

Lombroso et alii

La donna delinquente:

The Female
Predestination to Fail



A Long Story:

Cleopatra: "Bear'st thou her face
in mind? Is't long or round?"

Messenger: "Round even to
faultiness"

Cleopatra: "For the most part, too,
they are foolish that are
so."

W. Shakespeare, *Antony and
Cleopatra*,

Act III, Sc. 3



Lombroso's «Scientific Mix»

- Darwinism (theory of Natural Selection, and Evolution)
- Malthusianism (Statistics)
- Positivism (absolute faith in «science»)
- Folklore (mottos and proverbs)
- Literature (Stendhal, Balzac, Dante, etc...)
- Empiric knowledge



A Long Story (cont.):

- "Still the folk do judge by appearances, or we should be without such rhymes as these:

Varvaruttedu
Vucca d'aneddu,
Nasu affilatu,
Occhi di stiddi,
Frunti quatrata,
Ete' cca 'na timpulata!"

(A.F. Chamberlain, "Human Physiognomy and physical characteristics in folk-lore and folk-speech." March 1893)



A Long Story (cont.):

- "Ours is an age which consciously pursues health, and yet only believes in the reality of sickness."

(S. Sontag, *Against Interpretation*, p. 49)



A Long Story (cont.):

- "Disease, far from being a simple aspect of reality, is an integral element of a given historical and social structure taken into consideration by literature; therefore, disease often becomes a point of view, an instrument of knowledge and of totalizing judgment for an author." G.P. Biasin, "From Anatomy to Criticism," *MLN*, vol. 86, N. 6 (Dec. 1971), 885.



18th-19th Century Penal System:

- "Sotto il nome di crimini e delitti [...] si giudicano istinti, passioni, anomalie, infermità, disadattamenti, effetti dell'ambiente o della eredità; si puniscono delle aggressioni, ma attraverso queste delle aggressività; degli stupri, ma nello stesso tempo delle perversioni; degli assassini che sono anche pulsioni e desideri."
(Foucault, *Sorvegliare e punire*, 20)



18th-19th Century Medical Discourse:

- "il corpo non è più il corpo animato di Vesalio ma è inteso piuttosto in modo frammentario, quasi un insieme ai [sic] solidi in perfusione [...] Lo stesso uomo sano, in questo contesto, appare diligentemente modellato sul patologico."
(L. Bonuzzi, 4)



18th-19th Century Medical Discourse (cont):

- "La medicina [...] per adeguarsi all'esigenza di conoscere forme di disagio umano e sociale che sembrano destinate all'incremento continuo, muove con incerta problematicità fra neuroanatomia e biologia, fra psicologia e sociologia. Dall'intrecciato confluire di suggestioni ideologiche e di indubbi dati oggettivi nasce [...] l'antropologia criminale, che ha per inventore [...] Cesare Lombroso."

(L. Bonuzzi, 'Psicopatologia e criminalità.' 2)



18th-19th Century Medical Discourse:

- *"incorporazione delle perversioni [e] specificazione nuova degli individui: [...] ci sono gli esibizionisti di Lasègue, i feticisti di Binet, gli zoofili e zoerasti di Krafft-Ebing, gli automonosessualisti di Rohleder; ci saranno i missoscopofili, i ginecomasti, i presbiofili, gli invertiti sessoestetici e le donne dispareuniste."*

(Foucault, *La volontà di sapere*, 42-3)



Lombroso's Purpose:

Through the "cieca osservanza dei fatti" (2) to display a scientific - and therefore hardly questionable- research over the Female Criminal Subject.



Scientific Areas Covered

Zoology

Anatomy

Criminology

Anthropometry

Biology

Psychology

Therapy

Casuistic



The Female Offender 1909

{Summary kindly provided by J. Hamlin}

- Most women are not criminal *[Sic...]*
- Those that are, are most often occasional criminals;
- But, some women are actavistic *[sic]* criminals;
- Harder to detect than men;
- More vicious.



The Female Offender 1909

{Summary kindly provided by J. Hamlin} (cont.)

- A) He first conceived of the criminal as a throwback to a more primitive type of brain structure, and therefore of behavior;
- B) He later modified this to include general degeneracy of defectiveness;
- C) He never claimed that the born criminal constituted more than 40% probably less, only about 1/3 of the total criminal population.



The Female Offender 1909

{Summary kindly provided by J. Hamlin} (cont.)

- He always attempted to be:
- A) objective, in method, often statistical;
- B) positive in the sense of deterministic;
- C) faithful to the basic idea of cause as a chain of interrelated events, not the more familiar and popular doctrine of behavior, to say nothing of demonistic.



Lombroso's Discourse

- Criminale-nata
- Rea d'occasione
- Rea per passione
- Suicida
- Delinquente epilettica
- Delinquente isterica
- Prostituta-nata
- Prostituta d'occasione
- Pazza criminale
- Pazza morale



Various Implications

- Denial of Free Will of alienated and criminals (according to Bonuzzi).
- Creation *ex nihilo* of the class of the natural (the type) born-criminal subjects (according to Bonuzzi).
- Pathological hierarchism among human beings.
- Scientific status for a-scientific matters (folk-lore).



Lombroso's critics

- "The Lombrosian rhetoric of sickness aims precisely to reduce all signs to symptoms of somatic illness, to read literary works as philosophical tics."
(Anonymous, 20th Century Literary Critic and Scholar, 135)



Modern Criminal Women



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