something to focus on other than the absence of loved ones. Their patriotism saw its expression in providing humanitarian aid. The majority of women who traveled voluntarily to the front lines acted as caregivers for wounded soldiers, attending to the soldiers' physical and emotional needs. Nurses had to know how to distract an injured soldier and, in Giacomelli's words, "persuade him that everything is going well," in addition to knowing how to heal his wound.[17] For nurses living at the front, having their own lives in danger only compounded the difficulty of their work.

The nurses' writings reveal that most saw nursing as more than an individual act of humanitarian kindness; it was a patriotic duty. Many romanticized their mission, seeing the soldier as a personification of Italy itself. Maria Luisa Perduca found in the banal act of sponge bathing an opportunity to honor Italian men for their sacrifice and duty; she claimed nursing allowed her to show her appreciation to Italy's people.[18] Trained as a French teacher, Perduca worked as a volunteer Red Cross nurse from 1915 to 1918. She was only 19 when Italy entered the war, and her diary, published in 1917, contains unusually astute observations. Her writing is poetic and literary. She painted a realistic portrait of the Italian army, seeing the soldiers as individual men and describing them without condescension. She came to see the hospital where she worked as her home and the patients and other staff as her family. Overall, Perduca remained patriotically in support of the war, even though she expressed doubts about it at times. She saw herself as an equal of the male soldiers, and she was awarded a Silver Medal of Merit from the Red Cross during the war and a Medal of Public Welfare from the Italian government in 1922. After the war, Perduca founded a CRI division in her native Pavia and later worked as a nurse during World War II.[19] Her attraction to Fascism is confirmed by her early membership in the Pavian Fascio Femminile, the women's group. But she was expelled in 1924 for "indiscipline and political inconsistency."[20] By the end of World War II, she worked with the resistance.[21]

In her patriotic reflection, Perduca compared the bodies of the men to the terrain of Italy: "The thick, wild hair of the soldiers resembles the leafy forests that they knocked down with the axe; the strong, hard bodies recall the roughness of our mountains; the eyes of pure water remember the waters, the night, and the skies of Italy."[22] If the soldiers were Italy incarnate, then Perduca nursed Italy itself back to health as she tended to the wounded men. The nation inscribed itself on the bodies of both men and women living at the front.

With similar visions of caring after Italy's saviors, the nurse Maria Antonietta Clerici refused to leave the side of her patients who were too wounded to travel after Caporetto. In her memoirs, she called herself a "humble Italian woman" with a "heart filled with profound national pride."[23] In fact, Clerici was exceptionally courageous. The invading Austrians took her to Katzenau, the concentration camp set up for pro-Italian prisoners of war and criminals. Despite her attempt to denigrate her sacrifice, Clerici acted with a sense of loyalty, patriotism, and duty that society usually expected only from men. Both Perduca and Clerici openly discussed their strong nationalist feelings in their published diaries.

Motivated by a similar mix of patriotism and altruism, Teresa Garbari became a volunteer nurse.[24] In Austria caring for her sick brother when the

Great War broke out, Garbari wanted to get home to Trento, an Italian-speaking Austrian city. Local officials, afraid of Irredentist Italian sympathizers, forbade Austrians from returning to the contested area. Garbari enrolled in the Austrian Red Cross in order to return legally. This new job allowed her to disguise her pro-Italy sympathies under the cloak of proper femininity. She continued nursing after returning to Trento, treating Italian prisoners of war as well as her assigned Austrian patients. The Austrian government eventually deported her for helping the Italians POWs against the orders of her supervisor. Later she traveled to Udine and Trieste to help Irredentists and was again caught and sent back to Austria. For Garbari, nursing was inseparable from patriotism because it was the vehicle by which she could most directly contribute to Italy's success in the war.

The nurses working in field hospitals along the Italian Front performed a number of different tasks. Although many of their duties mirrored those of nurses stationed at military hospitals throughout Italy, they endured a much more difficult daily life. For example, Mercedes Astuto, an Italian fiction writer who volunteered as a Red Cross nurse during the war and continued publishing into the Fascist era, reported that after heavy shelling one thousand wounded men arrived at her hospital that was designed to hold only three hundred. She witnessed a ghastly scene: everyone on stretchers, on the ground, crying.[25] Not easily shaken, Astuto later received a Medal for Military Valor for her work in a surgical ambulance unit. Astuto published her diary in 1935. Its message of patriotism and self-service must have resonated with the values of the Fascist regime, as it won a prize for being the best monograph on the conflict.[26]

In addition to poor living and working conditions, the nurses were subject to air raids and other bombardments. Numerous memoirs contain descriptions similar to those of Gleichen, the British x-ray technician, who heard the "incessant booming of the big guns" and the "rattle of rifles and machine guns."[27] But the attacks failed to stir much anxiety in the nurses who quickly grew used to the danger. The nurses at the front worked long hours, but they had to remain upbeat for sake of the wounded despite the horrors they encountered.

Nurses had a plethora of responsibilities. Photographs collected by Bartoloni show nurses at the front doing everything from changing bandages to attending funerals.[28] In her diary, Antonietta Giacomelli explained the routine at a field hospital. The nurses helped unload the patients and brought them into the ward. They undressed the soldiers and cleaned the wounds. They fed them and got them into clean beds. Clerici also triaged patients when they arrived at her field hospital and assisted in amputations and other operations by administering chloroform.[29] Nurses on transport trains worked in much the same way.[30] Astuto enumerated the variety of

activities she performed on a hospital train. On their way to the front, the nurses changed all the linens. Once the patients had boarded, they faced a long trip to a recovery hospital in a safe place, such as Naples. Along the way, nurses undressed the wounded men, tracked their vital signs, administered medicine, distributed meals, and wrote letters for them.[31] Talking with patients and acting as confidants, nurses also assumed responsibility for the soldiers' psychological health. For most nurses working at the front, their duties went far beyond refreshing linens and dressings.

The work they performed and the environment in which they did it introduced them to the violence of the war. What one Russian nurse on the Eastern Front wrote about herself easily applies to the volunteer nurses along the Italian Front: "There remained in me less and less of the feminine, and I didn't know whether to be sorry or glad."[32] Women's exposure to war crossed traditional boundaries that had confined the feminine ideal. Nurses at the front knew they were privy to more than other women. Some women questioned whether they were still feminine at all. By nature of being at the front, they were distinctly unfeminine, but in caring for soldiers, they were being maternal.

Many nurses saw themselves as substitute mothers, sisters, or wives, providing love and attention to lonely and injured men. This same maternal relationship surfaced in hospitals throughout Italy, but women at the home front were not subjected to the same intensity of duty because they were not in the line of fire. For the wounded men, the hospital was an oasis, and they appreciated the comforting presence of the female nurses.[33] Nurses fondly remembered being called "sister" by soldiers (*sorella* or *suore*). One nurse admitted that she liked even the way it sounded in German (*schwester*).[34] Countless nurses referred to their patients as "my poor boys" and "my soldiers." Many viewed the men as children, even comparing them to babies who find pleasure in the smallest things. "What a brave boy! What a good child!" one nurse exclaimed about a patient.[35] A British nurse described her Italian patient, who was a lieutenant, as "the little *tenente*."[36] Soldiers were "boys" (*ragazzi*), "little soldiers" (*soldatini*), and "little infantrymen" (*piccoli fanti*) in nurses' memoirs and diaries. The class and education difference between female nurses (usually educated and from the upper or upper-middle classes) and male soldiers (mostly illiterate peasant farmers or working-class laborers) heightened the contrast. The humility of the "simple" soldiers awed some women, who claimed to have a newfound respect for the *gente buona* (good common people). Although most women emphasized their patriotic motives for becoming nurses, the sense of *noblesse oblige* permeates some of the writings by the more well-off women. They were protective of the men and worried about how the war had disrupted their lives. Perduca enthused, "Since our brave soldiers, who

come from the trenches, are for the most part farmers. Oh! The Country will not be able to forget it!"[37] Although nurses saw the "simplicity of children" in soldiers, they claimed that they treated them with a respect born from gratitude.[38]

Some soldiers themselves perpetuated the fantasy, calling out for mamma and accepting the nurse as her substitute. Joshua Goldstein, a scholar of war and international politics, has asserted that this phenomenon occurs across time in the history of warfare.[39] The Great War was no exception. In thank-you notes, soldiers complimented nurses that they had been "like a mother" to them in their darkest hours. One American volunteer, Grace Cleveland Porter, served at an Italian hospital in Florence; she titled her memoir *Mammina Graziosa* (which she defined as "kind, good little mamma") claiming that was her nickname from one of the soldiers.[40]

For the most part, nurses obligingly acted as surrogate mothers. For instance, Perduca admitted that it was hard for soldiers not to have visitors, but she offered herself as a substitute: "We are yours, your mamme and sisters for a day." She believed it was helpful for the soldiers to have women in the hospital: "We speak to the wounded as if they were children and we were mamme or other far away women."[41] Porter also reprinted a letter from the Italian director of her Red Cross hospital that called her "the good fairy, the happy sister of all the soldiers."[42] Nurses self-consciously provided this feminine presence. They consoled the men and reminded them of their individuality. It seems almost no soldiers complained that the women were condescending, a surprising find since some memoirs overflow with patronizing, so-called insights into the male mind. For instance, Zeni, writing about Austrian soldiers, claimed, "everywhere in the world, soldiers are first of all, boys."[43]

Perhaps, as the literary analyst Sandra Gilbert has theorized, soldiers did feel antagonism toward the women who nursed them, but, if so, it surfaced after the war ended. In claiming that writings by men evoke "sinister" nurses, Gilbert and others overestimate male-female tension during the war because they focus on post-Armistice texts.[44] As Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau's study of trench newspapers on the Western Front makes clear, most men missed having women in their lives and embraced any opportunity to interact with the other sex.[45] Audoin-Rouzeau analyzes the soldiers' mixed feelings about the war. On the one hand, they were angry at everyone who remained safe at home (as Gilbert and Paul Fussell speculate). On the other hand, they maintained a high level of affection for female civilians, family and stranger alike. When discussing women they encountered at the front, be they local civilians or nurses who lived there, soldiers expressed pleasure tinged with despair that the meetings were so infrequent and brief. In their own voices, the men of Audoin-Rouzeau's

study had many positive things to say about women. Audoin-Rouzeau cites a French trench newspaper article: "After four months in the trenches the regiment is going for a rest. . . . Here is a new sight: civilians! Better still, there are women, and some are young and pretty. What gentleness after such efforts! A pretty nape of the neck under golden hair, a slender waist, a curving leg seen passing, and at once there appears the distant image of the loved one, and the face of love. Those who have not felt this deprivation of everything that brings charm into one's life will never know how cruel it is."[46] Seeing a woman brought joy to soldiers stationed at the front, as this source and other articles reveal.[47] Their physical femininity, regardless of personality and actions toward the men, was worthy of mention. Especially in the thick of war, many men were not able to see beyond their own death beds, and gratitude was the obvious first response to women who nursed them through wounds and illness. The men at the front, servicemen and surgeons, needed the women's help and attention, and the evidence shows they responded gratefully when they got it.

Redefining Femininity at the Front

Although nurses mostly avoided being sexualized by their soldier patients, they never fully escaped their biology. Because women were scarce in the war zone, even a skilled woman at the front to perform medical procedures could not transcend traditional gender roles. Gleichen, the British radiographer who crisscrossed the eastern Italian Front with her partner Nina Hollings in their own motorcade, reported from a hospital in Gorizia that "after we had finished we were asked to go down to the cellar to cheer up the wounded who had been taken there for safety when the hospital was shelled."[48] Note that the women did their medical work upstairs where the stability of the building was uncertain, while the male patients sat in safety below, awaiting their arrival. After performing as radiographers, Gleichen and Hollings performed as women, cheering up the male troops. This story demonstrates the dual nature of gender identity. Perhaps more than wanting to see the x-ray technicians as women, the soldiers wanted to see themselves as men, and the contrast of having women around reinforced their masculinity. In this sense, these women supported the servicemen's identity—healing them physically and emotionally. Even British women assumed a responsibility for maintaining Italian patriotism, morale, and virility; these women, like their Italian sisters, acted as purveyors of identity and citizenship.

Gleichen described a second experience that reinforces the complex nature of gender relations at the front. At one stop, she left her car for an

hour and returned to find it filled with violets. She noticed that "behind some bushes were hiding a quantity of soldiers, who had rushed off to pick them when we arrived and were hiding to see if we were pleased." Their colonel explained that it had been over a year since they had seen any women, "hence their delight."[49] No matter how adroitly or professionally women acted, at times some men insisted on relating to these women in traditional ways. The gift of the violets illustrates as much about the soldiers' understanding of masculinity—of their duties as men—as of femininity.

These two stories, about the cheering up and the flowers in the car, appear in Gleichen's memoir. She highlighted the times men at the front needed her to show a feminine side. From another source, a different picture appears of what people thought about Gleichen and Hollings and their mobile x-ray unit. In a letter home, the British volunteer nurse Vera Woodroffe relayed the gossip about her bosses. A man "who seemed to know everyone up there" warned Woodroffe before she arrived in Udine that Gleichen was "a masculine sort of woman dontcher know but awfully competent, likes her own way though!" His designation of her as "masculine" further underscores the prevailing notions of femininity. She was under no man's authority and worked in an exclusively male profession. Gleichen acted in a feminine manner when she needed to but otherwise was content to be her own individual. After working for the pair, Woodroffe was able to appreciate the efforts of the x-ray team while still chafing under the strict rule: "They seem to know their job jolly well and have worked awfully well and hard. But of course as a result of having had exactly their own way and overridden the entire Italian army for two years, they are a bit autocratic." Combined with Gleichen's own account, this view confirms that Gleichen and Hollings were atypical women at the front. In fact, Woodroffe wrote her mother that "everybody looks after the pampered pet the radoiographic [*sic*] section and we are in with everybody and everything and couldn't be better looked after." They "live in great luxury and draw Italian first 1 line rations (cigarettes etc) which are prepared by an ex cook from the Savoy."[50] Trevelyan singled out the Radiographic Unit for praise, extolling their "valuable work where it was most needed."[51] These were women living squarely in the war zone; their actions were well known by British and Italian men at the front, and they were rewarded for performing their radiography with first-class treatment by the military.

Other women made different wartime contributions at the front. Marina Carloni, for example, encouraged women to teach illiterate servicemen why they were fighting.[52] Bemoaning society's limited roles for women, Carloni wrote, "We will never have the sublime satisfaction of displaying ourselves for our Divine Italy. We will never have in our memories the violent impressions of a fight against our cruel enemy!" She sighed, "To

be a man and to be able to take a rifle and run there to our border!" She devised an appropriately feminine way to work for Italian victory. She was surprised by how ignorant many of the soldiers were about the causes of the Great War. Her observations were on target; conscripts were poor and uninformed members of the lowest classes. She called on other women, teachers especially, to head to the front to conduct what amounted to propaganda "conferences" among the troops. Carloni believed that women did not belong in the war zone, but she could not help wanting to make a substantial (i.e., not traditionally female) contribution to the cause. Her decision to create a female niche was ingenious, because it gave her what she wanted—a chance to set out for the front and to experience the war firsthand, unhindered by her sex—without making her look unfeminine or eccentric.

This question of how women could cross gender boundaries to serve Italy resonated for many women. One response to the chaos of the war was to mitigate traditional male-female divisions. For example, the uniforms worn by nurses were designed to defeminize them so they would blend in more easily and, one assumes, so they would not be attractive targets for sexually predatory soldiers. Figure 4 shows the cover of the magazine *La Donna* with a photograph of a nurse standing near her patients. In her collection of photographs of nurses at the front, Bartoloni notes that the bulky Red Cross uniforms weighed down the women and denied the existence of the body; they looked similar to the traditional habits worn by nuns.[53] Headdresses covered almost all of the hair; long sleeves and ankle-length skirts covered all the skin except for the hands and face. Even the crisis of the Great War did not erase gendered obligations for men or women, but it did allow women to venture into the public arena.

Some women supplanted traditional notions of femininity by using the ultrahazardous conditions of war as an excuse to act "like men" by performing courageous acts. In a short story written by Zeni, Lea, the heroine, is "not a feminine creature, but rather an audacious and strong spirit."[54] The character becomes a nurse and serves in a field hospital. She acts as a guide for the soldiers until she is caught in the crossfire and injured. Lea typifies the real women who defied convention through their bravery.

Zeni wrote fiction, but real-life examples exist of female courage at the front. Zeni (herself a volunteer nurse, writer, and spy) reported with pride how Maria Antonietta Clerici, Maria Audina, and Maria Concetta Chludzinska remained at the front with their male patients who were too ill to retreat after Caporetto. As a result, the Austrians took them as prisoners of war along with the soldiers. Like Audina, Clerici was from Como, and both women were stationed at Fredda, near Porteole. Chludzinska was from the Venezia region and was stationed at Gervasutta near Udine.

The women were interned at the Katzenau camp for five months in 1918.[55] For Clerici, the decision to stay was easy because of her patriotism and her strong sense of duty: "I could not leave those boys, who have given everything to the Patria."[56] She, like many male soldiers, was especially concerned about how her absence would affect her mother. Clerici and other women went beyond the call of duty, trampling on older notions of what women could withstand.

Women who defied traditional gender behavior patterns often did so because they felt themselves allied with the male soldiers. Antonietta Giacomelli was in her sixties and already a published writer when the war began. She was a third order Franciscan who became a volunteer nurse; she published two "diaries" of her Great War experience that read more like propaganda than personal reflection. She continued to write extensively during the Fascist years and published another diary during World War II.[57] She lived in Treviso and Ziano di Fiemme before Italy joined the Great War but then went to Trento and Padua in 1915.[58] She traveled throughout the war and served in a field hospital in the war zone from January to March 1917 as a Samaritana, a member of a group like the Red Cross but with formal ties to the Catholic Church. Giacomelli reported that during an air raid she and another nurse insisted on staying alongside a patient, Castelli, who was too sick to be moved. He wanted them to seek shelter. "You are not soldiers," Castelli told them. One nurse smiled "sweetly," and Giacomelli replied, "Yes, we are also soldiers, son; and we are thus content to share one crumb of your dangers."[59] Giacomelli knew her duties were different from those of the soldiers; her diaries make clear that she saw herself as a maternalistic caregiver to the Allied troops. But at a crucial moment when she could have taken refuge in her sex to avoid her nursing duties, she chose to identify with her male patient and risk her life to remain with him. In one view Giacomelli equated herself with men, and her decision, like Clerici's during the Caporetto retreat, provides some evidence of women taking on masculine attributes. But her experience also makes clear the elision of gender differences. Castelli himself was not performing the traditionally masculine role because he was too feeble to provide adequate protection for the women. Meanwhile, Giacomelli reasserted duty at the expense of self.

The chaos of battle taught both men and women new lessons. While they were under attack, Castelli philosophized to the two nurses that "in certain moments of combat . . . it seems that to live or to die is the same thing." It is easy to see why a soldier would adopt such a stoic, even fatalistic, point of view. What is more surprising is that Giacomelli agreed with him; "Yes, to live or to die, it does not matter," she said, "because it is doing your duty."[60] She was a patriot proud to serve Italy. As a woman, she saw

nursing as the most useful and direct way to help Italy win the war. As a nurse, she put the well-being of her patients before her own, thus refusing the easy escape her biology could have provided her. The experience of the Great War made nursing a "female" profession, but it muddled the meaning of "feminine" in the process.

Paul Fussell has written that the Great War forever changed not only the young officers who volunteered to serve but also the British cultural view of masculinity. The survivors, Fussell explains, returned to society as broken men, feeling the war had cut them off from their idyllic past. Despite Fussell's inattention to women, the idea of a "lost youth" was not unique to men. In her postwar memoir, the British nurse Vera Brittain marveled at "my contemporaries, who had lived a lifetime of love and toil and suffering and yet were only in their early twenties, dancing in the vain hope of recapturing the lost youth that the War had stolen."[61] In 1917, Perduca turned 21 years old. She looked back on her prewar past with nostalgia and melancholy, writing, "The final years of my adolescence, the laugh of some foreign friends, now hurled here and there by the terrible events; divided, hostile, enemies." Nursing, according to Perduca, improved the women, introducing them to a new part of themselves: "The war has changed us, matured us before our time."[62] Like men, women at the front realized the war had forever altered their futures. Clerici recalled what her idea of the future had been and scoffed, "it does not exist anymore, it cannot ever exist."[63] The war may have forced people to grow up faster than they otherwise would have, but it also gave them a chance to experience unique adventures and to be braver than they thought they were.

Closely tied to the idea of a "lost youth" is the concept of a cohesive generation that marked itself apart from others. Fussell and the historian Robert Wohl have demonstrated convincingly that the young men who served in the Great War saw themselves as the "Generation of 1914." These scholars delineate the group by age, service, and sex, assuming that only male soldiers experienced the violence of war.[64] Reading the diaries of nurses who lived in the war zone reveals that they, too, saw themselves as part of the "Generation of 1914." Perduca described the war as a destroyer of the personal dreams of her age group. "We were born to love, to live our little life" in peace, she observed, but the war had snatched away any semblance of normalcy. She questioned the cost of the war but ultimately came to believe the vast sacrifices were worthwhile. In grieving for a soldier who had not survived an attempted amputation, Perduca justified his death: "We are the instruments of the immortal life of the Patria; we are part of a generation that sacrifices itself."[65] That she used *we* instead of *they* is important. She did not believe men and women were making the

same contribution to the war, but she saw herself as similar to the soldiers because they both worked for the common patriotic goal of Italian victory.

Women and men serving at the front, especially those of the generation of 1914, often shared a sense of camaraderie. Clerici felt herself at one with the male troops. In fact, she expressed a desire to serve alongside them: "I want to be with you, oh good, heroic, holy soldiers of Italy" who fight "to save women, your children, honor, and the sacred soil of the Patria." After hearing about the Italians' bitter defeat at Caporetto, Clerici felt "my own share of responsibility." Although "they lost," she vows "we will work, we will make it right."[66] Her feeling of alliance with male troops was compounded by her experience of being taken to Austria to be interned as a prisoner of war. Many nurses commented that they had more in common with their patients then with women who had no firsthand exposure to the violence of war. Perduca also spoke of the *fraternity* between nurses and patients and sometimes referred to a patient as *brother*. She felt allied with the soldiers, using *we* to mean herself and the men: "Now we are ready to bear everything together, for you, Patria, for you whom we love like life, more than life, more than everything else that we love!" At one point she wrote "*siamo uomini*," which can mean "we are men" or "we are human." In either sense, Perduca stressed men and women's shared humanity. She poetically remarked that "life is in the same plane as death, today yours for mine, tomorrow mine for yours."[67] Perhaps it was the acquisition of maturity, strength, and skepticism that made women at the front feel "less and less of the feminine."[68]

Servicemen and women at the front shared some aspects of the war experience. In her memoir, Clerici referred to "all of us who worked in the war zone."[69] Both sexes worked long hours and lived on the edge of emotional stability. Discussing her fatigue, Perduca confessed, "I must feel the same sad sensation of the soldier."[70] Perduca sometimes expressed a sense of hopelessness that she imagined the troops in the trenches must have felt. At the other end of the emotional spectrum, men and women enjoyed happier experiences. Astuto and the other nurses, "the only women in this great sea of men in gray-green," were invited to the army's celebration of the anniversary of the taking of Gorizia.[71] The ultimate evidence that the service of women was sometimes equated with men's lies in the military cemetery at Redipuglia where nurses were buried alongside soldiers. One woman's epitaph states, "remain with us, sorella."[72] Luisa Zeni's memoir, *Briciole*, lists the names of the Red Cross nurses who died "on the field of duty." According to the Italian Red Cross, forty women died in service; two were wounded, and three were taken prisoner.[73] Zeni reported that seven died of exhaustion and the others from sickness contracted while on duty. Six received medals for military valor.[74]

Duty, however, did not mean the same thing to men and women. *Imboscato* was the popular word used to malign a war dodger. Berta Allatini Friedmann referred to herself using the feminine version of the word in a lighter sense. Regarding her time as a nurse at the home front during an influenza epidemic, she wrote: "In those days one can say that I worked like a donkey . . . but I considered myself happily *imboscata* (!) since mine was a surgical hospital, and it seemed therefore that our doors always had to be closed in the face of the insidious sickness."[75] Her appropriation of the word implies that she felt women had wartime duties just like men did, although her use of the term is lighthearted, as evidenced by the exclamation point. It is important to note that Friedmann was thinking of a time when she was living safely far behind the lines, not to her later travels to the front. Gleichen also referred to herself as an *imboscata* for retreating to Cormons from Gorizia, where the Italian army was based. Meanwhile, her partner remained in Gorizia. Of her, she wrote, "If she likes living in an underground room with all the windows stopped up by sandbags, it is not for me to argue, but it is not to my taste." In some cases, women's experience genuinely replicated that of the troops, but usually women's lives were far easier. Like Italian soldiers, Gleichen lived with rats and endured air raids, shelling, and gas attacks. But she viewed it all as an adventure. She left food out for the rats in her room, treating them almost as pets. She collected shells as souvenirs, watched a "thrilling" aerial dog fight, and claimed a gas attack was "a great joke, there being much laughter at the miserable appearance of everyone."[76] To be fair, she was British and these descriptions could be classified as exemplary of the stoic Phlegm style described by Fussell.[77] Yet because her book was published long after the war, her lighthearted tone is somewhat surprising.

Other women wrote more graphic accounts of what they saw. An American journalist, upon visiting the Western Front and being astonished by the "overpowering" stench of dead bodies, stated that "any lingering belief I may have had in the grandeur and glory of war died that night beside that silver lake—died of an odor."[78] She, like some women along the Italian Front, conveyed the horrific destruction caused by the war.

The diaries of the Italian nurses Perduca and Astuto stand out for their vivid language and thoughtful observations. Both women wrote openly about such topics as amputations, frostbite, typhus, and death. Perduca, in particular, spared few gory details. For example, a soldier had a bad wound: "His knee had been shattered by a grenade; was it a knee or was it a shapeless mass of bleeding ground flesh, from which greenish pus ran?" Of an amputation, she wrote how "blood gushed from the cut vessels" as the surgeon sawed off the leg.[79]

Women could be surprisingly clinical in their anecdotes. One French nurse, Louise Weiss, served at the Western Front. She told of moving a

wounded soldier into her home: "One of the local women took him by the armpits. I took his feet. He groaned. At the landing, I missed my footing. The chap slipped on to me. His pants split open and his penis, thwack! was crushed against my face."[80] Although it brings a smile, this story epitomizes the juggling act nurses had to perform daily. Officially asexual and off-limits to patients, they were repeatedly exposed to male anatomy.

Most of the associations with bodies were not so light-hearted as Weiss's. Perduca associated the smell of "alcohol, gasoline, nitrate pastels, the burning hot cauterizations sizzling on the flesh" with the war's destruction.[81] She knew how hard the war was on the men, and her writing went beyond emotional empathy to reveal the gory details of war. In contrast, Giacomelli discussed amputations and death almost exclusively in the context of patriotic sacrifice. Perduca was a patriot who remained in favor of the war, but in her memoir she questioned whether it was worth so much pain and horror. This honest approach to writing what she experienced gives her book an intimate and personal voice, somewhat unique compared to other wartime personal narratives by either men or women.

Like the soldiers, most women at the front found that "death is so close that it seems a natural thing," to quote the Marinaz sisters.[82] Encountering the horrors of war every day made most people stoic. The unflappable tone of the diary written by these two sisters, who were Austrian nurses along the Italian Front, demonstrates how women could endure the violent destruction of war. With few exclamation points, they discussed bombs, machine-gun fire, and other battle noises matter-of-factly, as if they were mundane details: "The cannons sound always louder and closer" and "we hear the infernal noise of projectiles." They were concerned for their safety, in fact they eventually evacuated their home in Gorizia, but they did not cower in fear. After the Austrian advance at Caporetto, the sisters returned to a devastated Gorizia and concluded that "this war has reduced similar people to beasts."[83] Many people saw that the war brought out the worst in humans. Gleichen complained, "In war we do all we can to help the wounded on both sides and yet do our best to kill. It is all so illogical."[84] People living at the front reconciled themselves to this contradiction and many others too.

Male-Female Relations at the Front

Gleichen theorized that the Great War would not be the last war because an innate "hunting lust" exists in people—both men and women. Most contemporary Italians would not have agreed that women have an instinct for hunting. Femininity usually involved being caring, self-sacrificing, and

giving. Masculinity had its own set of characteristics. In their writings, women at the front typecast the soldiers and developed a new definition of what it meant to be manly. The nurses admired soldiers who were brave and patriotic but also tender. An American woman praised the Italian soldiers for having such "fidelity to duty, uncomplaining patience and quiet heroism."[85] The men's ability to accept their duty, even to be enthusiastic about doing it, was also a key component of masculinity. Friedmann wrote that her husband was, of course, "happy" to go to the front; her cousin Eric had endured months in the trenches but remained "full of enthusiasm."[86] An Italian captain of artillery wrote to his mother, "We are as happy and gay as though we were taking part in a wedding feast, in which the sweetest melody is the sound of the cannon and the machine gun."[87] His naïve enthusiasm evokes the British Phlegm style, and the fact that the letter was published shows how admired such a sentiment was during the war. Significantly, this passage was written in the early months of the war; more than likely, the author felt less effusive as the war dragged on.

Not all men overlooked the destructive power of the war. Perduca overheard one soldier warning another: "You will see, you will see up there there are ugly things, sad things, but there are also beautiful things, high and mighty things that you cannot imagine can be done by men!" The nurses would have agreed that the men seemed capable of everything, a result of their belief in "the virile power of their spirit."[88]

Describing a Sicilian soldier, Astuto wrote that he was "simple, good, brave, in other words a man." In addition to courage, nurses admired honesty and simplicity in soldiers. A hero was a man who did things, including suffering, without complaint. Perduca wanted to tend to her patients' physical and emotional pain. Nurses' memoirs overflow with recollections of wounded men who went out of their way not to inconvenience the nurses. They often suffered in silence, or at least in quiet. In part because of the class difference, the nurses saw the patients as simple men. Giacomelli was surprised to find some who could not even explain why Italy was involved in the Great War. Instead of criticizing their ignorance, she admired the men even more for their blind devotion.[89] To the nurses, the unassuming men took on heroic proportions. Writing about a dead soldier, Perduca emphasized his class origins: "he was a little unknown infantryman, an obscure worker of the earth, now he is a Hero."[90] Being masculine meant being a soldier without drawing too much attention. Heroism came with humility.

From women's point of view, a man should show, at the appropriate moment, individuality and human compassion. Perduca observed that most soldiers did not tremble before death, yet, when they left her hospital, they said grateful goodbyes to the nurses and some stoically held off tears. The women praised the men who let out some emotion. Perduca felt that,

since they had been brave for so long, men could express their relief by crying once they found themselves in the comparative safety of the field hospital.[91] Similarly, Giacomelli noted that the symptoms of shell shock were honorable when the soldier had truly suffered in the trenches. The same delirium, however, resulting from alcoholism was completely dishonorable to her.[92] Nurses begrudged soldiers no weakness that derived from their war service.

The image of the battle-hardened soldier with a soft heart recurs in nurses' writings. Perduca described a conversation with an old volunteer: "When he spoke of the war, his eyes sparkled, when he spoke of his 'old lady,' his eyes softened."[93] Perduca has seized on the dual nature of wartime masculinity—a man should have an ardent love of the war (and by extension of duty and of the Patria) and a tender love for his wife. The women at the front felt the soldiers missed being around their wives, mothers, and girlfriends. Giacomelli related how much soldiers loved getting mail from their wives and how they hoped to be transferred to a base hospital near their hometown.[94]

It was not just male-female relationships that softened a man's heart; many demonstrated affection for their fellow soldiers that the nurses found touching. Perduca told of a patient whose captain was injured in an attack. The troops wanted to bring him along, but he insisted on being left behind. The men were crying but obeyed. Then the enemy attacked with gas, killing the captain.[95] In Perduca's retelling of this story, both the patient and the dead captain were worthy of admiration for their bravery, their acceptance of death, and their ability to reveal their emotions. In a similar case, Astuto had a patient who continued to call out for his tenente even in the hospital because his attachment to him was so deep.[96] In their writing, women memorialized the men who had an impact on them. Although they encountered many different individuals, the ones who were brave, patriotic, and loving stood out as the archetypes.

The nurses idealized the men in the same way as the men idealized them. Yet many women who voluntarily went to the front acknowledged their own bravery, if not explicitly then implicitly by publishing their own war stories. Simultaneously, most women also reported feeling a sense of camaraderie with the men.

Camaraderie could lead to romantic attachment, but I found no women's diaries that discuss in detail such a relationship between nurses and soldiers. Maria Naepflin, a Swiss nurse who served on the Austrian side in a hospital in Trieste (among other places), claimed, "Undeniably many a romantic attachment was also formed between nurses and officers or doctors."[97] She complained about the difficulty of remaining a "respectable nurse." Woodroffe, the British volunteer radiographer serving with

Gleichen's team, also felt the reputation of the women on staff needed careful vigilance. She wrote to her mother expressing her dismay that the other women would not obey her rules about keeping separate mess halls: "In a mixed unit things must be kept distinct, anyway they are going to be as long as I am here." It was the men who "wished for us to mess together," but Woodroffe was cautious about agreeing.

At Villa Trento, the base for British ambulance operations and a field hospital, the entire staff ate together, but they were almost exclusively British. Sybil Reeves, a VAD stationed there, wrote in her diary about camaraderie, perhaps keeping her standards a little low for the men: "There is an extraordinary feeling of genuine friendliness here amongst everyone—the men also are so ready and eager to do anything and it's wonderful how they are roughing it when three-fourths of them are Varsity men used to such a different life."[98] At Woodroffe's villa (Villa Zucco, also in Cormons) the staff was a mix of British and Italians, and she believed "it is quite a different thing to do it with the Italian mess." Her main worry was that "if we are not very careful we shall have the section talked about and particularly by the other English out here."[99] It pushed the boundaries of respectability to intermix with British men, but to do so with Italians was practically unthinkable to Woodroffe. Not everyone had her standards, however, as her complaints about the nurse who allowed the men and women to relax together demonstrate.

In all the diaries and memoirs examined here, only one account exists of a woman who married a soldier she had met, but she was a civilian not a nurse.[100] The most famous novels in English about the Italian Front, Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms* and Mark Helprin's *A Soldier of the Great War*, focus on love stories between nurses and male patients. Nonfictional accounts of the war do not emphasize such romantic involvement.[101] Perhaps it was not only that many nurses were concerned with keeping good reputations. In his unpublished diary from 1917–1918, Private Horace Wright, who was British, explained there might have been some resistance on the part of the men as well: "Near the camp was a British Hospital [Villa Trento]—operating theatre for severe cases only—and when it was rumored that British nurses were here there was considerable "wind up" in the Battalion. However, three of them turned up without officers to see the "What-Nots," and after that the "wind" died down because—well, how shall we put it—well, no doubt they were splendid at their work but were—er—more—er—more useful than ornamental."[102] Wright's ideals about femininity come through loud and clear: the women were not pretty enough to attract male attention. Whether the women wished they were continues to be a mystery. Wright was careful not to denigrate their skills, but his honesty reveals that even in the midst of war, in an almost all-male

environment, traditional standards of feminine beauty remained. The men did not want just any woman, even a British one, they wanted to see, meet, and gossip about a beautiful or sexy woman.

The lack of romance in nurse-patient relationships does not signify a lack of male-female sexual relations; prostitution was legal and even overseen by the government. Naepflin reported that "recognized pleasure houses were a fixture at every stop along the rail lines" on the Austrian side, and the same held true on the Italian one.[103] In his study of soldiers and prostitutes, Antonio Sema reveals the army attempted to control the health of prostitutes by setting up official brothels in towns located near the front.[104] Using archival material from the Royal Army, Sema analyzes how the army institutionalized prostitution. Although the official policy was to discourage prostitution, army officials realized the sale of sex would happen regardless of their efforts. With the health of the soldiers in mind, the Italian government instituted a campaign against sexually transmitted diseases that focused on controlling the women who were registered as prostitutes instead of the men who were patronizing them. Of course, a number of clandestine prostitutes worked outside officially sanctioned channels, and their health was impossible to monitor. In addition to the local population, women came from all over Italy, according to one contemporary source, to work in the lucrative trade. Sema's book shows that almost all women living near the front were under surveillance by an Italian government determined to deport infected women before they endangered the troops. Other than Sema, very few historians have examined prostitution along the Italian Front. Records are scarce, and no prostitute working along the Italian Front published her autobiography.

How widespread was prostitution? According to Sema, in the summer of 1917 at least a dozen brothels existed to serve the Third Army (some catered only to officers, others to infantrymen). Some were official brothels, others clandestine.[105] Other sources corroborate the extent of prostitution. In one official report, the head censor of the British forces in Italy quoted from several letters in which the soldiers discussed prostitution. One soldier described the brothels in Vicenza, a town accessible when soldiers were on leave: "Fancy, they have put a few houses in Vicenza and Thiene out of bounds!! Why, the whores will only parade the streets and take you to some other house unknown to the Police. The proper thing to do would be to have proper medically examined houses *available only* for the British Forces, they say it is the Italians who spread all the disease."[106]

The excerpts selected for the report on the Italian Front focused on the soldiers' "morality" (the section heading), but clearly the censors wanted the military officials to know what the men thought about sex and venereal disease as well. Speaking not only of his own sexual needs, one soldier

wrote, "If they want to stop all the Venereal, they will have to give us Leave every four months like the French have. It is the silly old fools who can't do anything who think we can do without a bit of 'Fresh' every now and then." The British soldiers felt they were not getting adequate access to women, and, when they were, they complained about a lack of information. Clearly annoyed, one officer recorded his opinion in a letter: "All Leave to Italy has now been stopped because young officers won't take *precautions*. In several places I have seen notices printed in Italian telling you what to do *after*. Why don't they have these notices printed in English, or else issue unofficially to all a few words on How to prevent getting a dose!" Another soldier took his parents instead of the military to task for not warning him of the danger of sexually transmitted disease. Angered by their warnings for him to "run straight," he responded:

> I have seen and heard authentically more about the ravages of venereal disease than what you have. I have dressed civilians, old men, with huge sores caused by syphilis. I have seen many a young lad reporting sick with a "dose", poor chaps. They have not known which way to look. . . . if you had, or my father had warned me not only of the loss of manhood, but the actual physical danger, incurred by associating with women of easy virtue, when I left school, it would have been more to the point.
>
> All the knowledge I possess, I have gained in devious ways, mainly through my own efforts, actuated by one of our greatest blessings, curiosity.
>
> I think I am what we call decent inherently. But, if in addition to my birthright I had known more, you would have been saved many an anxious thought (which I assure your dear heart are needless) whilst I have been away from you.[107]

His frank discussion of sexual adventures to his mother reveals that he felt it to be commonplace, if not uniformly acceptable. His letter demonstrates that his father had warned him even before he joined the army not to be with prostitutes or other loose women. But it was in the military that he finally learned the lesson. He and the other soldiers writing home recognized the necessity of sex for soldiers and the reality of prostitution. Audoin-Rouzeau's study of trench journalism on the Western Front identified the same longing. He cites several examples of soldiers' expressing sexual frustration.[108] For most soldiers, the major concerns were accessibility to women and freedom from disease. They were not worried about the physical or psychological health of the women involved except as it affected them.

It has been impossible to find personal narratives written by women providing sex to soldiers, but others mention them in passing. For example, Clerici saw 51 young women traveling with the Austrian army as it

occupied former Italian territory after Caporetto. She explained that most were young women who had been following the troops for "three or more years." Clerici was keen to note that these women shared the fatigue and experience of war with the male servicemen. But she complained that some "brought a breath of immodesty and libertine life" to the area.[109] Some of these women were probably wives or girlfriends, and others were most likely nurses. Many might also have been acting as members of a traveling brothel. Of course, civilians who would not think of themselves as prostitutes likely were paid in favors, not in money, for sex with soldiers encamped in their town.

An article in a French trench newspaper demonstrates that some servicemen genuinely cared about their relationships with local women: "Those girls from the mining villages were attractive to look at! Tall and slim, with dark eyes! They offered us hospitality . . . And then a little love here and there, a snatched kiss, a brief embrace . . . sometimes more . . . You went off to the trenches and you thought about them, at night, in the dugout, under the shelling."[110]

Another example comes from my own family. T. A. Barrow, one of my great-grandfathers, kept the letters he exchanged with a French woman from Saumur, where he was based during the war. He was not married, and they corresponded in French during and for a short time after the war. He later married an American schoolteacher, but the letters survived. Local women acted as surrogate girlfriends and were objects of soldiers' affection. Not quite prostitutes, these women nevertheless performed at least one of the same functions as prostitutes by temporarily distracting soldiers from the war.

Sex was the topic of much discussion, even by women. Maria Naepflin's diary corroborates Clerici's sighting of prostitutes. Naepflin lamented the difficulty of remaining a respectable nurse among the female assistants who were a "random assortment" of "man-crazy adventuresses who degraded our profession with their shameful behavior and provided rich material for slander." She was outraged by the official "pleasure houses" that "were a fixture at every stop along the rail lines."[111] Although she referred to the Austrian situation, there is no reason to think her observation that prostitution was rampant was confined to the Austrian case. And even if her comments applied only to Austria, they still reflect the situation along the Italian Front because so much land changed hands from Austria to Italy and back again.

Naepflin could not hide her contempt for prostitutes in her memoir. She wrote of the "fiasco" of having "to police over one hundred fallen girls" on a train trip from Vienna to Innsbruck. She was concerned about their spreading venereal disease among the Austrian soldiers and was "disgusted

by these sick women, who strutted in their elegant dresses, believing that fur and silk could conceal their sick bodies from public eyes." She loathed their "moral depravity" and resented what she perceived as a lack of regret among them. Displaying no sense of feminine alliance, Naepflin preferred the company of the soldiers in the other rail cars who, she claimed, shared her distaste for the prostitutes. She clearly felt she had less in common with the "fallen girls" than with male soldiers, providing an example of how slippery feminine identity could be for women at the front.[112]

The situation was well enough known for Antonietta Giacomelli to devote several paragraphs in her diary to warning soldiers to stay away from prostitutes. She advised them not to patronize prostitutes; instead, they should think of the women as if they were their sisters, driven to selling their bodies. "You are good, deep down you love your family, you feel respect for women," Giacomelli wrote, calling on them to rise above their base inclinations. She reminded them of the misfortune such women (especially if civilians from occupied lands) had endured. If these references to chivalry and marital duty were not enough, she added that, for their own health and safety, they should avoid prostitutes. She hoped soldiers would return from war able to fulfill their "most sacred duty," that of making the next generations of Italians "healthy, strong, virtuous."[113] Giacomelli made a good case for why prostitution should be avoided, but it is doubtful many soldiers heeded her advice.

Of course, true love was not completely absent in the war zone. Wives and mothers sometimes visited the front, and a few took up residence to be near their husbands or sons. Born in France, Berta Allatini Friedmann was well traveled with an international outlook, and her sympathies clearly lay with Italy and the Allies. She traveled from her home in Livorno several times to see her husband Guido at the front, usually bringing their children along, too. In Bassano, she settled in a boarding house to be near Guido, who was stationed there, until she could no longer evade the restriction that forbade wives from accompanying husbands. Later, she traveled by train to Udine and again took up residence. Her landlady gave her lectures about how a good wife should always be patient and indulgent with her husband. Friedmann may not have followed that advice, but her memoir reveals that she and Guido had a close marriage and that she was simultaneously independent and loyal.

As a trained nurse in Livorno and as the wife of an Italian officer living alongside him at the front, Friedmann got to see the war from two different perspectives. Her memoir offers vivid descriptions of her daily activities but few insights that analyze why she sought out life in the war zone. Guido went to the front in May 1915, leaving her and the children "shaken," living "as if in a dream." But she did not rush to his side for her own comfort, she

came at his invitation. Once there, however, she embraced the opportunity to see the war firsthand. While in the war zone, Friedmann did more than wait for her husband. She frequently borrowed a car and traveled up and down the Italian Front, visiting male cousins at their posts and touring hospitals. Her book includes many photographs that depict life at the front. They show anti-air guns, observatories nestled in the mountains, trenches, destroyed neighborhoods and churches, and different hospitals. She saw herself both as a competent individual, capable of living in dangerous places, and as a wife and mother, responsible for the well-being of her family. She worried that "a mother of a family does not have the right to expose herself to danger."[114] Soon enough, she reconciled herself to war, and it became everyday life. For example, while in Udine, she and the children (and their dog!) endured such frequent air raids that they became inured to them. She explained that, since the bombs fell randomly, there was no point in trying to avoid them, so the family did not even head for the shelters when attacked. Fortunately, all of her family survived the war. When the armistice came, she was on her way to be with Guido again, this time to celebrate their wedding anniversary. Her journeys were difficult and costly. She had to evade bureaucratic red tape in order to travel, and once with Guido she had to avoid the dangers of life in the war zone. If it had been easy and inexpensive to be at the front, certainly more wives would have made the trip.

Another woman who lived near the front because of her husband's work was the American Gertrude Slaughter. The middle-aged wife of the Delegate of the American Red Cross in Venice, Slaughter fondly described her adventurous life in Italy during the Great War. Her memoir, published in English by Yale University Press in 1927, recounts her activities, such as socializing with the Venetian elite, negotiating the locations of hospitals, and setting up nurseries and workhouses for local citizens. Her most significant contribution to the war effort was organizing a children's hospital and a convalescent home for soldier's children to take the "sea-cure." Her memoir offers descriptions of life during the war. For example, she opened the book with a memory of Venice under fire: "Night after night, as we have hung over the marble railing losing the fatigue of the day's labor in the loveliness of Venice, we have seen the sky burst into flashes of flame, while the great stone house shook to its foundations and the windowpanes rattled in their frames and the thunder of bombs clashed and reverberated through the lagoons. And for days and nights the roaring of the guns was never silenced except now and then by the hoarse grumble of a Caproni soaring overhead."[115] Despite such proximity to the fighting (after the Caporetto retreat, Venice was as close as 16 miles from the front), Slaughter used an aloof and celebratory tone. She discussed the air raids without any

trace of fear. Perhaps she believed her status as a foreign dignitary or as a member of the upper class would protect her. Her confidence was not tested as she never had to face Austrian troops. In any case, she certainly felt she belonged in Venice.

The content of her memoir reveals that Slaughter focused on performing duties that were traditionally gendered female and identified as obligations that the upper classes had to the rest of society. She wrote about civilian life and women and children left alone in Venice, and she saved many of the mementos the locals made for her and her husband.[116] Her own actions and the fact that she saw her duty in an exclusively feminine and upper-class way mark her as one of the most traditional women who wrote about their experiences at the front. Slaughter's class and gender identities were intimately bound together. When she took prerogatives with old-fashioned gender boundaries, she justified the behavior because of her class and her official tie to the Red Cross. And when she stepped outside the narrow world of Venetian elite, she relied on her gender (a woman trying to help poor mothers and children) to warrant that conduct.

"Unfeminine" Female Work

Although most women were at the front to do work typically gendered female (nursing or charity) or to visit male relatives, another category of women existed: women who completely disassociated themselves from traditional female roles. In Russia, the Women's Battalion of Death originally enlisted over two hundred women who volunteered to go into battle.[117] One American woman commented that the Russian "girls in it have forgotten everything they were ever taught as women."[118] A member told an interviewer: "Once at the front, I forgot whether I was a man or a woman. I was just a soldier."[119] Like the all-female battalion at the Eastern Front, female martyrs, guides, medical technicians, and spies at the Italian Front made individual contributions to the war that transcended stereotypes.

Some women earned official recognition for their bravery. Maria Abriani received the Medal of Honor for guiding Italian troops through Ala (a town of about five thousand) in defiance of Austrian orders. The Italians arrived to an ambush, and from her home Abriani could hear the fighting. "No man from the village presented himself," so Abriani decided to help the Italians skirt around the Austrians. After eight hours, the Italians secured Ala.[120] Other types of accomplishments also got women noticed. In her celebration of Italian war heroines, Anna Soldati Manis

overtly compared women's sacrifices to men's. Going beyond the usual praise of mothers who willingly sacrificed their sons for Italy's cause, Soldati Manis glorified wives of martyred heroes. To her the wives of Italian patriots, such as Caterina Sauro and Ernesta Battisti, were heroines in their own right.[121] With anecdotes culled from newspapers across Italy, Soldati Manis' collection demonstrates the variety of ways women participated in the war.

Whereas Friedmann and Slaughter sought out the front for personal reasons, the British countess Helena Gleichen went to contribute her medical expertise. She and her partner Nina Hollings formed a radiography team. Raised as British aristocracy, Gleichen was the daughter of Prince and Princess Victor of Hohenlohe Langenberg, and she grew up traveling across Europe. In her mid-forties, she and Hollings left for France to work for the Allied war effort in early 1915. They first served as ambulance drivers stationed at a French chateau, then moved to Paris for six months to study radiography. While in practice back in London, they raised enough money to buy their own portable x-ray equipment. They tried to offer their services to Britain and to France, but both armies rejected them because they were women. Italy, in contrast, accepted their offer. They joined Unit IV of the British Red Cross.[122] Gleichen quoted the Duke of Aosta as saying, "We are cleverer than the English then, because we employ who and what we can for our wounded regardless of whether they wear trousers or petticoats."[123] The Duke exaggerated the Italian commitment to equality, but the fact that only Italy welcomed Gleichen reveals a willingness on its part to trespass over old boundaries for the sake of wartime advantage.

In December 1915, Gleichen and Hollings came to the Italian Front with their own unit. Based in Udine, the same town where Friedmann spent so much time, they provided the Italian army with its only mobile x-ray unit, and they went up and down the front helping surgeons locate bullets and shrapnel in wounded soldiers. They worked on their own, for the most part, with occasional help from volunteers provided through the Red Cross. That they were appreciated by the Italian military is shown by the Bronze Medals for Military Valor they received.[124] They were not Italian patriots and did not know anyone at the Italian Front before arriving (although they were friendly with Italy's king and queen). In that sense, their decision to volunteer for front-line duty was even more unusual than other women's, but they were typical in their loyalty to the Allies and in their decision to do their part to contribute to victory. Gleichen and Hollings sought out radiography training, and they tried hard to find a place to use their skill for the Allies' advantage. They had mixed motives—a sense of duty, perhaps, and a desire to experience the war firsthand. Hollings's

son was killed in action in France in 1914, so perhaps she wanted to continue his fight.

Whatever brought them there, Gleichen and Hollings remained committed to serving Italian troops in the war zone for two years. By one account, they saw 3,424 cases before their first year ended.[125] They worked long hours and lived dangerously, driving between shells, sleeping during air attacks, and handling infected patients. Gleichen correctly viewed her work as a life or death matter, and she took her commitment seriously. She held a rank in the Italian Army, but much of her ability to get what she wanted came from her moneyed connections. In this regard, she and Hollings were completely atypical of women who voluntarily went to the Italian Front. But every individual's story is unique in some way, and Gleichen's account of what life was like for a woman at the front is not diminished just because it was singular.

As Gleichen's experience demonstrates, not every woman at the front performed traditionally feminine work, such as nursing or visiting husbands. A minority of women hid behind their femininity in order to do "man's work." For example, Luisa Zeni, a Red Cross nurse, writer, and fervent Irredentist, worked in Austria as a spy.[126] Born in Arco, a town (like Trento) that belonged to Austria politically but Italy culturally, Zeni was only 18 when the Great War began. From the start, she was an Italian patriot. A refugee in Milan, she worked with a group of Irredentists while training to be a nurse. Her hospital received wounded men who had received only "summary medication" at the front, and so she saw firsthand evidence of the war's human cost. Nevertheless, her diary is hyperpatriotic, written in a florid style. She befriended the soon-to-be-martyred patriot Cesare Battisti and remained committed to redeeming Italian territories from Austria. In May 1915, she went to Austria where she acted as a spy. After the war, she joined Gabriele D'Annunzio in his quest for Fiume, and the last section of her memoir described her time with D'Annunzio. She received a Silver Medal for bravery in 1922 and continued her affection for militarism as an admirer of Mussolini.

According to Zeni's own account, she traveled north to Austria in 1915, accompanying the troops for part of the journey. She did not dress as a man and did not try to pass as one.[127] Determined to cross into enemy lines, Zeni bluffed her way into Austria by pretending to be a German woman returning home. In Innsbruck, she hung around the hotel that was a base for Austrian officials, investigating conditions of interned Italian sympathizers. Posing as a mute nurse, she visited hospitals and warehouses. She observed "everything without ever fixing on anything," and sent reports back to Italy. Zeni's sex often covered up her illicit activity. In one notable example, the Austrian police stormed a meeting of Trentini

and proceeded to arrest only the men.[128] Hiding behind her biological sex, Zeni was able to get away with being a spy, work not traditionally associated with women. Not every female spy eluded capture. For example, a British journalist reported seeing three civilian suspects on trial in Gorizia—a man, a woman, and a little girl. Calling it "a very unconventional and curious scene," he could not find out what they were charged with, but he assumed they were suspected spies for Austria. He emphatically endorsed their arrest: "No chances were to be taken, and rightly so."[129] Despite the fact that the Austrian police did not even question Zeni when they rounded up Italian sympathizers in Innsbruck, other police knew that women were capable of political crimes.

Zeni depicted herself as a master of changing identity. She made herself into whatever would be the least suspicious—a German at the Austrian border, a woman among spies. On her way back into Switzerland, she dressed as a man from Tirol.[130] Her war adventures epitomize how fluctuating identity can be. A teenage, female nurse, a citizen of Austria, Zeni risked her life to work with the most famous men of the Irredentist movement. Like them, she was motivated by a patriotic love of Italy and a desire for adventure.

All of these women chose to be at the front. Most viewed themselves as comrades of the male servicemen, even as they acknowledged their own contributions as valuable in a different and perhaps inferior way from the men's. As Slaughter noticed, "One made friends with great rapidity in the war zone," whether male or female.[131] These Italian women expressed a strong sense of patriotism and a desire to do what they perceived as their duty to assure victory. Although some women viewed the war as a great adventure, others reflected on the complex nature of their experience, realizing the war introduced them to new worlds but not unequivocally better ones than they inhabited before 1915. This new female citizenship was two-sided. Society and the state expected much from women, but they also recognized women's sacrifices that appeared to go above and beyond usual female duties.

What did these women who went to the front voluntarily think about the Great War? In most works written close to the war experience, the women supported the war even though they acknowledged it was horrifically destructive. Few of the women who saw firsthand the violence of the war viewed it simplistically. They believed the war was a just evil perpetrated on innocent individuals. Perduca wrote especially openly about her feelings. From her first exposure to wounded and dead soldiers, she realized one could not survive based on idle patriotism and big abstract ideas. "I curse war," she wrote. She had had "enough blood, enough pus, enough shrieking, enough death, enough tears." Nevertheless, she remained

committed to the cause and asserted that victory would make all the suffering worthwhile. And she embraced the common assumption that Italy was making a "redemptive sacrifice" that would make Italians better for having triumphed.[132] Like most men writing at the time, most of these women were not prepared to reject nationalism. They maintained their patriotism and justified the pain caused by the war as limited and temporary. During the war, nationalism tended to overshadow other interests, even for those confronted daily with the harsh realities of war.

5

Civilians

Women Trapped in the War Zone

> When will I return to the kitchen, to needlework and even more, to the studies of our children?
>
> —Isabella Sperti, *Una donna in guerra: Diario di Isabella Bigontina Sperti-1917–1918*

Caught in the war zone, Pina Bauzon realized her life would change when the Austrians marched into Versa (in the Friuli region) to take control from the fleeing Italians during the Battle of Caporetto in 1917. Young and unmarried, she had enjoyed Italian occupation and had found the burden of militarization rather light. Her diary described flirtations with Italian soldiers and parties rather than deprivation, which was also present.[1] Most people in Bauzon's village saw the Italians as liberators, freeing the culturally Italian village from official Austrian rule. But once the Italians retreated, the incoming Austro-German soldiers acted more like oppressors controlling a hostile people than former governors returning to power. Only after the armistice would her townspeople become legal Italians. Also living in a militarized town, Caterina Pezzé (later Batesta) experienced a similar situation during the war. A young teenager during the Great War, Pezzé fraternized with the soldiers who occupied Moena. Unlike Bauzon, she was an Austrian sympathizer who preferred Hapsburg rule to so-called independence for her hometown.[2]

Despite their age, both of these young women elided the personal with the political. Bauzon met and later married an Italian soldier who had been stationed in her town. Pezzé fell in love with an Austrian serviceman, but the relationship did not outlast the war. In their experiences, the decision about whom to date was fraught with politics. Such was the nature of the Great War for women trapped in the war zone. During occupation every

act had an undercurrent of politics, and the issue of citizenship became a crucial aspect of identity for civilians caught in the war zone.

Thousands of women remained in the Italian *retrovie*, the area behind the lines but close to the front, when enemy troops or home-country military occupied their towns. By one estimate, twice as many civilians stayed as fled.[3] Unlike the women of the previous chapter who sought out the experience of living near the front lines, these women found themselves trapped in their hometowns when the Great War came to them. They hailed from a variety of classes and backgrounds, from rural farmers to urban bourgeoisie. Almost all were Austrian citizens who were culturally Italian, and most were Irredentists. They expressed strong patriotic feelings for one side or the other; only a few tried to make their own place outside the politics of war. Even though these civilians caught behind the lines did not hail from similar class or political backgrounds, they shared the unusual experience of being women in a war zone.

A review of about 30 published and unpublished diaries and memoirs written by civilian women reveals some patterns in their response to the extraordinarily anomalous situation of living at the center of war. Few civilian women discussed their experience with the bravado expressed by women who voluntarily went to the front. Bogged down in learning how to survive violence and near starvation, most writers proved reluctant to philosophize about the war and their place in it. There is little overt discussion of what it meant to be a woman in a man's place, especially compared with the writings of nurses. Nurses and other women who voluntarily went to the front often assumed a defensive tone in their writings, as if trying to justify their decision to cross over into the usually all-male world of war. In contrast, most of the civilian narratives were personal, not intended for publication; therefore we see what the author wanted to preserve about her experience, not what she thought others would be interested in reading. Although most civilian women did not address gender identity openly, their writings give many clues about how women experienced the war. From personal narratives to testimony about rape to a ledger tracking dwindling family income, Italian women left a clear account of their participation in the war. In areas located near the mobile Italian Front, the Great War exposed local women to a variety of experiences.

Deciding to Stay or Go

Why did these women remain in towns situated so close to the fighting? Many civilians, male and female, left as soon as they realized the danger they might face if they stayed. Although an in-depth analysis of refugees is

a matter separate from the point of this study, it is important to understand why some women became refugees and others did not. In two volumes of previously unpublished diaries compiled from the Archivio della scrittura poplare at the Museo Storico in Trento, 15 female refugees who were culturally Italian but technically Austrian citizens reveal the hardships of exile.[4] Some went to Italy to stay with family; others fled because of their political sympathies. Still other refugees traveled to Austria, not always voluntarily. Women without enough money to finance their journeys followed the command of the Austro-Hungarian government and were resettled in the interior of Austria in makeshift camps. The government sent women it considered overt supporters of Italy to internment camps, mostly to the "City of Wood" in Katzenau, where they lived under close supervision with minimal rations.

Many descriptions exist of what life was like for civilians in exodus. And for Italy as well as other European places, their stories sound remarkably similar. The first people to depart were able to catch trains, but most ventured on foot or in any vehicle that would carry them. Bauzon described the "great river of people of every class and every age" that flowed by the town of Versa as Gradisca was evacuated.[5] In all cases, chaos reigned. People, animals, cars, and carts clogged the main streets out of town. Being on the run was difficult. Travelers turned quickly from comfortable citizens into beggars, imposing on strangers for meals and lodging as they moved away from the front. With an overwhelming attitude of self-preservation, many locals resented the influx of these new arrivals.[6] The bleak picture of crying children and desperate mothers appears in many accounts.[7] Writers tended to record the extreme hardship, especially for children. In addition to not knowing where they were going or how they would get there, refugees often encountered another problem—bad weather. The days of the Caporetto disaster saw horrible storms in the northeast; thousands had to venture out in freezing cold and torrential rain. Some people attempting flight decided to return home, hoping that whatever they would endure there would be better than their experience as refugees.

To flee was not an easy choice. Most of the men had already been called up for service, so women had to decide on their own whether to leave their homes. About 2 million civilians remained in the *retrovie*, according to historian Lucio Fabi. In his comprehensive study of civilians living in Friuli during the war, Fabi explains that for most people, the decision to stay or go as the enemy approached was a personal one.[8] And even after deciding to leave, individuals had a choice of finding their own route or following the one prescribed by the government. Most people who fled had no idea where they were going or what the future would bring. Lucia "Turco" Anziutti provides a perfect example of the hesitation many felt

about leaving. She observed that "many calm themselves by assuring themselves that here we are safe," but she expressed doubts. Why stay, she asked herself in her diary, "to remain prey to barbarians?" She continued, "For me the world had become a desert." She hated the idea of having to leave her "nursery," her lifelong home, the small village of Forna di Sopra in the Friuli region. She prayed, "Jesus give me strength, to bear with Christian resignation the misfortune" of living so closely to danger. Deciding to leave, Anziutti packed a suitcase, but she hesitated and soon, like many others, found herself trapped at home as the Austro-German forces marched in after Caporetto.[9] Based on his study of a wide variety of refugee writing, Fabi notes common themes: "agony of abandoning [one's] house, land, gardens, animals; fear of the voyage across the unknown; dread of the loss of every [political] right."[10] Those who left did so because they possessed a fortuitous combination of time, money, and inclination to leave.

To leave meant abandoning not only one's home and homeland but also one's claim to citizenship. For most culturally Italian civilians living in Austrian controlled land, their civic identity was confusing enough before the war. As refugees, would they be seen as Austrians if they fled to Italy or as political enemies if they moved deeper inside Austria? In addition to these issues of identity, those in exile lost control over their property and their right to have a say in civic affairs. For townspeople, this threat was less severe because it applied to inanimate, if sentimental, objects. For farmers, in contrast, exodus resulted in the death of crops and animals, both of which were necessary for their economic livelihood when they returned. Most people who did become refugees did so because either they felt themselves in serious danger or the government officials in charge forced them out.

In this light, it easier to understand why a woman would remain at home after her region had become a battlefield or barracks. Granted, not all women felt they had the luxury of choice. Some, like Maria Borra and Maria Juretigh, both of Udine, did not organize quickly enough to leave before the enemy took the town and sealed the exits.[11] Juretigh's family underestimated the danger, and her father refused to leave his house for days. When they finally got to the station, all trains had been cancelled, and they could not procure a car. Others, like Luigia Venturini, remained behind in deference to family members who were too young or too old to endure a hard trip. Her family worried about how well the children would fare, so they decided to stay, and, if necessary, they preferred to "die together united in our house" rather than be separated on the road.[12] In some places, government officials misled the town's inhabitants in an attempt to avoid the chaos of a mass exodus. During the Caporetto retreat, the Mayor of Udine swore there was no real danger and encouraged people to stay home.[13] And

in Pordenone, locals put up signs saying the Italian troops were on their way back to defend the town.[14]

A decision to stay was both personal and political. An Irredentist woman might stay as the Austrians left in order to welcome the Italians, or vice versa after Caporetto turned many towns gained by Italy in 1916 back over to the Austro-German forces in 1917. In Friuli, even people who were not fervent patriots did not fear the incoming Italians, seeing them as neighbors more than as enemy invaders.[15] Overtly political inclination was beside the point in many instances; people expressed a sincere love for their own land and their local community. Few men remained to defend personal property from organized attack and furtive robbery, so neither the women themselves nor wider society questioned the integrity of their femininity simply because they placed themselves in harm's way to protect their family's belongings. Although many women claimed they stayed for personal reasons, the hardship they endured during the war tied them to the fortunes of politics.

Along with gender, class became a factor in determining who stayed and who left. The very rich and the very poor of Friuli got out right away. The poorest citizens, including orphans, the homeless, and other wards of the state, left at government expense and were resettled deep inside Austria. The rich could finance a quick escape and left their property in the care of servants or tenants. In one case, before fleeing, a landlord told his tenant-farmers not to open the door if the Germans came. Obediently, they refused entry when the advancing Germans appeared. The soldiers shot them and put the bodies up in the main piazza in San Vito del Tagliamento as a warning to the rest of the population.[16] This show of force probably decreased how vigilantly people protected property that was not even their own. The Udine-based Juretigh also noted that class affected the decision about departing. She reported that nobles and high bourgeoisie fled immediately, leaving businessmen, white-collar workers, and artisans as the town's preeminent citizens.[17] Some parish priests, who often announced evacuation orders, also stayed, committed to ministering to their remaining flock.[18] Similarly, some doctors and monks stayed to care for those too sick to travel.[19] Those with some assets—not so rich they could finance their flight in comfort, but wealthy enough to have a stake in protecting themselves and their property—were most likely to stay.

The middle classes, the people with their own houses, farms, or businesses, stayed to protect their investments. Many women who remained stated they did so in part to protect their family's property. Isabella Sperti refused to travel with her husband, a fervent Irredentist, and her daughter to Italy. Instead, she and her sister remained in Belluno for six months of Austrian occupation. She hoped her house would remain untouched at

the end of the war, so at least "our sacrifices will not have been in vain."[20] According to one count, about 200,000 houses were destroyed or otherwise made uninhabitable in the occupied territory in the Veneto, but this count failed to include the cost of looting.[21] An elderly widow from Bressanone whose son went to serve in the army testified that she stayed to guard the few possessions she had. She assumed she would be safe because she was a "woman of advanced age," but she was arrested by the occupying Austrians on her way home from mass and was sent to Katzenau after eight days of incarceration. She eventually made her way back home via Switzerland and found her house destroyed. [22]

The Austrian government ordered civilians to leave the towns in Trentino located near fighting. They allowed those deemed necessary to social order to stay: managers, hoteliers, sanitation workers, utility employees, bakers, butchers, police, and business people.[23] Since most able-bodied men were away serving in the military, it was women who were left to carry on the daily life of the town. For example, Juretigh (unmarried and in her forties) continued to work in the family business selling fabric and mending clothes. And Maria Zamboni, also a tailor, claimed she was allowed to stay in Trento because the Austrian wives liked her salon.[24] Businesses eventually became militarized, catering to the occupying soldiers and their entourage. An abundance of restaurants (*osterie* and *trattorie)* appeared in occupied towns and in places near the front where soldiers took leave.[25] These new relations between military occupiers and civilian inhabitants grew increasingly complex.

Occupation

In the *retrovie*, soldiers and civilians, men and women, adults and children, upper and lower classes, Irredentists and pro-Austrians all coexisted. The issue most affecting a town's occupation experience was the nationality of the troops. From the point of view of civilians, Italians and Austro-Germans had very different ruling styles. Several areas, especially in Friuli, endured military occupation twice. The Austrians were more rigid than the Italians, with stricter rules for civilians. When in power, however, both sides were zealously suspicious of spies. When the Austrians took over Udine, for example, they ordered the local population to denounce Italian prisoners of war who were hiding. Borra reported that teachers had to sign an oath of loyalty to the Austrian Empire and promise not to teach Italian pride. And locals had to keep their doors open for twelve days to allow full access to entering soldiers who could take whatever they wanted. The worst scenario from the locals' point of view

came during Caporetto. The retreating Italians were unorganized and disorderly, and, acting as individuals rather than as a disciplined army unit, they took what they wanted as they went. Just days later, incoming Austrians, in a frenzy because of their victories, sacked many of the same places. The early days of occupation saw overt acts of cruelty as the entering army demanded obedience and recognition of their newly won authority. Eventually, the situation stabilized, but the locals still had to give up whatever the military requested.[26]

Although both Italians and Austrians committed atrocities, a major difference existed between the two groups of occupiers. The Austrian Empire faced severe shortages at home. Therefore, when the Austro-German troops took over a new area, they thoroughly sacked it for supplies. During Austro-German occupation, the distinction between pillaging and requisition blurred as soldiers increasingly demanded that everyone's goods be applied for the war effort. Through official channels, the Imperial Army demanded food, linens, animals, metals, and more. Supplies dwindled, resulting in extreme shortages during the last years of the war.

When enemy soldiers arrived in an area, they usually were indiscriminately and viciously destructive. Numerous reports of widespread looting and sacking exist. In Basaldella, an eyewitness wrote that the entering Austro-German forces faced no resistance, as almost all the townspeople and Italian soldiers had evacuated. Although these troops were orderly in the beginning, within days discipline degenerated and looting became the norm. Sperti reported that in Belluno, from first arrival to departure, the invaders kept everything they found for themselves, sharing nothing with the locals. In the official government report of violence committed by the enemy, people talked of vandalism, destroyed cemeteries, confiscated furniture, and ruined land. Not all requisitions were officially sanctioned; soldiers often took whatever they wanted. One woman told how German officers demanded all the food and drink from her house, then stole her bicycle, gold watch, and other items important to her. Pina Bauzon lamented, "The sacked houses, the lost memories." Eventually, her own home was plundered; "Oh the horror of our poor unlucky house!" she wrote in 1917.[27]

Once occupied, towns became populated by a "sea of soldiers," as Bauzon noted. After the "river" of refugees left, the military became the majority.[28] In Gorizia, only about ten thousand civilians remained to live among about forty thousand Austro-German soldiers.[29] Everything changed. Daily life was interrupted by air raids and military orders, the economy refocused to address the needs of the war, the standard of living dropped because of severe shortages and frequent requisitions, and gender relations changed as women took on the active role of provider and defender of the

home while maintaining their traditionally subordinate role as caretaker of the home.

Many authors had difficulty reconciling these two roles. Even women who were there viewed the war as a masculine preserve. Berta Allatini Friedmann, who had traveled to be with her husband at the Italian Front, wrote of her shock at finding a gracious hostess "there in that atmosphere of war, so far from every femininity."[30] Yet she herself was there. In a similar vein, Julius Price, a British male journalist, was amazed to find "a galaxy of beauty and fashion" on Sunday afternoons when women strolled in Udine. This well-traveled "war-artist correspondent" of the *Illustrated London News* had written about journeys to the Yukon, Klondike, Siberia, Mongolia, the Gobi desert, and the Western Front. Even he expressed surprise at seeing women on the Italian Front. He explained, "To anyone like myself, newly arrived in the town, and expecting to find himself in the midst of warlike scenes considering how close one was to the operations, this unexpected spectacle came as a positive shock." But the "incongruity wore off" the more time he spent there.[31] He probably encountered women of all classes—peasants with nowhere to go, daughters of working-class families, and nurses from the well-off middle and upper classes.

Frequently people did not know what to make of the aberration of women at war. Feminine qualities did not seem to belong in the war zone. When women assumed male roles, people struggled to discover remnants of femininity intact. For example, E. V. Lucas, a British man visiting the Red Cross hospitals along the Italian Front, described passing through Tolmezzo, "the wettest spot in Italy." He noted, "We drove off, through the snow (which some very pretty girls were engaged in scraping from the roads) to Saletto."[32] That they were pretty perhaps mitigated, in his mind, the hard labor they were doing in the freezing cold. Price had a similar reaction to women working along the Italian Front. The sight of women carrying 50-pound parcels of barbed wire up the side of a mountain stunned him. He had not thought they were capable of such exertion. Price admired their strength but was also disappointed that the war was such a literal burden on the local women. Nevertheless, he still managed to see them as unmistakably female: "Many of the girls I saw were distinctly good-looking, and the bright tones of their picturesque costumes made a cheerful and unexpected note of colour against the dull grey of the wild mountain pass."[33] His memoir even included a sketch of a "gang of peasant women." In his eyes the women doing hard manual labor retained some trace of prewar, traditional femininity by bringing color and joy into a bleak landscape.

In the *retrovie*, to a certain extent, civilians were militarized and troops were civilized. The soldiers lived in local houses, oftentimes with a *padrona* (house mistress) to clean up after them and make their meals.

Some relationships were friendly; a soldier might bring his *padrona* hard-to-procure treats like chocolate or coffee. In return, the daily life patterns of civilians reflected the standards of military obedience. As in the story of the two tenant-farmers who naïvely refused to open the door to invading Germans, locals did not always understand what was going on around them. But they quickly adjusted as authorities imposed new restrictions instituting curfews and blackouts and requiring passes to enter certain parts of the town and identification requirements that severely curtailed movement elsewhere.

Civilians rarely were comfortable living so close to soldiers. Women complained about the extra responsibilities of serving as landlords and hostesses for the invading troops. Maria Zamboni quartered Austrians in her extra room, as did Venturini and Sperti. Bauzon set the scene: "The countryside is always full of soldiers[,] many regiments are camped in the adjacent fields and the officers in private homes."[34] For Anziutti, it was difficult to put on "a good face" while her heart "had an infernal hatred" for the occupiers.[35] Venturini was afraid of the night and complained of being unable to sleep. She worried about what the occupying soldiers might do. It was not just her fears that kept her awake. In one instance, the soldiers got drunk in her home, acted boisterously, then demanded more alcohol from the family. One even threatened Venturini's father with a knife after he admitted there was no more wine in the house.[36] Another woman, Sperti, never got over living side-by-side with her occupiers: "He who has not lived with them cannot imagine it." She wrote, "One lives in continual anxiety, I do not know if it is better to be alone or with the troops." Like Venturini, Sperti feared the power of the troops, made more frightening by the complete submission of the civilians. But she also experienced more benign relations with the Austro-German forces and occasionally gained some comfort from their presence. One soldier presented her with extra food when supplies were short, and she showed pride when one of her boarders complimented her. Overall, she resented the soldiers' presence. "I have become a great diplomat," Sperti wrote in her diary. Like Anziutti, her "heart cries" at having to be polite to the foreign officers quartered in her house because they had just returned from fighting against "our sons."[37]

Civilian women resented the forced requisitions and low rations even more than the practice of quartering soldiers. Diaries mention the frustration of food shortages and requisitions regardless of the age and class of the writer. Maria Borra, an unmarried middle-class teacher, described the situation in Udine when the Austro-Germans took it over. Shops ran low on bread just a few days after the occupation. She could no longer talk of the "poor people," because "we are all such. . . . The hunger that torments

the imperi centri begins to make itself felt." Townspeople ate bad bread and rotten vegetables—and very little of either. The American Red Cross Special Commissioner to Southeast Europe, Homer Folks, visited occupied Italy within weeks of the armistice. He found evidence of widespread malnutrition and warned that weakened people were most susceptible to disease.[38] Borra also noted signs of starvation among local children, mentioning that many skipped school in order to help their parents forage for food all day. She saw women reduced to begging for food. Meanwhile, the fact that the military got its supplies at half price infuriated her. To Borra, Udine had become a "squalid land," degraded by misery. With the approval of the hastily formed Citizens' Committee, the military passed strict laws about hoarding food. House-by-house searches were justified under the guise of looking for hidden prisoners of war or telephones and telegraphs. Borra believed the real motive was searching for hoarded food.[39]

In Udine, the entering military demanded that anyone who remained at home make a sign for the front door reading "This House Is Occupied," and below they had to list the names of people living there and the contents of the house.[40] In some cases, the military forced the owners from their houses, putting them out on the street, according to testimony given to the Italian government. In stages, the military demanded everything from copper to eggs, livestock to linens. One civilian reported the Austrians took over gardens without compensation and shipped the produce back to Austria. Meanwhile, local children were malnourished and "undoubtedly" the hardships caused death, especially among the young, the old, and the sick, according to official Italian government records.[41] Sperti wrote, "We live in an atmosphere of great discomfort and the deprivations are not few." She lived in constant fear of having to give up more to the invading army, calling the severe requisitions "terrorism." She also noted the increase in begging as rations ran low: "Every day people come with tears in their eyes asking for something to eat and we are at the end of March—I always tell myself to have faith in God, but the truth is that we have little hope and that the general conditions are very grave."[42] Somehow, most civilians survived occupation. Carmela Rossi Timeus of Trieste admired the "bravura of our women" who managed to feed their families even though food was in short supply and prices were high.[43] The old order fell apart as ration cards replaced cash. Timeus overheard female farmers complaining that no one wanted cash anymore, just bread ration cards. The entire economy of the area became focused on the needs of the war.

When troops marched in, most local businesses closed, but gradually some reopened. Borra reported that the first to reopen were ones that served the needs of the occupiers: hotels, cafés, restaurants, and stationary shops. Public trams started running again, and a semblance of daily

life resumed.[44] Yet communication remained limited. Most women would have agreed with Sperti that "one of the great cruelties" of invasion was the lack of correspondence and newspapers.[45] Borra reported that via the Red Cross, civilians were allowed to send out a few lines twice a month, but all notes were censored.[46] When their town belonged to the enemy, most civilians could not get news about their homeland, much less letters from male relatives serving in the enemy's military. In addition, a language barrier sometimes existed between the occupying army and the locals. In certain parts of Friuli, for example, the local dialect was unrecognizable to invading Italians and Austrians. But in most cases some Austrians spoke Italian and could communicate fairly easily with the locals. Despite challenges, the local population remade itself to serve the needs of the invading army. The wartime economy demanded the participation of all citizens, and occupation increased individual responsibility.

Daily life assumed some aspects of normalcy, although it would be better to think of it as a daily grind instead of as daily life. To locals, the occupation seemed to last forever. "I have the sensation," Sperti explained, "of having passed one whole life with the conquerors and liberation would seem to me a miracle."[47] After months of living in such militarized conditions, most civilians had a hard time imagining a time of freedom. As early as 1915, people were already exhausted by war. It was "always the same life," wrote Timeus, a "life of anxiety and punishment."[48] She could not "see the end of our suffering." The daily shelling wore her down, making her feel scared and overwhelmed. But most grew accustomed to the new living situation, even though they abhorred it.

Women's diaries reveal that only in absolute emergencies did people abandon their usual rituals. Civilians continued to attend mass and to celebrate major holidays. Life cycle events continued; women reported attending weddings, funerals, and first communion parties. Holiday activities featured prominently in women's diaries, testifying to the fact that civilians tried to maintain the rhythm of their prewar lives. It was precisely this aspect of normalcy that many of the invaders wanted to change. In Moena, a town that remained under Austrian control but close to the fighting, the Austrian officials grew so anxious about pro-Italian sentiment that they attempted to Germanify the people through a series of cultural reforms. Although many residents spoke Italian, most were pro-Austria and not Irredentist. Nevertheless, the government demanded that mass be said only in German.[49] This reinforcing of Austrian cultural identity may seem harmless compared with atrocities committed elsewhere, but it provides an important clue to how the authorities' anxiety manifested itself. Even though the locals were Austrian citizens who had spoken Italian for

generations, only during the war did Austria demand the locals prove their loyalty to the motherland.

The illusion of routine in some ways allowed locals to hide from the reality of their captivity. In addition to religious holidays, the occupying army offered special events. For example, military bands gave public concerts, which did improve the morale of both their own troops and the locals. Such entertainment provided a venue for female civilians to mix with male soldiers. Like life in the trenches, life in occupied towns oscillated between boredom and normalcy and fear and anxiety. Sperti's diary provides some fine examples of this duality. She remembered once, after a quiet breakfast at home, going to visit a friend whose house was soon afterward in ruins: "I will never forget that visit." The feeling of normalcy brought on by calling on a friend was impossible to sustain in the *retrovie*. Another episode shows how living with war became normal. Sperti wrote, "One does not hear the cannon anymore and, terrible thing, it seems to me I am missing a friend."[50] Her so-called normal life consisted of performing daily rituals in the shadow of war. Silence struck her as abnormal.

The war militarized the tempo of normal life. Local women accepted new rules and requirements, but did life near the fighting front change more than their outward behavior? Did it change the definition of being good woman, a *donna brava*? No doubt a woman's identity changed because of the war. Her biological status as a woman could make her the target of gender-specific crime, especially rape. At the same time, she, like the female resistance fighters discussed in Chapter 4, could tap into traditional, feminine roles to control the invaders or to get away with making political statements. And she could also escape the limits that traditional social mores put on her activities because she lived in a state of emergency, which demanded she do whatever was necessary to survive.

Crimes against Women

The *retrovie* provides an excellent place to study women and war because it was where the home front literally met the war front. By remaining at home in their own communities, civilian women in the *retrovie* continued to live a fairly normal (i.e., peacetime) life. But by being so close to the war, so surrounded by the military, they also experienced a crisis situation that made normalcy too slippery a concept to maintain.

Although a certain amount of chivalry endured, the occupying army punished women when they disobeyed orders. In a case like that of the male tenant-farmers murdered by Germans in San Vito del Tagliamento, a woman was strangled by invading soldiers for being too slow to hand

over her keys. She escaped and sought refuge with nearby nuns. A nun and the woman herself related this incident to Italian authorities after the war.[51] Was she deliberately stalling or just slow? It is impossible to know. Similarly, a soldier shot a woman in Gorizia through her window because she was late in turning off her lamp and closing her shutters.[52] The invaders suspected her of signaling to the enemy. She was the first civilian casualty in Gorizia after the Austro-German forces entered. In other instances, overtly patriotic acts were punished just as severely. An Austrian lieutenant killed Anna Celanti del Puppo because "it seemed she had given shelter" to an Italian prisoner of war.[53] In these examples, the mere fact of being a woman did not protect the victim from military orders.

Not all authorities were so shrewd, and civilian women's diaries prove that many women were political actors. Maria Zamboni, for example, stands out for her insistent loyalty to Irredentism. A citizen of Trento, Zamboni testified before an Austrian military tribunal in a case designed to prove she corresponded with an Irredentist uncle in Italy. In her diary, she explained that, except for that one instance, she was never seriously suspected of conspiracy. Yet she was active in the Irredentist movement and subverted Austrian rules, especially with political symbols. She always wore her brooch with the image of the king of Italy half-hidden in the folds of her clothes. Zamboni did not attribute the lack of attention on the Austrians' part to her gender alone. She believed the authorities were not capable of imagining that a "humble seamstress" could be involved. To her, it was the combination of her class and gender that made her semi-invisible.[54] In part she was right, but it was also true that Trento was not occupied by Austrians; it belonged to the Austrian Empire before the war. So as anxious as the Austrians may have been to dissuade spying, the crisis mentality that prevailed in places such as San Vito del Tagliamento and Gorizia, where each new set of rulers demanded obedience from the locals, did not extend to all militarized territories.

When towns were occupied, women became victims of burglary, theft, and violent attacks. The testimony published by the Italian government from 1920 to 1921 as a record of occupation, the *Relazioni della Reale Commissioni d'inchiesta sulle violazioni del diritto delle genti commesse dal nemico* (Relations of the Royal Commission's Inquest into Violations of the Rights of the People Committed by the Enemy), provided a detailed, personal account of what local populations endured when the enemy took charge.[55] Unlike the Bryce Report, which was the British government's attempt to control the public debate about German rapes and atrocities in Belgium, the *Relazioni* provided a more sober chance for civilians to go on the record after occupation had ended about crimes committed by the enemy.[56]

In addition to complaining of widespread robbery and looting, the locals were frequent targets of random violence. A couple of specific examples reveal a larger pattern. A 19-year-old woman was struck in the face by an officer; he hit her so hard that she got a bloody nose. A Bosnian soldier killed a girl in Udine without cause, according to a nun's testimony. When another woman went to borrow salt from a neighbor, she crossed the path of a German noncommissioned officer who slapped the salt from her hands and then hit her in the face.[57] This act of aggression was made even more threatening by the fact that her husband witnessed it.

Although the victims of robberies and burglaries were both male and female, crimes specifically targeting women reaffirmed that, no matter what else they did, women remained essentially female in the eyes of the enemy. Rape is the one of the most common crimes committed against women during war. The history of rape as a military weapon is ancient and lasting. Like no other crime, it reasserts the powerful masculinity of the perpetrator while emphasizing the vulnerable femininity of the victim. Rape is both a sex crime and a violent act.[58] The *Relazioni* contains testimony from civilians living at the front and records actual incidents of rape and attempted rape. Many accounts were secondhand stories, but some were told by the victims themselves.

For one to understand the scope of violence against women in the occupied areas, it is essential to give particular examples. Elisa Minuzzi was raped on November 9, 1917. She told her story in detail at the inquest, including how she was strangled, then raped for two hours by a German soldier. She was affected not only physically but also emotionally. She was 41 and a virgin; this rape resulted in pregnancy, and she had a child nine months later. Minuzzi also testified about other rapes with which she was familiar, one of her elderly aunt and a series of rapes of three young women in her town, one of which also resulted in pregnancy.[59] In a separate instance, a doctor from Pordenone reported that he had examined a young girl, about six or seven years old, who "was violated in the vaginal region." He reported his discovery to the authorities, but nothing was done. He also told of a rape where a local man who tried to defend the victim was fatally struck with a bayonet.[60] In another instance, an Italian soldier, who had been away from home on duty at the time, testified that invading soldiers subjected his family to every humiliation, including forcing his three sisters to have sex with them and making his mother drink urine.[61] Another horror story happened in Ronchi. Several family members and a neighbor witnessed the rapes of Regina Bennati Fantin and Emilia Balutto. Fantin reported being attacked by five Austrian soldiers who entered her bedroom "with menace," forced her husband and their children out of the room, then successively raped her.

The children who yelled were beaten in their beds. Later the same night—November 4, 1917—in the same house, four Austrians entered Balutto's room, removed her two children from her bed, and raped her as well. The testimony offered the rank and regiment number of the Austrian attackers.[62] Another woman from Ronchi was attacked by invaders who threatened to kill her six-month-old daughter if she refused to comply with their wishes. Two soldiers raped her in the presence of her whole family, who remained in the same room, unable to help her.[63] None of these stories is typical, nor are they isolated examples. Each act of violence is unique, but patterns emerge in the entire body of testimony.

Rape in front of others was common; women who were raped often had family or neighbors at their side who were powerless to help. The attackers thus exerted power over everyone around them, subjecting everyone to what historians John Horne and Alan Kramer have called a "double humiliation." They emphasize that these rapes show that "the invasion as a gendered process was not a two-, but a three-way relationship—between perpetrator, victim, and the victim's male compatriots."[64] Femininity was under attack, literally and symbolically, but so was masculinity. Most young adult men were away serving in the military; those few who remained were interned or organized into work gangs by the occupying army.[65] Only male children and older men remained in town. Examples of this type of rape include a 50-year-old woman raped in front of her husband and a 16-year-old daughter in front of her father. Three Hungarians raped a 17-year-old from Cividale in her house in the presence of her father; the next evening, November 2, 1917, other soldiers pulled her from her house and raped her again. Another government official reported, second-hand, that he knew of a case in which the husband had to assist the attackers in the rape of his wife.[66] Such violent rapes intimidated the whole population. Catharine MacKinnon, a legal scholar, has explained that in "the male system, rape of women becomes an act by some men against other men." Men use rape to send messages to other men, using women "as a way to establish their power among one another." Yet for the raped women, as MacKinnon has noted, "it is a real violation" not a coded message.[67] When Borra called the Austro-Germans "conquerors," she expressed her view that they were outsiders determined to control the local civilians in all ways possible.[68]

The occupiers found other ways to attack Italian masculinity. In one town, they forced local men who remained behind to clean the houses abandoned by refugees.[69] Cleaning house was (and remains) a chore that was gendered female. By having the men clean instead of the women—and at gunpoint no less—the occupiers emasculated the local men. This twisting of well-established gender norms exemplifies how life in the war zone

fostered unconventional behavior. Despite these efforts, the civilian men were not completely impotent.

Local men sometimes asserted their masculinity by successfully managing these crisis situations. For example, her father and two brothers successfully fended off the attackers of Eudosia Fersuoch. Another father was wounded trying to defend his daughter from a German. And the mayor of Trappogrande told of how he and other civilian men intervened to save local girls from rape by officers of a Hungarian regiment who had ordered their soldiers to round up some women for sex. And in a most unusual case, one Austrian soldier (not coincidentally a man from Trieste who was probably culturally Italian like the family he was quartered with in Tarcento) protected the daughters of his host family from a German soldier who attempted to rape them. These men were able to exert their traditional role as protector of women, a position the men who were left behind tried to maintain in general even when they could not save individual women from attack. In early phases of occupation, the invaders were most anxious to exert their authority and were most cruel. Also locals were not yet militarized enough to understand what was expected of them. But traditional expectations survived, dictating an ideal for how each person should act based on their gender, class, and national identity and loyalty.[70]

For women, however, the choice was not always between being raped by a bad man or saved by a good one. In many instances along the Italian Front, women were able to save themselves from violence and rape. Nineteen-year-old Angelina Casagrande of Campolongo testified that she and many other local women hid in fields at night in the early phase of occupation to avoid predatory Germans. Other women jumped from windows to escape as enemy soldiers entered their homes. In Cividale, Angela Barbiani Deganutti and another woman successfully defended themselves from attack by Austrians. Because the testimony was brief and to the point, very little is known about the women who testified in the *Relazioni*, making it hard to say why some women were able to avoid rape but others were not. The level of determination and physical strength of the attacker probably had much to do with it, as did the individual circumstances. Perhaps some women who escaped were unusually savvy or clever, and they anticipated the danger before it happened. Neither the *Relazioni* nor available diaries tell a firsthand story of a woman who talked her way out of rape. But the experience of attempted rape was enough to unsettle people. One witness claimed to know a girl, Pierina Astolfi, who died from fear after finding an enemy soldier under her bed. While this story seems exaggerated, women legitimately feared for their personal safety. Several people claimed to know women who went crazy after being raped.[71] Others caught venereal diseases or became pregnant, terrible and destabilizing side effects of rape.

What is astonishing is that any women talked openly about their experiences given the stigma attached to rape. The mayor of Trappogrande testified that he knew it was impossible for the government to document how many rapes occurred because many people refused to come forward: "No one wants to bring shame on their families." Similarly, a man from Arta reported that he knew of many rapes, but "because of a sense of shame," the victims did not want to testify in public.[72] And the mayor of Tarcento swore that he knew of many acts of violence committed against women, but he would not divulge any details because he did not want to expose those involved to gossip. He told a story of two girls from his town who denied they were raped even though many other townspeople believed they had been. The fact that any detailed evidence of rape exists is surprising. Diaries that speak of women's experience in the Great War are rare enough; none that I have found offers a firsthand account of rape. Very few women, or men for that matter, discuss the topic at all. But it must have been of paramount importance at the time.

At least one popular Italian novel made rape its central subject matter. Annie Vivanti (later Chartres) wrote a novel about rape and war, *Vae Victis!* (published as *The Outrage* in English), based on her play from 1915 called *L'invasore*.[73] Vivanti was one of the dominant figures in the Italian literary scene between 1890 and the early twentieth century, and she was well respected by critics, male and female alike.[74] Born in London to an Italian father and German-Jewish mother, Vivanti considered Italy her home and wrote in both English and Italian. She was romantically linked to Giosuè Carducci, but she married an Irish journalist and poet. Published in 1918, *Vae Victis!* took place in wartime Belgium and revolved around the experiences of Belgian civilian women after Germans occupied their town. Cherie and Louise (Luisa), sisters-in-law, failed to realize how fast the Germans were approaching. They remained at home, celebrating Cherie's eighteenth birthday, as the Germans entered their town. The soldiers requisitioned the house and became more menacing; after heavy drinking, the soldiers raped the women.

Vivanti described the brutal attack in a series of flashbacks. The soldiers tied Louise's young daughter to an iron railing with a scarf and leather belt because she would not stop yelling, and they killed the family dog. In her memory of the event, Cherie recalled being lifted up then falling down: "The world is full of rushing horrors, of tearing, racking pain." Louise found Cherie "still in her white muslin dress all torn and bloodstained . . . with her two hands stretched upwards and tied to the bedpost above her head. A wide pink ribbon had been torn from her hair and used to tie her hands to the brass bedstead. Her face was scratched and bleeding. She was quite unconscious."[75] Vivanti's story was fictional, but it gave readers a

vivid picture of rape during war. Cherie forgot the rape until months later when her obvious pregnancy forced her to come to terms with the event. Louise wanted to hide her rape, most importantly from her husband who was away fighting. In reality, victims of rape probably also did not want to discuss the details publicly. In the testimonies published in the *Relazioni*, even the most explicit accounts of rape do not include particulars such as how the women were held down during the rape.

The conclusion of Vivanti's novel was ambiguous. The women went to England as refugees and were taken in by a British family. Louise got an abortion; Cherie decided to keep her baby, but she paid a price by losing her Belgian boyfriend who saw her as spoiled by the rape. Vivanti offered both women as object lessons, showing how they suffered enormously because of their treatment by the occupiers, who were portrayed as cruel and inhumane.

In a contemporary review of the original play, an Italian critic, Ottorino Modugno, praised the story. He felt it brilliantly combined art and patriotism. He claimed he read it in one sitting and recommended it as "drama superb in its boldness, gentle in its poetry and victorious as a battle against German high-handed cowardice."[76] The fact that Vivanti published two incarnations of the same story (and that it was immediately translated) reflects the strong connection she must have made with her reading public. Her ideas about rape and aggression resonated with the wartime population anxious about vulnerability. France faced similar concerns, especially because, like Italy, they were defending their borders from foreign soldiers.[77] The rape of Vivanti's characters, like the "rape of Belgium" that was so widely discussed internationally, equated Germany's violation of innocent individuals with that of neutral Belgium. The reports of German atrocities spread along official and unofficial channels, mixing rumors with government reports, mostly with the result of stirring up support for the Allies' participation in the Great War against the barbaric Huns.[78] As Grayzel explains in her analysis of rape narratives, these types of stories "called upon men to act as *men*, defending women, home, and family."[79] Implicit in this notion is that women as *women* were not capable of protecting themselves or their nations.

Vae Victis! is fiction, but its construction of rape narratives reveals much about women's roles in wartime and the function of rape as a metaphor for war. In comparing depictions of rape in popular wartime texts across national boundaries, Grayzel finds common tropes. She explains that most propaganda "inscribed women as passive, ultimately sacrificial victims, as the emblems of the traditional home and family that the war was presumably being fought to protect and preserve." The story of rape and atrocities against women served, according to Grayzel, to make the "maternal

body another site of conflict" while elevating motherhood as "the ultimate source of women's patriotism and agency."[80] She is correct that stories about war crimes against women underscore women's weakness and need for protection. However, Vivanti's story gave women agency, even though they may have used it to deny themselves maternity as Louise did in choosing to have an abortion. Both Cherie and Louise decided the fate of their pregnancies; Vivanti presented their decisions as understandable and difficult. As stand-ins for Belgium, they were vanquished. As female characters, they found the strength to absorb and respond to the violence committed against them by the Germans.

Male-Female Relations in the *Retrovie*

Being a woman at the front was not just a liability; it could also be an asset, and many women exerted influence on their own terms. Flirting with enemy soldiers was common, but the negative comments about it outweigh the praise. Besides the disgrace of being overly friendly with the enemy, more cautious women worried that girls would give away too much information to their boyfriends. Sperti worried that "certain women too long in the tongue" would tell their boyfriends inside information about the townspeople: who was hiding what, where, et cetera.[81] Despite the moralizing by others, romantic relationships did occur between soldiers and local women.

Pina Bauzon, discussed at the opening of this chapter, provided the most direct evidence of socializing between soldier and civilian since she herself was friendly with the invaders. She lived in Versa, and she enjoyed the two-year period of Italian occupation of her village near Gorizia. Soldiers were everywhere, but she never discussed an incidence of rape, robbery, or ungentlemanly behavior. Bauzon knew many soldiers by name and rank, and her diary allows a glimpse into the social life of a young, eligible woman; she was in her late twenties in 1915. In addition to the soldiers quartered in her home, she visited with others she met in public places. Her entries chronicled the comings and goings of different officers. She comes across as a real-life Lydia Bennett, the flirtatious youngest sister in Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* whose entire life revolved around the military men stationed in their town. Bauzon discussed romance and courting in her diary; her brief entries during this period were chatty and buoyant. And after the war she married Dario Maestrini, an Italian soldier from Perugia.

Another young diarist, Caterina Pezzé from Moena, fell in love with an Austrian soldier, a Mr. Valerio. He appeared in only a few of her entries from 1917 and 1918. Pezzé recounted a tender conversation between the

two of them and ended her entry that night asking for divine guidance: "God, tell me this, is it bad to love in this way?"[82] The fact that both supported Austria's right to rule the area probably facilitated the relationship. After his unit had to leave, she wrote that he had promised to find her after the war, but she doubted that would happen. The diary ends in 1920, with no other mention of him. Despite her youth, Pezzé's diary was not as flighty and contained none of the daily discussions of courting found in Bauzon's. Yet in their affections for servicemen stationed in their hometowns, both women offered evidence of soldiers and civilians having romantic relationships.

Not all flirtations were conducted within traditional boundaries of chaste romance. In Trento, Anna Menestrina worked with refugees and prisoners of war. She could not hide her frustration when a woman asked for help with her third illegitimate pregnancy. The father was Russian, probably a prisoner of war, but the mother did not even speak Russian. "Poor disgraced woman!" wrote Menestrina. Thousands of soldiers living in towns where most husbands and boyfriends were absent made for a sexually charged situation. In a study of Volano, historians claimed that the war "accelerated the affirmation of the right of a woman to direct . . . her own body and own sexuality."[83] Menestrina would have agreed. She wrote in 1917 that the "moral level" of the town's women had dropped so low that she was more worried than words could express. She felt almost ashamed to be a woman in such moments, and in a moment of exaggeration, she wrote, "It is sad, sadder than the war, the thought of certain moral deviations that cannot but have terrible consequences!"[84] Menestrina's view exemplifies the negative opinion most civilians had about inappropriate male-female relations during the war.

In her diary, Bauzon made no mention of negative reaction by her family or gossip from townspeople about her flirting. She was clearly not alone in attending to the soldiers. When new *bersagliere* arrived in town, she described them as "elegant, the most beautiful young men . . . [surrounded by] women and children."[85] In their writings, military men held local women in similarly high regard. A British soldier stationed on the Italian Front wrote home, "The girls here beat the Frenchies all ends up and Oh Gee the style on Sunday." In summing up the tone and content of letters that British soldiers sent for an official report, the head censor chose letters that praised the local Italians with comments such as, "Personally I have met with kindness and welcome from several families, and am beginning to make myself understood and understand what is said to me," and "Its [*sic*] a real holiday out here, the best war I have been in. Our billets are good, the wine is fair, the weather grand and the people treat us A1. What could be better?" When comparing military service in Italy with that in France, the censor explained that Tommy "gives

the same cheerful eye to Carlotta as to Jeanne Marie."[86] Such British evidence makes clear that soldiers lived in close contact with local women, whom they saw as not only hostesses but also companions. Another British soldier wrote in his diary of visiting a "place fairly full of buxom wenches, children and old men." When one of his friends tried to approach a woman there, she "burst out in screams[.] I think it must have been his grin—he has a sort of lean and hungry look."[87] Neither his attempt to approach her nor her reaction is surprising considering the range of relations evident between soldiers and local women. Male-female interactions could just as easily be violent and destructive for local women as they could be benevolent or harmless. Although locals did not mind having Allied soldiers near their female citizens, fraternizing with enemy soldiers was not well accepted.

Either Bauzon was unaware that others looked askance at her behavior or the locals were so pro-Italy that the vast majority did not consider her relationships inappropriate. She was not a teenager, and perhaps an Italian soldier was considered as good a catch as any other culturally Italian man from Friuli. In Udine, the mood was different because the occupying army was Austro-German. Maria Borra wrote about a "garden plot" in Udine where German soldiers with their "not always German" girlfriends took pictures of themselves. She also mentioned local women who attended "enemy's parties," dances sponsored by the military.[88] She did not consort with the invaders and did not approve of others who did. She refused to attend the "Festa di soldato" in May 1918, dismissing it as an event designed for local-soldier flirting.[89] Borra's criticism of flirting is by far the more common response found in diaries, both published and unpublished. Her reaction stemmed from her intense hatred for the Austro-German invaders.

Bauzon's easy comfort with soldiers came from the fact that it was Italians who occupied the area. After Caporetto her life changed. When the Austrians took over, she became more serious and worried. Her diary focused on food shortages and the minutiae of survival. There was neither flirting nor romantic rendezvous with Austrian soldiers, even though they were technically liberating Versa since it had belonged to the Austrian Empire before the war.

Compared with most women's experience, Bauzon's dismal post-Caporetto life was much closer to the norm. For married women living near the front, the absence of their husbands resulted in anxiety not liberation. Newly crowned heads of households, these women mostly expressed exhaustion at trying to keep up with their new responsibilities. Wives of businessmen, for example, had to keep up the family *osteria* without help.[90] The diary of Giuseppina Filippi Manfredi makes clear the utter desolation she felt about having to live without her husband, Gregorio, who was serving in the Austrian military on the Eastern Front. She addressed diary

entries to "you" (meaning Gregorio), and every entry ended with a goodbye to him, as if her diary writing took the place of talking to him in person. She wondered about his safety, but usually in terms that reflected how it would affect her: "Am I a widow?"[91] On several occasions she exclaimed, "If you knew" and "If you were here," as if his presence would have ameliorated her situation. She was concerned about how much her children missed their father, and she was always eager for news of him. When the family had to become refugees, exiled to inner Austria, she became openly antiwar. She worked hard, but there was never enough food. In her mind, Gregorio's family obligations should have outweighed his national duties. She never stopped wishing he were with her, and she sorely missed his guidance and help. Her feelings of helplessness and anger, while singular in intensity among the diaries written by civilians, were historically not unusual for women in war.

In her insightful study of American women slaveholders in the Civil War, Drew Gilpin Faust found many testimonies that echo Manfredi's. American upper-class white women expressed frustration that their husbands were away. They complained that their slaves would not obey them, making them feel "unprotected and afraid."[92] These women saw the war as a burden rather than as liberation. Although weakness and vulnerability were key elements of the American (and Italian) prewar ideal of femininity, wartime deprivations forced the women of the upper classes to become "mothers of invention," creating solutions to problems they once thought insurmountable. After the Civil War, these women had to cease their dependence both on slaves, who had been freed, and on their men, who had lost the war. Some longed for the relative ease of antebellum culture.

Italian women expressed similar sentiments almost 50 years later. Manfredi and others like her felt alone and desperate during the war. Sperti wondered, "What would Vittorio [her husband] say if he saw me busy and worried . . . and not knowing anything about anything?" Her deepest hope was to return to her prewar life and to the traditional responsibilities of a *donna brava*—a good woman who put the home at the center of her universe. In her diary, Sperti asked, "When will I return to the kitchen, to sewing and even more to the studies of our children?" She said her "only happy moments" were when she dreamed of her husband.[93] Independence was a burden for the vast majority of women living in the war zone.

The tie that bound some women to their husbands did not break easily. In one of her last entries, Manfredi still saw herself only in relation to her husband. She lamented, "Oh if you could see my downheartedness! If you were here!"[94] She expressed the frustration of the majority of Italian women who wanted their former lives back. For wives who saw their

marriages as partnerships, the war disrupted their lives and offered no benefits in return. Women in agriculture, especially, complained about all the extra work they had to do.[95] Refugees and civilians in the war zone would rather have had their husbands with them, sharing the responsibility of managing households in extraordinary times. In addition, the men would have provided emotional support, the aspect of marriage that Manfredi missed most of all. The presence of men made women feel safer and more protected, even though as we have seen, having a man around provided little real security against rape and other crimes.

Manfredi agonized that her husband was unaware of the trials she had to endure while he was away, but how much did she understand of what he was going through at the front? Nurses and wives who traveled to the front lines believed they experienced much of the same horror and destruction as men. Similarly, civilian women under occupation, militarized authority, or in exile believed they endured the worst of war just as men did. Manfredi wrote in her diary, "For eight months we both have suffered torture of every kind: me in one way, you in another."[96] Her delineation underscores how many civilian women saw themselves: separate from men but equal to them in suffering.

Only rarely did a woman express openly a feeling of inferiority because of her gender. In her unpublished diary, Anziutti wrote in the weeks before the Caporetto battle began that she wished she were a man so she could fight for Italy.[97] She saw herself as so patriotic that no female expression could convey adequately her emotions. Speaking of soldiers who had died in battle, she wrote, "I would like to be them! They died for the Patria! I would like to be there." She continued, "How cursed the destiny that did not make me born a different sex. If I had been a man at this hour I would leave, in order to defend still my beloved Patria." Instead, she remained at home in Forna di Sopra, "constrained to suffer" what she anticipated would be the fate that befell the "poor Belgians" as the Austro-German forces marched in. Anziutti was the sole woman writer of this group who identified so thoroughly with men. One could speculate that she did not really understand how difficult war was, or she would not have wished herself a soldier. But she knew of bombardments and the dangers of war. What she expressed here is a wish to be more active, a wish that many women in Chapter 4 also expressed and acted on by seeking out the front lines. Anziutti's eagerness to get involved was rare among townswomen caught at the front. Most did not welcome the war and did not wish they were more involved than geography had already made them. They lived the war, or at least one genuine form of it. Manfredi provided the best example. She knew that both she and her husband suffered tortures, albeit different ones. She was in exile, having narrowly escaped from the front in Trentino; she had children to

feed and a difficult time making enough money to provide for her family. She did not know the details of what Gregorio did on a daily basis on the Eastern Front, but she rightly assumed he was in grave danger.

Although women who lived near the front saw what war was like, they did not know where an individual loved one was at any given time or what he was experiencing—for many the hardest thing about separation. In their diaries, women tried to imagine their husbands' thoughts and actions. Mail was slow, if it arrived at all, so women could not know what their husbands were doing or where exactly they were. From their unique vantage point of being able to see the comings and goings of soldiers, some women tried to guess the course the war was taking. Sperti estimated which side was taking the lead along the front by watching who came and went from Belluno. Civilians' ability to gauge the prospects of the war led to severe restrictions on communication with outsiders because of the occupiers' fear of spies.

Women living in the *retrovie* had a true understanding of how it felt to be under attack and afraid, and they unanimously respected the soldiers on their side who withstood life in the trenches. But they had mixed feelings about prisoners of war and enemy soldiers. Sometimes torn between patriotic loyalty and maternal instinct, civilian women responded to these two groups in a variety of ways. In Udine, Borra felt confused about Italians who had been captured by advancing Austro-German forces in Caporetto. She could not decide whether to view them as heroes or as traitors; she tried to read their faces to make a judgment about their worthiness.[98] In Trento and Trieste, women were disturbed by the pathetic sight of prisoners of war begging locals for food and money. The Austrian government in command had forbidden townspeople to help them in any way. One woman asked herself, "But must they die of hunger?"[99] For the most part, women were overtly sympathetic to prisoners of war. For example, Zamboni witnessed the death of a Russian prisoner from starvation, and later she had the opportunity to hide Italian prisoners who were on the lam. Her unpublished papers contain a letter written to her from Gino Preti thanking "this brave Signorina" for helping him get home. But her acts were not limited to political allies. A zealous Irredentist, Zamboni also helped secure the release of a wrongly imprisoned German soldier.

What side were women on? In Trento, an Austrian soldier saw Menestrina offering aid to a Russian prisoner. He asked, "What are you doing—he is the enemy." She replied, "I have no enemies."[100] What can we make of this comment? Did she feel, as Virginia Woolf would later write, that as a woman she had no country?[101] On the one hand, Menestrina could have been acting out of munificence. On the other, she could have been using her status as a woman (as an apolitical noncitizen) to excuse her political act of helping an enemy prisoner. She claimed that her sense of humanity

won out over her political allegiance; whatever her motive, her act retained political overtones.

Most women expected to hate individual enemy soldiers with the same venom they applied to the enemy country or government. In reality, dealing with individuals was more difficult than they imagined. Anziutti had heard all the rumors about how Germans had treated Belgian civilians and was terrified of the Austro-German troops. Yet their appearance was not at all what she expected. They marched in looking dirty and tired, and she was surprised to feel compassion and pity. She described seeing deprivation in their faces and realizing how difficult soldiering was.[102] However she never warmed up to them once they took power; she resisted their authority and looked forward to the day when Italy would win the war. She later wrote that it was hard for her to show "a good face while in my heart I have an infernal hatred of them."[103] Nevertheless, Anziutti had acknowledged at least once that she saw the Germans as "brothers in Jesus Christ."[104] Other women were on good terms with individual soldiers even though they disapproved of the group as a whole. Soldiers sometimes were especially playful with local children, a fact that must have sat well with nervous mothers. Sperti had good relationships with most of her boarders, including a colonel who promised to bring her young relatives sweets.[105] In his history of the period, Fabi reports that children had the best rapport with soldiers, both Italian and Austrian, compared with other segments of the population.[106] It is not difficult to imagine why. Children tend to have no political agenda and an unformed worldview. They enjoyed the soldiers playing with them and giving them special attention. And soldiers stationed far from home benefited from being around young admirers whose innocence during wartime must have relieved, if only temporarily, the burdens of living with war day in and day out.

Wartime Femininity: Patriotism, Religion, and Motherhood

Unlike children, women could and did distinguish between friend and foe. Almost all women expressed strong patriotic feelings in their writings. Giuseppina Cattoi wrote a long war poem in her diary celebrating the Austrian Empire and expressing sadness for the soldiers who had to leave their beautiful homelands to fight.[107] Her overt pro-Austrian sympathies reveal that she, as a citizen of Trentino, saw the war as not only an interruption of her life but also an important world event. Elsewhere in her diary she scolded Italy for trying to meddle in the affairs of the people of Trentino. She wanted her area to remain part of Austria and saw the war as a diplomatic event, albeit a tragic one. Several women speculated about who

was responsible for the Great War. Young Caterina Pezzé blamed the Serbs for killing the "beloved" Archduke and forcing Austria into war. Pezzé watched her brother and uncle go to war, wondering if they would ever come back. They did not. Perhaps because she also had two aunts die in the same period, she never questioned the validity of the war. She remained on Austria's side until the war's end. Most women followed Pezzé's pattern. They were grieved when a relative was called up to serve, but few turned against the war itself. For example, the news that her husband had been drafted shocked Adelia Parisi Bruseghini. But after he persuaded her he would gladly give his arm for his "dear country," Austria, she agreed that "it is better to die with honor" than be a deserter.[108] In a similar vein, Sperti put her own fate on the line: "It is better to continue to suffer here without hope of liberation rather than the enemy make one single step forward!"[109] She imagined how hard a life of infinite occupation would be, but she preferred that life to Italy's losing.

If they cared enough, women living in the *retrovie* became quasi-resistance fighters. The resistance activity in the Great War differed somewhat from that of World War II. In Italy, opposition to Fascism and Nazism encouraged a variety of women to work openly or clandestinely against Mussolini's and Hitler's forces. Among others, Maria de Blasio Wilhelm, Jomarie Alano, Anna Bravo, and Anna Maria Bruzzone have examined Italian women's resistance activity in the 1930s and 1940s. Historians of Italy and France have expanded the definition of resistance to make room for women's contributions.[110] From sheltering escaped prisoners of war to organizing opposition groups, women during World War II played an important role in noncollaboration.

The Great War was less tinged with good-versus-evil ideology than World War II, but authorities and civilians took political symbols very seriously. Zamboni, who made a point of wearing her patriotic brooch every day, also cared deeply about the Italian flag. In the beginning of the war, she avoided hanging the Austrian flag out her window, as was the expected custom. One day a zealous policeman noticed the omission and entered her home to ask her about it. Inside he found an Irredentist flag portraying a rock atop a white lamb with an inscription that bemoaned the slaughter of innocent victims. He confiscated the flag and interrogated her. She pretended that she did not understand the flag's significance. In one of the best examples of how women could use their femininity to disguise their true intent, Zamboni played dumb. Her diary made clear that she absolutely knew what the flag stood for and that she had it in her possession on purpose. However, she acted the part of the apolitical female, unable to comprehend why politics mattered so much. Later she speculated to herself about her motives. Her elderly mother lived with her, and she knew that

if anything happened to her, her mother would be left alone. She asked why she endangered herself for such a useless gesture as having a forbidden flag. She must have decided that her conscience demanded it because, even before the war ended, she busied herself making a giant tricolor flag. She sewed it from scratch, even dyeing the material red and green, a risky operation considering the Austrian soldiers she quartered slept in the next room. Zamboni cared so much about these political symbols that when she donated a copy of her memoir to the local museum she included the flag she had worked on during the war.[111]

Flags were important to others, too. Timeus reported that on the first anniversary of Italy's entrance into the war some people in Trieste flew the Italian tricolor out their windows. The Austrians were not pleased, and they arrested all the tenants of the building where the offending flag flew. In Gorizia, Giulietta Bianchini and Maria Arcani raised the tricolor flag to encourage Italian troops.[112] In Udine, Borra removed her tricolor from hiding and put it on display as the last Austrians headed for the train station in 1918. She also reported that the local women created a tricolor with flowers for the altar at mass, and one of her students showed up to school wearing a white shirt, a red coat, and a green skirt, a common resistance gesture.[113]

Individual women performed most of these acts, but women did work in concert on certain occasions. In Trieste in 1915, women led thousands of protesters to attack bakeries and warehouses as shortages began to affect the entire population.[114] Most likely not explicitly political in intent, the revolt occurred because women demanded an appropriate share of food and other necessities. They protested not the politics of war but the shortages it caused. Several years later, however, women's political agenda rose to the forefront.[115] In 1918, according to Timeus, the women of Trieste rallied in the streets calling for self-determination (i.e., for Trieste to become part of Italy).[116] Sensing the war was drawing to a close, the women sent an explicitly patriotic message to the Austrian government.

In their writings and actions, women expressed clear political allegiances. In fact, the diary of Isabella Sperti is available today because she was accused after the war of having pro-Austrian sympathies because of her decision not to evacuate. She submitted her diary to public record to redeem herself during her trial because it contained numerous pro-Italy comments. She claimed she stayed in town to protect her house and property and that she was civil with the occupying Austrians only out of feminine good-heartedness. Her husband had been an important city official who had fled to Italy for the duration of the war. Other women made their loyalty known through actions in addition to words. Zamboni and her friends performed puppet shows in front of the fence that held prisoners

of war. Seemingly a humanitarian gesture, the goal of the diversion was to sneak packages to the captive men.[117] In a similar vein, Borra refused to help the enemy. When newly arrived Austrians questioned her about where the Italian military headquarters had been, she refused to answer them.[118] All of these acts show that women were interested in politics, and many felt a strong sense of patriotism. These examples reveal a burgeoning civic and national identity among women. Like women living safely at the home front, civilians trapped in the *retrovie* also became *donne italiane* during the war. They exhibited a desire to see themselves as citizens, and many demanded that the invading military and the other townspeople recognize their national citizenship loyalties. No longer simply subjects, they became active participants in determining their political fates.

In militarized zones, women who committed political crimes were not always spared from punishment just because of their gender. In Trento, the Austrians were on the lookout for Irredentist sympathy and arrested anyone they could accuse of treason, including women and the elderly.[119] Women who were tried and convicted of political crimes usually were sent to an Austrian concentration camp. The Austrians arrested and sentenced 17-year-old Maria Vallini to death because of her Irredentism. Her crime: in a letter to her cousin who was serving in the military, Vallini said she hoped the Italian tricolor would soon fly over Trento. Imprisoned and tortured for two weeks, she refused to recant her Italian patriotic statement.[120] In Silvia Gottardi's case, a witness accused her of saying, "Better Italian hell than German Paradise" and "the King of Italy is better than the Emperor of Austria," among other Irredentist comments. Only 24 years old, Gottardi and her younger sister stood trial for high treason. After spending several days in solitary confinement in the Castel Buon Consiglio in Trento, where Cesare Battisti, the most famous Irredentist martyr, had recently been imprisoned, Gottardi received the death sentence. The emperor lessened her punishment, and she was jailed in the Wiener-Neudorf camp where she lived with women convicted of murder, robbery and infanticide; political prisoners had little contact with each other.[121]

The Austrians recognized a danger in politicized women who might work for Allied victory. The example of Adalgisa Piffer and her 16-year-old daughter, Cornelia, compares with Vallini's and Gottardi's stories. Someone overheard the Piffers making pro-Italy comments. The mother initially received a sentence of death; the daughter got five years. Later the emperor considerably reduced their sentences. Once incarcerated, they were separated as further punishment. Fed hot salt water and flour, they withered away in jail, both suffering from malnutrition, until they were released in 1918.[122] In their postwar testimony, neither woman denied she was an Irredentist, but they claimed they never had planned to work against the

Austrians. Like Vallini and Gottardi, the government punished them for their politics, not their subversive actions. In this spirit, the Austrians condemned Anna Eller to death by a firing squad in October 1915 for her comments; her sentence was later reduced to five years hard time. According to Eller, another woman had falsely accused her of verbally criticizing the Austrian emperor and for wishing for his imminent death. She grew very sick after one month in solitary confinement and complained that the nuns who acted as her guards did not treat her well. But in her testimony to the Italian government after the war, Eller said, "I offer willingly my sacrifice to the Country, happy that finally the beloved tricolor flies over Trento."[123] The patriotic comments imputed to these women were the whole of their crime. The Austrians did not accuse them of organizing resistance or spying, but, in the climate of fear that pervaded Trento during the war, authorities saw ideas as dangerous, and they held women responsible for their words.

Political crimes were not just about words. Austrian officials requisitioned Maria Lazzeri's house in 1915 and arrested her father on charges of high treason. They arrested her about one month later. Her father was soon released, but Lazzeri was not. She stood accused of supporting her two brothers who had deserted from the Austrian military and fled to Switzerland. The authorities claimed she had given them money. Lazzeri was in trouble not for her own anti-Austrian actions or words but for supporting her brothers' decision. Because they could not punish the men themselves, the Austrians saw a chance to hurt them via their families. Like the other women, Lazzeri had her sentence reduced after her incarceration (to three years instead of death).[124] Ada Torboli found herself in similar circumstances. In her unpublished memoir, she recounted her arrest by Austrian authorities because her brother had deserted from the Austrian side to join the Italians.[125] She served ten months in jail. That these women were made responsible for the actions of male relatives, even as accomplices, demonstrates that the Austrian government treated women as political actors.

These women who were jailed for Irredentism represent a small fraction of the civilian population. Piffer testified there were twelve Trentine and four Trieste women held as political prisoners in Wiener-Neudorf. Except for Edith Cavell, a British woman accused by the Germans of spying in Belgium, no woman was tried and executed for treason.[126] The military may have wanted to root out and punish both male and female traitors, but in reality, women were not punished as often or as severely as men were. All but two of the Italian female prisoners discussed above were released by July 1918 when an amnesty order excused their crimes. Lazzeri remained for three and half more months (until the war ended) because her crime was not covered by the amnesty.[127]

Of course not everyone was willing to sacrifice so magnanimously for the war. Manfredi never stopped hating the war for separating her from her husband. She acted as the stereotype incarnate for what government officials and society at-large suspected women's response to the war would be: selfish and loyal only to their personal families. Official propaganda campaigns, discussed in Chapter 1, aimed to make women selfless models of patriotism. Manfredi is a singular voice in exhibiting patent individualism about the war. She complained that her husband had never been patriotic or cared about politics, so why did he have to serve? She sighed, "Cruel War! Ruiner of the World!"[128] All she cared about was the effect that individual deaths would have on the deceased's families, especially the wives. She gave little thought to which side should win the war. But her lack of patriotism was unusual in its severity. Most women, even if they discussed the war in the most subjective ways, still believed that war was a valid way for leaders to solve problems. They hoped their side would win, and soon, so their relatives could come home. Manfredi, in contrast, insisted that she and her family should be allowed to live outside the bounds of political society, as she believed they had before the war began.

At the other end of the spectrum from Manfredi were women who were ready to sacrifice not only their loved ones but also themselves to help their side win. Their actions went beyond any expectations of appropriate female national pride, and they were roundly celebrated for their bravery in books and articles of the day. The previously mentioned example of Maria Abriani stands out. In May 1915, Abriani guided Italian soldiers into the small town of Ala after seeing from her window that the Italians could not find their way. She was awarded a gold medal for her bravery. In her book aimed at children, Anna Franchi praised Abriani as a fitting role model, calling her "a courageous and kind girl."[129]

If Abriani represented one ideal type of femininity, it was not the most popular one. Many civilian women in the *retrovie* accepted a more traditional view of femininity. In their diaries, they revealed that their families and homes were the center of their lives, and many relied on religious faith to help them through the crises brought by the war. Countless examples attest to the importance of Christianity to the civilian women living in the war zone and to the way organized religion provided routine and structure reminiscent of the prewar era. Sperti, for instance, described how angry the women of Belluno were when the Austrians confiscated almost all the candles from the church for military use.[130] A few writers had formal ties to the Catholic Church, for example Giacomelli was a Samaritan nurse and Luigia Venturini became a nun after the war.[131] Most women devoted to Catholicism were less officially involved. In fact Venturini made little mention of God and the Church compared with many other women. Generally,

religious women vested Catholicism with the power to console them during occupation or militarization. They attended mass, went to confession, and received communion from priests who had stayed behind to minister. In these rites and rituals, they found "courage" and the "strength to endure the sadness and deprivations of slavery," as Juretigh wrote.[132] In their writings, civilian women also prayed to God and Jesus to be kind to their neighbors and friends and to help their side win the war. Anziutti begged Jesus to be kind to refugees; she thought that because Jesus himself knew how awful it was to be cast out, he should have pity on them.[133] Others prayed to God, Jesus, or saints to bless the soldiers and protect them from the enemy.

The emphasis on religion in the *retrovie* diaries is unmatched in the writings of the women who sought out the front, for whom religion was not a major theme. Although some contemporary writers believed women were volunteering for front line service out of religious zeal, there is little in the diaries to corroborate this assumption.[134] In part, this discrepancy reflects the more orderly, routine life led by civilians living in the war zone compared with that of nurses, technicians, and journalists who lived as nomads. Even when these women were stationed somewhere for months at a time, their jobs made their daily schedules chaotic. Although women caught in the war zone did not live an easy life, their days usually had a comforting rhythm. Perhaps the women who joined the men at the front were less traditional and maybe religion had never played a central role in their lives. Even though no evidence implied these volunteers at the front were atheists or agnostics, religion and spirituality clearly were not central issues for them. It may be simply that both women working at the front and those caught in the *retrovie* maintained the level of religious faith they had before the war. None of the documents discussed in this chapter concerns a woman developing a new interest in religion where none had existed before the war. If Catholicism had been central to their lives earlier, they maintained their faith during occupation. This reliance on organized religion and personal spirituality reflected the common values of early twentieth-century Italy.

Just as prominent as religion in these diaries and memoirs is the theme of motherhood. As children and as mothers, the women living in the war zone were obsessed with the survival of family members. Bauzon and Zamboni lived with their mothers, and both women discussed in their diaries how much they worried about getting enough to eat and providing the rest of their families with meals. And Pezzé, just a teenager at the time, wrote about her mother often. In fact, her diary ends with an entry about her mother's death and Pezzé's memories of how much they loved each other. Beyond these personal relationships, many writers mentioned the image of a woman with their children as the most distressing sight during

evacuation and occupation. It is a standard trope—the mother with her baby and other young children in tow, emboldened to protect them despite the odds against their survival, the weak woman turned strong to protect her children. Onlookers worried about these mothers and their children, about how they would survive during times of extreme shortage or on long journeys to unknown destinations. Most of the women whose writing survived had either no children or grown children; we have few primary sources that document the feelings of these young mothers everyone worried so much about.

Life was hard for any mother at this time. Mothers felt anxiety for the children, no matter their ages or proximity. The *Relazioni* documented cases of mothers saving their daughters from harm. In one story, a mother bought off a group of enemy soldiers for 500 lire to prevent them from raping her 20-year-old daughter.[135] A soldier from Trieste serving in the Austrian military testified about a different story. When Bosnian troops threatened rape, a mother replied they would have to kill her before getting to her daughter, and during this conversation the daughter had time to escape. The men were so angry, they fired off rounds in the house, saying if the daughter did not return in ten minutes they would kill the mother. Fortunately she, too, escaped.[136] In yet another case, Chiara Collautti di Buttrio explained how she encouraged the successful escape of her two daughters, ages 16 and 20, from malevolent Austrian soldiers.[137] It remained nearly impossible to dissuade attackers from their intended victim, but the fact that mothers, like fathers, occasionally did so merits mention. Of course, concern about family was not just a female issue. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau has demonstrated that soldiers also were preoccupied with the health and status of their family members back home.[138]

Women living in the *retrovie* lacked a uniform code of femininity. Most women trapped in the war zone continued their daily routine as much as possible, considering the effects of martial law, air raids, depleted resources, and living in a town without adult men. Manfredi described living amid only women, saying, "It seems a comedy, they sing, they play, women instead of men, they play ridiculous roles."[139] They may have seemed ridiculous to her, but women in such circumstances were in charge of much more than they had ever been. They protected private property, headed households, and often worked as well. They were responsible for feeding whoever was left from the family and to make do with extreme shortages. They adapted to new laws designed to restrict the local population and found ways to express patriotic loyalties by writing diaries, sewing flags, and aiding prisoners of war. They bravely endured war's destruction on a daily basis—random violence, bombardments, and personal attacks by occupying troops. Nevertheless, these women did not describe themselves

as heroic or brave. They recognized strength in other women but did not dwell on how the war was changing their lives. They accepted their fates, some with more grace than others. However, they did not seize the opportunity war offered them to reject the patterns of gender behavior they inherited from their mothers. They were willing to act "unfeminine" when they had to, but they did not relish transgressing gender boundaries the way the adventurers of Chapter 4 did.

For many civilian women at the front, the war nurtured their patriotism. Used to living in a double world—politically Austrian but culturally Italian—these women had to take sides when the rulers changed. Would they support the occupiers, as Bauzon did when the Italians arrived, or would they oppose them, as Borra did to the Austro-Germans? Try as they might, it was difficult to avoid getting involved in politics because the war was on their very doorsteps. Even Manfredi, who described so openly her apolitical feelings, could not avoid becoming entangled in the war. She became a refugee while her husband fought at the Eastern Front.

It would be an exaggeration to say the Great War turned every civilian woman into a political creature who refused to cast off her new national identity after the war, but almost every woman who kept a diary did express patriotic loyalties. They saw themselves as contributing to national victory through their ability to endure scarcity and to refuse to cooperate with the enemy. Few expressed a desire to participate in the war effort in the same way as men did, yet many thought of their own hardships as monstrously difficult to bear. Seeing themselves as citizens from whom the ruling government expected something, these civilian women took pride in fulfilling their duty. The majority of writers discussed here (the pro-Italy Irredentists) saw themselves as good Italian women, *donne italiane*, in much the same way as did the nurses, wives, and technicians who went to the front on purpose.

Part III

Femininity in the Postwar Era

6

Postwar Femininity and the Liberal State

The *Donna Nuova*

> Let the woman ask for the things which will be useful to her, which will give her the greatest advantages.
>
> —Gina Lombroso, *The Soul of Woman: Reflections on Life*

After the cultural shifts caused by the Great War in Italy, the return to normalcy of the postwar period placed women and Italian femininity in an awkward position. The engaged female citizen of the war years could not simply disappear. However, many people wanted to see the war as a parenthesis, requiring change only for the duration. They hoped that peace would bring a return to the prewar ideals of marriage, religion, and gender roles. Such a reversion was not altogether possible; too much had changed. Many veterans returned as different men, physically or emotionally disabled, and society itself had changed. Near the Italian Front, bombings, sackings, and the hardships of occupation had altered the geographic landscape, local economies, and social codes. A woman who preferred old-fashioned boundaries of feminine behavior found herself living in a new world. The female archetype of the *donna nuova* (new woman) straddled the two previous eras.

In the immediate postwar period, the *donna nuova* looked back to the comfort of the older gender roles while also expecting to engage with the public sphere as a member of the body politic. She should not be confused with the modern girl type (exemplified by the flapper of American lore or similar *garçonne* of France), who rejected older standards of femininity and participated in the consumer economy to outfit herself for the postwar decades.[1] The new woman archetype was more tied to reality, an

independent woman torn between her own desires and the needs of her family. Unlike the previous Italian models for women (the *donna brava* and the *donna italiana*), the new woman appeared to have choices. She could choose autonomy but was encouraged to prefer motherhood.

Masculinity and Femininity Redefined

The Great War unquestionably affected men and society's conception of masculinity. In *The Great War and Modern Memory*, Paul Fussell has sparked controversy with his thesis that the war created the modern man.[2] Thinking of the British generation of young men who went to fight, Fussell theorizes that, no longer able to find solace in the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, these men from the upper classes turned to irony and disillusionment to make sense of their grisly experience. Fussell describes his subjects as forever separated from all women and from men who had not served in the trenches. Along these same lines, Eric Leed has analyzed the psychological effect of the Great War on men.[3] He, too, sees a rendezvous with modernity. Leed claims that male identity was undeniably altered by the war as war service obliterated all other distinctions that might have separated the men from each other, forging a generation of masculine veterans. Like Fussell, he focuses on male servicemen who felt they had more in common with each other (but not with enemy male servicemen) than with women and noncombatants. Although Leed goes too far in claiming that class and regional identity were subsumed by masculinity, his point that the war broke a person's interior life into two parts—before and after the war—is accurate. Both men and women felt a sense of discontinuity, because their wartime exploits were far removed from their prewar, peacetime selves.

Other studies of wartime and postwar masculinity have reached different conclusions. In her study of British men, Joanna Bourke finds that the trauma of the Great War made soldiers more likely to seek solace at home. Since male bonding during the war had not fulfilled men's emotional needs, veterans placed "a greater stress on domestic emotional ties as being necessary to the stability of the masculine personality."[4] Daniel J. Sherman has studied the war's effect on French masculinity. For him, the proliferation of "family imagery" after the war reflects an attempt by wider culture to "contain the subversive potential" of the "all-male world" of combatants.[5] Both Sherman and Bourke note men's new emphasis on family in the postwar years. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau has described the same phenomenon in trench newspapers written on the Western Front. He concludes that by the end of the war, "the combatants appeared to concentrate more than ever on those from whom they were separated and whom they

hoped . . . to see again."[6] Where Sherman portrays society "channel[ing] masculinity in a socially useful direction," Bourke and Audoin-Rouzeau recognize that the veterans themselves wanted to return to the comfort of intimate, familial bonds.[7] Bourke explains that marriage, even for men, was more popular than it was before the war. A recent review of scholarship on masculinity in times of war and peace reaches similar conclusions. Robert A. Nye sums up, "Even in wartime the masculine warrior is never sealed off from women or from the feminine in himself or his comrades."[8]

Bourke understands that although some men resented women for their wartime gains in independence, most spent the war years looking forward to returning to the solace of family life. Whereas before the war a man probably saw marriage as something society expected of him as he made his way in the world, after the war he anticipated the comfort of being with his wife (or finding a wife). Wartime rhetoric reminded soldiers they were fighting to protect women at home. So it is not surprising that, having risked their lives to defend domesticity, veterans showed an increased appreciation for their female family members once the war ended. In Bourke's words, the experience of war "led to an increased yearning amongst the male sex for a domesticity that was far from oppressive statist and military interventions." Unfortunately, as Bourke demonstrates, the satisfaction men sought within marriage remained as elusive as the promise of male bonding during the war.[9] The men who were fortunate enough to return from the war were changed, as was everyone's notion of masculinity. At the same time, femininity and women's conception of their place in society also shifted.

For the generation of women who came of age during or shortly after the war, the flapper girl, nicknamed the *maschietta* in Italy and the *garçonne* in France, quickly became a popular image of postwar femininity. The mystique of the single, affluent, and independent woman inflamed the popular press not only in Europe but also across the globe. This caricature was a woman loose in morals, less attentive to family, and obsessed with beauty. A comprehensive collection of essays tracking the modern girl as an international phenomenon has noted that she was "a harbinger of both the possibilities and the dangers of modern life" and "a threat to national cohesion and social control."[10] Her emergence signified women's new public visibility. In discussing the modern girl, scholars have explained how her obsession with beauty products "fostered young women's yearning for public life by outfitting them with faces and bodies that emboldened them to cross the domestic threshold into the public sphere." Furthermore, these fashion and beauty "commodities publicized women's everyday lives by putting private cares about the body and bodily function on display."[11] People were both attracted to and repelled by this ideal of postwar femininity. That Italians called her *maschietta* emphasized their belief that she

was so emancipated she became masculinized. Yet this figure was more of a specter haunting Europe than a reality.[12] Historians of Italy have found scant evidence of actual maschiette, yet there was much general anxiety about allegedly liberated women who refused to quit their wartime jobs and return to the home. Even in France, the image of the garçonne belied the reality that few women lived such lives.[13] For Italy, I propose a more nuanced archetype for the postwar years—the *donna nuova*—who hewed more closely to the prewar and wartime norm for women than the dramatic image of the modern girl.

Published writings from the immediate postwar period, 1918 to 1922, validate the image of the *donna nuova*, a modern woman on the verge of financial and intellectual independence. Two things marked this feminine archetype as new. First, she had a choice about what to do with her future. Before the war, women had limited options for single life. New fields created by the war, especially secretarial work, remained open to women even after the armistice. During the war, many women made their own decisions about daily life rather than relying on male relatives as advisers. After the war, many women did not want to lose this newfound sense of individuality and of belonging in the public arena. Thus, the second characteristic that marked the *donna nuova* was her wartime involvement with the nation in both real and symbolic ways. For many women, exclusion from the nation was no longer an acceptable option. In 1921, a mainstream Italian newspaper had boldly stated, "When there is not a place for everybody, men come first and then women." One female Socialist replied, "You have taught us in school that the nation is a family . . . What would that family be like if your theories were applied? Men eat first. Then, if there were leftovers, women would eat."[14] Clearly her opinion was that women should have an equal place at Italy's banquet table. Not everyone agreed.

Even before the war ended, contemporary observers were criticizing the modern woman for her self-indulgence. In an essay written in April 1918, Oreste Lo Valvo observed that the war purified men but corrupted women. The self-sacrifice required of the male troops did not find a complement in female duties, according to Lo Valvo. Seeing a completely different world than the one inhabited by women at the time, he claimed life at the home front was too easy, allowing women to focus on frivolity and luxury. For him, women's valuable war contribution was to dedicate themselves to domesticity. Women's liberation was anathema to Lo Valvo because he felt it would destroy the Italian family. A woman belongs "in the arms of the hero who has fought for the good of humanity," he wrote.[15] But he promised that the new woman created by the war would not live in ignorance as the older generation of women did. She would put her "civil education" to

good use, especially by teaching her own children patriotism. The *donna italiana* created by the war could endure in a sort of republican motherhood. Even for Lo Valvo, women had earned some permanent gains with their war service. His train of thought chugged in the same direction as many others, including Mussolini himself only a few years later.

Most authors, male and female, still believed that biology controlled women, focusing on their emotions, their physical weakness, and most importantly, their reproductive ability. One example of middle-class Italian values in the immediate postwar years is Gina Lombroso's *L'anima della donna*.[16] Although she began the book in 1917, just after her family had moved to Florence, it was not completed and published until 1921. It was an instant success, appearing in at least three Italian editions and translated into 16 languages.[17] The English title is *The Soul of Woman: Reflections on Life*. By the time it was published, Gina Lombroso was already an international figure who would become more famous as she continued to write about current events. She had dined at the White House on her 1908 visit to the United States and was listed as one of two women on the *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune* list of outstanding non-American Jews.[18] Called "Italy's leading woman intellectual" at her death, Lombroso opined about everything from women's character to industrialization, and her works were translated into over 20 languages.[19] She cowrote texts with her father and married her father's disciple and a future historian of antiquity, Guglielmo Ferrero. She edited their famous book *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman*. She earned a doctorate in philosophy and another in medicine from the University of Turin. In addition to her scholarly output, she published a children's book. Of course her ideas were not the only ones floating around postwar Italy, and she did not represent everyone's views. Nevertheless, she was a major cultural figure, at home and abroad, and her book's success and reputation make it an important reference point for postwar Italian femininity.

The Soul of Woman was ostensibly a letter to her daughter Nina, a book for her to read when she grew older to help her understand her own nature, and Lombroso also read parts aloud to her son Leo as she wrote.[20] Published when Lombroso was turning 50, she spoke for an older generation trying to preserve tradition in the face of change. The lengthy review in *The New York Times* described it as coming from an "Old World" context, a "product of a Latin temperament, of an Italian heart and brain." The reviewer, Mary Siegrist, vehemently disagreed with Lombroso's conclusions, although not with all her observations. Crediting it as "the sincere harvesting of a gifted woman's experience, study, observation and reflections," Siegrist criticized Lombroso's analysis of women as "inevitably inferior to men." She continued, "One stops in the reading of it from time to time and wonders

whether it is all a dream or whether a woman in the twentieth century has actually written these things and believes them to be true."[21] Lombroso must have seemed anathema to American feminists. She was on record as opposing female suffrage and was outspoken about her reservations about feminism. Despite Siegrist's objections, the book enjoyed a wide influence, including even a translation into Armenian. In an article analyzing the new woman in Italy, historian Michela De Giorgio cites Lombroso's book as exemplary of the period.[22] A contemporary review in the quasi-feminist *Almanacco della donna italiana* (Italian Woman's Almanac) found it filled with "so many truths" and singled it out as the only book from 1921 worth mentioning. It was, the reviewer stated, "a book unlike any other."[23]

Interestingly, Lombroso's work can perform the same function for the postwar period that her sister Paola Lombroso's book, *Caratteri della femminilità*, did for the prewar era. Gina Lombroso remained committed to many of the same nineteenth-century, pseudoscientific theories about women that her sister held before the war. Both believed that women were biologically different from men; both asserted a woman's primary function was to serve her family over her individual needs. But Gina Lombroso differed from her sister in her desire to address women trying to discover their place in a new society. Her advice to the *donna nuova* was conservative; she wanted motherhood valued above all else. Yet the way she wrote about women and society reveals that new ideals about femininity permeated postwar Italian society, and her solutions anticipated some of what was to come for Italian women in the Fascist era.

Lombroso noted that in the past women had tried to make a place for themselves outside the home, always to no avail, and she took contemporary feminists to task for avoiding the reality of women's "natural" constitution. She claimed to be writing especially for the "humble mothers" and "young girls" waiting to be mothers who felt "oppressed, crushed, bewildered by all the talk of woman's great social and political mission."[24] The choice between motherhood and personal ambition may seem difficult, Lombroso believed, but women must choose motherhood because it is a natural fit for their innate strengths and weaknesses. The postwar woman was, in Lombroso's words, "not the first generation to try to break away from the past, but always—after having satisfied her ambitions and interests, attained independence, wealth, fame and honor—woman has withdrawn, disgusted from the general competition, realizing that she has been pursuing a shadow and neglecting to satisfy the cravings of her heart. In the midst of her triumphs woman has realized that they gave her no real satisfaction, whereas she has found satisfaction even in the midst of the greatest hardships when fulfilling her role of mother and protector."[25] To Lombroso, only compliance with the eternal feminine instinct that put

others before herself would satisfy women. What threatened Lombroso and many others in Italy and across Europe was the *donna nuova*'s newfound ability to think for herself. These critics feared the luster of personal fulfillment would allow the modern woman to put her own needs first, thereby breaking society's fragile balance. Lombroso and others, including Lo Valvo, took comfort in their belief that women would ultimately find that their loyalty lay with the family. They wanted to preserve the traditional model of gender relations despite the current postwar climate that allowed for female independence. Another article in the *Almanacco della donna italiana* written by Esther Danesi Traversari explained that throughout history and across geography, women are always the same because all have maternity (potential or actual) in common.[26] She felt that women cannot change, even if familial, social, or political customs do.

Lombroso and others believed deeply in biological essentialism, but that did not deter them from considering themselves crusaders for change. Their ideas mirror those held by some German women who became Nazis in the interwar years. As Claudia Koonz notes, these middle-class women consciously accepted men's superiority in society. They did not want to be equal to men in all things; they wanted to reign supreme in a separate, feminine sphere.[27] Similarly, Gina Lombroso saw the idea of women seeking to have the same rights as men as absurd: "Let the woman ask for the things which will be useful to her, which will give her the greatest advantages." For Lombroso, suffrage was not among them. Rather than ask that all rights of men be extended to women, she wanted to "change the basis of the question, and ask for things beneficial to women." She was keen enough to realize that therein lay the problem because "opinions can vary indefinitely." Nevertheless, she was adamant that "feminists" missed the mark by advocating equal legal rights for women. "There is no use denying it. Woman is not man's equal," Lombroso stated in the opening pages of her book. As she elaborated on her views, it is clear that she believed women were capable of as much greatness as men but only within their own feminine sphere and the confines of a narrow definition of "greatness."[28]

Like her nineteenth-century predecessors, Lombroso believed that "men and women are different physically, intellectually, and morally." She refuted the suggestion that gender difference was constructed by society, offering examples from the animal kingdom to prove her point: "In spite of many years of domestication the bull remains wild, while the cow is peaceful; the rooster is combative, while the hen is docile. Female lions and tigers are always chosen for taming . . . Why should not similar tendencies exist in the most perfect race, the human race?" Since woman herself (as a biological creature and a thinking individual who could not overcome biology) was incapable of change, Lombroso suggested that societal change would

reverse women's present status. "Instead of making a campaign to emancipate women," she boldly asserted, "I would suggest one to increase man's chivalry, and this campaign would have the double advantage of making men more agreeable and women happier." Although she felt individual men could be encouraged to treat women with more respect, she also called for a wider cultural change to elevate the position of motherhood.[29]

Lombroso's goal was for society, including feminists, to recognize and value maternity as essential. She bemoaned that people never built monuments to everyday women who willingly take on the hard work of raising children and tending to their husbands. Instead of being judged by the "masculine ideal," she wanted women rated on how well they succeeded as women. Reflecting on the fact that the *donna nuova* might be more attracted to a career than to family, Lombroso compared male and female achievement. She was right to see why a woman who had the choice might be drawn to follow her own personal ambition instead of her innate sense of "alterocentrism" that made her put others before herself. She wrote,

> The reason why the feminine ideal is less sought than the masculine one, at present, is no doubt that the feminine ideal is vague and thankless. To write books, to paint pictures or to chisel statues is something definite. One can measure what is accomplished. But to shape traditions, increase another's prestige, what is that? How can one measure it? What is the reward? None. The greatest women, judged by feminine standards, are not known to the public. They have no great statues in the public squares, whereas 'great' men, in reality no greater in their fields than these women in theirs, are known by name to one and all.[30]

Lombroso sought not female emancipation but societal valorization for women's domestic achievements. She elaborated, "Injustice begins when society fails to reward and decorate the women who have fulfilled perfectly the functions of mother, wife and daughter and when that same society rewards men who have best fulfilled their masculine careers." In some ways, Lombroso advocated a change as big as any wanted by contemporary feminism. She wanted society to reconceptualize women, not by allowing them to pursue their individuality, but by changing society's values to make women's traditional contributions more important.[31]

Only a few years later, Mussolini would exploit these cultural tendencies to reduce women to their biological essence. The Great War introduced women to the concept that they, too, could be useful citizens of the Patria. But the era of Fascism elevated their status as politicized Italians by having the state formally acknowledge them as participants, albeit only on Mussolini's terms. In public spectacles devoted to celebrating prolific mothers,

in propaganda posters deifying peasant women, and in policy designed to make motherhood central to Italy's rebirth, the Fascists extolled motherhood as a civic duty.[32] They heaped glory and public approval on women who supported the pronatalist campaign by providing Italy with future soldiers and mothers. Lombroso was not a supporter of Fascism. Among her closest friends were the Roselli family, whose antifascist sons Carlo and Nello were murdered by Fascist supporters in France in 1937.[33] Lombroso left Italy with her immediate family in 1930 and lived the rest of her life in Switzerland. Nevertheless, her vision of a radical change in society's view of motherhood was partially realized during Mussolini's regime.

Lombroso scolded feminists for being out of touch with the situation of women, and she was not wrong to find the small, radical feminist movement unrepresentative of the majority of Italian women. For example, women living in the war zone had expressed their overwhelming desire to return to normalcy after the war. Lombroso cautioned feminism to "go slowly in asking for the things which will make marriage more difficult" because she believed most women would not find happiness outside marriage. To her, the submission of a wife's needs to her husband's was essential in making both marriage and society in general function properly. The *donna nuova* was lucky to have options, Lombroso believed, but she was in error if she thought following personal goals would fulfill her. Lombroso saw in women "ancient truths," for example that they prefer cooking to history and that they are ruled by their hearts not minds.[34] She believed that neither passage of time, nor world war, nor economic change could remove the fact that women were damned to a hard life; they were fortified only by the generosity of biology that allowed them to find happiness in sacrificing themselves for others.

Lombroso's views of women echo other prominent voices in postwar Europe. Eugenics and pronatalist theories abounded in Europe and the United States. France, like Italy, suffered from a population decline.[35] Dropping birthrates combined with the war dead created a frantic atmosphere in both nations. By one estimate, the war caused a birth deficit of 1.4 million people in Italy.[36] Public outcries demanded people respect and encourage motherhood. In Italy in 1918, the eminent gynecologist and public intellectual Emilio Alfieri published a pamphlet suggesting how the Liberal government could legislate changes to encourage women to have children. Alarmed at the low birthrate and the "degeneration of the race," he called for measures beyond propaganda, such as limiting pregnant women's working hours, providing nursing rooms to encourage breast feeding at factories, and raising the age when girls could start working. For Alfieri, the state had an obligation to protect all women because of their potential to become mothers. Echoing prominent voices advocating eugenics,

Alfieri wrote, "One cannot be in doubt, that it will be the duty of the state of tomorrow to dictate the norms of hygienic matrimony in the interests of the races, of the nations, and of the human species."[37] He then acknowledged that the present government was not at all prepared to be so far-reaching. Social Darwinism, eugenics, and other theories that attempted to give humans control over the evolution of the species remained as popular after 1918 as they had been before, and they would grow more so in the interwar period as Fascism put many theories into practice.

Alfieri and Lombroso both wanted to see Italian culture pay more attention to mothers. At first glance, their fixation on maternity implies that women's place in society had not shifted at all because of the war, that women were still valued, as they were before the war, for their reproductive ability. Susan Grayzel reaches such a conclusion in her in-depth study of Great War rhetoric in England and France. Grayzel's interest lies in the stability of the old models of femininity, and even the Great War could not shake them loose. Undeniably, the war "enhanced the centrality of motherhood," as Grayzel argues, in England, France, and Italy.[38] Grayzel's point that society would not allow women to escape their biology is correct, but in these years almost everything was seen in biological terms. Social Darwinism flourished, especially in Britain, as did fears about population decline, especially in France. In many cases, it was women themselves, not an abstract "society," that encouraged seeing women as an inescapable biological category. Male and female writers exalted women who served at the altar of domesticity. The postwar European obsession with motherhood was made up of some of the same elements that existed in prewar gender norms. But much had changed as well. Postwar femininity was entangled with politics.

The Almanacco *della donna italiana provides* an excellent source for historians trying to understand postwar women's issues. Published annually by Bemporad, the prestigious house, the *Almanacco* provided an eclectic collection of female voices that evaluated the year's events. Silvia Bemporad, the editor (and wife of the publisher), clearly stated the *Almanacco's* goal in its first issue in 1920: "To be a faithful mirror to the gradual elevation of the female masses" as they expand their horizons.[39] The cover of the 1922 edition reflects perfectly the almanac's objective (Figure 10). A woman sits sewing an Italian flag with her young child at her feet. She has clearly not given up on motherhood and traditional female tasks, like needlework, but she is using these skills for a new end: patriotism. Is she at home or has she taken her child out to a meeting? In either case, the world opens up beyond her domestic circle; over the low porch walls is a world ready for her to explore.

In its early years, the annual publication included a wide variety of female voices, from socialists and feminists to proto-Fascists. In her study of the *Almanacco*, Elisabetta Mondello emphasizes the impressive list of female authors contributing everything from fiction to political commentary to discussions of what it meant to be a woman in the postwar world. In the pre-Fascist years, the journal was open to diverse opinions and attempted to provide a panorama of female reality in all its complexity. It wanted to inform and educate its readers.[40] The 1920s were a time of important changes for Italian women as they navigated the rough waters of demobilization and the rise of Fascism; these currents featured prominently in the *Almanacco della donna italiana.*

Almost all the essays in the first edition reveal that women saw themselves as living in a new era, led by the generation of women old enough to have contributed to the war effort but young enough to feel their lives were still ahead of them in 1918. One article offered traditional fare in its advice to mothers about how to raise young children. The author, Pia Valdameri Peregrini, assumed that it was the "dream of every wife to be herself a *mamma*."[41] But the very next article in that issue called for a nanny training school in Italy, proving that the editors recognized that not all women planned to be full-time caregivers for their children.[42] The mixed messages abound, as women were reminded alternately of their duty as mothers and of the opportunities for individuality offered by the public sphere.

An article by Laura Orvieto called "How do I educate my daughters?" reveals much about the complex definition of femininity that existed in the pre-Fascist, postwar years. She opened with a telling metaphor comparing families to governments. In the old world, the prewar world, the family was a small kingdom, ruled by the father as an absolute monarch. The wife was like the prime minister; she could be consulted but did not have to be. Orvieto explained that in those former days, women had limited opportunity and education. In the present day, she said, the family is more like a republic; a kind of equality exists in the home between the wife and husband, and women are responsible, not obedient. In this new world, Orvieto believed women needed guidance about how to raise the next generation of girls. She wanted females to use their new freedom wisely, and she criticized aristocratic and working-class women for their self-indulgence (based on the false assumption that the working woman spent her salary only on herself). Orvieto aimed her article squarely at the middle class, the target audience for the *Almanacco*. She encouraged these mothers to let their daughters be athletic and "sportive," so they could learn courage and determination. Meanwhile, they should also teach the younger generation home economics so they would be competent wives.

At this point, Orvieto revealed her true goal, one that mimicked Lombroso's: mothers must teach their daughters to be good mothers. In a sign of the times, Orvieto noted that not every woman would end up a mother, but all needed the same training because everyone in society needed some sort of mothering. Orvieto's message, like Lombroso's, Lo Valvo's, and others, is clear. Women should not exploit the freedom that might come from living in a republic instead of an absolute monarchy; the gain for women is that they get to *choose* to fulfill their "nature" rather than have it forced on them. Over and over again, prescriptive magazines, essays, and books advised women to prioritize old-fashioned motherhood despite the new options available.

Koonz has noted this same phenomenon in the Weimar era in Germany: when a society is in tumult, people find comfort in hazy recollections of how wonderful the good old days were. This nostalgia for the past is based on an idealization rather than a reality. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, many people wanted the best of both worlds: the stability of the prewar gender system and the benefits of wartime emancipation, especially financial and personal independence. The prewar gender hierarchy that gave men superior status over women remained in force in Western Europe after the war. Nevertheless, postwar femininity was not the same as its prewar counterpart. The *donna nuova* was more than just a wife or a mother; she was a modern woman and a citizen of the body politic. The way Fascism viewed women and rallied them to its cause emerged from this paradigm.

Female Citizenship and the Suffrage Debate

What did Italian women want after the end of the Great War? Individual women had different agendas, as did organized groups of women. The feminist movement was never strong in Italy, especially compared with the militant and organized English and American groups. But like their counterparts, Italian feminists wanted the vote. The pre-Fascist volumes of the *Almanacco della donna italiana* devoted much space to the rising feminist movement and to figuring out what female citizenship might mean in the postwar world.

Most official political movements continued to ignore women in the interwar years. Very few women were card-carrying members of the Italian Socialist (PSI) or Communist parties (PCI), as they made up less than 2 percent of either party's total in the 1920s.[43] Party leadership in both the PSI and PCI did not encourage women to participate. In fact, they had mostly kept silent on the issue of female suffrage out of concern that enfranchised

women would throw their support to the Catholic party. Women who sought changes in society had to look beyond these political options.

Other than being interested in "women's issues," each Italian women's group had a distinct political bent. In an article for the *Almanacco* in 1920, Laura Casartelli, a prominent Socialist, wrote a "Review of the Italian Women's Movement" where she delineated the special features of each women's organization.[44] The Unione Femminile Nazionale, based in Milan, was a democratic-leaning political group attracting mostly lower-middle and middle-class women, especially white collar professionals like teachers, doctors, and managers.[45] In Rome, the Associazione Nazionale per la Donna drew working-class women, in part because of its emphasis on female emancipation and its valorization of female work. Catholic women had their own organization, the Unione delle Donne Cattoliche, which held a special importance among women's groups because of its large membership. It was well organized but was directed by male bishops and priests. The Consiglio Nazionale delle Donne Italiane was made up of wealthier Italian women, including the high bourgeoisie and aristocrats. It had a "liberal accentuation," according to Casartelli, but did not hold democratic conventions. It never attained its goal of synthesizing all the different women's groups into one general confederation. Although all Italian women could not be subsumed into a few organizations, these groups aimed to improve the lives of Italian women, especially through literacy campaigns, mother and child welfare programs, and legal reform. All women's groups wanted the government to improve their lives.

The first tangible result came with the Sacchi Law of 1919 that empowered women with legal rights. Casartelli believed this legislation was the "prize of demobilization" and an important affirmation of women's rights.[46] Although the bill had been in the works since 1917, its final passage after the war made it seem a reward for women's wartime efforts. If Italians were following a map to female emancipation, by 1919 they at least had the compass pointed in the right direction, even if they were not precisely on the right path. The Sacchi Law decreed the sexes equal with regard to professional and public employment opportunity, revoking the doctrine of "marital authorization" that required husbands to approve their wives' financial transactions.[47] But for some people, like Teresa Labriola, the laws did not go far enough. The law continued to keep women out of certain public sector jobs, such as in the Colonial Ministry and in investigative agencies, and it barred them from attaining positions in fields ranging from ship captains to judgeships to certain university chairs.[48] Furthermore, it did not revoke the recognition of "paternal power," which kept men as legally superior in the household.[49] Women were still decades away from achieving the right to divorce.[50] But there were real benefits; the new

law made a wife financially independent from her husband, allowing her to receive government aid without his authorization. And in other ways, the Sacchi Law gave women more of a voice in family matters.

Most women at the time appreciated the Sacchi Law, but many hoped the government would go further and give women the right to vote. The history of the suffrage movement in Italy dates back to the mid-1800s. Female suffrage was discussed 20 times in Parliament between 1863 and April 1918.[51] During the Risorgimento, a proposal was floated to continue to allow the women of Lombardy the right of the administrative vote as the territory passed from Austria to Italy. Anna Franchi had published a call for female suffrage in 1851. Ten years later a petition to the Camera dei Deputati tried again.[52] But unified Italy did not endorse female suffrage. In 1861, the law affirmed, "Neither women nor people affected by mental illness can have the right to vote."[53] No serious agitation began until the 1890s when female organizations sprang up in Milan and the "woman question" became the subject of mass media debate. Anna Maria Mozzoni and Anna Kuliscioff led the early fight for women's emancipation and suffrage. Italian women came together politically for the first time from 1897 to 1903, forming a variety of groups.[54] These organizations fostered discussions, not protests, about how to increase rights for women. In the words of one historian, they wanted "compromise not confrontation."[55] In Milan and Turin, women organized committees for female suffrage in 1906.[56] The issue must have loomed in the public eye; a dispatch from the London *Pall Mall Gazette* claimed men were rushing "into print for the purpose of proving the inferiority of women" to counteract suffragists. With obvious Anglo bias, it remarked that Italian feminism was "centuries behind others."[57] But the analysis was not too far off. Although Kuliscioff and others devoted themselves to the cause in the years just before the Great War began, the masses of Italians were not behind them.

When Italy's Liberal parliament took up the issue of women's suffrage on May 3, 1912, the roll call vote failed 31 to 129.[58] In the words Kuliscioff's biographer, Claire LaVigna, the "almost total lack of interest demonstrated by the small number of votes cast was only the last of a series of discouragements following Kuliscioff's inability to stir interest in her 'great reforms.'"[59] One Italian senator, on a trip to the United States, observed, "There is a sentiment for woman's suffrage in Italy, but it is not so pronounced as in some other countries" and was confined to aristocratic women.[60] Among those opposed to extending the franchise to women were prominent women like Gina Lombroso, Matlide Serao, and Italia Garibaldi.[61] Universal male suffrage passed the same year, increasing by almost three times the number of eligible voters.[62] The outbreak of the Great War two years later stopped the European women's movement in its tracks.

Prime Minister Giolitti voiced another obstacle to suffrage when he commented that it was impossible to give women political rights when they lacked civil rights.[63] How could a nonentity become a citizen? The Pisanelli Codes of 1865 ascribed total authority to the male head of households, refused women civil rights, and barred them from all legal and commercial actions, including dispensing family moneys such as inheritances, dowries, and patrimonies.[64] One scholar has theorized that the code was so strict that it kept women not only legally subservient but also psychologically incapable of autonomy.[65] Thus, the passage of the Sacchi laws in 1919 seemed to prepare the way for women to vote.

Just after the war ended, the imminence of female suffrage energized most women's groups. In 1919, acting Prime Minister Francesco Nitti publicly endorsed the idea, citing women's wartime contributions as evidence of their ability to participate in the life of the nation. Even conservatives like former Prime Minister Sidney Sonnino supported female suffrage. Leading newspapers carried articles following the debate in the legislature. *Il Corriere della Sera* covered "the reasons for and against the vote for women" on the front pages in early September 1919.[66] The bill passed the Chamber of Deputies by a vote of 174 to 55. But the cabinet fell and D'Annunzio's March on Fiume destabilized the legislative process before the bill reached the Senate. Casartelli celebrated prematurely in her column in the 1920 *Almanacco*, certain that the ratification of the bill was all but finalized.[67] She applauded "the suffragist victory" and credited the war with valorizing women's ability to contribute to society. She quoted from lawmakers' pro-suffrage remarks, especially when they involved seeing the vote as payment for wartime services rendered. She hoped that the acquisition of suffrage for women would have ripple effects in society, for instance making men more deferential to women. These expectations did not turn into reality. A year later, the *Almanacco* was still waiting for female suffrage with bated breath; they would wait a long time. Italian women first voted in national elections in 1946.[68] Over 52 percent of voters were women; 89 percent of eligible women voted.[69] Although female suffrage was an important symbolic victory, it did not redress gender inequality because women were still subjected to unequal marriage laws and other patriarchal restrictions.[70]

Postwar Italian society debated how women's voting would affect Italy. Two women's magazines, *Giornale della donna* and *La Donna*, surveyed prominent Italians on the issues surrounding suffrage.[71] Almost all respondents said no when they were asked, "Will there be a Female Party (Partito femminile) in Italy soon?" Most respondents implied that there was no need for a Female Party because women were already represented by the major political parties. The answers to the question of how to prepare women for political life were more varied. Teresa Labriola, the prominent

patriot, female lawyer, and public intellectual, hoped an increased understanding of feminism would help women cope with modern society. One male politician believed women's exposure to life outside the home would ready them for suffrage. In her article reviewing the surveys, Casartelli endorsed the notion that the organized political parties should make a conscious effort to reach out to women.

With a third question, the survey got to the heart of the matter: Will entry into political life change traditional femininity or male-female relations? One male author, Tullio Giordana, had a clear answer: "I wouldn't dream of it! If I thought that, I would not ever" support giving the vote to women. How could suffrage not affect gender roles that tied women so directly to domesticity? Giordana revealed his naïveté, however the beliefs of others reflected a more balanced view. Labriola asserted that the vote alone would have little impact but that forces were already in motion that would change Italian gender relations. Labriola was an ardent feminist (and later Fascist) who wanted women to be men's equals, although not their identical twins. Others agreed that some changes would occur but that they would be for the better. One male politician thought the vote would cause men and women to respect each other more, thereby improving the quality of a couple's relationship. He believed that female suffrage would improve marriage. The magazine had touched on an issue that was important to postwar Italy—deciphering how politics affected daily life. Even five years later when Italy was on the verge of granting a very limited number of women the franchise during the early years of Mussolini's control, senators were still debating how involvement with politics would affect women's commitment to motherhood.[72]

In another article, Gino Bellincioni explained that making women and men more politically equal would benefit marriage and male-female relations.[73] He was staunchly in favor of female suffrage and believed it to be imminent. Yet he used the final pages of his essay to warn women not to carry their impending political rights lightly. Do not act in "bad taste," he admonished, and do not assume "undignified gestures." Like other postwar cultural critics, he wanted women to reap the benefits of belonging to a society that welcomed them onto the public stage without losing their essential feminine goodness. Bellincioni, among others, believed that in light of the war's decimation of male soldiers, women had to remain loyal to their domestic duties and to childbearing in particular. He told women, "Think a little" about their homes, despite their new status as public actors. His ambivalence about how female citizens would behave reveals an anxiety that was widespread in the postwar era.

In the discussion of women's political future, traditional ideas of biological essentialism continued to appear. Did women have any "legal

capacity"? In Britain and the United States, the decision to grant female suffrage as the Great War ended forced those societies to accept that femininity and the state both were changing. In Italy and France, however, the discussions of women's place in the new society remained hypothetical because female suffrage was not granted. As politicians debated whether to go forward slowly, quickly, or not at all, the women's suffrage movement came to a standstill. In the late 1910s, Italian commentators like Donna Paola and Gino Bellincioni fully expected suffrage as a reward for women's wartime sacrifices. They made the familiar arguments—that Woodrow Wilson himself had endorsed it, that women had proven they were not weak and inept, that the war had put to rest old ideas about women being inferior. Bellincioni hoped his pamphlet *The Vote for Women* would convince the Italian populace, whom he saw as overwhelmingly conservative, to reward women with suffrage. Apparently, he was not persuasive enough. After putting women into careers and into the public sphere, the Liberal State refused to legalize their new standing. By not passing female suffrage, the state seemed to want to push women back into the home and to tie their identity (as it had been before the war) exclusively to family. In doing so, a paradox arose: postwar women were more segregated than before but also more politicized.[74]

Women did not get the vote in Italy until after Fascism's fall, but the right to vote is not the only measure of political standing. In her fascinating study of Britain, Nicoletta Gullace has demonstrated how the Great War contributed to postwar female suffrage. Using a wide variety of sources, from newspapers to novels, Gullace charts a change in public discussion about citizenship. She observes, "Once war service rather than male gender became the basis of British citizenship, feminists had won a crucial victory." Female volunteers showed their patriotism with their war service, while male war dodgers and pacifists revealed their lack of patriotism. Gullace believes that women's nationalism and evidence of their wartime loyalty "opened the door for feminist demands."[75] In Italy, women's war service did not lead directly to suffrage, but it did redefine the concept of citizenship.

Political scientists continue to debate the link between voting and citizenship, especially in light of the fact that in the late twentieth century fewer than half the registered voters in the United States even participated in national elections.[76] Women's groups in Italy pressed for other legislative changes, including divorce, recognition of illegitimate children, increased literacy, and more aid for mothers and children.[77] Of course, gaining the vote would have been a major victory for the interwar women's movement, but Italian women continued to exert their influence. Governments across Western Europe and in the United States heeded calls for female

emancipation in different ways. In France, the government attended to women's needs through workplace reforms. In Britain, suffragettes succeeded in getting the vote, but they did not get much legislation to improve women's quality of life on a day-to-day basis. In Germany, women were granted both suffrage and an equal rights amendment by the new Weimar Republic, but most women seemed baffled rather than excited about the new rights.[78] The French situation remained the closest to the Italian one.

When the definition of postwar era expands to include Fascism, however, Italy found itself on a separate path from France. Socialists lost influence as Fascism squeezed everyone else out of public life. Laura Casartelli's career provides a good example. The columnist on women's issues for the *Almanacco*, Casartelli was replaced for the 1925–26 edition by the Fascist Esther Lombardo who claimed that the "feminist movement in Italy no longer exists" because it had been "gobbled up by the Fascist Revolution."[79] Mussolini had not entirely done away with the organized feminist movement in Italy, but he did devote much energy to corralling the female population to see things his way.

7

Italian Fascism and the *Donna Fascista*

War is to men what motherhood is to women.

—Benito Mussolini, Opera Omnia, vol. 26

In the wake of the Great War and a string of postwar crises, the Liberal government began to dissolve when Benito Mussolini became prime minister in 1922. Making the mentality of total war permanent and recreating the idea of mandatory sacrifice, he affirmed "all in the state, nothing outside the state."[1] Mussolini wanted women to be Fascists first and women second, and he devised a new idealized model of femininity: the *donna fascista* (Fascist woman). Certainly not embraced by everyone, the *donna fascista* attracted a great number of Italian women, especially the generation already touched by the Great War and those who grew up in its shadow.

As Mussolini gained control of Italy, a new style of politics emerged that explicitly included both men and women. George Mosse has described how the "nationalization of the masses" occurred in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[2] Politics became a secular religion; it appropriated language and rituals from organized religion with the goal of making people feel that they belonged to a higher power, the nation-state. This early glorification of the state targeted men alone as its audience. The Great War changed that by including women in the total war effort. As Italian Fascism emerged, its sacralization of politics made it even easier for women to participate in public rituals.[3] They had for centuries been standard-bearers for organized religion; if politics were to be the new religion, perhaps women could adjust their loyalty from the Roman Catholic Church to the Italian Fascist state, or so Mussolini hoped. Women participated in politics and national life during the years of Fascist rule, to the degree that any participation in such a system is possible. Fascism could not and would not have included women in the national dialogue if they already had not been brought into the discussion by the desperate crisis of the Great War. And

women would not have involved themselves in postwar civic activity if the war had not pulled them out of the domestic sphere.

Mussolini's approach was paradoxical because it attempted to reassert traditional roles for women while simultaneously trying to reinvent femininity through public participation in gymnastics and organizing female youth groups. He idealized peasant women, their simplicity and focus on family, then encouraged young women to march in public parades dressed in military-style uniforms. As Fascism exalted the new male (the new Fascist soldier), it glorified the prewar version of the female: big hipped, big breasted, and perfectly shaped for easy birthing. As Barbara Spackman explains in her study of Fascist virility, "Any redistribution of properties, any mixing and matching of term—a feminine man, a masculine woman—is counted as an unnatural monstrosity, perversion, or aberration."[4] While these Fascist-sponsored images of women seem to be at odds with each other, they reflected two parts of Mussolini's personal philosophy. On the one hand, he wanted women to uphold their familial responsibilities and contribute in ways prescribed by the state. On the other, he believed in the importance of discipline and a strong body, especially for promoting healthy babies.

Mussolini's irreconcilable conflict regarding women was how to have the best of the past (as he saw it) while taking advantage of the benefits of modern ideas. His desire to have it both ways reflected a tension that existed in many segments of Italian society. Fascism provided a way for individual women and men to restore the order of the prewar gender system without giving up wartime gains of being recognized as valuable citizens. As Sharon Wood demonstrates in her study of Italian women in the interwar years, "Woman was summoned into the public sphere as the incarnation of the Fascist ideal in her role as wife and mother, in her proud fulfillment of her patriotic duty."[5] Women were brought into the project of nation building because of their unique biological ability to bear children and their societal responsibility to indoctrinate them. In deciphering Fascist models of femininity, Gigliola Gori explains that its focus on housework and prolific motherhood "repackaged" traditionalism, allowing women to participate in building a new Fascist state as mothers.[6] Of course, their actual ability to affect change was limited and controlled by party officials. Women were clearly not equal partners in forging the nation's destiny, but a lot of contemporaries viewed women's contributions as having separate but equal importance (however hollow that idea sounds to twenty-first-century ears). For many women, this praise was an improvement over their prewar exclusion from all things political and public. In Italy and throughout Europe, society underwent a double transformation in the wartime and postwar years: women came onto the national stage as contributors and as citizens at a time when politics itself was changing.

From Chaos to Order

The appeal of someone who promises a return to order in the face of chaos is not hard to imagine. Italy was economically weak after the war, unable to provide basic necessities for its war-torn population. From 1919 to 1920, Italy faltered during two years of strikes and occupations of land and factories called the *biennio rosso* (two red years). Anticipating a crisis, an American Red Cross commissioner writing in 1920 hoped Italy "would not be led astray by any will-o'-the-wisp," would give "the same degree of attention she gave to winning the war" to solving her internal problems, and would "think in terms of welfare rather than of glory."[7] Unfortunately, it did not. Many Italians in the early 1920s, like many Germans in the 1930s, rallied to a leader promising a new and better future for the nation and its citizenry.

In the immediate postwar years, Italian stability crumbled. Gabriele D'Annunzio invaded Fiume, inflation soared, and Socialists staged widespread strikes. All these acts showed the weakness of the Liberal government and its inability to handle crisis. In contrast, Mussolini and his Blackshirts took matters in their own hands, literally. These *squadristi* attacked strikers with the tacit support of local authorities; they gained the respect of citizens feeling anxious about the looming threat of Communism and Socialism. The Fascists came across as strong and determined, and Mussolini benefited from the postwar turmoil. He staged a March on Rome on October 28, 1922. Rather than deal directly with the threat, the government capitulated and offered him the prime ministership. The plan was to coopt the Fascists by formalizing their standing in government. The king and others hoped Mussolini would temper the extralegal activities of his followers. Instead, Mussolini assumed more control through the 1920s even without disavowing violence. The infamous murder of the Socialist deputy Giacomo Matteotti in 1924 resulted in the other Socialists walking out of Parliament, thus creating a one-party state that Mussolini could control.

Today, most historians agree that the Great War played a crucial role in setting the stage for Fascism, seeing it as a necessary but insufficient factor in explaining Italy's acceptance of Fascism. The connection between the Great War and the success of Italian Fascism makes it clear that without the war, Mussolini could never have succeeded on the scale he did.[8] In the eyes of contemporaries and of historians looking at the *longue durée*, the Great War was also the second Risorgimento, a second chance to annex the Irredenta to make Italy whole. Mussolini rose to power out of the smoldering ashes of the Versailles treaty that failed to give Italians what they considered their due, especially Fiume. D'Annunzio and his paramilitary antics set a new tone in Italian politics, previewing what one man with his own army could do to the government. Furthermore, the war had forced the government

to call on its subjects to act as good citizens, thereby politicizing the entire population.

The success of fascist politics has a very specific historical context. Claudia Koonz spends much of her groundbreaking work analyzing German women's attraction to Nazism.[9] She examines how the turmoil of the Great War and the agony of Germany's defeat planted the seeds for Nazism to spring up a decade later. The Weimar Republic failed to address the needs of its citizenry, despite the fact that it gave women the vote and attempted to institute equal rights. Yet few works of scholarship have been interested in how the Italian Fascist Party earned support from everyday Italian women.[10] A strong link exists between the chaotic postwar environment and the populace's longing for prewar norms.

The Great War played an important role in readying women to accept Fascism. At best, the war on the home and fighting fronts made life difficult. At worst, it did not allow for life at all. The Liberal government asked much of its population but failed to attend to the raised expectations after the war ended. Then, it bungled the peace settlement when the Italian delegates were unable to secure all of their territorial demands.[11] Riding a wave of disillusionment and frustration, Mussolini appeared willing to put Italy back together and to reconsecrate it as a new and improved nation. He wanted Italy to cease being a second-tier European pawn of France, Britain, and Germany by becoming an imperial power in its own right. Women, too, found that vision appealing. And beyond their dreams for Italian greatness, women also got something for themselves from Fascism. After the war ended, many women expected to hold on to their new status as national citizens. The Liberal government offered women very little reward for the immense wartime sacrifices they had made. It had raised hopes that women would be important players in the postwar world, but then it refused to grant female suffrage. As Gori maintains in her study of fascism and the female body, women "were finding it hard to exercise the rights that they had gained during the war." Fascism's radical approach to politics appealed to those inclined to fight for more women's rights.[12] To those looking for a return to gender order, Mussolini offered a revolutionary solution—they could keep their status as wives and mothers and enjoy a civic identity. They could celebrate their maternity for the good of the nation; in fact, Mussolini claimed it was their national duty to excel at motherhood. Historians have missed how inviting Fascism's definition of femininity was to many women.

An expert in the history of Italian Fascist women, Perry Willson has linked women's war experience with their later support of Fascism. She observes, "For some of these women it was a small ideological step from this patriotic stance to the new blackshirt movement. Their new roles

during the war had given many a taste for an active public life."[13] Willson's case study of Laura Marani Argnani demonstrates the profound impact the war had on individuals. The daughter of a Risorgimento patriot and headmistress of the Reggio Emilia Teacher Training College, Argnani "threw herself into patriotic activity" during the war, organizing those around her to work for the war effort. Already 60 when war broke out, she orchestrated relief efforts for the soldiers, earning a silver medal from the war ministry. Willson describes how her war work gave her "a way in which she too, like her father, could play an active role in the defence of the nation."[14] Looking for an outlet for her patriotic zeal, she gravitated to Fascism, becoming the head of the local Fasci Femminili (FF) from 1929 to 1940. Agnani was far from the only woman to find postwar comfort in an ideology that combined traditional and modern values.

Scholars have described a variety of ways the Great War destabilized the social order throughout Europe. Alison Light identifies a trend of interwar conservatism in her study of British literature, coining the phrase "conservative modernity" to illustrate how women looked forward and backward at the same time, accommodating "the past in the new forms of the present."[15] Susan Kingsley Kent, in documenting middle-class feminism in Britain, demonstrates how 1920s society tried to ameliorate the "sex war" that had raged in the prewar era.[16] Exacerbated by suffragettes and other advocates of female emancipation, the gulf separating men from women seemed to widen before the Great War began. Kent argues persuasively that it was a fear of a continued sex war that caused British men and women to reembrace the prewar ideology of separate spheres after 1918. Both sexes wanted badly to return to normalcy. But they, like their Italian counterparts, remembered a past that had never really existed, a past when there was no sex war and no class war, only a neat division of gender responsibilities with each sex finding true fulfillment in its prescribed role.

Throughout Europe, those who refused to go along with reviving this false memory were seen as unpatriotic and disrespectful to veterans. Historian Kevin Passmore depicts Europeans facing a crisis of gender relations alongside a crisis of liberal democracy. Liberalism as an idea was undermined from both sides. Conservatives felt liberal governments had given away too much to minorities, including women. Meanwhile, some of these same minority groups became disenchanted with democracy and looked elsewhere for solutions, especially to the Communists or the far right.[17] Throughout Europe and the United States, men and women struggled with each other after the war, especially as a result of the increased independence many women enjoyed that seemed to come at men's expense.[18]

As Kent notes, even feminists in Britain abandoned the goal of male-female equality; they fell back on resurrecting the "feminine" qualities in

women instead of fighting for what was perceived as a self-serving agenda. Kent divides postwar feminists into two camps: old and new. Old feminists were hangers-on from the prewar suffragette movement who focused on gaining political and legal equality. New feminists, mindful of the current climate that demonized the new woman as independent and selfish, rallied for the government to attend to the "needs" of women instead of their rights. New feminists, according to Kent, focused on the fight for birth control, welfare amenities, and support for mothers. With the exception of birth control, these were the same goals held by postwar Italian female activists like Gina Lombroso, who also counseled the *donna nuova* to choose motherhood over independence.

The sociologist Mariolina Graziosi has corroborated Kent's theories for the Italian case. She described the period between 1919 and 1922 as a time of "gender struggle." In her study of the attitudes about women portrayed in the popular press, she finds a society in conflict. Slogans such as "Women go home, because home is the place where you really belong" and "Women's employment is causing men's unemployment" appeared in the early 1920s, revealing the high level of resentment that existed in Italian society about women working. Despite the fact that women were paid less than men and that most women workers had taken newly created jobs (as opposed to soldiers' prewar jobs), public opinion seemed determined to fault the *donna nuova*. Graziosi explains that veterans were among women's harshest critics, organizing demonstrations to demand that women be fired. It is significant that veterans also made up the first audience of Mussolini and his Fascist Party. Italian culture sublimated its economic problems (especially the high rate of unemployment in the immediate postwar era) onto gender ones. Therefore, Graziosi concludes, "redefining gender identity functions as the vehicle through which society legitimates its concrete process of discrimination."[19] If popular wisdom dictated that women's role was in the home, then working women themselves could be blamed for the poor economy rather than the government. Graziosi cleverly uses gender identity as a way to take the pulse of Italian culture, and she sees how it served to mask larger economic problems. Some women welcomed these new models that emphasized women's domestic responsibility over their individual ambition. For the Italians, like the British, one solution to the sex war was to create even more rigid gender roles to bring order to the postwar chaos. Thus many women embraced Fascism and its clear delineation of gender roles.

Eliding the Personal and the Political

The most influential Fascist philosopher, Giovanni Gentile, declared in 1934 that female emancipation was dead as an ideal. As Robin Pickering-Iazzi explains, the Fascists "reinvented" the ideal woman by emphasizing the "bearing of children and selfless devotion to the family and home as the highest political service women could perform for the State."[20] The *donna fascista* had much in common with the *donna italiana* of the war years and the *donna nuova* of the immediate postwar era in that she was both modern and traditional (capable of independence but preferring family), sacrificing (as women always had) for the state (now Fascist instead of Liberal). Instead of giving up money and loved ones for the war effort, she was to give up personal ambition in order to have more children for the sake of securing the future of Mussolini's Italy.

Women who supported Fascism consented to Mussolini's consolidation of power. In her study of Fascist fashion policy, Eugenia Paulicelli demonstrates that both rural housewives and urbane consumers were "rendered protagonists in the life of the fascist state."[21] Fascists encouraged women to see themselves as agents of history rather than as the subordinates that Fascist laws clearly made them. Since the regime made the personal political, there were not many places to nurture apolitical opinions. Therefore, women and the entire domestic sphere were part of the nation, just as they had been during the Great War. Fascism appropriated the issue of gender roles for its own ends. Graziosi notes that women "formed the troop deployed to enforce the patriarchal values of war and duty as Fascist imperatives" while men served as "the warriors and the heroes."[22] This division of labor paralleled what happened during the Great War, when men went to fight and women remained at home, charged with keeping up morale. Wartime propaganda made women responsible for morale at the home front (where they made up the majority of citizens anyway) and at the fighting front (where they were thought to wield great influence over their male relatives in the trenches). This dynamic continued into the Fascist era, and Mussolini followed a similar pattern in his treatment of women. He knew women expected to be acknowledged as a valuable part of public opinion. He wanted the consensus of every Italian, not just of every man.

In her seminal works on Italy under Fascism, Victoria de Grazia has studied how the regime targeted the working class and women. She acknowledges that Fascists, "unlike conservative regimes, grasped that social and gender-differentiated policies of complex societies could not be implemented without the consent of the nation's female as well as male subjects."[23] Mussolini wanted Italy to become a harmonious society, with each gender contributing to the improvement of Italy in its own way. He,

like Gina Lombroso and countless others, saw gender roles as synonymous with biology. "War is to men what motherhood is to women" was a key line in Mussolini's propaganda.[24] As limiting as that idea was for both men and women, it encouraged women to see themselves as they had been in the war: key players in helping Italy forge a new future. Instead of only being guardians of the hearth, as nineteenth-century women were, women during and after the Great War served as guardians of society.

The Fascist state wanted all citizens to think of themselves as Italian Fascists before any other identity. De Grazia's study of the regime's working-class leisure organization (called the Opera nazionale dopolavoro) demonstrates the Fascists' determined "search for a responsive public."[25] This search went beyond class to include gender. The Fascists drew up clear guidelines for female behavior, creating a new model for women, the *donna fascista*. The party published its list of goals for the moral, civil, and physical education of Italy's female youth:

1. To fulfill the peculiar needs of daughter, sister, student, friend, with goodness and happiness.
2. To serve the Country as the greatest Mother, the Mother of all good Italian citizens.
3. To love the Duce who has rendered the Country stronger and greater.
4. To obey superiors with joy.
5. To have the courage to oppose one who advises the worst and who mocks honesty.
6. To educate her own body to gain physical force and the spirit to not fear sadness.
7. To flee from stupid vanity, but to love beautiful things.
8. To love the work that is life and harmony.[26]

Targeting everyone from the traditional peasant mother to the sophisticated young athlete, Mussolini wanted women to know their place: serving the state. Paulicelli explains that the female civil uniforms promoted by Fascists encouraged "a standardization of dress," revealing the regime's desire "to erase the numerous differences of class, geography and culture that were characteristic of 1920s and 1930s Italy."[27]

Beyond dictating fashion, Fascists created special groups designed to support Mussolini's goals. The Fascist girls' group, for example, stressed obedience and loyalty to the state. It is impossible to know how sincerely women supported Fascism, but millions approved of some of his policies and worked within the Fascist hierarchy.[28] De Grazia has done an outstanding job portraying the varied ways women in leadership roles responded to the regime, but we do not know much about average women and their

relationship with Fascism. Nine women attended the founding meeting of the Fascists in Milan in 1919. Soon, they spun off a separate all-female group, the Fasci Femminili. According to Willson, the early female supporters represented a variety of interests: anti-Communists, revolutionaries, nationalists, even some feminists.[29] While leaders emerged from the middle class (school teachers, like Argnani, especially took on local leadership positions), party members also came from the urban working class and the peasantry. Membership in the FF grew from one hundred thousand members in 1929 to over one million at the close of the regime (1942). The female peasant group (Massaie rurali) had about 2.5 million members in 1942, up from a quarter million in 1935.[30] And the working class group enjoyed similar membership, over 1.5 million in 1942. Willson stresses that women joined for a variety of reasons, including material necessity, opportunism, conformism, and sincere belief.[31] Other scholars too often have ignored the possibility that many women joined because they believed in the Fascist message.

It seems ironic that energetic and independent women like Argnani (who was a childless widow) would espouse Fascist antifemale rhetoric, but clearly she was, as Willson calls her, "a true believer in the Fascist Faith."[32] Argnani showed her loyalty in her actions as FF leader and as an important role model and influence on the young people she corralled around her. In one speech she overtly endorsed Mussolini's *donna fascista* model, telling her audience, "The frivolous, vain type of woman . . . must give way to the dignified, serious, irreproachable Fascist woman, who is totally devoted to her duties as a wife, a mother and an Italian."[33] Understanding how seriously her listeners took her advice is more difficult than finding out that she consistently appropriated Mussolini's messages.

Argnani was certainly not alone in her admiration for Mussolini and Fascist ideology. Many well-known women writers conformed with Fascism and continued to publish and make money throughout the era, as the cases of Fanny Dini, Maria Chiappelli, and Lina Pietravalle show.[34] Among women who wrote about their lives during the Great War, Mercedes Astuto, Maria Luisa Perduca, Carmela Rossi Timeus, and Teresa Labriola sympathized with Fascism. A collection of letters sent to Mussolini by women reveals the depth of some women's devotion to him. Many saw him as the father figure he pretended to be, for example calling him "our father, guardian angel and head of our great family that is Italy."[35] In writing to Mussolini, even to ask for personal favors, women exhibited their sense of belonging to the state. Even if women were couching their requests in a language they knew would please Mussolini, the act of writing to the head of state proves that women considered themselves his constituents. Although some women apologized for presuming to write to Il Duce, they

continued to seek his counsel. They believed it was within their purview to assert their identity as Italian citizens by corresponding with him.

Another example of intense female devotion to Mussolini comes from the experience of women who worked for him even after his resignation as Prime Minister. Maria Fraddosio has examined women who volunteered to serve in the Italian Socialist Republic at Salò from 1943 until 1945.[36] Numbering around five thousand, these female militants were mostly young women from the middle and lower-middle classes whose letters and diaries reveal a deep personal loyalty to Mussolini. Fraddosio charts their loyalty to the "myth of Mussolini," explaining that they "felt the same affection for their Chief that had imbued the vast majority of the Italian people in the years of their adolescence and youth."[37] Scholars need to remember that some Italians trusted in the Fascist message, even when the consequences undermined them personally.

Of course, Mussolini's obsession with encouraging motherhood hurt working women. He gradually erased the gains made by the Sacchi laws that opened up the workplace to women. The regime did all it could to cease the hiring of women, most notably single women.[38] At the same time, Mussolini created the Opera nazionale per maternità ed infanzia (ONMI) in 1925 as an umbrella organization to control welfare, create propaganda, and enforce laws regarding maternity. Its goal was to improve the health of Italy's women and children, and it undertook campaigns such as increasing awareness of tuberculosis and syphilis.[39] Combining propaganda with tangible services, ONMI reflected Fascism's comprehensive policy toward mothers. Mussolini also organized annual celebrations to reward maternity. For example, in a grand rally in Piazza Venezia, he offered money, an insurance policy, and, one year, a silver bar for each child to the 95 most prolific Italian mothers.[40]

Despite Mussolini's public courting of women, he dismissed them as inferior to men. Publicly patronizing women, he called them "adorable creatures" and remained unimpressed with their intellectual and political abilities.[41] They were "incorrigibly frivolous, uncreative, and unintellectual," he said in the legislature.[42] He told a female French journalist, "the true place of women, in modern society, is actually, as in the past, in the home."[43] In another interview, he explained that his "notion of women's role in the state is utterly opposed to feminism. Of course I do not want women to be slaves, but . . . [a]s far as political life is concerned, they do not count here."[44]

Hitler mouthed similar phrases. He told a female Nazi leader, "90 percent of the matters dealt with by Parliament were masculine affairs, on which they [women] could have no opinions of any value." When women "rebelled against this point of view . . . I shut their mouths by saying 'You

will not claim that you know men as I know women.'"[45] Yet despite the open disdain of both Fascist leaders, thousands of women joined their parties. Koonz has described how Nazi women got around Hitler's hostility by situating their interest in politics only in relation to the improvement of the Nazi family.

Although neither Hitler nor Mussolini made room for female political operatives in their inner circle of advisers, they both went out of their way to seek women's support, especially for their pronatalist goals. In this view, women were valuable citizens as long as they offered something the regimes needed, but such was the nature of Fascism, and it treated men similarly. De Grazia explains that the Fascists "recognized female citizenship" while "denying it any emancipatory significance."[46] Both Italian and German women had complicated relationships with Fascism.

In theory and in practice, Fascism was inconsistent; for example, Mussolini took both sides on the issue of female suffrage. Early on, he supported granting women the vote. In 1919 he said he refused "to cater to the traditional Catholic gender ideology."[47] But as he consolidated power, his half-hearted commitment waned. In 1923, he spoke at the first Women's Fascist Conference, saying, "What does the vote matter? You will have it! But even when women did not vote and did not wish to vote, in time past as in time present, women had always a preponderant influence in shaping the destinies of humanity."[48] For Mussolini, and many other Italians, women's influence came from their role as mothers. Yet in 1925 he gave an extremely small group of women (1 million out of 12 million Italian women) the right to vote in local elections. The group included female holders of military decorations or civil honors, mothers and widows of war dead, and female heads-of-households who had graduated from primary school and who paid over 40 lire per year in taxes.[49] A year later, all elections were cancelled. Mussolini had increased the electorate at the same time as he was plotting to wipe out elections. While his granting of female suffrage could be seen as an accomplishment, the gesture was so limited that it was ultimately worthless. Mussolini wanted women to be prolific mothers, and the vote seemed a good reward for women who were already committed to sacrifice.

Despite its grandiose aims, or perhaps because of them, Fascism failed to rally all Italian women to espouse its new image. Looking to other models of femininity, like those found in the Catholic Church and in contemporary films and magazines, some Italian women opted for their own path instead of Mussolini's. In both her books that deal with life under Fascism, de Grazia demonstrates Fascism's failure to achieve its totalitarian ends. As with other models of feminine behavior, the archetype of the *donna fascista* did not entice everyone, and very few women (if any) would have realized

the ideal in everyday life. Many thousands of women did not accept Fascism or its role models in any form. As writers, activists, and covert agents, many women opposed Fascism with every tool available.[50] They openly worked as antifascists and as part of the Resistance that rose up during World War II.[51] As Communists, Socialists, pacifists, or Liberals, the women of Italy continued to engage in politics despite Fascism's attempt to stifle them. And the Roman Catholic Church itself provided one of the most attractive options for women who refused the Fascist model of femininity.

Mussolini was unable to control Italy's female population for several reasons. Among them was the fact that he had overlooked what the philosopher Denise Riley has so accurately noted—humans have multiple identities.[52] People cannot keep their nationality supreme all the time; gender, class, and generational loyalties compete for priority throughout a person's life.

Willson sees Fascism as focusing "an unprecedented amount of attention to defining the female contribution to the state," claiming it "brought women on to the national stage for the first time." With this claim, Willson judges the Fascist era as "a watershed in Italian women's history."[53] It was an important era for women's history, but it was not wholly new. Fascism continued the process of nationalizing Italian women that had begun during the Great War. The new woman created by the war was there to stay. As the Liberal state did during the war, Fascism glorified women's ability to sacrifice, not for personal reasons but for the state's.

The Great War politicized women, changing their sense of femininity so dramatically that even during peacetime, the public sphere had to reckon with them. In Italy, total war (1914–18) became total politics (1922–45). Although it seems that in the postwar years there was a backlash against women's involvement in the national discourse because of the pervasive emphasis on motherhood and domesticity, something closer to the opposite was true. The crisis of the Great War changed femininity, giving women a newfound sense of citizenship. Because of their status as mothers and guardians of the hearth, women emerged as constituents that the Liberal and Fascist states had to court. Mussolini demanded the involvement of all Italians, forcing women to put their newfound political identity to use, either opposing or supporting Fascism. The advent of female citizenship and the obligation to take part in politics distinguished postwar from prewar women.

Appendix

Notable Women Writers and Diarists

Lucia "Turco" Anziutti (1889–1956)

Two drafts of her unpublished diary available at the Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia.

In her twenties during the war, Anziutti stayed behind when Austro-German forces conquered her village, Forna di Sopra (in the Friuli region). She worked with the Red Cross. Her unpublished diary has a strong patriotic tone.

Mercedes Astuto (dates unknown)

I vivi (diario di guerra) di Mercedes Astuto, infermiera volontaria di Croce Rossa. Roma: 1935.

Astuto was a volunteer Red Cross nurse first working at home in Vicenza then at the Italian Front until the Caporetto retreat. She was single and served alongside two other women from her family. She published her war diary in 1935, and it won a prize for best monograph on the conflict. She received a Medal for Military Valor for her work in a surgical ambulance unit during the Great War. She later published adult and children's fiction and wrote a spiritual guide for nurses (1938). Her fascist sympathies surface in her other publications, including *The Letter to Mussolini* (1938) and an article in the *Almanacco della donna italiana* from 1936 called "The Italian Woman and Our Colonies." Her body of work reflects her deep commitment to Catholicism and nationalism.

Population estimates come from Baedeker's guidebooks: Karl Baedeker, *Handbook for Travellers: Northern Italy* (Leipzig: Baedeker, 1913), and Karl Baedeker, *Handbook for Travellers: Austria* (Leipcig: Baedeker, 1900).

Valeria Bais (1900–1980)

Diary published in *Scritture di guerra, vol. 4*, edited by Quinto Antonelli et al. 14–32. Trento: Museo Storico, 1996.

Bais was a teenager during the war years and hailed from Rovereto, a town south of Trento of about nine thousand inhabitants. During the war, she followed orders to evacuate to Austria. She most likely wrote her diary after the war when she had returned home. It remained unpublished during her lifetime but is available in volume 4 of Quinto Antonelli's *Scritture di Guerra* series. She married Giuseppe Versini, an agricultural worker, in 1921, and they had six children.

Pina Bauzon (1887–1934)

"Queste pagine saranno la storia della mia casa." In *La guerra in casa, 1914–1918, Soldati e popolazione del Friuli Austraico nella Grande Guerra: Romans*, edited by Lucio Fabi, 88–120. Monfalcone: Edizioni della Laguna, 1991.

Bauzon was a young, single, well-off woman from Versa, a town in Friuli, where she lived during the war with her mother and brother (her father had died in 1913). Her diary includes a mix of personal and war news. She describes her interactions with soldiers, and she clearly enjoyed Italian occupation. After the war she married an Italian soldier, Dr. Dario Menestrini of Perugia, who had been stationed in Versa. They met in January 1917. Her diary, covering May 1915 through 1919, remained unpublished until 1991.

Maria Borra (dates unknown)

Nell'anno di cattività 28 ottobre 1917—3 novembre 1918: Ricordi di una maestra udinese. Udine: Del Bianco, 1919.

Borra was an unmarried elementary school teacher during the war. Her diary provides ample description about the occupation of Udine, a city of about 23,300 inhabitants. She wrote daily entries in her diary (published in 1919) describing the conditions of her community: hunger, repression, and anxiety. She was overtly pro-Italian and resented the Austro-German occupiers who ruled Udine from 1917 to 1918.

Argelia Butti (1856–1924)

La donna e la guerra. Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1921.

A vocal pacifist, Butti was an elderly artist when the war began. Her sister was the better-known writer Adele Butti. She also published poetry.

Laura Casartelli-Cabrini (dates unknown)

Articles in *Almanacco della donna italiana*, 1920–1921.

Casartelli was a prominent Socialist and feminist and the featured columnist on women's issues for the *Almanacco della donna italiana*. Because of her noncompliance with Fascism, Casartelli was replaced by the ardent Fascist Esther Lombardo for the 1925 to 1926 edition. She is remembered as a pioneer of the Italian women's movement and an anti-Fascist.

Carla Lavelli Celesia (dates unknown)

Editor of *Assistenza civile*.

A baroness, Celesia directed the umbrella organization dedicated to civilian aid in Italy, the Federazione Comitati Assistenza, based in Milan. Her name appeared on the masthead of *Assistenza civile*, along with Renzo Sachetti of the Opera federate assistenza e propaganda based in Rome. In 1939, she published *Pensieri, scritti, discorsi, opere di Carla Celesia, Baronessa di Vegliasco in Lavelli de Capitani*. A publication at that time signifies a strong possibility of collaboration with the Fascist regime.

Maria Antoinetta Clerci (dates unknown)

Al di là del Piave coi morti e coi vivi, ricordi di prigionia. Como: Vittorio Omarini, 1919.

Clerici was a volunteer nurse who refused to leave her post during the Caporetto disaster. The invading Austrians sent her to Katzenau concentration camp two months later. Most of the diary (published in 1919) not only concerns her time in prison but also details life at the hospital during the retreat. She graduated from nursing school in 1914, but her age is unknown; she was probably young during the Great War.

Gemma De Daninos (dates unknown)

Impressioni di guerra 1915–1918. Milano: Coen, 1919.

Published in 1919, De Daninos's collection of poetry is held by the Biblioteca storico moderna e contemporanea in Rome. No other biographical information has been found.

Maria di Borio (dates unknown)

La fede e la vittoria: Diario. Torino: S. Lattes, 1916.

Di Borio was a countess from Turin; her full name was Maria Gauthier Panzoja di Borio. She was a famous author who published at least a dozen titles (besides *Fede e Vittoria*, her lengthy prowar tract) before and after the Great War. Her work reflects her conservative and spiritual worldview. She lost a son in the Great War.

Donna Paola (1866–1954)

La donna della nuova Italia: Documenti del contributo femminile alla guerra (maggio 1915–maggio 1917). Milano: Quintieri, 1917.
La funziona della donna in tempo di guerra. Firenze: Bemporad, 1915.
Articles in *Assistenza civile*.

Paola Baronchelli Grosson, a noblewoman born in Bergamo, wrote under the pen name Donna Paola. A feminist and interventionist, she was a coeditor of the journal *Scena Illustrata* in Florence for 20 years and an established author before the war began. Baronchelli was a prolific author, writing articles, short stories, dramas, novels, and children's books. During the war (when she was about 50), she wrote two important books examining the roles of women in wartime. Her book from 1917, *La donna della nuova Italia*, is available on microfilm and is perhaps the most cited contemporary source about Italian women and the Great War.

Anna Franchi (1866–1954)

A voi, soldati futuri, dico . . . . Milano: A. Vallardi, 1916.
Articles in *Assistenza civile* and propaganda pamphlets.

Franchi was a well-known journalist, novelist, essayist, and critic. She was a leading feminist voice of the early twentieth century, publishing an important book on divorce. She lost her only son in the war, so her prowar and patriotic stance carried extra significance.

Berta Allatini Friedmann (dates unknown)

Ricordi e impressioni 1915–1919. Livorno: S. Belforte, 1919.

Friedmann was a French-born Italian who lived in Livorno during the war. Her husband, Guido Friedmann, served as a captain at the Italian Front, and she visited him three times, recording her travels. At home, she

volunteered as a nurse during the war. Her published diary (1919) includes photographs taken by Guido during the war. She described her trips up and down the lines in borrowed cars to visit her cousins who were also serving. Her dates are unknown, but Guido was born in 1877 and died in 1939, so she was probably between 30 and 40 during the war. The couple had two children. Although they were a Jewish family (Guido's promotion to captain was featured in the *American Jewish Yearbook*, vol. 18, in 1916), she did not discuss religion in her book.

Teresa Garbari (dates unknown)

"Memorie," in Museo Storico, Trento.

In her 11-page, typed diary, Garbari described how she returned home to Trento from visiting Linz despite the Austrian prohibition on letting people return to the contested area. Her solution was to join the Austrian Red Cross. She held strong pro-Italy sympathies and nursed Italian prisoners of war (POWs), despite the protestations of her superiors. She later traveled to Udine and Trieste to help Irredentists. For Garbari, nursing was inseparable from patriotism because it was the vehicle by which she could most directly contribute to Italy's success in the war. Her unpublished diary is housed in Trento at the Museo Storico.

Antonietta Giacomelli (1857–1949)

Dal diario di una Samaritana: Ai nostri soldati e alle loro infermiere. Milano: A. Solmi, 1917.

Vigilie (1914–1918). Firenze: Bemporad, 1919.

Giacomelli was in her sixties and already a published writer when the war began. She was a third-order Franciscan who became a volunteer nurse; she published two "diaries" of her Great War experience that read more like propaganda than personal reflection. She continued to write extensively during the Fascist years and published a diary during World War II. She lived in Treviso and Ziano di Fiemme before Italy began participating in the Great War but went to Trento and Padua in 1915. She traveled throughout the war and served in a field hospital in the war zone from January to March 1917 as a Samaritana, a member of a group similar to the Red Cross but with formal ties to the Catholic Church.

Helena Gleichen (1873–1947)

Contacts and Contrasts. London: J. Murray, 1940.

Raised as British aristocracy, Gleichen was the daughter of Prince Victor of Hohenlohe Langenberg. She grew up traveling across the continent. In her mid-forties, she and her partner Nina Hollings left for France to work for the Allied war effort in early 1915. They first served as ambulance drivers stationed at a French chateau, then moved to Paris for six months to study radiography. While in practice back in London, they raised enough money to buy their own portable x-ray equipment. After being rejected by Britain and France, their offer was accepted by Italy. They formed the Fourth Radiographic British Red Cross Unit, housed in the Villa Zucco in Cormons. Gleichen considered herself a painter and illustrator. The Imperial War Museum in London commissioned a painting based on her experience in Italy, *Troops Moving into Gorizia After the Battle of 8 August 1916*. Her memoir was published in 1940, although drafts appeared in print earlier (*Blackwood's Magazine*, 1918). Her sister Lady Feodora Gleichen (1861–1922) was a well-known artist.

Maria Juretigh (1874–1957)

"Diario di Maria Juretigh." In *La gente e la guerra, vol 2: Documenti*, edited by Lucio Fabi, 206–50. Udine: Il Campo, 1990.

Jureitgh's father was a former Garibaldino turned monk who left the monastery and later married a chambermaid. They had one other daughter besides Maria. From Moena, where Maria was born, they moved to Udine where her father changed jobs frequently until finally settling in the clothing business. Unmarried and in her mid-forties during the war, Juretigh continued to work in family textile and fabric shop. Juretigh's diary was unpublished during her life; she wrote it during the war and titled it "Notes on a Sad Year." It tells a vivid and immediate account of the disenchantment of life in Udine during occupation, which she experienced because the family failed to evacuate in time. It includes descriptions of the Caporetto retreat.

Teresa Labriola (1873–1941)

Numerous articles on the war and patriotism (some published in *Assistenza civile)*.

Like her father Antonio, a famous Marxist philosopher, Teresa was a public intellectual; she published frequently into the 1930s. She was Italy's

first female lawyer and joined the law faculty of the University of Rome in 1912. She moved from left to right in her political sympathies and became an outspoken supporter of Italy's participation in the Great War. She formed the first all-female patriotic league, the Lega Patriottica Femminile (Female Patriotic League). Although she was intrigued by Fascism's early avant-garde leanings, she moved away from it in the 1930s as the regime grew more conservative and more controlling.

Paola Lombroso-Carrara (1871–1954)

Caratteri della femminilità. Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1909.

The elder daughter of Cesare Lombroso, Paola came from a nonobservant Jewish background and socialized with Europe's intellectual elite. Influenced by their father's positivism and belief in female inferiority, Paola and her sister Gina continued to link biology with social mores during their own careers as public intellectuals. Paola wrote numerous essays, short novels, children's books, and articles on psychology in a variety of journals. She started a popular Italian weekly magazine for children, *Corriere dei piccoli*, and occasionally published under the pen name Zia Mariù. Like her father, she was interested in uncovering scientific ideas about human nature, especially women and children of the lower classes. She married Mario Carrara, a professor of physiology at the University of Turin who became a notable anti-Fascist.

Gina Lombroso-Ferrero (1872–1944)

The Soul of Woman: Reflections on Life. Translated by Catherine D. Groeth. New York: Dutton, 1922.

Gina Lombroso was the younger daughter and collaborator of the famous positivist and criminologist Cesare Lombroso. She was a leading intellectual whose writings cast an international spell. She dined at the White House and was listed as one of two women on the *American Hebrew and Jewish Tribune* list of outstanding non-American Jews. Called "Italy's leading woman intellectual" at her death, Lombroso wrote about everything from female character to industrialization. She cowrote texts with her father and married her father's disciple and noted historian of antiquity Guglielmo Ferrero. She earned a doctorate in philosophy and another in medicine from the University of Turin. In addition to her scholarly output, she published a children's book. An antifeminist and antisuffragist, she was also an anti-Fascist and fled to Switzerland in 1930.

Giuseppina Filippi Manfredi (1887–1981)

Diary published in *Scritture, vol. 4*, edited by Antonelli et al., 99–131. Trento: Museo Storico, 1996.

Born in Sacco, a very small town 100 kilometers north of Trento, Giuseppina Filippi attended some school and worked in the tobacco business. At age 21, she married a fellow worker, Gregorio Manfredi. They had 11 children, four of whom lived with her during the war. Her diary covers the period from April 1915 through December 1917. She frequently addressed her husband who was stationed at the Eastern Front. When the family was forced to become refugees, exiled to inner Austria, she became openly antiwar in her writing.

Marinaz Sisters: Virginia Marinaz (1883–1975) and Enrica Marinaz (1888–1976)

"Diario," translated from the original German into Italian by an unknown source. From the Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia.

The Marinaz sisters told their family story in an unpublished diary that begins in May 1915 and continues through November 1917. They lived in Gorizia with their parents but fled after shelling increased in October 1916. Their father had been head of the Austro-Hungarian police. Virginia trained as a teacher, studying at the Universities of Padua and Vienna. She focused on languages and taught in Rovereto before the war began. They volunteered with the Austrian Red Cross, and as such, they were allowed onto a military train during evacuation, but their parents had to take a train for refugees. They worked inside Austria for three months before returning home after Caporetto. They provide vivid descriptions of their hometown under siege both before and after occupation by Italians. After the war, they continued to work with the Red Cross, and they also volunteered with the Italian Red Cross during World War II. Neither sister married, and they lived together all their lives. They received merit medals from the Red Cross for their service during the Great War. Testifying to their importance in local affairs, both women's obituaries appeared in Trieste's *Il Popolo*.

Anna Menestrina (1883–1964)

La guerra di Anna Menestrina: Eventi bellici e vita quotidiana in un diario femminile trentino. Edited by Cristina Delibori. Tesi di laurea in lettere, Università degli studi di Verona, 1997.

From Trento, Menestrina was in her thirties during the Great War. She came from a solid middle-class background (her father was a pharmacist). Her war work included aiding refugees and POWs, and she volunteered with the Red Cross. She handwrote her diary during the war (June 1914–November 1918) and typed an edited copy in 1953 for her descendants. It was not published in her lifetime. She fled Trento in May 1915 to live with relatives in Vervó but returned permanently to a militarized Trento in April 1916. The diary includes descriptions of her postwar efforts to help women workers. She also kept a diary during World War II from 1943 to 1945. She wrote with religious conviction and was opposed to socialism, feminism, and liberalism. After the war, she continued her work with the Red Cross and became head of the local Catholic Action women's group. Her allegiance to the Catholic Church caused her to turn away from getting too involved with Fascism. She published two juvenile novels and essays for Catholic publications.

Maria Luisa Perduca (1896–1966)

Un anno d'ospedale (giugno 1915–novembre 1916): Note di un'infermiera. Milano, 1917

Still a teenager at the outbreak of war, Perduca volunteered as a Red Cross nurse from 1915 to 1918. She worked in base and field hospitals. Her diary (published in 1917) recounts her experiences from June 1915 through November 1916. She received a silver Medal of Merit from the Red Cross in 1917 and a Medal of Public Welfare from the Italian government in 1922. After the war, Perduca worked as a French teacher, founded a Red Cross division in her native Pavia, and later worked as a nurse during World War II. Her early sympathy for Fascism diminished as the regime grew more conservative. She was expelled from the fascist women's group in 1924. She worked with the anti-Fascist resistance at the end of World War II.

Caterina Pezzé [Batesta] (1900–1980)

Piccolo diario di Caterina, 1912–1918: Dalla pace alla Grande Guerra. Edited by Michele Simonetti Federspiel. Bassano: Ghedina & Tassotti, 1995.

A young teenager during the Great War, Pezzé lived in occupied Moena, a small farming community in the Dolomites about 60 kilometers northeast of Trento. Before the war (from ages 6 to 14), she not only attended school but also worked in the fields and bakery alongside her working-class family. She was part of the Ladina community used to seasonal migration for work (and already accustomed to life without men). After May

24, 1915, she lived only a few kilometers from the front, in real danger of invasion by the Italians. During the war, she worked in a military laundry and as a seamstress and attended school at a convent. Her diary (1912–18) describes her own daily life as well as the effects of the war on her community. She was an Austrian sympathizer who preferred Hapsburg rule to Italian. Her brother and uncle both died serving Austria during the war. After the war, she worked with the Italian postal service. She married Valentino Batesta in 1926, and they had eight children. Her diary was unpublished during her life; for her biography and the transcribed text of the diary, see Michele Simonetti Federspiel, *Piccolo Diario di Caterina*.

Grace Cleveland Porter (1880–1953)

"*Mammina graziosa*." New York: Privately printed, 1917.

Porter was the grand-niece of President Grover Cleveland. She served in Italy as a volunteer nurse with the Red Cross in an Italian hospital and as director of recreation services in Italian war hospitals in Rome under the auspices of the YMCA. Her self-published memoir came out in 1916. Porter received decorations from the Italian government for her war service. In 1933, she married Florentine nobleman Cavaliere Riccardo Nobili.

Sybil Reeves (dates unknown)

Papers available at Imperial War Museum, London.

Reeves was a British volunteer nurse. After serving as a nurse in England, Reeves went to Italy in February 1916 to work at Villa Trento with George Trevelyan's British Ambulance Unit. From August 1916 through October 1917, she worked at the clearing and dressing station at Dolegna, two miles from Caporetto, under the command of Mrs. Henry Watkins. During the retreat, she fled the area, traveling to Milan where she ran an emergency mobile canteen until December 1917. She reported that she was granted six months leave in August 1919 after suffering from "acute neuritis."

Josephine Schebat (1875–?)

Papers available from the Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia

Schebat lived in Gorizia, a town of about 21,900 in the Friuli region, when the Great War began. Gorizia was a hotly contested area that became militarized upon Italy's entry into the war. Her unpublished diary (obtained from Lucio Fabi) includes daily short entries describing air raids, funerals,

and other aspects of life at the front. She describes visits by the king of Italy and General Cadorna and also the experience of a bomb hitting her house. She was pro-Italy and was happy to see Austrians flee the town in August 1916. When the Austrians returned in 1916, she fled.

Matilde Serao (1856–1927)

Parla una donna: Diario feminile di guerra, maggio 1915–marzo 1916. Milano: Treves, 1916

A famous author, publisher, editor, and journalist, Serao published her collection of essays about women and war as a war diary in 1916. An elder stateswoman of female writers, Serao was a leading voice against feminism and women's suffrage. She was emphatically patriotic in her wartime texts.

Gertrude Elizabeth Taylor Slaughter (1870–1963)

Heirs of Old Venice. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927.

The middle-aged wife of the delegate of the American Red Cross in Venice, Slaughter described her adventurous life in Italy in her memoir. She spent the war years socializing with the Venetian elite, negotiating the locations of hospitals, and setting up nurseries and workhouses for local citizens. She published other memoirs in 1918 (*Two Children in Old Paris*) and in 1963 (*Only the Past is Ours*). Her papers, including souvenirs of her stay in Venice, are in the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution, and Peace at Stanford.

Isabella Bigontina Sperti (1869–1969)

Una donna in guerra: Diario di Isabella Bigontina Sperti—1917–1918. Edited by Adriana Lotto. Verona: Cierra Edizioni, 1996

Sperti was from a modest background; her father was a tailor. Born in Cortina (which belonged to Austria), she grew up speaking Italian and German and also learned French and English. She gained Italian citizenship from her husband when they married in 1896. By 1907, the couple had five children, and by 1912, her husband was a prominent city official in the Comune of Belluno. During the war, Sperti remained at home with her sister Silvia in Belluno (a small town in the Trentino region with a pre-war population of 6,900). Meanwhile, her husband, concerned about the safety of the region's important financial documents, fled to Italy where he safely waited out the war. Her sister's husband was sent to Katzenau

in Austria. Her diary (published and edited by Adrianna Lotto) is available today because Sperti was accused after the war of having pro-Austrian sympathies because of her decision not to evacuate. She submitted her diary to public record to redeem herself during her trial because it contained numerous pro-Italy comments. She claimed she stayed in town to protect her house and property and that she was civil with the occupying Austrians out of feminine good-heartedness. After the war, her family moved to Udine. Two of her sons became active Fascists even before Mussolini became prime minister.

Regina Terruzzi (1862–?)

La parola di una donna. Milano: Mercurio, 1918.

Terruzzi was a lifelong radical. A Socialist at the outbreak of war, she sided with Mussolini for Italian intervention and was one of only nine women who attended Mussolini's first Fascist meeting. She later created the Fascist league for Rural Housewives. A fervent nationalist, she did not follow Fascism with blind obedience.

Carmela Rossi Timeus (1897–1970)

Attendiamo le navi: Diario di un giovetta triestina. Bologna: Licino Cappelli Editore, 1934.

In 1934, Timeus published her diary claiming it was exactly as she had written it during the war. It covers the period from July 1914 through October 1918, when she was in her late teens and early twenties. Her focus was on describing life in Trieste (prewar population 21,571), not on revealing her personal response to events. She described rampant hunger, bombings, and general war news. She was pro-Italy and included reports of Irredentist actions by the local populace. After the war, she became an active Fascist, and the publication date of her patriotic diary indicates continuing support for the goals of the regime.

Luigia Venturini (1895–1939)

"Episodi avvenuti in tempo dell'invasione in Friuli." In *La gente e la guerra*, edited by Lucio Fabi, 181–204. Udine: Il Campo, 1990.

Venturini came from a family of agricultural workers who farmed the property of the Ospedale Civile S. Maria della Misericordia in Udine (prewar population 23,300). During the war (when she was in her early

twenties), they lived in Basaldella, a village just outside Udine, after they failed to evacuate in time. Her weekly diary entries record her experience from Caporetto (October 24, 1917) through Italian victory (November 4, 1918). She sent her journal to a relative after she joined a convent to become a nun in 1920, and it came to light after his death in 1984. It includes descriptions of mass requisitions, political tensions, weather, and the misery of occupation. She was strongly pro-Italy.

Elma Vercelloni (dates unknown)

Perché la coscrizione femminile deve essere obbligatoria. Roma: Carlo Colombo, 1918.

Vercelloni published the proceedings from a conference endorsing female conscription held in Rome in 1918. She published a book of letters in 1941, *A te . . . salvato da me . . . diletto amico*. Allegedly, they were letters she found in her family home in Milan, written in the early nineteenth century. No other biographical information about her is available.

Annie Vivanti Chartres (1868–1942)

Vae Victis! Milano: Quintieri, 1917; published in English as *The Outrage*. New York: Knopf, 1918.

One of the dominant figures in the Italian literary scene between 1890 and the early twentieth century, Vivanti was well respected by critics. She published novels, plays, poems, and was a frequent contributor to the *Almanacco della donna italiana.* Born in London to an Italian Garibaldino exile and a German-Jewish mother, Vivanti considered Italy her home and wrote in both English and Italian. She was romantically linked to Giosuè Carducci, but she married an Irish journalist and poet. Her only child, the prodigy violinist Vivien Chartres, died in a London air raid during World War II. Although Vivanti Chartres died having seen her fame pass (and her influence obscured by her Jewish heritage), her death was covered in the international press.

Vera Woodroffe (dates unknown)

Papers available at Imperial War Museum, London.

A nurse with the British Red Cross, Woodroffe volunteered for service in Italy. She was an assistant with Gleichen's radiographic unit. After Caporetto, almost all of the medical staff evacuated. Woodroffe stayed

behind in Gorizia to continue her hospital work, refusing to move to safer ground until the hospital itself had been dismantled. Her unpublished letters are in the Imperial War Museum's documents collection.

Maria Zamboni (dates unknown)

"Le mie memorie," available at Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra, Rovereto.

Zamboni worked as a tailor in Trento (prewar population of 21,571). Her unpublished diary (copies housed at the Museo Storico in Trento and the Museo della Grande Guerra in Rovereto) is a typed manuscript from a diary written in 1920 about her wartime experiences. In 1937, she donated her diary and the tricolor flag she made during occupation to the museum. She was fervently pro-Italy, and her diary includes stories of her attempts to keep alive her faith in Italy during Austrian occupation. During the war, she lived with her mother and quartered soldiers in their house.

Luisa Zeni (1895–?)

Briciole: Ricordi di una donna in guerra. Roma: Eredi cremonese, 1926.
"Lea l'irredenta." *Il grido degli oppressi* 1, no. 17 (September 12, 1918).

Zeni, a Red Cross nurse, writer, and fervent Irredentist, worked in Austria as a self-described spy. She was born in Arco, a small town outside of Trento. In her early twenties during the war, Zeni was at first a refugee in Milan where she worked with Irredentists while training to be a nurse. Her diary, published in 1926, is hyperpatriotic and written in a florid style. She befriended the soon-to-be martyred patriot Cesare Battisti. In May 1915, she went to Austria where she acted as a spy. After the war, she joined Gabriele D'Annunzio in his quest for Fiume, and the last section of her diary describes her time with D'Annunzio. She received a Silver Medal for bravery in 1922 and continued her affection for militarism as an admirer of Mussolini.

Notes

Introduction

1. Silvana Patriarca, "National Identity or National Character? New Vocabularies and Old Paradigms," in *Making and Remaking Italy: The Cultivation of National Identity around the Risorgimento*, ed. Albert Russell Ascoli and Krystyna von Henneberg (New York: Berg, 2001), 313. Patriarca is summarizing the theory of sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.
2. I have borrowed this phrase from Flavia Zanolla, who applied it to the stereotype of women among early twentieth-century peasants. Zanolla, "Mothers-in-law, Daughters-in-law, and Sisters-in-law at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century in P. of Friuli," trans. Margaret A. Gallacci in *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 177–99.
3. For an excellent discussion of identity, see Denise Riley, *Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).
4. Ann Hallamore Caesar, "About Town: The City and the Female Reader, 1860–1900," *Modern Italy* 7, no. 2 (2002): 135.
5. For a longer discussion of national identity and how Italian scholars discuss being Italian, see Patriarca, "National Identity."
6. In saying these women were expected to be loyal to Italy, it is important to note that their allegiance may have been more to the king or the concept of Italy than to the state itself. Although the governing Liberal-led coalition certainly would have preferred its people conflate the idea of "Italy" with the particulars of its government, this was rarely the case.
7. Krisztina Robert, "Gender, Class, and Patriotism: Women's Paramilitary Units in First World War Britain," *International History Review* 19, no. 1 (February 1997): 56.
8. For example, Robert discusses volunteer activity in Britain before government involvement; Italy did not create a morale office until 1917; in the United States, hundred of volunteers participated on behalf of the Allies long before American involvement.
9. Kathleen Canning and Sonya O. Rose, "Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity: Some Historical and Theoretical Considerations," *Gender & History* 13, no. 3 (November 2001): 427.

10. Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1986); Rogers Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1992).
11. Billie Melman, ed., *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace 1870–1930* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 9.
12. Ibid., 13.
13. Nicoletta F. Gullace, "*The Blood of Our Sons*": *Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).
14. This concept is akin to Charles Taylor's "politics of recognition." Canning and Rose, *Gender, Citizenship and Subjectivity*, 429–30.
15. Ursula Vogel, "Is Citizenship Gender-Specific?" in *The Frontiers of Citizenship*, ed. Ursula Vogel and Michael Moran (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1991), 58–85.
16. Carla Lavelli Celesia, "Chiamiamo a noi le donne!" *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 1 (1917): 15–16.
17. Ottorino Modugno, *Mobilitazione femminile* (Campobasso: G. Colitti, 1916), 5–6.
18. Lucia Re, "Fascism and Futurism, 1914–1945," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 194–95.
19. Barbara Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998).
20. See, for example, the work of Susan Grayzel. See also Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995).
21. Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999).
22. Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), and "Making the Modern Girl French: From New Woman to *Eclaireuse*," in *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization*, ed. Modern Girl Around the World Research Group (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 77–95.
23. To introduce his memoir about his time as a soldier in Vietnam, Philip Caputo writes, "In a general sense, it is simply a story about war, about the things men do in war and the things war does to them." Caputo, *A Rumor of War* (New York: Henry Holt, 1977, reissued 1996), xiii.
24. For a theoretical explanation of how this subordination occurs, see Margaret R. Higonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 31–47.
25. Belinda J. Davis, "Experience, Identity, and Memory: The Legacy of World War I," *Journal of Modern History* 75 (March 2003): 114. For a review of scholarship on masculinity, see Robert A. Nye, "Review Essay: Western Masculinities in

War and Peace," *American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 419. On the blurring of home and fighting fronts, see Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum, eds., *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany* (New York: Berg, 2002).

26. On civilians as targets, see Susan Grayzel, "'The Souls of Soldiers': Civilians under Fire in First World War France," *Journal of Modern History* 78 (September 2006): 588–622
27. Suzanne Bunkers, "What Do Women Really Mean? Thoughts on Women's Diaries and Lives," in *The Intimate Critique: Autobiographical Literary Criticism*, ed. Diane P. Freedman et al. (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 62–74.
28. Sara Maza, *Private Lives and Public Affairs: The Causes Célèbres of Prerevolutionary France* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).
29. Stefania Bartoloni offers a helpful overview of the content and style of Italian nurses' wartime narratives in *Italiane alla guerra: L'assistenza ai feriti 1915–1918* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003), 155–216.
30. Albert Camus, *The Plague*, trans. Stuart Gilbert (New York: Vintage International, 1991), 179.
31. Ibid., 76.
32. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
33. Thomas Row, "Mobilizing the Nation: Italian Propaganda in the Great War," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 24 (2002): 141–46.
34. Elisabetta Mondello cites the following literacy rates for Italy. In 1871, about 75.8 percent of women were illiterate, compared with 61.8 percent of men. By 1921, the number had dropped to 30.4 percent for women and 24.4 percent for men. Not until 1961 did rates drop to under 10 percent for women. Mondello, *La nuova italiana. La donna nella stampa e nella cultura del Ventennio* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987), 15.
35. For a larger discussion of this phenomenon, see Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin, 1998).
36. Re, "Futurism and Fascism," 191.
37. See Appendix of Notable Women Writers for biographical data on those featured throughout the text.
38. Anna Menestrina, *La guerra di Anna Menestrina: Eventi bellici e vita quotidiana in un diario femminile trentino*, ed. Cristina Delibori (Tesi di laurea in lettere, Università degli studi di Verona, 1997), 154; Isabella Bigontina Sperti, *Una donna in guerra: Diario di Isabella Bigontina Sperti, 1917–1918*, ed. Adriana Lotto (Verona: Cierra Edizioni, 1996), 71, 95; Maria Juretigh, "Diario di Maria Juretigh," in *La gente e la guerra, vol. 2: Documenti*, ed. Lucio Fabi (Udine: Il Campo, 1990), 250; Pina Bauzon, "Queste pagine saranno la storia della mia casa," in *La guerra in casa, 1914–1918: Soldati e popolazione del Friuli Austraico nella Grande Guerra: Romans*, ed. Lucio Fabi (Monfalcone: Edizioni della Laguna, 1991), 93; Carmela Rossi Timeus, *Attendiamo le navi: Diario di un giovetta triestina* (Bologna: Licino Cappelli Editore, 1934), 116; Valeria

Bais, in *Scritture di guerra, vol. 4*, ed. Quinto Antonelli et al. (Trento: Museo Storico, 1996).

39. For a more thorough discussion of the utility of wartime versus postwar texts, see Jane Potter, *Boys in Khaki, Girls in Print: Women's Literary Responses to the Great War 1914–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
40. Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale*, 14–15. For a larger discussion on the advantages and perils of using letters as windows into war experience, see Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 103–17.
41. Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
42. Menestrina, *Guerra*, 263.
43. On the issue of "civilizing" soldiers, albeit in a postwar context, see Maureen Healy, "Civilizing the Soldier in Postwar Austria," in *Gender & War in Twentieth-Century Eastern Europe*, ed. Nancy M. Wingfield and Maria Bucur (Bloomginton: Indiana University Press, 2006), 47–69.
44. Italian Royal Commission, *Relazioni della Reale Commissioni d'inchiesta sulle violazioni del diritto delle genti commesse dal nemico*, vol. 3 (Milan-Rome: Bestetti e Tuminelli, 1920–21).

Prologue

1. Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), see photos facing page 174.
2. Benjamin Ziemann, *War Experiences in Rural Germany 1914–1923*, trans. Alex Skinner (New York: Berg, 2007), 16–24.
3. John R. Schindler, *Isonzo: The Forgotten Sacrifice of the Great War* (Westport: Praeger, 2001), 13.
4. For a concise review of the diplomacy of the period, see Spencer Di Scala, *Italy: From Revolution to Republic, 1700 to the Present* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 2009), 201–7.
5. Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 24.
6. Figures are from the 1910 Austro-Hungarian census found in Christopher Seton-Watson, *Italy from Liberalism to Fascism: 1870–1925* (London: Methuen, 1967), 353. For more information on the area near the Austro-Italian border, see Dennison I. Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage 1919–1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).
7. Little scholarship exists on how the organized effort by Belgium and the Allies affected Italian public opinion; for information about the Belgian mission, see John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 250–56.
8. Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War*, 93.
9. Luigi Tomassini, "The Home Front in Italy," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (London: Cooper,

1996), 588–89, and Simonetta Ortaggi, "Italian Women During the Great War," trans. Guido M. R. Franzinetti, in *Evidence, History and the Great War*, ed. Gail Braybon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 216–38.

10. Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: The Political Vision of Italian Peace Movements, 1869–1915* (Los Angeles: Center for Study of Armament and Disarmament, 1985), 5, 30–32.
11. Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 140–60; Joyce Berkman, "Feminism, War, and Peace Politics: The Case of World War I," in *Women, Militarism, and War*, ed. Jean Bethke Elshtain and Shelia Tobias (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 141–60.
12. For more on feminists and socialist women, see Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 47–49.
13. Schindler, *Isonzo*, 21.
14. Tomassini, "The Home Front in Italy," 578.
15. James Hannah, ed., *The Great War Reader* (College Station, TX: Texas A&M University Press, 2000), xviii.
16. Quoted in ibid., xvii.
17. Mario Isnenghi, *La Grande guerra* (Florence: Giunti-Casterman, 1997), 46.
18. John Keegan, *A History of Warfare* (New York: Vintage, 1993), 361.
19. For more on the soccer game, see Modris Eksteins, *Rites of Spring: The Great War and the Birth of the Modern Age* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 95–98.
20. Tomassini, "The Home Front in Italy," 586.
21. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871–1995* (New York: Longman, 1996), 186; Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War*, 14.
22. Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War*, 14.
23. Ibid., 93–94.
24. Antonio Gibelli, *La Grande Guerra degli Italiani* (Milan: Sansoni, 1998), 148–66.
25. Keegan, *A History of Warfare*, 365.
26. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, trans. Helen McPhail (New York: Berg, 1995), 46–52.
27. For a lengthy description of the Caporetto defeat and its effect on civilians, see Chapter 3 of this book.
28. E. V. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy: The Record of a Visit in November and December, 1916, to the Various Units of the British Red Cross in Italy* (London: Methuen, 1917), 37.
29. Magdeleine ver Mehr, "Living Age" (December 4, 1915), in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Margaret Higonnet (New York: Plume, 1999), 140–41.
30. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy*, 10.
31. Schindler, *Isonzo*, xii.
32. Gemma De Daninos, "Caporetto!" in *Impressioni di guerra 1915–1918* (Milan: Coen, 1919), 22.

33. Marc Ferro, *The Great War: 1914–1918*, trans. Nicole Stone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 225. For more on Caporetto and its affects on civilians, see Chapter 3 of this book.
34. Hew Strachan, *The First World War* (New York: Viking, 2003), 255–58.
35. For more on the British military's assistance to the Italians, see George Cassar, *The Forgotten Front: the British Campaign in Italy, 1917–1918* (Rio Grande, Ohio: Hambledon, 1998).

Chapter 1

1. Nicole Hahn Rafter and Mary Gibson, introduction to *Criminal Woman, the Prostitute, and the Normal Woman,* by Cesare Lombroso and Guglielmo Ferrero (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 16.
2. Paola Lombroso, *Caratteri della femminilità* (Turin: Fratelli Boca, 1909), 22–23.
3. Flavia Zanolla focuses on peasant women of the prewar era in her "Mothers-in-law, Daughters-in-law, and Sisters-in-law at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century in P. of Friuli," trans. Margaret A. Gallacci, in *Sex and Gender in Historical Perspective*, ed. Edward Muir and Guido Ruggiero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press: 1990), 177–99.
4. Ann Hallamore Caesar, "Proper Behaviour: Women, the Novel, and Conduct Books in Nineteenth-Century Italy," in *With a Pen in her Han: Women Writing in Italy in the Nineteenth Century and Beyond*, ed. Verina R. Jones and Anna Laura Lepschy (Exeter: Society for Italian Studies, 2000), 27–35.
5. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871–1995* (New York: Longman, 1996), 34–36.
6. Caesar, "Proper Behaviour," 28–29.
7. A major exception is the radical *Una Donna*, an autobiography by Sibilla Aleramo. It was Italy's most famous prewar feminist text and caused a sensation when it was published in 1909. Sibilla Aleramo, *A Woman*, trans. Rosalind Delmar with an introduction by Richard Drake (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).
8. Judith Jeffrey Howard, "Patriot Mothers in the Post-Risorgimento: Women after the Italian Revolution," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1980), 237.
9. On France, see Darlene Gay Levy, "Women's Revolutionary Citizenship in Action, 1791: Setting the Boundaries," in *The French Revolution and the Meaning of Citizenship*, ed. Renée Waldinger et al. (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1998), 169–84.
10. Howard, "Patriot Mothers," 253.
11. For more on the Lombroso sisters, see Delfina Dolza, *Essere figlie di Lombroso: Due donne intellettuali tra '800 e '900* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1990). For Cesare Lombroso's ideas about women, see Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman*.
12. Silvana Patriarca, "Journalists and Essayists, 1850–1915," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 160–62.

13. Paola Lombroso, *Caratteri*, 187–91.
14. Zanolla, "Mothers-in-law, Daughters-in-law," 177–99.
15. Anna Bravo, "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War," in *War, Peace, and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Clive Emsley et al. (Pennsylvania: Open University Press, 1989), 102–15.
16. Linda Reeder, *Widows in White: Migration and Transformation of Rural Italian Women, Sicily, 1880–1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003).
17. Ibid., 158–59.
18. Clark, *Modern Italy 1871–1995*, 127. For the most complete history of Italian women workers during the war, see Barbara Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998).
19. For more on strikes and antiwar sentiment among the working and peasant classes, see Simonetta Ortaggi, "Italian Women During the Great War," trans. Guido M. R. Franzinetti, in *Evidence, History and the Great War*, ed. Gail Braybon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 216–38.
20. Many Italians embraced Darwinism in the late nineteenth century because it reinforced the growing desire for secularization. See Giuliano Pancaldi, *Darwin in Italy: Science Across Cultural Frontiers*, trans. Ruey Brodine Morelli (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991).
21. Lombroso and Ferrero, *Criminal Woman*, 35–36.
22. Lombroso, *Caratteri*, 94–95.
23. For instance Margherita Sarfatti (future biographer and lover of Mussolini) "grew up in a Jewish family, but a Catholic society." She studied the Bible but not Hebrew. Philip V. Cannistraro and Brian R. Sullivan, *Il Duce's Other Woman* (New York: William Morrow, 1993), 35.
24. On women and the Enlightenment in Italy, see Rebecca Messbarger, *The Century of Women: Representations of Women in Eighteenth-Century Italian Public Discourse* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).
25. Reeder, *Widows in White*, 103–4.
26. Ellen M. Leonard, "Separation of the Sexes: The Development of Gender Roles in Modern Catholicism," in *Equal at the Creation: Sexism, Society, and Christian Thought*, ed. Joseph Martos and Pierre Hégy (Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 125.
27. Howard, "Patriot Mothers," 242.
28. Pope Leo XIII, "Rerum Novarum," repr. in *The Papal Encyclicals in their Historical Context*, ed. Anne Fremantle (New York: Mentor-Omega Books, 1963), 186.
29. Ortaggi, "Italian Women During the Great War," 216–38. For more on female suffrage in prewar Italy, see Debora Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne: Dieci anni di battaglie suffragiste in Italia (1903–1913)* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2006).
30. "Garibaldi's Granddaughter to Aid Her Countrywomen," *New York Times*, May 12, 1912.
31. Lucienne Kroha, "The Novel, 1870–1920," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 175.

32. Ibid., 167.
33. Maria Marotti, "Filial Discourses: Feminism and Family in Italian Women's Autobiography," in *Feminine Feminists: Cultural Practices in Italy*, ed. Giovanna Miceli Jeffries (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994), 70–71.
34. Judith Jeffery Howard, "Visions of Reform, Visions of Revolution: Women's Activism in the New Italian Nation," in *Views of Women's Lives in Western Tradition: Frontiers of the Past and the Future*, ed. Frances Richardson Keller (Lewiston: E. Mellen, 1990), 436, 441.
35. Patriarca, "Journalists and Essayists," 154–55.
36. Mark Seymour, *Debating Divorce in Italy* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 26–27.
37. Howard, "Visions," 445–46.
38. Rafter and Gibson, introduction to *Criminal Woman*, by Lombroso and Ferrero, 13–14.
39. Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 20–26.
40. Gigliola Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body: Sport, Submissive Women and Strong Mothers* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 51.
41. Her statement is somewhat ironic because she was making a visit to the United States to organize women workers. "Garibaldi's Granddaughter to Aid Her Countrywomen," *New York Times*, May 12, 1912.
42. Women were involved extensively with the journal *L'Italia futurista* during the war years and engaged in a debate over how the war would affect women. Walter L. Adamson, "Futurism, Mass Culture, and Women: The Reshaping of the Artistic Vocation, 1909–1920," *Modernism/Modernity* 4, no. 1 (1997): 101–6. On female futurists, see Mirella Bentivolgio and Franca Zoccoli, *Women Artists of Italian Futurism: Almost Lost to History* (New York: Midmarch, 1997), and Lucia Re, "Futurism and Fascism 1914–1945," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 190–204.
43. Steven C. Hughes, *Politics of the Sword: Dueling, Honor, and Masculinity in Modern Italy* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2007), 6.
44. De Grazia, *Fascism*, 25.
45. Massimo Livi-Bacci, *A History of Italian Fertility during the Last Two Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3.
46. Gibson cites Agopik Manoukian, "La rappresentazione statistica dei vincoli familiari," in *I vincoli familiari in Italia: Dal secolo XI al secolo XX*, ed. A. Manoukian (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983), 446; Mary Gibson, "Women and the Left in the Shadow of Fascism in Interwar Italy," in *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars*, ed. Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (New York: Berghahn, 1998), 385.
47. Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 59.
48. See Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: the Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), on sexual division

of labor within factories. I refer to the larger division of labor—men work as soldiers at the front while women maintain civilian routine at home.

49. Thomas Row, "Mobilizing the Nation: Italian Propaganda in the Great War," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 24 (2002): 152.
50. Teodoro Rovito, *Letterati e giornalisti italiani contemporanei: Dizionario bio-bibliografico* (Napoli: Teodoro Rovito, 1922), 38–39.
51. Bruce Merry, "Activism: Nineteenth Century," in *The Feminist Encyclopedia of Italian Literature*, ed. Rinaldina Russell (Westport, CT: Greenwood, 1997), 3–4.
52. In addition to *Funziona*, her most significant contribution to the literature on women and war is *La donna della nuova Italia: Documenti del contributo femminile alla guerra (maggio 1915–maggio 1917)* (Milan: Quintieri, 1917).
53. Donna Paola [Paola Baronchelli Grosson], *La funziona della donna in tempo di guerra* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1915), 8.
54. For more on di Borio, see Mario Gastaldi, *Donne: luce d'Italia* (Pistoia: G. Grazzini, 1930), 80, 334–36.
55. Maria Di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria* (Turin: Lattes, 1916), 2–3.
56. Carla Cadorna, *La guerra nelle retrovie* (Florence: Bemporad, 1917), 22–34.
57. Unione generale degli Insegnanti per la guerra nazionale: Comitato Lombardo, *Al popolo d'Italia: Le donne italiane* (Milan: Luigi Olivia, 1916), 11.
58. Piero Barbèra, *Patriottismo femminile: Conferenza* (Florence: G. Barbèra, 1919), 50
59. Quoted in Donna Paola, *Donna*, 14.
60. Quoted in di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria*, 50.
61. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 45, 60.
62. Argelia Butti, *La donna e la guerra* (Bologna: N. Zanichelli, 1921), 43.
63. Di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria*, 19, 29.
64. "Donne Italiane!" in *Bollettino dell'Unione Femminile Nazionale* (UFN) 2, no. 1 (January 1918). For more on the UFN, see Fiorenza Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile italiano dall'unità al fascismo* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1996), 139–73.
65. Ida Braggio del Longo, *I doveri della donna nell'ora presente: Conferenza* (Domosossola: Ossolana, 1917), 3.
66. Adriana D'Oria Tron, *Patriottismo silenzioso* (Livorno: S. Belaforte, 1916), 4–5, emphasis added.
67. Donna Paola, *Funziona*, 4, 6.
68. Gemma De Daninos, "Testamento di Trincea," in *Impressioni di guerra 1915–1918* (Milan: Coen, 1919), 11; Donna Paola, *Donna*, 197.
69. *Licenze invernali . . . Alle madri, alle spose, alle sorelle* (Spezia: L'Ufficio Propaganda presso il Com., in Capo, 1918).
70. Row, "Mobilizing the Nation," 166.
71. *Ciò che dicono le madri dei caduti* (Milan: Commissione centrale di propaganda, 1918).
72. Anna Franchi, "Alle donne!" *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 24 (December 16, 1917): 1031–35.

73. This approach was perhaps typical of di Borio's outlook on life. In a 1916 essay, Antonio Gramsci called her a "Catholic Francophile," a "boring novelist," and a "sanctimonious preacher of virtuousness." *Antonio Gramsci, Prison Notebooks Volume II*, trans. and ed. Joseph A. Buttigieg (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 435–36.
74. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 192–93.
75. Quoted from a speech given in December 1916 by the head of the Giovani Esploratrici. Ibid., 201.
76. Butti's *La donna e guerra* is one of the only monographs published by a woman advocating pacifism that I was able to find. Note also that it was published in 1921, three years after the war when it was clear that Italy had not received all it expected in the peace. For more on Italian pacifism, see Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism: The Political Vision of Italian Peace Movements, 1869–1915* (Los Angeles: Center for Study of Armament and Disarmament, 1985).
77. Butti, *Donna e guerra*, 26, 33.
78. Ortaggi, "Italian Women During the Great War," 221, 225, 230.
79. Marc Ferro, *The Great War: 1914–1918*, trans. Nicole Stone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 197–99.
80. Richard Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 11–12.
81. Ortaggi, "Italian Women During the Great War," 222–23.
82. Reeder, *Widows in White*, 164; Bravo, "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War," 110–12.
83. Bravo, "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War," 102, 107–13.
84. Reeder, *Widows in White*, 202–31.
85. For example, Teresa Labriola, Matilde Serao, Anna Franchi, Ada Negri, Annie Vivanti Chartres, Flavia Steno, and Carla Cadorna (the daughter of General Luigi Cadorna, the army's Chief of Staff) published fiction, articles, plays, and epistolary accounts to encourage Italians to support the war. Although it is impossible to know exactly how the audience responded to these entreaties, it is clear that most of the works were aimed squarely at middle-class women. Most Italian male intellectuals also were in favor of the war. James J. Sheehan makes a similar point about male writers across Europe supporting the war. James J. Sheehan, *Where Have All the Soldiers Gone*? (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2008), 62.
86. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 41–42, 189.
87. Di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria*, 30.
88. Elma Vercelloni, *Perché la coscrizione femminile deve essere obbligatoria* (Rome: Carlo Colombo, 1918), 18; italics in original.
89. Ibid., 3.
90. For more on the Patriot Mother in Italy, see Howard, "Patriot Mothers." Ottavia Occhipinti Cabibbo, *La donna e la guerra* (Ragusa: Destefano, 1916), 11.
91. Braggio del Longo, *I doveri della donna nell'ora presente*, 3.

92. Ada Negri, quoted from speech given in December 1917. *Bollettino dell'Unione Femminile Nazionale* 2, no. 1 (January 1918).
93. Umberto Baione, *La donna e la guerra: Conferenza* (Florence: E. Ducci, 1917), 18.
94. Braggio del Longo, *I doveri della donna nell'ora presente*, 6–7.
95. Di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria*, 93.
96. Baione, *Donna e guerra*, 18.
97. Donna Paola, *Funziona*, 4–5.
98. Donna Paola, *Funziona*, 6.
99. Matilde Serao, *Parla una donna: Diario femminile di guerra, maggio 1915–marzo 1916* (Milan: Treves, 1916), 46.
100. Serao, *Parla*, 62; and Cabibbo, *La donna e la guerra*, 11.
101. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 66, 70–71.
102. Graziella Monachesi, "Le madri," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 7 (June 1918): 341–42.
103. Augusta Molinari, *La buona signora e i poveri soldati: Letter a una madrina di Guerra (1915–1918)* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1998), 27.
104. Serao, *Parla*, 49. For more on the topic of women as mothers during wartime, see Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 197–226.
105. See, for example, De Daninos, "Il decalogo della donna Italiana," in *Impressioni*, 26–27.
106. Di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria*, 3.
107. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 98.
108. In the original: "Collaboratrice indispensabile." Quoted in Donna Paola, *Donna*, 191.
109. Di Borio, *La fede e la vittoria*, 26. For more on Caporetto, see Chapter 3 of this book.
110. Anna Soldati Manis, *Donne italiane nell'ora presente* (Turin: Bonise Rossi, 1917), 6.
111. Baione, *Donna e guerra*, 18.
112. Regina Terruzzi, *La parola di una donna* (Milan: Mercurio, 1918).
113. De Daninos, "Caporetto!" and "La Riscossa," in *Impressioni*, 22, 24.

Chapter 2

1. Alfred Dallolio, speaking in Rome on June 3, 1917. Cited in Donna Paola [Paola Baronchelli Grosson], *La donna della nuova Italia: Documenti del contributo femminile alla guerra (maggio 1915–maggio 1917)* (Milan: Quintieri, 1917), 11.
2. Homer Folks, *The Human Costs of the War* (New York: Harper, 1920), 193–94.
3. Ibid., 181–84.
4. Susan Grayzel, "Writers of La Grande Guerre: Gender and the Boundaries between the Fronts," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History* 21 (1994): 187.

5. A comprehensive account of individual women involved in charity organizations can be found in chapters 3, 4, and 5 of Donna Paola, *Donna*, 47–188.
6. Augusta Molinari, *La buona signora e i poveri soldati: Lettere a una madrina di guerra (1915–1918)* (Turin: Scriptorium, 1998), 14–15.
7. Donna Paola [Paola Baronchelli Grosson], *La funziona della donna in tempo di guerra* (Firenze: Bemporad, 1915), 9–10.
8. Luigi Tomassini, "The Home Front in Italy," in *Facing Armageddon: The First World War Experienced*, ed. Hugh Cecil and Peter H. Liddle (London: Cooper, 1996), 583.
9. Teresa Labriola, "Origini della Lega Patriottica Femminile" *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 3 (March 1918): 105–6, and "Spirito e programma della Lega Patriottica Femminile," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 4 (April 1918): 175–76.
10. "Italy's Only Woman Lawyer," *New York Times*, July 21, 1912. For more on Labriola, see Fiorenza Taricone, *Teresa Labriola: Biografica politica di un'intellettuale tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Milan: FrancoAngeli, 1994).
11. Labriola, "Spirito e programma," 175–76.
12. Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 41–48.
13. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 66–72.
14. Sybil Reeves, unpublished diary, February 22, 1916; Vera Woodroffe, unpublished letter dated July 13, 1917. Both are available in the Documents Collection at the Imperial War Museum, London.
15. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 99–100.
16. Enzo Valentini, *The Letters and Drawings of Enzo Valentini*, trans. Fernanda Bellachioma (London: Constable, 1917), 6.
17. G. M. Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 109.
18. *Case del soldato* in the war zone were organized and staffed by men, under the auspices of the YMCA, the Italian army, and the British Red Cross. For more, see Irene Guerrini and Marco Pluviano, "L'organizzazione del tempo libero dei soldati in Italia durante la Grande guerra: Le case del soldato," *Archivio trentino di storia contemporanea* 43, no. 1 (January 1995): 77–84.
19. Molinari, *Buona signora*, 9.
20. Ibid., 11.
21. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 80.
22. On heaters, see Donna Paola, *Donna*, 102–3. On "cosies," see Claudine Cleves, "Women and the War," *Illustrated War News* 7 (November 7, 1917): 34–36.
23. Umberto Baione, *La donna e la guerra: Conferenza* (Firenze: tip E. Ducci, 1917), 13.
24. Ibid., 122–23, and Scuola di rieducazione professionale pei militari ciechi, Milan, *Relazione sulla rieducazione e assistenza ai soldati ciechi, 1916–1918* (Milan: n.p., 1918).
25. See the discussion in Chapter 1 concerning the Mamme del soldato group. See also Graziella Monachesi, "Le Madri," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 7 (June 1918): 341–42; and Ottavia Occhipinti Cabibbo, *La Donna e la guerra* (Ragusa: Destefano, 1916).

26. For more on nurse-patient relationships, see Chapter 4. Grace Cleveland Porter, '*Mammina graziosa*' (New York: Privately printed, 1917).
27. Bruna Guarducci, "Le 'Cucine materne,'" *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 15 (August 1, 1917): 678–80.
28. For more on Guarducci from the Fascist-era perspective, see Mario Gastaldi, Donne: Luce d'Italia (Pistoia: G. Grazzini, 1930), 85–93.
29. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 133.
30. Ernesta Fasciotti, "Mobilitazione civile," reprinted speech, *Assistenza civile* 1, nos. 7–8 (April 1–16, 1917): 350.
31. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 179.
32. Tomassini, "The Home Front in Italy," 585–86.
33. Gertrude Elizabeth (Taylor) Slaughter, *Heirs of Old Venice* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927), 44–45, 113.
34. Cleves, "Women."
35. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 173–77.
36. Folks, *The Human Costs of the War*, 195.
37. Stefania Bartoloni chronicles the origins of Italian nursing and the Red Cross in *Italiane alla guerra: L'assistenza ai feriti 1915–1918* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003), 23–37.
38. For detailed information about who joined what group in which cities, see Donna Paola, *Donna*, 47–57.
39. Baione and Gibelli cite a figure of 7,300. Baione, *Donna*, 10, and Antonio Gibelli, *La Grande Guerra degli Italiani* (Milan: Sansoni, 1998), 248. The figure of eight thousand five hundred comes from Croce Rossa Italiana, *In guerra, in pace: Storia fotografica del Corpo delle infermiere volontarie della Croce Rossa Italiana* (Rome: F. Palombi, 1990), 25.
40. Stefania Bartoloni, *Donne nella Croce Rossa Italiana tra guerre e impegno sociale* (Venice: Marsilio, 2005), 34.
41. Antonio Gibelli, *La Grande guerra degli Italiani*, 201–5.
42. Matilde Serao, *Parla una donna: Diario femminile di guerra, maggio 1915–marzo 1916* (Milan: Treves, 1916), 222–23. For a wider discussion of "*mulier ebre*" in the Fascist context, see Spackman, *Fascist Virilities*, 41.
43. Silvana Patriarca, "Journalists and Essayists, 1850–1915," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 159.
44. Amilda A. Pons, *Piccole storie della storia grande 1915–1916* (Milan: Società Editrice Dante Aligheri, 1916).
45. Cabibbo, *Donna*, 8.
46. Gemma De Daninos, "Infermiera di Croce Rossa," *Impressioni di guerra 1915–1918* (Milan: Coen, 1919), 39–40.
47. Gibelli, *La Grande Guerra degli Italiani*, 202.
48. Bernice Kent, *The Hemingway Women* (New York: Norton, 1983), 58–59.
49. Quoted from a letter by Alfred Dallolio, June 3, 1917, in Donna Paola, *Donna*, 11.
50. Cleves, "Women," 34–36.

51. Susan R. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War* (New York: Longman, 2002), 28–35. On British women workers, see Claire Culleton, *Working-Class Culture, Women, and Britain, 1914–1921* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999). On Germany, see Ute Daniel, *The War from Within: German Working-Class Women in the First World War*, trans. Margaret Ries (New York: Berg, 1997).
52. Matilde Serao, "Contadine," trans. Sylvia Notini in *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I, ed*. Margaret Higonnet (New York: Plume, 1999), 120–21.
53. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 19. During the war, women working in agriculture outnumbered men 6.2 million females over age ten compared with 3.4 million males. Gibelli, *La Grande Guerra degli Italiani*, 193.
54. Anna Bravo, "Italian Peasant Women and the First World War," in *War, Peace, and Social Change in Twentieth-Century Europe*, ed. Clive Emsley et al. (Pennsylvania: Open University Press, 1989), 104–5.
55. Donna Paola, La *funziona della donna in tempo di guerra* (Florence: Bemporad, 1915), 20. For more on female labor patterns, see Comitato nazionale per il munizionamento, *Il lavoro femminile nella industria di guerra italiana* (Italy: Pubblicazione di propaganda per la diffusione del lavoro femminile nelle officine), 1917; L'Ufficio della mano d'opera femminile del Ministero Armi e Munizioni, *Le Donne d'Italia nella industrie di guerra* (Italy: Direzione generale mobilitazione industriale, 1918).
56. Barbara Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920* (Venice: Marsilio, 1998), 60.
57. Ibid., 23, 181–256.
58. Baione, *Donna*, 12.
59. Guarducci, "Cucine materne," 678.
60. *La guerra: dalle raccolte del reparto fotografico del Comando supremo del R. esercito*, *v 9 (Aprile 1917)* (Milan: Treves, 1917), 552, 567.
61. Perry Willson, *Women in Twentieth-Century Italy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 53.
62. Angela Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).
63. Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).
64. Woollacott, *On Her Their Lives Depend*, 116.
65. The extensive appendices (A–D) in Curli's study provide detailed information about Italian women's wartime work. *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920*, 297–311. Her statistics chart women's industrial, tertiary, and auxiliary work, plus female salaries and the number of women working as managers. Baione cites the following statistics for Italy. In the leather industry, the percentage of women working rose by 55 percent in the beginning of 1915. At the same time, the mechanical industry saw a rise of 12 percent; 22 percent in footwear; 17 percent in clothes making. Baione, *Donna*, 7–8.
66. Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920*, 151.

67. Margaret R. Hignonnet and Patrice L.-R. Higonnet, "The Double Helix," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), 31–47.
68. Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920*, 32.
69. *Alle Donne d'Italia* (Milan: Casa Editrice l'impressa moderna, 1918), 7.
70. Ibid., 9.
71. Ibid., 9.
72. For example, see Bice Viallet's arguments in "L'utilizzazione della mano d'opera femminile," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 7 (June 1918): 343–44.
73. Ida Magliocchetti, "Garanti e responsibili," *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 20 (October 16, 1917): 880–81.
74. Willson, *Women*, 54.
75. Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920*, 147–57.
76. For more on Brunelleschi's wartime postcards and women in Italian propaganda in general, see Thomas Row, "Mobilizing the Nation: Italian Propaganda in The Great War," *Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts* 24 (2002): 141–69.
77. Nina Macdonald, "Sing a Song of War-time," in *War-Time Nursery Rhymes* (London: Routledge, 1918); repr. in Sayre P. Sheldon, ed., *Her War Story: Twentieth-Century Women Write about War* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1999), 11–12.
78. Survey sponsored by the Ufficio Storiografico della Mobilitazione. Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920*, 155–57.
79. Stefano Conio, "Bisogna mobilitare le donne per la resistenza e per la vittoria," *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 20 (October 16, 1917): 882–84; Paolina Tarugi, "Dure verità: Le donne e gli uffici militari—Il prossimo convengo femminile—La mobilitazione femminile," *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 19 (October 1, 1917): 841–43.
80. Paolina Tarugi, "Dure verità," 841–43. For more on welfare committees, see Emma Sciavon, "Interventismo al femminile nella Grande Guerra: Assistenza e propaganda a Milano e in Italia," *Italia contemporanea* 234 (2004): 89–104.
81. Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, 62–78.
82. Viallet, "L'utilizzazione," and "Quello che il ministero delle armi e munizioni ha fatto per il lavoro femminile e quello che dovrebbe ancora fare," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 9 (September 1918): 373–75.
83. Curli, *Italiane al lavoro 1914–1920*, 33–36, 57, 259–73, 279–80.
84. Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950: A Political History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 283–88. For more on feminism and the war, see Simonetta Ortaggi, "Italian Women During the Great War," trans. Guido M. R. Franzinetti, in *Evidence, History and the Great War*, ed. Gail Braybon (New York: Berghahn Books, 2003), 216–38.
85. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy, 1871–1995* (New York: Longman, 1996), 163–64.
86. Willson, *Women*, 59.

87. Elma Vercelloni, *Perché la coscrizione femminile deve essere obbligatoria: Discorso-programma tenuto al Teatro comunale Argentina in Roma il 3 Marzo del 1918* (Rome: Stabilamento Cromo-Tip. Carlo Colombo, 1918).
88. See Vercelloni on Leonida Bissolati's rejection of the idea. Vercelloni, *Perché la coscrizione femminile deve essere obbligatoria*, 11–12.
89. Donna Paola, "La mobilitazione volontaria e la donna," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 3 (March 1918): 110–12.
90. Paola, "La mobilitazione," 17.
91. See, for example, Conio, "Bisogna mobilitare le donne per la resistenza e per la vittoria," 882.
92. Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
93. Franca Pieroni Bortolotti believes that the division was even more marked after the war. Franca Pieroni Bortolotti, *Socialismo e questione femminile in Italia 1892–1922* (Milan: Mazzotta, 1976), 13.
94. See Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," in *Behind the Lines*, ed. Higonnet et al., 197–226.
95. P. T. [Paolina Tarugi], "Le armate femminili," *Assistenza civile* 2, no. 1 (January 1918): 19–22.
96. Donna Paola, "La mobilitazione," 110.
97. Bruna Guarducci, "Divagazioni intorna a La Donna della nuova Italia," *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 19 (October 1917): 839–41.
98. Fasciotti, "Mobilitazione civile," 350.
99. At the time of her writing, the dominant theory explaining the Italian defeat at Caporetto blamed draft dodgers, Socialists, and pacifists for undermining the Italian army's morale.
100. Carla Lavelli Celesia, "Chiamiamo a noi le donne!" *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 1 (January 1917): 15–16.
101. Donna Paola, *Funziona*, 8.
102. Her ideas were somewhat typical of the times, when Social Darwinist ideas permeated European society. On Italy, see Giuliano Pancaldi, *Darwin in Italy: Science Across Cultural Frontiers*, trans. Ruey Brodine Morelli (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1991).
103. Marc Ferro, *The Great War: 1914–1918*, trans. Nicole Stone (New York: Routledge, 2002), 225.
104. Clark, *Modern Italy*, 186–7.
105. F. Scaduto, "La guerra, la coscienza della nostra cultura e della capacità della donna," *Nuova antologia* (December 16, 1919): 422–24. He cites the opening of jobs to women in the military and in governmental bureaucracies, and he thinks female suffrage will soon follow.
106. Giuseppe Prezzolini, "L'assistenza civile e il congresso femminile," *Assistenza civile* 1, no. 21 (November 1, 1917): 930–32.

107. Laura Casartelli-Cabrini, 'Rassegna," *Almanacco della donna* (1921): 251–53; Alexander De Grand, "Women under Italian Fascism," *Historical Journal* 19, no. 4 (1976): 949; Mariolina Graziosi, "Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the Interwar Years" in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism, and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 32.

Chapter 3

1. Margaret Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front* (New York: Berg, 2000).
2. Luigi Villari, *The War on the Italian Front* (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1932), 192–93.
3. The diary of Josephine Schebat provides an excellent account of life in Gorizia from 1915–1917 (Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia).
4. Berta Allatini Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni 1915–1919* (Livorno: S. Belaforte, 1919), 87.
5. E. V. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy: The Record of a Visit in November and December, 1916, to the Various Units of the British Red Cross in Italy* (London: Methuen, 1917), 22.
6. Schebat, entry from August 29, 1916 (Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia).
7. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy*, 28, 24.
8. Isabella Bigontina Sperti, *Una donna in guerra: Diario di Isabella Bigontina Sperti, 1917–1918*, ed. Adriana Lotto (Verona: Cierra Edizioni, 1996), 37, 66, 97.
9. Jan F. Triska, *The Great War's Forgotten Front* (Boulder: East European Monographs, distributed by Columbia University Press, 1998), 100.
10. Carmela Rossi Timeus, *Attendiamo le navi: Diario di un giovetta triestina* (Bolgona: Licino Cappelli, Editore, 1934), 117–26.
11. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy*, 27.
12. Helen McPhail, *The Long Silence: Civilian Life under the German Occupation of Northern France, 1914–1918* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 1999); Annette Becker, *Oubliés de la Grande guerre: humanitaire et culture de guerre, 1914–1918: populations occupées, déportés civils, prisonniers de guerre* (Paris: Noêsis, 1998); Stephane Audouin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker, *14–18: Understanding the Great War*, trans. Catherine Temerson (New York: Hill and Wang, 2002).
13. Iris Origo, *War in Val d'Orcia: An Italian War Diary, 1943–1944*, introduction by Denis Mack Smith (Boston: David R. Godine, 1984).
14. Trevelyan acted as head of British Red Cross Unit I. He was stationed in Udine at Villa Trento, the only hospital established by the Red Cross with an all-British staff. His service earned him the Italian Medal for Valor. G. M. Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 119–20.
15. Gertrude Elizabeth (Taylor) Slaughter, *Heirs of Old Venice* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1927), 118–26.

16. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni*, 45.
17. Lucio Fabi, *Gente di trincea: La Grande guerra sul Carso e sull'Isonzo* (Milan: Mursia, 1994), 321–22.
18. Comune di Padova, *Relazione della commissione pro vittime delle incursioni aeree nemiche* (Padova: Premiata, 1917).
19. From Udine: Elda Galli, Ina Battistelli, Fanny Luzzatto. From Livorno: Lina Nobili. From Florence: Berta Pozzolinin, Tommasina Baldi. From Rome: a Mrs. Cerruti. Bronze medals went to Elvira Borretti and Amalia Boninsegni of Florence for bravery under fire while serving in a hospital in Dogna in 1916. Donna Paola [Paola Baronchelli Grosson], *La Donna della nuova Italia: Documenti del contributo femminile alla guerra (maggio 1915–maggio 1917)* (Milan: Quintieri, 1917), 58–59.
20. Susan Grayzel, "'The Souls of Soldiers': Civilians under Fire in First World War France," *Journal of Modern History* 78 (September 2006): 588–622.
21. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni*, 61.
22. Mercedes Astuto, *I vivi (diario di guerra) di Mercedes Astuto, infemiera volontaria di Croce Rossa* (Rome: 1935), 27, 56.
23. Colette [Sidonie-Gabrielle Colette], *Earthly Paradise*, in *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I*, ed. Margaret Higonnet (New York: Plume, 1999), 134.
24. A. G. Hales, *Where Angels Fear to Tread* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1918), 13–14.
25. Helena Gleichen, *Contacts and Contrasts* (London: J. Murray, 1940), 164.
26. Astuto, *Vivi*, 53.
27. Quoted in Klyda Richardson Steege, ed., *We of Italy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1917), 48–49.
28. Sorelle Marinaz, "Diario," July 7, 1915, entry, trans. from German (Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia).
29. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni*, 46.
30. Gleichen, *Contacts and Contrasts*, 200, 236, 239, 306.
31. Quoted in Steege, *We of Italy*, 137–38.
32. Quoted in ibid., 19–20.
33. Trevelyan lists 17 Voluntary Aid Detachment workers (all referred to as "Miss"), one female Matron (a Mrs. G. S. Brock), three "sisters" (each referred to as "Miss"). The principal medical officer and two surgeons were both male, as was the entire car section, headed by G. M. Trevelyan as commandant. "Strictly Private and Confidential" Report of the First British Ambulance for Italy (under the auspices of the British Red Cross) prepared by Trevelyan. His report is filed with the papers of Sybil Reeves, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
34. Sybil Reeves, unpublished diary, entries dated February 25, 1916, and April 17, 1916, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
35. For the Italian point of view, see the published diaries of nurses Maria Antonietta Clerici, Mercedes Astuto, and Antonietta Giacomelli. Also, Berta Allatini Friedmann described her encounters with refugees in her memoir. On the Austrian side, see the diaries of Jan Triska, an Austrian soldier, and

the Marinaz sisters. In English, a long letter by Vera Woodroffe described the scene, as does the "Strictly Private and Confidential" Report of the First British Ambulance for Italy (under the auspices of the British Red Cross) prepared by G. M. Trevelyan.

36. Martin Clark, *Modern Italy 1871–1995* (New York: Longman, 1996), 189.
37. Mario Morselli, *Caporetto 1917: Victory or Defeat?* (Portland, OR: F. Cass, 2001).
38. Clark, *Modern Italy*, 189.
39. Charles M. Bakewell, *The Story of the American Red Cross in Italy* (New York: MacMillan, 1920), 22–23.
40. G. M. Trevelyan, unpublished "Monthly Report for October 1917," filed in Sybil Reeves papers, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
41. Bakewell, *Story of the American Red Cross*, 24–25.
42. Homer Folks, *The Human Costs of the War* (New York: Harper, 1920), 171.
43. See Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra, eds., *La città di legno: Profughi trentini in Austria 1915–1918* (Trento: Editrice Temi, 1981).
44. Ettore Kers, *I deportati della Venezia Guilia nella guerra di liberazione* (Milan: R. Laddeo, 1923), 47, 68.
45. Clerici, *Al di là del Piave coi morti e coi vivi, ricordi di prigionia* (Como: Vittorio Omarini, 1919), 12–13.
46. Clerici was not the only female nurse to choose to stay. Vera Woodroffe refused to leave her hospital in Gorizia until all the men had been evacuated.
47. Woodroffe, unpublished letter dated November 3, 1917, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London. For information about Woodroffe's actions, see Helena Glichen, "A Mobile X-Ray Section on the Italian Front," *Blackwood's Magazine*, August 1918, 169–70.
48. Trevelyan, "Monthly Report," filed in Sybil Reeves papers, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London."
49. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni*, 102, 107, 110.
50. Biographical data on the Marinaz sisters comes from obituaries in Trieste's *Il Popolo* (June 25–26, 1975; March 26–28, 1976), http://www.cimeetrincee.it/marinaz.htm (accessed January 24, 2010).
51. Marinaz, "Diario," 105.
52. For more on fluctuating identity, see Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1988).

Chapter 4

1. Samuel Hynes, *The Soldiers' Tale: Bearing Witness to Modern War* (New York: Penguin, 1998).
2. E. V. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy* (London: Methuen, 1917), 46.
3. Stefania Bartoloni cites 1320 as the total number of female nurses by December 31, 1918, in *Italiane alla guerra: L'assistenza ai feriti 1915–1918* (Venice: Marsilio, 2003), 138.
4. Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 24.

5. G. M. Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1919), 104.
6. For more on the process of national inspection, see Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 103–13.
7. Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War*, 105.
8. For more on the women of the Italian Red Cross at home and at the front, see Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 89–153.
9. Ibid., 141–43.
10. Stefania Bartoloni, ed., *Donne al fronte: Le Infermiere Volontarie nella Grande guerra* (Rome: Jouvence, 1998), 20–21, 139. Krisztina Robert makes a similar list in discussing why British women joined paramilitary units. Krisztina Robert, "Gender, Class, and Patriotism: Women's Paramilitary Units in First World War Britain," *International History Review* 19, 1 (February 1997): 55–61.
11. Berta Allatini Friedmann, *Ricordi e impresioni 1915–1919* (Livorno: S. Belaforte, 1919), 19, italics in original.
12. From an unpublished letter to Miss Georgie Fyfe by F. M. Sargant, Georgie Fyfe Papers, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
13. Sybil Reeves, unpublished diary, February 20, 1916, entry, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London. In November 1918, British records counted 281 British nurses stationed in Italy. Great Britain War Office, *Statistics of the military effort of the British Empire during the Great War, 1914–1920* (London: HMSO, 1922), 192.
14. Hynes, *Soldiers' Tale*, 49.
15. Vera Woodroffe, unpublished letter from October 18, 1917, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
16. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impresioni 1915–1919*, 31–32, italics in original.
17. Antonietta Giacomelli, *Dal diario di una Samaritana: Ai nostri soldati e alle loro infermiere* (Milan: A. Solmi, 1917), 287.
18. Maria Luisa Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale (giugno 1915–novembre 1916); Note di un'infermiera* (Milan: Treves, 1917), 7.
19. Margaret R. Higonnet, ed., *Lines of Fire: Women Writers of World War I* (New York: Plume, 1999), 215.
20. Quotations are from a 1924 newspaper article in *Il Popolo*, cited in *Il fascismo in Lombardia*, ed. M. L. Betri et al. (Milan: Angeli, 1989), 85.
21. Higonnet, *Lines of Fire*, 215.
22. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 60.
23. Maria Antonietta Clerici, *Al di là del Piave cio morti e coi vivi; ricordi di prigionia* (Como: Vittorio Omarini, 1919), 36.
24. Teresa Garbari, "Memoriale," Archivio della scrittura popolare, Museo Storico in Trento.
25. Mercedes Astuto, *I vivi (diario di guerra) di Mercedes Astuto, Infermiera Volontaria di Croce Rossa* (Rome: Ministero della guerra–Comando del corpo di stato maggiore-ufficio storico, 1935), 29.
26. Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 132.
27. Helena Gleichen, *Contacts and Contrasts* (London: J. Murray, 1940), 138.

28. Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 141–64.
29. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 8–11, 31–32.
30. For more on hospital trains, see Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 113–18.
31. Mercedes Astuto, "Hospital Train," trans. Sylvia Notini, in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 239–40.
32. Lidiia Zakharova, "Dnevnik Sestry miloserdiia na peredovkh positsiiakh," trans. Cynthia Simmons, in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 187.
33. The oasis metaphor is from Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 139–40.
34. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impresioni 1915–1919*, 126–27. Perduca also comments on her fondness for the term in *Un anno d'ospedale*, 5.
35. Klyda Richardson Steege, ed., *We of Italy* (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1917), 143.
36. Sybil Reeves, unpublished diary, March 4, 1916, entry, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
37. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 15.
38. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 9.
39. Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa* (Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2001), 309–10.
40. Grace Cleveland Porter, "*Mammina graziosa*" (New York: Privately printed), 7.
41. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 27, 58.
42. Porter, "*Mammina graziosa*," 5.
43. Luisa Zeni, *Briciole: Ricordi di una donna in guerra* (Rome: Eredi cremonese, 1926), 68.
44. Sandra Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," in *Behind the Lines*, ed. Higonnet et al., 211. See also Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1975).
45. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, trans. Helen McPhail (Washington, DC: Berg, 1996), 128–54.
46. From *Le Poilu du 35*, May 1918, quoted in Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 128.
47. Susan Zieger finds the same appreciation from American soldiers who encountered American women serving in the Expeditionary Force. Zieger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), 60.
48. The use of the word "partner" here explicitly refers to the working relationship of Helena Gleichen and Nina Hollings. On the one hand, there is no overt evidence to suggest a romantic attachment; Hollings had been married, and her son was killed in the war. On the other hand, *Contacts and Contrasts*, Gleichen's memoir, recounts her life story and makes no mention of a male companion at any stage of her life. Based on published accounts, no evidence exists to assume a lesbian relationship between the two women. Gleichen, *Contacts*, 213.
49. Gleichen, *Contacts*, 165.
50. Vera Woodroffe, unpublished letters dated July 13, 1917, August 1917, November 3, 1917, and one undated, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.

51. Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War*, 108.
52. Marina Carloni, "La donna fra i soldati," *Assistenza civile* (June 1, 1917): 490–91.
53. Stefania Bartoloni, *Donne al fronte: Le Infermiere Volontarie nella Grande Guerra* (Rome: Jouvence, 1998), 16.
54. Zeni, "Lea l'irredenta," *Il grido degli oppressi* 1, no. 17 (September 12, 1918).
55. Maria Audina also published an account of her experience: Maria Audina, *La mia prigionia in Austria: Ottobre 1917–Maggio 1918* (Como: Cavalleri, 1921). Maria Concetta Chludzinska wrote her version of events, but it has not been published, *Diario 27–28 ottobre 1917–maggio '18* (written in Venice in May 1918); it is available in the archives collection of Biblioteca storia moderna e contemporanea in Rome according to Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 161.
56. Clerici, *Al di là del Piave*, 13–14. Besides her diary, see her testimony about her captivity in the Katzenau concentration camp in *Relazioni della Reale Commissioni d'inchiesta sulle violenzi del diritto delle genti commesse dal nemico, vol. 3* (Milan-Rome: Bestetti e Tuminelli, 1920–21), 625–26.
57. Antonietta Giacomelli, *Pagine di ciglia: giugno 1944–giugno 1945* (Bergamo: Casa dell'Orfano di Ponte Selva, 1945).
58. Antonietta Giacomelli, *Vigilie (1914–1918)* (Florence: R. Bemporad, 1919).
59. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 23.
60. Ibid., 24.
61. Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Penguin Books, 1994), 469.
62. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 84, 88–89.
63. Clerici, *Al di là del Piave*, 174–75.
64. Wohl's study examines men from a variety of nations, but the support for his theory that the Great War created an international generation of 1914 comes from exclusively male writings. Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979).
65. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 61, 90.
66. Clerici, *Al di là del Piave*, 18, 39, 56.
67. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 17, 30, 94, 95, 97.
68. From Zakharova, "Dnevnik Sestry," 187.
69. Clerici, *Al di là del Piave*, 165.
70. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 90.
71. Astuto, *Vivi*, 54.
72. Zeni, *Briciole*, 118–19.
73. In all, 1,400 Italian women received official recognition for meritorious war service (including medals, crosses of war, and other awards). *In guerra, in pace: Storia fotografica del Corpo delle infermiere volontarie della Croce Rossa Italiana* (Rome: F. Palombi, 1990), 26.
74. Zeni, *Briciole*, 125–27.
75. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impresioni 1915–1919*, 121–22, italics and punctuation in original.

76. Gleichen, *Contacts*, 177, 215, 241, 297–98.
77. Fussell, *Great War*, 181–82.
78. Mary Roberts Rinehart, "No Man's Land," in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 138.
79. Perduca, "An Amputation," trans. Sylvia Notini, in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 217.
80. Louise Weiss, "Le premier automne," trans. Sylvia Notini, in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 243.
81. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 57.
82. Sorelle Marinaz, "Diario" trans. from German (Museo Provinciali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia), 100.
83. Ibid., 1, 23, 106.
84. Gleichen, *Contacts*, 281.
85. Steege, *We of Italy*, 90.
86. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impresioni 1915–1919*, 22, 71.
87. Quoted in Steege, *We of Italy*, 138.
88. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 27, 95.
89. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 14.
90. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 36.
91. Ibid., 6, 14, 33.
92. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 33.
93. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 82.
94. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 14–15, 27.
95. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 14.
96. Astuto, *Vivi*, 28.
97. Maria Naepflin, selections from *Fortgerungen, durchgedrungen bis zum Kleinod hin*, trans. Trudi Nicholas, in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 233.
98. Sybil Reeves, unpublished diary, February 24, 1916, held in Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London. For more on Villa Trento, see Trevelyan, *Scenes from Italy's War*, 103–10.
99. Woodroffe, unpublished letter dated October 18, 1917.
100. Pina Bauzon married Dario Maestrini, an Italian soldier stationed in her town. Lucio Fabi, ed., *La guerra in casa 1914–1918: Soldati e popolazioni del Friuli Austriaco nella Grande guerra: Romans* (Monfalcone: Edizioni della laguna, 1991), 88–120.
101. Joshua Goldstein confirms this assertion in his study of gender and war. In practice, nurses were caregivers not sexual partners. Goldstein, *War and Gender*, 314.
102. Private Horace Wright, "A Diary of Italy," unpublished papers, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London, 39.
103. Naepflin, *Fortgerungen*, 233.
104. Antonio Sema, *Soldati e prostitute: Il caso della Terza Armata* (Vicenza: Novale, 1999).
105. Ibid., 48–49.

106. Emphasis in original. Office of the Head Censor, *Report on Postal Censorship. Italian Expeditionary Force, "Secret,"* February–July 1918, from Martin Hardie Papers, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
107. Ibid.
108. Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 130–31.
109. Clerici, *Al di là del Piave*, 44–45.
110. *Le Midi au front*, May 25, 1916, quoted in Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War*, 130.
111. Naepflin, *Fortgerungen*, 234.
112. Ibid., 231–34.
113. Giacomelli, *Diario*, 40–41.
114. Friedmann, *Ricordi e impresioni 1915–1919*, 21, 122.
115. Gertrude Elizabeth (Taylor) Slaughter, *Heirs of Old Venice (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1927)*, 3.
116. See her collection included with Moses Stephen Slaughter Papers, Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University, California.
117. Melissa K. Stockdale, "'My Death for the Motherland Is Happiness': Women, Patriotism, and Soldiering in Russia's Great War, 1914–1917," *American Historical Review* 109 no. 1 (February 2004): 78–116.
118. Rheta Childe Dorr, quoted in Higonnet, ed., *Lines of Fire*, 155.
119. Mary Gotoubyova, "Interview," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 31, 1917, cited in *Lines of Fire*, ed. Higonnet, 155–56.
120. Donna Paola [Paola Baronchelli Grosson], *La donna della nuova Italia: Documenti del contributo femminile alla guerra (maggio 1915–maggio 1917)* (Milan: Quintieri, 1917), 193–95.
121. Anna Soldati Manis, *Donne italiane nell'ora presente per iniziativa della Sez. Piemontese dell'Unione generale insegnanti per la Guerra nazionale* (Turin: Bonis e Rossi, 1917), 11–14.
122. Lucas, *Outposts*, 29.
123. Gleichen, *Contacts*, 192.
124. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 58.
125. Lucas, *Outposts*, 30–31.
126. Zeni, *Briciole*.
127. Other women, such as Flora Sandes, a British woman fighting for the Allies in Serbia, did don uniforms to "pass" as male soldiers. See Higonnet, ed., *Lines of Fire*, 152–54.
128. Zeni, *Briciole*, 70.
129. Julius M. Price, *Six Months in Italy in Wartime* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1917), 230–31.
130. Zeni, *Briciole*, 92.
131. Slaughter, *Heirs*, 238–39.
132. Perduca, *Un anno d'ospedale*, 32–34, 57–58, 88–89, 98.

Chapter 5

1. Pina Bauzon, "Queste pagine saranno la storia della mia casa," in *La guerra in casa, 1914–1918, Soldati e popolazione del Friuli Austraico nella Grande Guerra: Romans*, ed. Lucio Fabi (Monfalcone: Edizioni della Laguna, 1991), 88–120.
2. Caterina Pezzé Batesta, *Piccolo diario di Caterina, 1912–1918: Dalla pace alla Grande guerra*, ed. Michele Simonetti Federspiel (Bassano: Ghedina & Tassotti, 1995),
3. Homer Folks, *The Human Costs of the War* (New York: Harper, 1920), 174.
4. Quinto Antonelli et al., eds., *Scritture di guerra, vols. 4 and 5* (Trento: Museo Storico, 1996).
5. Bauzon, "Queste pagine," 92.
6. See the diaries of Giuseppina Cattoi in *Scritture*, *vol. 4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 75–98, and Giuseppina Filippi Manfredi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 99–132.
7. See, for example, Lucia "Turco" Anziutti, "Impressioni dopo l'invasione di Caporetto" two drafts of her unpublished diary in the Museo Provinviali, Borgo Castello, Gorizia. Numerous other examples exist in the *Relazioni della Reale Commissioni d'inchiesta sulle violenzi del diritto delle genti commesse dal nemico, 7 vols*. (Milan-Rome: Bestetti e Tuminelli, 1920–21).
8. Fabi, *Gente di trincea: La Grande guerra sul Carso e sull'Isonzo* (Milan: Mursia, 1994), 312, 319.
9. Anziutti, "Impressioni."
10. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 330.
11. Maria Juretigh, "Diario di Maria Juretigh," in *La gente e la guerra, vol.2*, *Documenti*, ed. Lucio Fabi (Udine: Il Campo, 1990), 206–50; Maria Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività 28 ottobre 1917—3 novembre 1918: Ricordi di una maestra udinese* (Udine: Del Bianco, 1919).
12. Luigia Venturini, "Episodi avvenuti in tempo dell'invasione in Friuli," in *La gente*, ed. Fabi, 185.
13. Juretigh, "Diario di Maria Juretigh," 220.
14. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 332.
15. Ibid., 326.
16. Ibid., 325, 336.
17. Juretigh, "Diario di Maria Juretigh," 220–21.
18. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 334.
19. Giorgina Brocchi, "[Primo Quaderno]," in *Scritture, vol. 5*, ed. Antonelli et al., 32.
20. Isabella Bigontina Sperti, *Una donna in guerra: Diario di Isabella Bigontina Sperti—1917–1918*, ed. Adriana Lotto (Verona: Cierra Edizioni, 1996), 134.
21. Folks, *Human Costs*, 179.
22. *Relazioni, vol.3*, 688.
23. Anna Menestrina, *La guerra di Anna Menestrina: Eventi bellici e vita quotidiana in un diario femminile trentino*, ed. Cristina Delibori (Tesi di laurea in lettere, Università degli studi di Verona, 1997), 81.

24. Maria Zamboni, *Le mie memorie*, unpublished, written in 1920, in archives collection of Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra, Rovereto.
25. Menestrina, *Guerra*, 79.
26. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 19, 30; *Relazioni vol. 6*, 134, 315–16; Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 371.
27. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 89, 331, 26; Bauzon, "Queste pagine," 111–12.
28. Bauzon, "Queste pagine," 92.
29. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 342.
30. Berta Allatini Friedmann, *Ricordi e impressioni 1915–1919* (Livorno: S. Belaforte, 1919), 51.
31. Julius M. Price, *Six Months on the Italian Front: From the Stelvio to the Adriatic 1915–1916* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1917), 52–53.
32. E. V. Lucas, *Outposts of Mercy: The Record of a Visit in November and December, 1916, to the Various Units of the British Red Cross in Italy* (London: Methuen, 1917), 44.
33. Price, *Six Months*, 119.
34. Bauzon, "Queste pagine," 94.
35. Anziutti, first draft of "Impressioni," 14.
36. Venturini, "Episodi," 189–93,
37. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 41, 42, 66, 84, 92.
38. He claimed "one in five" people in line in Conegliano for American Red Cross relief was emaciated and that disease was widespread. Folks, *Human Costs*, 175–78.
39. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 17, 24–25, 40, 52–55, 63.
40. Ibid., 26.
41. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 24, 88, 185.
42. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 42, 72, 77.
43. Carmela Rossi Timeus, *Attendiamo le nave: Diario di un giovetta triestina* (Bologna: Licino Cappelli Editore, 1934), 143–46, 165.
44. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 42; and Price, *Six Months*, 49–51, 131.
45. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 131.
46. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 80.
47. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 97.
48. Timeus, *Attendiamo le nave*, 36–37.
49. Pezzé Batesta, *Piccolo diario di Caterina*, 33.
50. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 31.
51. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 138–39.
52. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 303.
53. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 322.
54. Zamboni, *Le mie memorie*, 3–4.
55. *Relazioni*, 7 vols. In postwar tribunals, the Italians were able to submit only twelve cases to the Criminal Senate of Reichsgerich in Leipzig. John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 345.

56. For more on the Bryce Report, see Nicoletta F. Gullace's excellent analysis in "*The Blood of Our Sons*": *Men, Women, and the Renogiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), chap. 1.
57. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 25, 26, 176.
58. For more on rape during war, see Joshua S. Goldstein, *War and Gender: How Gender Shapes the War System and Vice Versa (*Cambridge: Cambridge, University Press, 2001), 362–71.
59. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 87–8.
60. Ibid., 310.
61. Ibid., 270–71.
62. Ibid., 198–201.
63. Ibid., 197–98
64. Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 199.
65. Venturini, "Episodi," 191; Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 103.
66. *Relazioni*, *vol. 6*, 95, 184–85, 344, 344.
67. Catharine MacKinnon, *Are Women Human? and Other International Dialogues* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard Univeristy, 2006), 171.
68. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 47.
69. *Relazioni*, *vol. 6*, 101.
70. Ibid., 271, 323, 364–65, 386.
71. Ibid., 88, 90, 184–85, 201–2, 244–45, 310, 323, 386. Lucia Gardel was reportedly still trying to recover from her rape over a year after it occurred.
72. Ibid., 272, 330.
73. Annie Vivanti Chartres, *Vae Victis!* (Milan: Quintieri, 1917), published in English as *The Outrage* (New York: Knopf, 1918), based on Vivanti's *L'Invasore: Dramma in tre atti* (Milan: Quintieri, 1915).
74. Bruce Merry, "Annie Vivanti," in *Italian Women Writers: A Bio-Bibliographical Sourcebook*, ed. Rinaldina Russell (Connecticut: Greenwood, 1994), 441–46. Anna Laura Lepschy, "The Popular Novel, 1850–1920," in *A History of Women's Writing in Italy*, ed. Letizia Panizza and Sharon Wood (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 183.
75. Vivanti Chartres, *Vae Victis!* 138, 153.
76. Ottorino Modugno, *Mobilitazione femminile* (Campobasso: G. Colitti e figlio, 1916), 30–34.
77. Ruth Harris, "The Child of the Barbarian: Rape, Race, and Nationalism in France in World War I," *Past and Present* 141 (1993): 170–206.
78. Not much scholarship exists on the effects of Belgian atrocity stories on Italy, but a Belgian mission did visit Italy for the express purpose of stirring up support. See Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, 250–56.
79. Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 51.
80. Ibid., 85.
81. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 103.
82. Pezzé Batesta, *Piccolo diario di Caterina*, 88–89.

83. Eva Bertoni et al., eds., *La guerra di Volano: Appunti per una storia del paese dal 1880 al 1919* (Mori: La Grafica, 1982), 137.
84. Menestrina, *Guerra*, 296, 265.
85. Bauzon, "Queste pagine," 91.
86. Office of the Head Censor, *Report on Postal Censorship. Italian Expeditionary Force, "Secret,"* February–July 1918, Martin Hardie Papers, Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
87. Private Horace Wright, "A Diary of Italy," Documents Collection, Imperial War Museum, London.
88. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 49.
89. Ibid., 63–64.
90. Friedmann, *Ricordi*, 50–51.
91. Manfredi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 120.
92. Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 56.
93. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 88, 91.
94. Manfredi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 130.
95. See, for example, the diary of Adelia Parisi Bruseghini in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 142.
96. Manfredi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 121.
97. Anziutti, "Impressione," October 4, 1917.
98. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 13.
99. Menestrina, *Guerra*, 301, and Timeus, *Attendiamo le nave*, 161.
100. Menestrina, *Guerra*, 297.
101. "As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country in the whole world." Virginia Woolf, *Three Guineas*, annotated with an introduction by Jane Marcus (New York: Harcourt, 2006), 129.
102. Anziutti, "Impressione," October 5, 1917.
103. Anziutti, first draft, 14.
104. Anziutti, "Impressione," October 5, 1917.
105. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 53, 61, 64.
106. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 306.
107. Giuseppina Cattoi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 91–96.
108. Bruseghini in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 140.
109. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 89.
110. Jomarie Alano, "Armed with a Yellow Mimosa: Women's Defence and Assistance Groups in Italy, 1943–45," *Journal of Contemporary History*, no. 4 (2003): 615–31; Maria de Blasio Wilhelm, *The Other Italy: Italian Resistance in World War II* (New York: Norton, 1988); Anna Bravo and Anna Maria Bruzzone, *In guerra senza armi: Storie di donne, 1940–1945* (Rome: Laterza, 2000). Paula Schwartz, "Redefining Resistance: Women's Activism in Wartime France," in *Behind the Lines*, ed. Higonnet et al., 141–53.

111. Zamboni presented the tricolor flag, photos, postcards, and a typed memoir to Bice Rizzi, who had been jailed as an Irredentist and was the director of the Museo Storico in Trento at the time.
112. Anna Soldati Manis, *Donne italiane nell'ora presente* (Torino: G. Bonis e Rossi, 1917).
113. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 15, 68, 96.
114. Fabi, *Gente di trincea*, 345, 351.
115. Yet even contemporaries often refused to recognize that female protest could have a political agenda. See Laura Lee Downs's discussion of French working-class women on strike in 1917. "Women's Strikes and the Politics of Popular Egalitarianism in France, 1916–1918," in *Rethinking Labor History*, ed. Lenard R. Berlanstein (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 114–48.
116. Timeus, *Attendiamo le nave*, 202. Note that Timeus's diary was published in 1934. Although she claimed it was exactly as she had written it during the war, the timing indicates she was also interested in bolstering Mussolini's agenda of empire and expansion.
117. Zamboni, *Le mie memorie*, 16–17.
118. Borra, *Nell'anno di cattività*, 76.
119. See the cases of Maria Daniel in Donna Paola, *La Donna della nuova Italia: Documenti del contributo femminile alla guerra (maggio 1915–maggio 1917)* (Milan: Quintieri, 1917), 193–94; and Pia Tomasi, *Relazioni vol. 6*, 666–67. Both women were in their seventies when they were tried and convicted. Tomasi died in jail.
120. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 193–94.
121. *Relazioni, vol.3*, 665–66.
122. Ibid., 667–68.
123. Ibid., 669.
124. Ibid., 670–71.
125. Ada Torboli, "Un episodio della Persecuzione Austriaca, subito dal popolo italiano, 1915–1918," Museo Storico in Trento.
126. For more on Cavell's case, see Margaret Darrow, *French Women and the First World War: War Stories of the Home Front* (New York: Berg, 2000), 276–83. Darrow reminds readers that Cavell was indeed guilty of protecting the Allies from the enemy by participating in a type of underground railroad that helped Allied soldiers escape Belgium. Italian women were killed for disobeying orders, but in a summary-style execution, not as the result of arrest, trial, and punishment. See Chapter 4 for examples.
127. Bice Rizzi remained until after the armistice. *Relazioni, vol.3*, 671.
128. Manfredi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 105.
129. Anna Franchi, *A voi, soldati futuri, dico . . .* (Milano: A. Vallardi, 1916), 18–20.
130. Sperti, *Donna in guerra*, 37.
131. On the contributions of religiously affiliated women, see Bartoloni, *Italiane alla guerra*, 123–24.
132. Juretigh, "Diario di Maria Juretigh," 247.
133. Anziutti, "Impressioni," September 29, 1917.

134. Donna Paola described heavenly reward as a motivator for some women, but she encouraged public recognition for their wartime contributions, revealing that she believed religion alone was not enough to keep women engaged in the war efforts. Donna Paola, *Donna*, 58.
135. *Relazioni*, *vol. 6*, 386.
136. The soldiers then took out their anger on a third woman at the house, a mother of two young children whom they beat and raped. *Relazioni*, *vol. 6*, 366.
137. *Relazioni, vol. 6*, 202.
138. He discusses French soldiers stationed along the Western Front, but one can imagine Italian soldiers sharing this sentiment. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, trans. Helen McPhail (Washington, DC: Berg, 1992), chap. 5.
139. Manfredi was a refugee at the time, living in Austria. But her observation holds true for Italy just as it does for Austria. Manfredi in *Scritture, vol.4*, ed. Antonelli et al., 113.

Chapter 6

1. For more on the flapper type as a global phenomenon, see the variety of essays in Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl Around the World: Consumption, Modernity, and Globalization* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). While there is no denying the prevalence of this stylish and independent archetypal female, her image was not the predominant one in 1920s and 1930s Italy.
2. Paul Fussell, *The Great War and Modern Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).
3. Eric Leed, *No Man's Land: Combat and Identity in World War I* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979). See also Alfredo Badeo, *Mark of the Beast: Death and Degradation in the Literature of the Great War* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1989).
4. Joanna Bourke, *Dismembering the Male: Men's Bodies, Britain and the Great War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 162–63.
5. Daniel J. Sherman, "Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity in France after World War I," *Gender & History* 8, no. 1 (1996): 85.
6. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau, *Men at War, 1914–1918: National Sentiment and Trench Journalism in France during the First World War*, trans. Helen McPhail (Washington, DC: Berg, 1992), 128.
7. Sherman, "Monuments, Mourning and Masculinity," 85.
8. Robert A. Nye, "Review Essay: Western Masculinities in War and Peace," *American Historical Review* 112 (2007): 438.
9. Bourke, *Dismembering the Male*, 252.
10. Modern Girl Around the World Research Group, *The Modern Girl*, 8, 17.
11. Ibid., 19.

12. Karla Huebner's work makes it clear that Czechoslovakia provides a major exception to the rule. She has described the government and the social mores of Czechoslovakia as being very comfortable with the ideal of modern, emancipated young women. Karla Huebner, "Girl, Trampka, nebo Zaba? The Czechoslovak New Woman," paper delivered at the Fourteenth Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, June 2008.
13. On Italy's lack of flappers, see Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women, Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 122. On postwar Italian debates over women's work habits, see Mariolina Graziosi, "Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the Interwar Years," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), 26–51. For France, see Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).
14. "Mutilati e donne impiegate," *La difesa delle lavoritrici*, April 23, 1921, quoted in Graziosi, "Gender Struggle," 29.
15. Oreste Lo Valvo, *La guerra e i nuovi destini della donna* (Palermo: Trimarchi, 1918), 30.
16. Gina Lombroso, *L'anima della donna* (Bologna: Zanichelli, 1921). In English Lombroso, *The Soul of Woman*: *Reflections on Life*, trans. Catherine D. Groeth (New York: Dutton & Company, 1922).
17. Luisa Passerini, *Love and the Idea of Europe* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2009), 132.
18. "Issues Who's Who of Foreign Jews: American Hebrew Lists Outstanding Leaders Outside of the United States," *New York Times*, July 15, 1932.
19. "Dr. Gina Ferrero, Italian Author, 72: Noted Feminine Psychologist Dies in Geneva—Was Widow of the Famous Historian," *New York Times*, April 1, 1944.
20. Passerini, *Love*, 88.
21. Mary Siegrist, "Woman's Place in the Background: Dr. Gina Lombroso Condemns the Whole Feminist Movement," *New York Times*, July 29, 1923.
22. Michela De Giorgio in "Dalla 'Donna Nuova' alla donna della 'nuova' Italia," in *La Grande Guerra*, ed. Diego Leoni and Camillo Zadra (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), 307–29.
23. Laura Casartelli-Cabrini, "Rassegna del movimento femminile Italiano," *Almanacco della donna italiana* (1921): 269–70.
24. Lombroso, *Soul*, viii.
25. Ibid., 18.
26. Esther Danesi Traversari, "La donna moderna nella case e nella famiglia," *Almanacco* (1920): 126–29.
27. Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987), 53–60.
28. Lombroso, *Soul*, 266, 5.
29. Ibid., 263, 47.

30. Ibid., 181–82.
31. Ibid., 262.
32. For more on Fascism's pronatalist theory, see Lucia Re, "Fascist Theories of 'Woman' and the Construction of Gender," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1995), 83.
33. For more on the Rosselli family and Carlo's participation in the antifascist resistance, see the chapters on the Foa family in Alexander Stille, *Benevolence and Betrayal: Five Italian Jewish Families under Fascism* (New York: Picador, 1991). On Lombroso's son Leo and his friendship with Carlo and Nello Rosselli, see Passerini, *Love*, 79–140.
34. Lombroso, *Soul*, 152.
35. On France, see Marie-Monique Huss, "Pronatalism and the Popular Ideology of the Child in Wartime France: The Evidence of the Picture Postcard," in Richard Wall and Jay Winter, eds., *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and Welfare in Europe, 1914–1918*, ed. Richard Wall and Jay Winter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).
36. Homer Folks, *The Human Costs of the War* (New York: Harper, 1920), 194.
37. Emilio Alfieri, *Protezione delle madri ed il problema del ripopolamento nel dopoguerra* (Cagliari: Sanda, 1918), 22.
38. Susan Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 7.
39. Silvia Bemporad, Preface, *Almanacco* (1920): vi.
40. Elisabetta Mondello, *La nuova italiana: La donna nella stampa e nella cultural del Ventennio* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1987), 159–82.
41. Pia Valdameri Peregrini, "Consigli alle mamme," *Almanacco* (1920): 103–11.
42. "La scuola delle bambinaie," *Almanacco* (1920): 112–15.
43. Mary Gibson, "Women and the Left in the Shadow of Fascism in Interwar Italy," in *Women and Socialism, Socialism and Women: Europe Between the Two World Wars*, ed. Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves (New York: Berghahn, 1998), 392, 397.
44. Laura Casartelli, "Rassegna del movimento femminile Italiano," *Almanacco* (1920): 133–54.
45. For more on the Unione Femminile Nazionale, see Fiorenza Taricone, *L'associazionismo femminile italiano dall'unità al fascismo* (Milan: Edizioni Unicopli, 1996), 139–73.
46. Casartelli-Cabrini, "Rassegna," *Almanacco* (1921): 251–53.
47. From articles 143–47 of the Civil Code from 1865, cited in Gibson, "Women and the Left," 407.
48. Casartelli-Cabrini, "Rassegna" *Almanacco* (1921): 251–53; and Alexander De Grand, "Women under Italian Fascism," *Historical Journal* 19, no. 4 (1976): 949.
49. Gibson, "Women and the Left," 385.

50. After Parliament passed a law in 1970, the referendum was finally approved in 1974. For more on divorce and the treatment of women in Italy's legal code, see Mark Seymour, *Debating Divorce in Italy* (New York: Palgrave, 2006).
51. M[aria] Ancona, "Il voto alle donne," *Almanacco* (1921): 83–101.
52. Taricone, *L'associazionismo*, 102.
53. Maria Weber, "Italy," in *The Politics of the Second Electorate, Women and Public Participation*, ed. Joni Lovenduski and Jill Hills ([0]Boston: Routledge, Kegan, Paul, 1981), 182.
54. Such groups included the National Association for Women, the Feminine National Union, the National Council of Italian Women, and the Committee for Female Suffrage, headed by Maria Montessori. Prior to that, only Catholic-sponsored organizations had existed.
55. Weber, "Italy," 183.
56. Tarcone, *L'associazionismo*, 101.
57. "Woman Suffrage in Italy," *New York Times*, March 18, 1906.
58. For a survey of attitudes about female suffrage in the decade before the war, see Debora Migliucci, *Per il voto alle donne: Dieci anni di battaglie suffragiste in Italia (1903–1913)* (Milan: Bruno Mondadori, 2006).
59. Claire LaVigna, *Anna Kuliscioff: From Russian Populism to Italian Socialism* (New York: Garland, 1991), 203.
60. "Few Suffragettes Are Found in Italy," *New York Times*, October 10, 1912.
61. "Garibaldi's Granddaughter to Aid Her Countrywomen," *New York Times*, May 12, 1912.
62. The Italian electorate consisted of 8,635,148 men, up from 3,247,722 men with the addition of illiterate adult male veterans and all men over the age of 30. "Extends Italian Suffrage" *New York Times*, September 29, 1913.
63. Ancona, "Il voto alle donne," 85.
64. De Grazia, *Fascism*, 19.
65. Fiorenza Taricone, cited in Seymour, *Debating Divorce*, 144.
66. September 2, 1919; September 5, 1919; September 6, 1919, *Il Corriere della Sera*.
67. Casartelli, "Rassegna," *Almanacco* (1920): 140–46.
68. For a comprehensive account of how Italian women gained suffrage, see Anna Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine: Il voto alle donne in Italia* (Florence: Giunti, 1996). Granted quickly by an almost ad-hoc government of veterans of the Resistance, female suffrage emerged from party politics rather than a desire to placate organized suffragists.
69. Molly Tambor, "'An Essential Way of Life': Women's Citizenship and the Renewal of Politics in Italy," in *After Fascism: European Case Studies in Politics, Society, and Identity*, ed. Matthew Paul Berg and Maria Mesner (New Jersey: Transaction Publishers, 2010), 206.
70. On postwar Italian women, see Penelope Morris, *Women in Italy, 1945–1960: An Interdisciplinary Study* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).
71. Results reported in Casartelli-Cabrini, "Rassegna," *Almanacco* (1921): 246–53.
72. "Debate Suffrage in Italian Senate," *New York Times*, November 18, 1925.

73. Gino Bellincioni, *Il voto alle donne* (Campobasso: Colitti e figlio, 1919).
74. Rossi-Doria, *Diventare cittadine*, 10.
75. Nicoletta F. Gullace, "*The Blood of Our Sons*": *Men, Women, and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 9, 196.
76. See the section titled "Do Voting and Elections Mean Anything?" in *Point-Counterpoint: Readings in American Government*, ed. Herbert M. Levine (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989).
77. See Casartelli-Cabrini's review of activity in "Rassegna," *Almanacco* (1921): 253.
78. Laura Lee Downs, *Manufacturing Inequality: Gender Division in the French and British Metalworking Industries 1914–1939* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland*, 29–33; Birthe Kundrus, "Gender Wars: The First World War and the Construction of Gender Relations in the Weimar Republic," in *Home/Front: The Military, War, and Gender in Twentieth-Century Germany*, ed. Karen Hagemann and Stefanie Schüler-Springorum (New York: Berg, 2002), 159–79.
79. De Grazia, *Fascism*, 38.

Chapter 7

1. Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), 79.
2. George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: H. Fertig, 1975).
3. Emilio Gentile, *The Sacralization of Politics in Fascist Italy*, trans. Keith Botsford (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1996).
4. Barbara Spackman, *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 34.
5. Sharon Wood, "Women and Culture in Fascist Italy," in *Women and Europe between the Wars: Politics, Culture and Society*, ed. Angela Kershaw and Angela Kimyongur (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 123.
6. Gigliola Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body: Sport, Submissive Women and Strong Mothers* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 54.
7. Homer Folks, *The Human Costs of the War* (New York: Harper, 1920), 198.
8. For more on the connections between the war and fascism, see Walter L. Adamson, "The Impact of World War I on Italian Political Culture," in *European Culture in the Great War The Arts, Entertainment, and Propaganda, 1914–1918*, ed. Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 308–17.
9. Claudia Koonz, *Mothers in the Fatherland: Women, the Family and Nazi Politics* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).
10. Many scholars focus on proving how tenuous Fascist support was among Italian women. See Robin Pickering-Iazzi, ed., *Mothers of Invention: Women,*

Italian Fascism and Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), for various accounts of the different models women created for themselves that supplanted or supplemented the feminine ideal propagated by Mussolini. In contrast, Perry Willson's body of work examines both Fascist organizations and individual women's positive affirmation for Fascism in Italy. See also Ulderico Munzi, *Donne di Salò: la vicenda delle ausiliarie della Repubblica sociale* (Milan: Sperling & Kupfer, 1999), and Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body*.

11. For a comprehensive account of Italian diplomacy, see H. James Burgwyn, *The Legend of the Mutilated Victory: Italy, the Great War and the Paris Peace Conference, 1915–1919* (Connecticut: Greenwood, 1993).
12. Gori, *Italian Fascism and the Female Body*, 53.
13. Perry Willson, "Italy," in *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945*, ed. Kevin Passmore (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 14.
14. Perry Willson, "The Fairytale Witch: Laura Marani Argnani and the Fasci Femminili of Reggio Emilia, 1929–1940," *Contemporary European History* 15, no. 1 (2006): 33, 41.
15. Alison Light, *Forever England: Femininity, Literature and Conservatism between the Wars* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
16. Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).
17. Kevin Passmore, "Europe," in *Women, Gender and Fascism in Europe, 1919–1945*, ed. Passmore (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), 236–37.
18. For France, see Mary Louise Roberts, *Civilization Without Sexes: Reconstructing Gender in Postwar France, 1917–1927* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994). For Britain, see Sandra M. Gilbert, "Soldier's Heart: Literary Men, Literary Women, and the Great War," in *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars*, ed. Margaret Higonnet et al. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987),197–226; Angela Woollacott, *On Her their Lives Depend: Munitions Workers in the Great War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994). For the United States, see Dorothy Brown, *Setting a Course: American Women in the 1920s* (Boston: Twayne, 1987). For Italy, see works by Mariolina Graziosi and Lucia Re.
19. Mariolina Graziosi, "Gender Struggle and the Social Manipulation and Ideological Use of Gender Identity in the Interwar Years," in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian Fascism and Culture*, ed. Robin Pickering-Iazzi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 31.
20. Robin Pickering-Iazzi, "Introduction," in *Mothers*, xi–xv.
21. Eugenia Paulicelli, "Fashion, the Politics of Style and National Identity in Pre-Fascist and Fascist Italy," *Gender and History* (November 2002): 545.
22. Graziosi, "Gender Struggle," 45.
23. Victoria de Grazia, "How Mussolini Ruled Italian Women," in *A History of Women in the West: Toward a Cultural Identity in the Twentieth Century, vol. 5*, ed. Pauline Schmitt Pantel et al. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 142.

24. Benito Mussolini, *Opera Omnia*, vol. 26 (Florence: La Fenice, 1934) cited in Carl Ipsen, *Dictating Demography: The Problem of Population in Fascist Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 145.
25. Victoria de Grazia, *The Culture of Consent: Mass Organization of Leisure in Fascist Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 21.
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27. Paulicelli, "Fashion," 544.
28. For more on the difficulty of gauging consensus during the Fascist years, see Perry Willson, *Peasant Women and Politics in Fascist Italy* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 170–72.
29. Willson, "Italy," 12–13; "The Fairytale Witch," 23–26.
30. For more on Massaie rurali, see Willson, *Peasant Women*.
31. Willson, "Italy," 27–29.
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33. March 1935. Cited in Willson, "Fairytale Witch," 35.
34. Wood, "Women and Culture in Fascist Italy," 124.
35. Letter by Ersilia R., in *Caro Duce: Lettere de donne italiane a Mussolini 1922–1943*, ed. Camilla Cederna (Milan: Rizzoli, 1989), 26.
36. Maria Fraddosio, "The Fallen Hero: The Myth of Mussolini and Fascist Women in the Italian Socialist Republic (1943–5)," *Journal of Contemporary History* 31, no. 1 (January 1996): 99–124.
37. Ibid., 103.
38. In 1927 the Senate mandated that all government positions must give preference in hiring to married men with children, and the act was later expanded to include private businesses. D. V. Glass, *Population, Policies and Movements in Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1940), 241–42.
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40. Denis Mack Smith, *Mussolini* (New York: Knopf, 1982), 210.
41. Quoted in Margherita Sarfatti, *Dux* (Milan: Mondadori, 1926), 159.
42. Mack Smith, *Mussolini*, 159.
43. Quoted in Meldini, *Sposa e madre*, 77.
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47. Donald Meyer, *Sex and Power: The Rise of Women in America, Russia, Sweden and Italy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 27.
48. Benito Mussolini, *Mussolini as Revealed in his Political Speeches*, selected, trans., and ed. Barone Bernardo Quaranta di San Severino (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1923), 286.

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