

Italian Women and *La Guerra Totale*

By Mary DiPasquale

Abstract

My research is on the First World War as seen from the Italian home front – through the eyes of workers and civilians instead of soldiers on the front lines. This poster hones in on the role of women taken from this research: on the tragedies they faced as Italian citizens during total war. Women often endured single motherhood after the death of their soldier husbands or if the brutal sexual assault by an Austrian or German soldier resulted in pregnancy. Women took a sympathetic role in aiding refugees as well, expunged from foreign countries or from battle zones in Italy. The image of women lastly as widows in need of protecting or as representation of beauty motivated many soldiers to go to war, and war bonds to be sold.

Women in the War

- Organizers for Refugee assistance
- Motivators for war > through propaganda
- Mothers and Wives of soldiers > dealt with many fallen men, tragedy
- Rape victims and unwed mothers

“Una mattina, la madre recavasi in Chiese per le sue diviozioni e lasciava sola la figliuola in casa per le faccende domestiche. Due Soldati...entrarono in casa e dopo aver tentato in tutti i modie per sudurre la ragazza... risorsero alla violenza.”

“One morning, the mother went to church for her devotions and left only her daughter in the house to do the domestic chores. Two soldiers...entered the house and after trying in every way to seduce the girl... resorted to violence.”*

*Translation my own.

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Italia, as a beautiful young woman with a sword.



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A young male soldier protects a line of grieving widows standing behind him as he addresses the Italian nation. Propaganda poster for War Bonds.
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