

MADNESS APPARATUS: GENDER POLITICS, ART AND THE ASYLUM IN  
FIN-DE-SIECLE ITALY

by

NICOLETTA PAZZAGLIA

A DISSERTATION

Presented to the Department of Romance Languages  
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy

December 2014



## DISSERTATION APPROVAL PAGE

Student: Nicoletta Pazzaglia

Title: Madness Apparatus: Gender Politics, Art and the Asylum in Fin-de-Siècle Italy

This dissertation has been accepted and approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in the Department of Romance Languages by:

|                        |                              |
|------------------------|------------------------------|
| Prof. Massimo Lollini  | Co-Chairperson               |
| Prof. Nathalie Hester  | Co-Chairperson               |
| Prof. Regina Psaki     | Core Member                  |
| Prof. Barbara Spackman | Core Member                  |
| Prof. Bonnie Mann      | Institutional Representative |

and

|                    |                             |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|
| J. Andrew Berglund | Dean of the Graduate School |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|

Original approval signatures are on file with the University of Oregon Graduate School.

Degree awarded December 2014

© 2014 Nicoletta Pazzaglia

## DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Nicoletta Pazzaglia

Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Romance Languages

December 2014

Title: Madness Apparatus: Gender Politics, Art and the Asylum in Fin-de-Siècle Italy

My dissertation focuses on literary and photographic representations of female madness as a means of exposing the material violence that notions of normality and of national identity produced in Italian society during the fin-de-siècle. Although many studies explore the exclusion of minorities in the project of nation-making, the mentally ill have rarely been discussed. Those studies that focus on literary representations of madness usually treat it as a metaphor or literary expedient and leave unexplored the material violence that psychiatric institutions inflicted on the mentally ill body. I aim to connect cultural realities and their representations, exploring the ways in which psychiatric and state power constructed and used the mentally ill body in the quest to create national identity. This quest was rooted in the widespread image of Italians as effeminate southerners from a backward, pre-modern part of Europe, an image that led to a crisis of masculinity.

In my study I consider the crisis of masculinity vis-à-vis practices of asexualization of the body conducted inside the asylum. Through a parallel analysis of psychiatric photography and literary representations of female madness in Giovanni Verga, Luigi Capuana, Gabriele D'Annunzio, and Futurist avant-garde writers, my study shows how these practices actively contributed to social constructions of madness.

Chapter I is an introduction to the development of modern psychiatry vis-à-vis the project of national identity formation in post-unification Italy. Chapter II analyzes first literary representations of female madness and psychiatric portraits of female patients to argue that the asexualization of patients' bodies was used to offer an ontological weight to national manhood. Chapter III explores the phenomenon of hysteria to show how the body of the hysterical woman functioned as an apparatus used to produce normalization. Chapter IV examines how the futurist avant-garde overturned the madness apparatus at the beginning of the twentieth century. The conclusion I draw is that the mentally ill body functioned as an abjected or excluded other whose alterity was key to the construction of Italian identity.

For copyright reasons, I could reproduce only the photographs from the San Clemente asylum, in Venice, Italy.

## CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Nicoletta Pazzaglia

### GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon, Eugene  
University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh, PA  
University of Urbino, Urbino, Italy

### DEGREES AWARDED:

Doctor of Philosophy in Romance Languages, 2014, University of Oregon  
Master of Arts in Italian, 2008, University of Pittsburgh  
Laurea in Foreign Languages and Literature (English and French) 2005,  
University of Urbino

### AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Nineteenth- and twentieth-century Italian literature  
Visual culture  
Gender studies

### PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Graduate Teaching Fellow, Department of Romance Languages, University of Oregon, 2008-2014

Teaching Assistant, University of Pittsburgh, Department of French and Italian, 2006-2008

### GRANTS, AWARDS, AND HONORS:

Samuel H. Kress Foundation travel grant, Italian Art Society, 2014

Beall Graduate Dissertation Scholarship. Department of Romance Languages, University of Oregon, 2012

James T. and Mary Alice Wetzel Graduate Scholarship, Department of Romance Languages, University of Oregon, 2011

James T. and Mary Alice Wetzel Graduate Scholarship, Department of Romance Languages, University of Oregon, 2010

Department of French and Italian Travel Scholarship, University of Pittsburgh, 2008

#### PUBLICATIONS:

Pazzaglia, Nicoletta. "Ruzantine Influences on the Theater of Shakespeare: Launce e Launcelot Inspired by Ruzante's Peasant?" *Italica*, vol. 91:2 (2014): 145- 165. Print.

—. "Angelo Beolco: dall'enigma della sopravvivenza all'estetica dei *lazzi*," *Italica*, vol. 90:2 (2013): 176-195. Print.

—. "Il linguaggio del corpo nella 'voragine' della *Terra Santa* di Alda Merini," *Mosaici: St. Andrews Journal of Italian Poetry* (September 4), 2011. Web.  
[http://www.mosaici.org.uk/index.php?p=show\\_item\\_home&ID=109](http://www.mosaici.org.uk/index.php?p=show_item_home&ID=109)

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I express my sincerest thanks and appreciation to my advisors Professors Massimo Lollini and Nathalie Hester for their assistance in the preparation of this manuscript and for following my work as a graduate student at the University of Oregon. I wish to express my profound gratitude to Professor Regina Psaki for commenting and editing several sections of this dissertation. I am also indebted to Professor Barbara Spackman from UC Berkeley for reading and also commenting on my project. I would like to mention special thanks to Professor Bonnie Mann for the numerous conversations I had with her and the precious feedback she offered. Part of what emerges in Chapter II, looking at psychiatric portraits of female patients, stemmed from our stimulating discussions, particularly the idea of focusing on the frontal-portrait format.

I am grateful to several other people and organizations that have contributed to the making of this manuscript. I thank the Department of Romance Languages at the University of Oregon for awarding me a James T. and Mary Alice Wetzel Graduate Scholarship and a Beall Graduate Dissertation Scholarship; allowing me to conduct research in Italy and to take time off from teaching. I thank Luigi Armiato and the Fondazione San Servolo IRSECS along with the San Lazzaro ex-psychiatric institution for letting me consult their photo archives. I would also like to express my heartfelt thankfulness to Anna Dalbo for letting me review sessions of her dissertation on psychiatric photography. I would like to convey my honest appreciation of the Getty Research Institute for enabling me to consult the F.T. Marinetti's archive in Los Angeles and to transcribe parts of Eva Kuhn's manifesto *La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi*. I

would also like to sincerely thank Giovanni Battista Amendola for the correspondence we had during these years in regards to his grandmother Eva Kuhn.

A special thanks goes to my parents, Enzo and Daniela Pazzaglia, for the moral and economic support they gave me during my years as a graduate student in the United States. I thank my sisters Chiara, Giovanna, Francesca and Caterina and my brother Marco for their strong encouragement. I am indebted to the Dissertation Writing Workshop and to my colleagues Erin and Aara for commenting on some sections of my manuscript and for their precious feedback. Finally, I am deeply grateful to my friends and colleagues whose company and enlightening conversations have been of extreme significance. In particular I thank Erin, Nagore, Stefano, Brandon and Eric.



To the victims of the asylum

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

| Chapter                                                                                        | Page |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| I. INTRODUCTION .....                                                                          | 1    |
| Methodology .....                                                                              | 13   |
| A Phantasmatic Construction.....                                                               | 27   |
| II. ASEXUALIZATION, SHAME AND NATIONAL MANHOOD.....                                            | 43   |
| Camouflage: The Asexual Body in Giovanni Verga's <i>Storia di una</i><br><i>Capinera</i> ..... | 48   |
| Frontal Portrait: A Practice of Fiction .....                                                  | 56   |
| Ontological Weight.....                                                                        | 65   |
| Madness Matters: The Asexual Body from Giovanni Verga to Luigi Capuana....                     | 84   |
| Conclusion .....                                                                               | 101  |
| III. MADNESS APPARATUS: HYSTERIA, AFFECTS AND EUGENICS.....                                    | 105  |
| Getting Rid of the Undesirables.....                                                           | 110  |
| The Bête Noire.....                                                                            | 116  |
| Flesh.....                                                                                     | 119  |
| Culpability.....                                                                               | 124  |
| Reproduction.....                                                                              | 129  |
| Madness Apparatus.....                                                                         | 139  |
| Gabriele D'Annunzio's "La vergine Anna" and "La vergine Orsola" .....                          | 145  |
| Hysteria and Race .....                                                                        | 157  |
| Conclusion .....                                                                               | 172  |

| Chapter                                                                       | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| IV. THE MAD’S FREEDOM: MADNESS, THE ASYLUM AND THE FUTURIST                   |      |
| GENDER OVERTHROW .....                                                        | 178  |
| Art and Gender Overthrow .....                                                | 183  |
| “Volontà Estrinsecata” .....                                                  | 197  |
| The Mad’s Freedom .....                                                       | 205  |
| Representation of Madness and Anti-Psychiatric Discourse in Futurist Creative |      |
| Works .....                                                                   | 215  |
| Magamal: <i>La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi</i> .....                     | 231  |
| Conclusion .....                                                              | 240  |
| V. CONCLUSION .....                                                           | 243  |
| APPENDICES .....                                                              | 256  |
| A. NOTES .....                                                                | 256  |
| B. PHOTOGRAPHS .....                                                          | 267  |
| REFERENCES CITED .....                                                        | 271  |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure                                                                  | Page |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------|------|
| 1. Madwoman in the San Clemente asylum, in Venice .....                 | 267  |
| 2. Female patients in the San Clemente asylum, in Venice. ....          | 268  |
| 3. Photograph of a patient taken before and after recovery .....        | 269  |
| 4. Photograph of a second patient taken before and after recovery ..... | 270  |

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The aim of this dissertation is to investigate how the Italian nation-state constructed and used the body of the mentally ill woman—in both its concrete historical reality and its representation—in the quest to create a national identity. This quest was deeply rooted in a crisis of masculinity that originated in the widespread image of Italians as effeminate southerners from a backward, pre-modern part of Europe. I focus on psychiatric photography and literary representations of female madness in Giovanni Verga, Luigi Capuana, Gabriele D’Annunzio, along with Futurist avant-garde writers, to show how practices of asexualization conducted inside the asylum actively contributed to social constructions of madness. My study shows how the mentally ill body functioned as an abjected or excluded other whose alterity was key to the construction of Italian identity. While this body offered an ontological weight to a fictionalized idea of national manhood, it also functioned as a normalizing principle—a Foucauldian apparatus—to produce and reinforce heterosexual normativity. The aim of this study is to uncover the material violence that the notion of normality and of national identity produced in Italian society during the *fin-de-siècle*. Violence, at the service of the nation-state, operated not only through practices of forced confinement, but also through the repression of sexual agency and gender identity.

Despite the numerous studies concerning the exclusion of minorities in the project of nation-building and their paradoxical role in the process of national identity formation, the mentally ill have only been partially addressed in Italian studies. The matter of mental institutions has remained even less explored; while there is substantial scholarship on the politics of oppression in Italy, this scholarship addresses issues such as Fascism, the Shoah, Italian emigration, contemporary immigration in Italy, the “southern question,” and homosexuality. The inhuman treatment inflicted on thousands of mentally ill Italians since Unification has remained virtually unexamined.<sup>1</sup>

If we also consider the explosion of queer studies in academia and public discourse, we must remember that one of the first victories of gay activists in the USA during the 1970s was the removal of homosexuality from the list of mental disorders.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, to be mentally ill today means to be not only marginalized but also essentialized as abnormal, dangerous, inferior and to some degree even non-human (Goffman, *Notes on the Management* 15). Whereas many identity markers such as gender, race, sexuality and national identity are considered social constructions, the mentally ill are still subjected to the judgment of biological essentialism.

Inside modern mental institutions, mentally ill people have been subjected to physical and moral torture capable of annihilating their identities. In *Asylums* (1961), Erving Goffman shows how treatments inside US mental institutions, rather than curing patients, were used to constitute them. Franco Basaglia, promoter of the 1978 law that abolished asylums in many Italian regions, writes:

Ciò che si vuole è il totale annientamento dell'internato e la sua identificazione con l'immagine di sé che l'istituzione gli offre: quella del sotto-uomo. Ciò che importa è che l'interessato si riconosca in questa immagine, perché solo allora il processo di distruzione può ritenersi totale e irreversibile. (Marsigli and Basaglia XX)

It is imperative to remember that these practices of torture remained almost entirely hidden from public scrutiny, at least until the 1970s, when Basaglia and his followers raised public awareness of the inhuman treatments conducted inside the asylum. In recent years, Basaglia's followers have also collected numerous testimonials written by both ex-patients and psychiatrists.<sup>3</sup>

The institutionalization of psychiatry and the emergence of mental illness conformed to the growing power of normalization that characterized western society during the nineteenth century. Ian Hacking in *The Timing of Chance* (1990) asserts that “the cardinal concept of the psychology of the Enlightenment had been, simply, human nature. By the end of the nineteenth century, it was being replaced by something different: the normal people” (1). Hacking argues that the notions of normal and abnormal began to work as categories of analysis and judgments; the word normal became crucial because “it created a way to be objective about human beings” (160). During this period the norm begins to function as a “political concept” used to legitimize a new form of power (Foucault, *Abnormal* 50). Foucault writes: “The norm's function is not to exclude and reject. Rather it is always linked to a positive technique of intervention and transformation, to a sort of a normative project” (50). The power of normalization

was based on the idea of production rather than repression—production aimed at the amelioration and maximalization of life.

The birth of modern psychiatry is usually associated with Philippe Pinel (1745-1826), commonly remembered for unchaining the inmates at the Bicêtre Hospital in France. While Pinel's act of liberation was not completely new, his main contribution to psychiatry was his *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale* (1801) (Shorter 11). Pinel asserted the possibility that asylums could work as therapeutic places in which “hopeless” individuals could learn to return to society (11). Pinel's introduction of moral treatment inaugurated a new role for mental institutions; at the core of this practice was the crucial idea that madness could be cured and that normalization could only happen inside the insane asylum (12).<sup>4</sup>

The reformation of the asylum required a new conception of madness. Starting from this period, physicians understood madness as a specific medical condition, an organic dysfunction of humankind's nature. In particular, it became associated with brain alterations (70).<sup>5</sup> Benedict-Augustine Morel offered an essential turning point in the study of mental disorders. In *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés maladives* (1857), he argued that mental illness was related to hereditary traits. According to Morel, mental illness represented the end stage of a relentless process of mental deterioration (94). During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, the link between mental illness and genetics, together with the development of social Darwinism, became the foundation of



Galton's studies on eugenics (Mantovani 15). Morel's idea of degeneration also spread outside psychiatric discourses and came to embody a *fin-de-siècle* notion of disease that inspired not only the writings of European intellectuals but also those of philosophers and sociologists such as Max Nordau, Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer (Biasin 10).

Indeed, despite Pinel's humanitarian contribution, mental institutions continued to function as places to confine those whose transgressive behavior, nation states considered a threat to society. Starting with Foucault's *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (1961) several studies have shown the political and social implications of the institutionalization of psychiatry.<sup>6</sup> In line with positivist sciences and social Darwinism, psychiatrists used the idea of nature—in this case of brain alterations—to justify the oppression of minorities. While madness became increasingly linked to an organic dysfunction of the brain, it was also related to the notion of dangerousness. In *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975* Foucault suggests that it was through this double process of codification that psychiatry could be established as a medical science responsible for public health (118-120).

In Italy, psychiatry was institutionalized in 1862, one year after Unification.<sup>7</sup> Since its emergence, the organicist approach—based on the link between mental disorders and the organic dysfunction of the body—became influential and was reinforced during the last two decades of the nineteenth century (Canosa 54-56). In particular, Benedict-Augustine Morel's idea of degeneration had a great impact on such Italian psychiatrists and physicians as

Cesare Lombroso and Enrico Morselli (70-76). Lombroso's studies in *L'uomo delinquente studiato in rapporto all'antropologia, alla giurisprudenza ed alle scienze carcerarie* (1876), according to which criminal behavior was biologically predetermined, inaugurated the field of criminal anthropology across Europe. The organicistic approach led to the radical exclusion of other forms of therapy than confinement; thus from the beginning of the Italian state, the asylum was at the core of psychiatric practice (78). More than in other countries, psychiatry was less concerned with the actual improvement of scientific research than it was with the administration of the asylum (Babini et al., *Tra potere e sapere* 35). This focus meant that practices of confinement acquired a priority over the actual development of psychiatric science.

Of particular significance was the promulgation of the Giolitti law that inaugurated the advent of psychiatry as social science. Approved in 1904, this law established that the mentally ill would be confined due to "social dangerousness" and "public scandal;" any institutionalization of patients had to occur through a legal proceeding (Canosa 112).<sup>8</sup> This law gave to psychiatry the full administration of madness and offered it a new prominence in both the scientific community and the sphere of social control.

We must notice that in Italy, the institutionalization of psychiatry directly coincided with the project of nation-building: the making of the "abnormals" went hand-in-hand with the making of Italians. As Silvana Patriarca suggests in *Italian Vices* (2010), discourses on the Other are key to understanding the formation of Italian discourses on national character more generally (8). For example, the

construction of the South as “internal other” necessary to the construction of the default Italy or Italian has received considerable attention in Italian Studies.<sup>9</sup> Similar attention has been offered to the African other; critics usually agree that economic reasons as well as the affirmation of national boundaries motivated the racialization of this minority.<sup>10</sup> Still, in study of the project of national identity formation, the function of the mentally ill has not received much attention.

For example, in literary criticism, the matter of disease and particularly of mental illness has been the subject of numerous studies. While the visible presence of the mad in society was virtually non-existent because they were systematically confined, the representation of mad people, specifically mad women, in the literature and photography produced between the 1870s and 1900s was very prominent. The body of the mentally ill, while being confined in society, became the object of obsessive representation in *fin-de-siècle* Italy.

The following studies have shown that *fin-de siècle* Italian literature was profoundly affected by medical discourse concerning madness. Gian Paolo Biasin, in *Literary Diseases: Theme and Metaphor in the Italian Novel* (1975), offers an overview on this topic in nineteenth-and twentieth-century Italian literature and shows how authors employed disease to represent a critique of bourgeois capitalism or to depict an existential condition. Annamaria Cavalli Pasini in *La scienza del romanzo: Romanzo e cultura scientifica tra '800 e '900* (1982) analyzes the relationship between psychiatric discourse and Italian naturalist and decadent writers; she also points to the crucial contribution of literature to the stereotyping of mental disorders.

In relation to hysteria and female madness, in the Italian context Mario Praz, in *La carne la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (1930), focused specifically on the topic of the *femme fatale* and its relation to eroticism. In recent years, Barbara Spackman and Cristina Mazzoni have also explored this topic and offered new perspectives. Barbara Spackman in *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio* (1989) explores the topic of sickness in different discourses and ideological fields that span from Cesare Lombroso to Max Nordeau, and from Charles Baudelaire to Gabriele D'Annunzio. Cristina Mazzoni, on the other hand, in *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture* (1996) focuses on the key relationship between the emergence of hysteria and the revival of mysticism in Europe during *fin-de-siècle*. Spackman's and Mazzoni's studies uncover crucial matters concerning the social construction of female madness vis-à-vis patriarchal society in Italy. This topic has received considerable attention in other areas of Europe and the United States starting with Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar's *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979), Phyllis Chesler's *Women and Madness* (1972) and Elaine Showalter's *The Female Malady* (1987).

Still, this illuminating criticism in the Italian context is usually more interested in investigating madness as a literary expedient, as metaphor, and in showing the author's perspective in relation to psychiatry or society at large—and less interested in exploring the operations of power that lay behind the representation of madness. What is more, this criticism usually leaves unexplored the matter of psychiatric institutions and of the inhuman treatments conducted on

the actual bodies of the mentally ill inside the asylum.<sup>11</sup>

By contrast, studies that focus on psychiatric photography, such as those of Georges Didi-Huberman, Stanley B. Burns and in the Italian context Franco Cagnetta, consider the material bodies of the mentally ill inside the asylum and also offer essential investigations into the discourse of power that lay behind and beyond the photographic frame. Compelling as this dimension is, these studies still leave unexplored the direct relation between the project of “managing” the mentally ill and the project of nation-building, and only partially address issues of gender. Furthermore, by focusing only on photography, these studies also leave unexplored the substantial cultural impact that the representation of madness had on society. Finally, historical studies on Italian psychiatric institutions, such as those of Romano Canosa and Valeria Babini, while offering key analyses of the discourse of power and paying attention to the project of nation-making, leave the representational level completely unexplored.

I aim to bring these fields together to connect the represented and the real, and to consider the social construction of madness vis-à-vis the project of national identity formation in the Italian context. In this dissertation, I examine the real and the represented together in order to investigate further the operations of power that lay behind the social construction of female madness. My decision to focus on female madness is rooted in the fact that this topic and especially hysteria became prominent in photographic and literary representations in the period between the 1860s and the beginning of the twentieth century. The wide diffusion of representations of female madness is related to the fact that madness, as Elaine

Showalter points out in *The Female Malady* (1987), has long been considered as having an essentially feminine nature, in opposition to male rationality: “madness is a female malady because it is experienced by more women than men” (3). Furthermore, my decision to focus on female madness is also linked to the key role that female madness played in the futurist gender revolution, as I will show in the last chapter of this dissertation.

In this study I take a fresh perspective on the topic of madness; while mental illness is generally associated with the animal, the line I follow is the asexualization of the body. This line of investigation emerged in reading patient testimonials, in which one of the most prevalent processes was the asexualization of the mad body. Inside the asylum, both male and female patients were completely deprived of their sexual agency and gender identity. This mechanism was particularly evident in women’s testimonials, for example in the works of Alda Merini’s *L'altra verità. Diario di una diversa* (1997) and *La terra santa* (1983), Lia Traverso’s *D'ogni dove chiusi si sta male* (1996), and Maria Luisa Marsigli’s *La marchesa e i demoni. Diario di un manicomio* (1973).

Alda Merini in her autobiographical diary *L'altra verità* (1997) addresses several times the repression of sexuality inside the asylum: “In manicomio come ho detto, il sesso è bandito come sconnessione, quasi come portatore di microbi patogeni e noi per l'appunto eravamo asessuati” (23). Together with sexual repression, Merini points to the complete annihilation of patients’ gender identity; she recalls other women inside the asylum and compares them to the witches of Macbeth: “Le facce delle degenti erano a dir poco mostruose. Avevano perso ogni

tratto femminile e guardandole mi venivano in mente le streghe di Macbeth” (32). Merini is horrified by the lack of femininity in other female patients and perceive them as monstrosity. At the core of this process of annihilation is shame. The poet describes the scene of the forced bath—“bagno di forza”—in which all patients were put together in the same room, completely undressed and washed by the nurses: “stavamo a guardare per terra come delle colpevoli, ammazzate dall’indifferenza, senza una parola, un sorriso, un dialogo qualunque” (39). The patients’ behavior of looking down, without saying a word or interacting with each others is a typical manifestation of shame. As Silvan Tomkins shows in his study shame is specifically manifested through the gesture of avoiding facial communication (134).

During her hospitalization the poet gave birth to her third daughter, and soon after was deprived of the right to nurse her. She recollects this experience as one of the major crimes she endured inside the asylum: “Comunque il latte dovettero levarmelo e quella fu la più dolorosa operazione morale che avessi mai subito dall’entrata in quel terribile luogo” (55). This loss was also followed by sterilization at the age of 39 to prevent her from having other children. In her diary, Merini also quotes a striking passage from Adalgisa Conti, who was confined in the Arezzo asylum, at the beginning of the twentieth century:

D'altronde l'internamento rappresenta già di per se una violenza enorme per la donna che, identificandosi come persona nel ruolo coperto in famiglia, sottratta a questo perde ogni punto di riferimento e ogni possibilità di essere e di riconoscersi come individuo. Il ruolo di casalinga-

moglie-madre è il solo ruolo possibile per la donna ipotizzato come naturale, come l'essenza stessa del vivere femminile. (17)

Adalgisa Conti perceives the loss of her gender role—as (house) wife and mother—as the complete annihilation of identity. This process recurs constantly in direct testimonials; through the denial of maternal or paternal roles, work, and forced homosexuality, as in the case of Nicola Fanizzi, the asylum was a space for the complete annihilation of the inmate's individual identity.

Asexualization then, as I refer to it in this study, implies on the one hand the repression of sexual agency and sexual relations and on the other hand, the forced and complete deprivation of the inmate's gender identity. This process took place not only through the deprivation of clothing, hair and make up, but first and foremost through the denial of the maternal role. This denial, as I will show, happened through forced confinement as well as through drastic practices of sterilization.

This process of asexualization came to the fore when I began analyzing literary and photographic representations of female madness in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. In both photographic and literary representations, madwomen were completely deprived of their gender identity. Even in those literary and photographic representations in which female madness was associated with a hyper-eroticization of the female body, the madwoman was usually deprived of the right of reproduction through sterility, abortion or even death. A similar representation of the female body as an engendered body was also the protagonist of futurist depictions. In the context of futurism, however, the mad body and its engendered



nature were celebrated as the paradigm of futurist women's virility.

## **Methodology**

My dissertation is not about direct testimonials; it does not investigate how the asexualization of the body effected the annihilation of patients' identity—except for a reference to Eva Kuhn Amendola's manifesto in the last chapter. My study is instead about the ways in which the nation state employed the asexualization of female bodies, in both their concrete historical reality and in their representation, in a project of national identity formation. This project, as I will show in what follows, was deeply rooted in a crisis of masculinity. In order to explore this relation, my study draws on both poststructuralist and phenomenological analyses of gender. While the materialist and poststructuralist approach allows me to study the functioning of the apparatus and the process of subjectivation, the phenomenological approach allows a further investigation that addresses the lived gender of the inmate. These two approaches require a clear definition of certain key concepts applied throughout this study.

French materialist Louis Althusser draws on Marx's theories of capitalism to stress the importance of ideological state apparatuses in economic development. Whereas Marx argues that the "reproduction of the means of production" is assured by state apparatuses, Althusser suggests that what he terms ideological state apparatuses, such as schools, mental institutions, and churches, work on the side of repressive state apparatuses and, by means of education, enable "the reproduction of submission to the condition of production" (86). Whereas repressive state apparatuses function "by violence," ideological

apparatuses function “by ideology,” although with violence always as the back-up (96).

Ideology for Althusser has a “material existence” in the sense that it exists beyond mere ideas. Ideology exists in a person’s actions: “an ideology always exists in an apparatus and in the practice or practices of that apparatus. This existence is material” (112). For Althusser ideology works at the level of the subject. With the term “interpellation,” the philosopher refers to the power of ideology to constitute the subject as subject, to subjectivate the subject: “the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology insofar as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (116). In capitalist societies, the interpellation of the subject submits the individual to the system of reproduction.

Foucault draws on Althusser’s notion of ideological state apparatus to develop his theory of disciplinary power and biopolitics. In contrast to Althusser, Foucault moves away from the idea of sovereign power. While sovereign power is rooted in the notion of repression, Foucault argues that the form of power that emerged during the nineteenth century was deeply linked to the idea of production. Power is understood as a “productive network” whose aim is the maximization of life. The discourse of power is a discourse that “serves to make possible a whole series of interventions of surveillance, circulation, control and so forth, which seem to have been intimately linked with techniques that give the appearance of repression, or are at least liable to be interpreted as such” (*The Foucault Reader* 62). In his view, there is not a subject who performs power;

rather, power operates through a series of relations: “In reality power means relations, a more-or-less organised, hierarchical, co-ordinated cluster of relations” (“Truth and Power” 198).

Foucault argues that starting from the eighteenth century, power was put into place not through violence or repression, but through apparatuses of discipline-normalization. Drawing on Althusser’s notion of ideological apparatus, Foucault describes the apparatus (*dispositive*) as “a heterogeneous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions—in short the said as much as the unsaid. The apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements” (194). For Foucault the apparatus also responds to an urgent need and has a strategic nature:

I said that the apparatus has essentially a strategic nature, which means assuming that it is a matter of a certain manipulation of relations of forces, either developing them in a particular direction, blocking them, stabilizing them, utilizing them. (196)

A key concept in Foucault’s idea of the apparatus is the process of incorporation of power. In order to work as a machine of governance, power has to circulate in a capillary way able to access people’s everyday behavior and actions: “power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of the individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behavior” (*The Foucault Reader* 67). As Giorgio Agamben suggests, an apparatus for Foucault “is first of all a machine that produces subjectivation” (20). Subjectivation implies the operation through which the subject is subjected. The incorporation of power produces certain acts and

practices in the individual that become constitutive of the making of subjectivity. In other words, it is because of these very practices induced by means of the apparatus that the subject is constituted as subject at all.

Foucault also stresses the pivotal idea that “sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of the population” (*The Foucault Reader* 67). Sex is situated at the crossroads of disciplinary power and biopolitics; it controls the body of the population as well as the small, individual body. In the first volume of *History of Sexuality* (1976) the philosopher investigates how sex became part of the power/ knowledge system during the nineteenth century. Foucault shows how during this period there emerged a multiplication of discourses concerning sexuality; a norm of sexual development was established and any possible deviation was accurately observed and classified (*The Foucault Reader* 319). Foucault talks about a “policing of sex” that implied the necessity to regulate sex through useful and public discourses (307).

The discourse of sexuality was also at the origin of the emergence of the domain of the “abnormals.” In *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975* the philosopher shows how sexual abnormalities began to define all kind of abnormalities (168). Foucault suggests that at the origin of the domain of the abnormal lay a technology of instincts; instincts became the major factor to determine the abnormality of individuals (168). In this context, the philosopher studies the development of a new system of confession. Starting from the sixteenth century, the practice of confession determined a crucial movement towards the body: “The body and its pleasures, rather than the required form for

legitimate union, become, as it were, the code of the carnal” (186). Through this new examination, the body was blamed through the flesh and at the same time, it was objectified as flesh alone. Foucault discusses “a moral physiology of the flesh” in which the concupiscence of the flesh became the psyche of the abnormal (189).

Foucault’s analysis of the apparatus is key to understanding the functioning of psychiatry and of the asylum as apparatus of discipline-normalization. Specifically compelling in my context is the regulation of sexuality in Italy in the period between the 1860s and the beginning of the twentieth century. As I will show in detail in what follows, sexuality played a key role in the definition of mental illness, specifically of female madness. The regulation of sexuality as a tool of controlling the population became a major concern for the founding fathers of the nation after Unification; during this period there emerged a large system of apparatus of discipline-normalization employed to regulate sexuality and to channel the population into heterosexual normativity. Foucault’s notion of the apparatus is also essential to show how literary and photographic representations of madness, around the turn of the century, began to function in term of apparatus; representations of madness worked as a locus of power used to produce subjectivation.

The idea of the discursive formation of subjectivity is also a key concept in Judith Butler’s analysis of power. In contrast to Foucault, however, Butler focuses on what cannot be materialized, on what remains unintelligible. In *Bodies That Matter* (1993) Butler develops the notion of the *abject*,<sup>12</sup> a key concept in

her theorization of subjectivity. In this book the philosopher attempts to reformulate the idea of matter in the light of her theory of gender performativity. Starting with the assumption that gender is a social construction that precedes the very notion of sex, Butler pushes her analysis further to discuss matter itself as a discursive construction:

What will, I hope, become clear in what follows is that the regulatory norms of 'sex' work in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body's sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative. (2)

Matter is considered "as power's most productive effect" (2). Butler suggests that the materiality of the body cannot be thought apart from the materialization of the norm; in this context sex is "not simply what one has, or a static description of what one is: it will be one of the norms by which the 'one' becomes viable at all, that which qualifies a body for life within the domain of cultural intelligibility" (2). According to Butler the materialization of sex is at the foundation of the visibility of the body; this materialization is able to place the body within the domain of intelligibility.

At this point the philosopher introduces the idea of the abject, also defined as the "constitutive outside":

This exclusionary matrix by which the subjects are formed thus requires the simultaneous production of a domain of abject beings, those who are not yet "subjects," but who form the constitutive outside to the domain of

the subject. The abject designates here precisely those “unlivable” and “uninhabitable” zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject, but whose living under the sign of the “unlivable” is required to circumscribe the domain of the subject. (3)

The “constitutive outside” represents everything that exceeds the norm and that, by so doing, becomes constitutive of the norm itself. In other words, the constitutive outside is the excluded or abjected Other that is key for self-identity or self-definition. Butler points out the necessary process of exclusion by means of which any notion of the “inside” can be constructed: “In this sense, then, the subject is constituted through the force of exclusion and abjection, one which produces a constitutive outside to the subject, an abjected outside, which is, after all, ‘inside’ the subject as its own founding repudiation” (3). Butler stresses the key role played by the abject in the constitution of subjectivity. According to her, there is no singular outside because the “inside” requires an infinite number of exclusions; it constantly replicates itself through what it excludes (52). This means that in order for the inside to be preserved and maintained, power has to guarantee the constant production and reproduction of the outside.

In my study I will show that the mentally ill occupied the domain of abject beings in post-Unification Italy; in this sense both the madmen and madwomen exceeded the norms and for this reason they lacked subjective status. Nonetheless my goal is to demonstrate the key role the mentally ill played in the construction of normality and national identity in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. While this minority was

marginalized and forcibly confined inside the asylum, it was foundational to the notion of normality.

In *Frames of War* (2009) Butler returns to the topic of the constitutive outside, moving away from a strictly gender-based analysis to offer a more general investigation of what a life is and where the right (or the lack of a right) to life originates. According to Butler, precariousness is at the core of her investigation. While perceived as a universal condition, precariousness is instead deeply linked to norms, to social and political organizations. Accordingly, Butler proposes a “social ontology” of the subject, meaning that the intelligibility of the subject is politically constituted:

The ‘frames’ that work to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot (or that produce lives across a continuum of life) not only organize visual experience but also generate specific ontologies of the subject” (3).

A subject, in order to be recognized as subject, must constantly be subjected to the normative system. As in Althusser and Foucault, the subject lacks an inner ontology; its ontology can only be thought in the relation with the normative system.

A key concept in Butler’s analysis is the fact that the frames able to determine whether or not a subject can be perceived as such must be exposed in order to be established. These frames are politically saturated and are able to produce certain affects. Through these frames, widespread throughout the media, it is in fact possible to create the whole system of recognizability:



Now the State works on the field of perception and, more generally, the field of representability, in order to control affect—in anticipation of the way affect is not only structured by interpretation, but structures interpretation as well” (72).

The field of representability is key to determine whether or not a subject can be recognized as such. Representability in Butler’s argument is prior to the field of recognizability; this fact implies that the very system of recognition cannot take place outside the system of perception.

A crucial idea in Butler’s argument is the key role played by affects. The field of representability operates first of all at the level of affects; it produces and at the same time controls affects in order to produce normalization. Accordingly, Butler argues that affects are politically constituted:

Affect depends upon social supports for feeling: we come to feel only in relation to a perceivable loss, one that depends on social structures of perception and we can only feel and claim affect as our own on the condition that we have already been inscribed in a circuit of social affect.  
(50)

In line with Butler’s argument, affects become part of a strategy of power used to determine whether or not a subject can be recognized as subject at all. The production of affects, as I will show throughout my study, is essential to understanding the operations of power that lie behind literary and photographic representations of madness. The viewer/reader’s response to representations of madness that will constitute one of my principal lines of investigation, far from

being a subjective or personal response to madness, was specifically constructed by State power for the preservation and production of normality.

Butler also asserts that although these frames are crucial in the constitution of subjectivity, during certain times they can likewise be destabilized. This happens when it becomes possible to apprehend a life beyond the frames of recognizability:

When those frames that govern the relative and differential recognizability of lives come apart—as part of the very mechanism of their circulation—it becomes possible to apprehend something about what or who is living but has not being generally “recognized” as life. What is this specter that gnaws at the norms of recognition, an intensified figure vacillating as its inside and its outside? As inside, it must be expelled to purify the norm; as outside, it threatens to undo the boundaries that limn the self. In either case, it figures the collapsibility of the norm. In other words, it is a sign that the norm functions precisely by the way of managing the prospect of its undoing, an undoing that inheres in its doing. (12)

In *Frames of War* the constitutive outside becomes the locus of moral responsibility; it is the place through which it is possible to create a counter-discourse to hegemonic power. This idea is key to understand the ways in which literature responded to and resisted the discourse of power. Throughout this dissertation I will show how at the core of the resistance to the discourse of power is the writer’s ability to produce in the viewer a different emotional response. This happens especially in naturalist writers Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana as well

as in futurist discourses.

My dissertation also draws on Bonnie Mann's thought-provoking book *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from The War on Terror* (2013). In this study Mann relates materialist and poststructuralist analysis of the apparatus to phenomenological theories of gender. Mann understands sovereign masculinity as an essentially justificatory operation that necessitates an ontological project (*Sovereign Masculinity* 10). Since it has no weight of its own, it is constantly forced to borrow its ontological weight from something else. She delineates the "ontological weight" of gender thus:

Gender is substantive in the sense that, at least for some of us, it constitutes such a core structure of the self, and of the world-self relation—its undoing is the self's undoing. When gender is shattered, al-Shweiri tells us, the person is broken, a world is lost. If this is the case, then gender has ontological weight in the sense that it anchors one's existence, it anchors one's sense of belonging to a community and to a world, and one is unmoored if it is undone. (1)

At the core of Mann's understanding of gender is the notion of style. Style is not considered a superficial matter, such as clothing or hairstyle; rather, following Merleau-Ponty, style is understood as a "general ontological category" (78). Merleau-Ponty argues that style is "an intersubjective and historical phenomenon...it is what goes on between the subject in relation to others and the world" (cited in Mann, *Sovereign Masculinity* 78). While style is a personal expressive gesture, style also creates a key connection with the collectivity: style

is at once an individual and collective gesture. Feminist phenomenologists draw on Merleau-Ponty's idea of style to define their notion of lived gender. Gender is understood as an essential part of our identity; gender creates a primary link between the individual biological and social world. Most significantly, gender constitutes the basis of "recognition" (77). In considering the deep relationship between the lived subject and the collectivity, gender recognition, Mann writes, "saturates our social world and our interactions with others" (77).

If gender "anchors one's existence," "its undoing is the self's undoing" (1). Even as gender becomes a crucial part of the construction/making of the subject, it can also constitute an essential part of its undoing. Mann discusses the idea of style in relation to the Imaginary which for her consists of "*a deeply felt and embodied sense* of the way things are done—of legitimacy, normalcy, rightness, and their correlates: illegitimacy, abnormality, wrongness—broadly but not monolithically or seamlessly shared" (106). In her definition of the Imaginary, Mann is interested in the sense of sexual order that motivates social life; she argues that gender works as a *machine which effects a binding* (107). This binding operates particularly through shame.

Shame is at the heart of the displacement of the self in being; shame is at the root of the disruption of the self. Mann's idea of ontological weight speaks directly to the processes of asexualization inside mental institutions. The deprivation of the inmate's gender identity was at the origin of the annihilation of their entire identity. Indeed, the key role that gender plays in anchoring one's existence and one's sense of belonging is able to explain why the undoing of

gender led to the process of annihilation inside the asylum. The production of shame in relation to the loss of gender identity recurs constantly in patients' testimonials.

A key point in Mann's analysis is the relationship between the production of shame and sovereign masculinity:

Sovereign manhood stands on the precarious edge of shame. It must paradoxically remain in the presence of shame, because shame is what is converted to power in its self constituting practice. When sovereign manhood has established itself against the experience of shame, shame and its production become the necessary motor for the realization of its power. When it is no longer shamed, it must shame others to reproduce itself. To repeat: the core structure of sovereign masculinity is this shame-to-power conversion. (116)

Production of shame, according to Mann, assures the realization of sovereign masculinity; this shame has to be produced consistently as it stands at the very foundation of the actualization of sovereign power. Mann studies the productivity of sex in the torture apparatus during the "War on Terror." She draws from Elaine Scarry's *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* to show how, for the tortured victim, "to have pain is to experience certainty;" the "incontestable reality" of suffering is converted, through a process of "analogical substantiation" to the "wholly convincing spectacle of [the regime's] power" (192-193). Mann connects Scarry's study of torture to practices of forced homosexualization and feminization of Iraqi prisoners and shows how, through a

process of “analogical substitution” the sexual shame of the prisoner, produced through practices of sexualized torture, was turned into the sexual power of the Nation:

Sexualized torture allows the regime to reach into the gender identity and sexual agency of the prisoner and undo them [...] The “incontestable reality” of sexual pain and humiliation, its “compelling vibrancy” (Scarry 13) is “effortlessly grasped” (4). Through an analogical substitution, the shattering of the manhood of the man lends its ontological weight to the manhood of the torturing regime, which could never have such weight on its own. (198)

In the presentness of suffering, national manhood borrowed an ontology and materialized a fictionalized idea of sovereign masculinity. Sex in this context “produces the manhood of the nation” (198).

Mann’s study is a much-needed effort to investigate other mechanisms, besides subjectivation, employed by the nation to construct masculinity. In my study I will intersect Mann’s notion of style and of the collectivity with Butler’s system of perception and “frames of representability.” Both Mann’s and Butler’s notions are based on the process of recognition which allow a subject to be recognized as such, though in Mann’s analysis the process of recognition is deeply rooted in gender recognition. Throughout my dissertation I will employ the terms “collectivity” and “system of perception,” but always considering the key role that gender recognition plays inside this system of perception—especially in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. By contrast, I will show how gender misrecognition, by

creating shock in the viewer, is also at the root of the production of fear. I will now explore these concepts in greater depth, to show how the apparatus, the constitutive outside, and the notion of ontological weight apply to the Italian context in the years between Unification and the beginning of the twentieth century. I will focus specifically on the fictionalized nature of national manhood that represents a unique feature of Italian identity during the years of Unification.

### **A Phantasmatic Construction**

With Italy's political unification, one of the major enterprises undertaken by the founding fathers of the nation was the making of Italians. The famous aphorism "Abbiamo fatto l'Italia, ora dobbiamo fare gli Italiani" (erroneously attributed to Massimo D'Azeglio) reflects the necessity to unify a heterogeneous group of people considered to lack an identity on their own (Patriarca 8). Not only was Italian identity still in search of a definition, but Italian character too had been constructed, according to Emilio Gentile, as a "negative myth" (*La Grande Italia* 33). Since the Middle Ages and in particular during the Enlightenment, with the spread of environmental determinism, effeminacy and laziness became traits typically attributed to inhabitants of the Southern parts of Europe, such as Italians. The literature of the Grand Tour often described Italians as indolent and morally lax (Patriarca 20).

These ideas intensified during the Risorgimento, when Italians' vices became a central topic in national-patriotic discourses (23). Pietro Gioberti, in *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani* (1843), condemned Italians' indolence and weakness of will, which he considered to be the origin of the feminization of

Italian people (25). Jean-Leonard-Charles Simonde de Sismondi attributed Italians' effeminate character to the Church, the Spanish domination and in particular *cicisbeismo*. *Cicisbeo* is the term used to refer to both an unmarried nobleman—a *cavalier servente*—whose role in society was to escort noble ladies; and to a *damerino*—the nobleman who only devoted himself with external appearance, dress and manners and with the company of women (40). The *cicisbeo* became in travel literature on Italy a peculiar aspect of Italians, a sign “of the moral deprivation and sexually permissive nature of the country and its people” (39). Indeed the *cicisbeo*, Silvana Patriarca suggests “is the effeminate and indolent nobleman par excellence.”<sup>13</sup> The custom of *cicisbeismo* that spread during the eighteenth century was perceived to be the cause of degeneration of the Italian character (41). Centuries of foreign domination also contributed largely to the characterization of Italians as “servile-dependent-effeminate,” to use Patriarca’s expression (45).

This association of Italians with the feminine engendered a crisis of masculinity that became intrinsic in the project of national identity formation (45). Founding fathers of the nation, such as Massimo D’Azeglio, Pasquale Villari, Giuseppe Mazzini and Francesco De Sanctis, underlined the necessity of a moral regeneration of the Italian character. As Patriarca points out, this regeneration was deeply linked to masculinization and to a recovery of manhood:

As the degeneration of the Italian people symbolized by *ozio* was cast in gendered terms as a state of emasculation and feminization, for both moderates and democrats the regeneration of the Italians meant a recovery



of manhood, an almost literal process of de-feminization and re-virilization of the country and its people. (45)

Regeneration took place first in both education and the army. Both Democrats and Revolutionaries became strong supporters of war; Mazzini, for example, asserted that the only way to gain independence and strength was “through blood” (45).

The founding fathers of the nation attempted to transform the heterogeneous and formless mass into an ordered group of citizens responsible for the nation (Mantovani 87). Francesco De Sanctis played a key role in this project of reformation. Not only did his *Storia della letteratura Italiana* (1872-73) become essential in the constitution of national ideology, but he also promoted several reforms related to education. A key concept in De Sanctis’ ideology was the idea of responsibility and limit. In “Il limite,” an article appeared in 1878, De Sanctis writes: “Il motto del secolo scorso era la libertà, e questo, più o meno è un punto acquisito e sorpassato. Il motto del nostro secolo è il limite” (*Scritti politici* 164). De Sanctis underscored the importance of educating bourgeois Italians to this measure. According to him, limits and freedom were not in opposition to each other; on the contrary, limits had to be perceived as the basis for freedom. De Sanctis’ project of self-regulation—a clear example of Foucault’s disciplinary power—was at the basis of the making of Italians. This project aimed at the bourgeois’ total control of Italian society (Ruggiero and Vivanti 868).

The making of Italians produced discourses about gender and sexuality as in the rest of Europe. George Mosse, in *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe* (1985), has investigated this matter in

the European context and claims that the development of nationalism coincided with the enforcement of sexual morality and sexual norms. Looking in particular at the German and English contexts, Mosse suggests that manliness meant freedom from sexual passions and desire; masculinity was based on self-control and purity (13). This notion of manliness also applied to the Italian context. At the turn of the century, Italy too witnessed the emergence of a rigid sexual morality; morally correct sexual behavior was defined in relation to the collectivity and was based on sexual repression, self-discipline and monogamy (Mantovani 116).

Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg in her book *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (2007) points out how in post-Unification Italy gender constructions played a constitutive role in how national discourses were to be made effective (3). During this period, and especially at the beginning of the twentieth century, state power activated a system of apparatuses of discipline normalization, such as sexual education and hygienic politics, which regulated sexuality and strengthened heterosexual normativity.

In particular, determining what kind of roles women had to play in society acquired increasing importance. This was a period in which “la questione femminile” increasingly affected political, artistic, cultural and social discourses (Puccini 9).<sup>14</sup> With the rise of capitalist society, the access of women to working spaces and the rise of the suffragette movement in Europe, issues concerning the inferiority of women, their role in society as well as in the family, and the institution of marriage became very prominent in Italy (33-37). Cesare Balbo, for example, advocated the importance of the family and the home as the starting

point for Italians' moral regeneration. Women, according to him, had to devote themselves to the family rather than to society (Patriarca 47). In general, women continued to be confined into the sphere of the house even despite the changes brought by the war at the beginning of the twentieth century (Molinari 117).

This period in Italy also witnessed an increasing medicalization of the “questione femminile” (Gallini 285). Cesare Lombroso's studies on the female offender and the prostitute signed a drastic distinction between the normal and the abnormal woman. In his pivotal book *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (1893), Lombroso explored the inferiority of females from the animal species up to the human. According to Lombroso, some of the major features that characterized normal women were weakness, sensitivity, altruism, cruelty and piety; normal women were less intelligent than men and their sexuality was weak, delayed and only subordinated to reproduction. Maternity was considered the only element that made women superior to men (105).

By contrast, female born criminals and prostitutes were more sexually sensitive (396). In those women affected by moral pathology, sexual perversion was manifested by eroticism, masculinity and lack of maternal affection (532). A specific concern for Cesare Lombroso was the confusion of sexes in degenerates; women who transgressed their gender roles were considered too masculine, whereas degenerate men too feminine (416). The pathologization of female desire was at the heart of the medicalization of the women question (Babini et al., *Donna nella scienze* 101). A woman who fully experienced her sexuality was considered selfish, and consequently opposed to the altruistic nature of normal women (28).

Together with Lombroso's work, Paolo Mantegazza's medical and literary works likewise had a great impact in Italy. In *Fisiologia della donna* (1893)

Mantegazza also pointed to the inferiority of women:

Tutti questi fatti provano che la donna per rispetto all'uomo è sempre in un periodo arretrato di sviluppo intellettuale. E' nostra contemporanea, vive con noi, respira nello stesso ambiente di tante ribellioni al passato; ma timida, paurosa, si appiatta nell'ombra delle antiche piante, che hanno dato ombra e rifugio agli avi suoi, e si ostina a voler vivere e morire dove hanno pregato e sperato tante generazioni. (224)

Women, according to Mantegazza, were inferiors, less intelligent, shy and fearful; in other words they were passive objects of History. He also suggested that only through maternity could females become women. The entirety of a woman's psychophysical energies was devoted to childbirth, nursing and breastfeeding (Gallini 285). Mantegazza's main concern was the establishment of sexual morality; in his view hygiene and ethics were strictly related. In a previous work *Elementi di igiene* (1871) Mantegazza delineated his ideas concerning reproduction:

Al giorno d'oggi l'igiene ha della scienza i più sacrosanti diritti per dire al tubercolotico, all'epilettico, al pazzo, all'idiota, al sifilitico, *amate ma non generate*. E l'economia politica che non è poi un'igiene della società, deve dire al povero che ai suoi fanciulli non sa offrire che la fame o la casa degli esposti: *Amate ma non generate*. (456)

Mantegazza was particularly concerned with the reproduction of so-called

degenerates: according to him, a degenerate should not reproduce. A compelling example of the expression of these ideas in popular culture is his novel *Un giorno a Madera* (1876) which renders Mantegazza's hygienic theories in fictional form. In the novel, the character of the madwoman voluntarily decides not to have children. Several other anthropologists and physicians during the last two decades of the nineteenth century became concerned with issues related to artificial selections and the regeneration of the Italian "race" (Mantovani 35).

Other key texts of the time were Julius Möbius' *The Mental Inferiority of Women* (1904) and Otto Weininger's *Sex and Character* (1903). Both works had a strong impact on Italian intellectuals and scientists. Weininger's discourse was exclusively concerned with female sexuality:

For women the state of sexual arousal only means the greatest intensification of her whole existence, *which is always and absolutely sexual. W's existence evolves entirely around her sexual life, the sphere of copulation and reproduction, i.e., in her relationship with a man and with children*, and her existence is totally absorbed by these things, while M is *not only* sexual. (79)

Starting with the assumption that a woman—"W"—"is nothing but sexuality, because she is sexuality itself" (81), Weininger asserted that women are unable to become conscious of their sexuality, as men—"M"—do, being men also and not only sexual. Sexuality for women is completely relegated to motherhood and reproduction.

In general, according to psychiatrists, in order to be considered "normal,"

women's behavior had to be feminine, meaning obedient, submissive, altruistic, not very independent or aggressive. Any violation of the "feminine nature" was considered proof of mental illness (Penfold-Walker 28). Augusta Molinari in her book *Donne e ruoli femminili nell'Italia della grande Guerra* (2008) offers a case study of Italian women confined in mental institutions in Northern Italy. She points out in most cases it was the patient's family, particularly the woman's husband, to hospitalize his wife, as she was considered inadequate to her role as mother and (house)wife (117). Women secluded inside the asylum included those women considered "irrecoverable"—such as prostitutes, alcoholics and beggars—as well as a large number of housewives who were diagnosed as "melancholic" or as affected by "erotic psychosis" (118).

It is also essential to remember that in many cases it was the very seclusion of women inside the house that drove women mad (Showalter 3). Further, the not infrequent state of depression that followed childbirth was also considered proof of mental illness. Those women who experienced such breakdowns—*frenosi puerperale*—were considered inadequate to be good mothers and for this reason they were systematically confined inside the asylum (126). Maternity and the possibility for a woman to be a good mother was a key criterion in diagnosing women's mental health (126).<sup>15</sup>

The medicalization of the female question and the resulting confinement of women in mental institutions was then paralleled by the confinement of "normal" women inside the house (Gallini 271). While these two processes have been amply investigated, we still have much to learn about the role of the female

inmate in the process of national identity. How did the body of the female inmate contribute to the project of national identity formation? By means of what mechanisms was national manhood able to acquire an ontological weight during a time in which it lacked weight of its own? How did the representation of madness come to be standardized, and what is the discourse of power that lay behind it? What role did madness play in society? Finally, in what ways did photography and literature respond to and/or resist the discourse of power advanced by psychiatrists?

In my dissertation I explore these questions in order to show how the body of the mentally ill functioned as the constitutive outside to the idea of normality. While it is not new that discourses of the other are used to construct the inside, in the context of Italian identity, my study aims at exploring some of the ways in which this normality was *produced*. Barbara Spackman in her book *Decadent Genealogies* (1989) summarizes Lombroso's study on the confusion of sexes in degenerates with the insightful phrase "degeneration is also degeneration" (31). With this statement, Spackman grasps the heart of the medicalization of madness: degeneration was connected to a transgression of traditional gender roles. Women with an excessive or transgressive sexuality, and women who transgressed their gender roles as mother and wives, were considered too masculine and consequently classified as madwomen. Degeneration thus refers to the way these women were specifically constructed by scientific discourse in defense of heterosexual normativity.

Indeed, an issue is yet to be explored: while the discourse of power made

degenerates degendered, it also made them asexualized inside the asylum. There is a major difference between these two processes. As I refer to it in my study, asexualization is not simply the discourse that constructs female transgressive sexuality as abnormal, but it implies the forced annihilation of an inmate's gender and sexual identity. Asexualization is a practice of physical and moral torture that was conducted inside the asylum. Considering this practice two levels intersect in my study. On the one hand, the real body of the madwoman, I argue, was employed to offer ontological weight to national manhood through practices of sexualized torture. As in Mann's analysis, I argue that it was through the undoing of patients' bodies and the production of shame that the manhood of the nation could borrow an ontological weight. On the other hand, in the representation of the madwoman's body the undoing of the lived gender was used to affirm and produce normalization. In my study, I show how the deconstruction of the lived gender of the female inmate also worked as an apparatus that produced subjectivation. Through the production of affects of desire and fear, the madwoman was employed not only to construct "frames of representability" able to relegate the mentally ill to the field of sub-human beings, but also to subject people in the society outside. This means that it was employed to channel and normalize people inside heterosexual normativity.

In my study I chose to start from the affective response of the reader and viewer to representations of madness. What feelings do photographic and literary representations produce in the reader and viewer? How are we to interpret the feelings of fear, pity, desire and horror that emerge in looking at these images?



How might our interpretation differ from that of a nineteenth-century reader? The aim of my analysis is to show, in line with Butler's analysis, how this affective response to madness became part of a strategy of power used to produce normalization in the formation of Italian identity. This response addressed not only a female audience, but a male audience as well.

In my study I examine the various discourses of power, such as biopolitics, disciplinary power, gender politics, torture and arts, that culminated in the figure of the madwoman. In particular, I show how beyond the figure of the hysterical woman lay a whole series of apparatuses of discipline-normalization that state power employed to reinforce heteronormativity. My dissertation uncovers the actual strength of the politics of gender that emerged in this period. While much attention has been given to Fascist politics of gender, the regulation of sexuality in post-Unification Italy has received very little attention. However, the consideration of the enormous power of confinement in asylums leads to a better understanding of the actual strength of the politics of gender that uniquely emerged in this period, a politics that is crucial to the futurist avant-garde.

We must consider futurist gender politics as a first radical subversion both of heterosexual institutions and of the naturalized relation between gender and sex. Whereas much attention has been offered to its misogynist project, the root of this gender revolution has been only partially explored. In my reading of futurist manifestos, creative works and the unpublished manifesto *La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi* (1913) by former inmate and futurist woman Eva Kuhn Amendola, I show how the matter of asylums and mental illness played a role in the futurist

gender overthrow. I argue that at the core of the original futurist ideology was a potential revolution based on an epistemological search of freedom. I will also show how futurists, by overthrowing the madness apparatus, promoted a pivotal anti-hygienic gender politics in a period during which active female sexuality and desire were pathologized and secluded inside the asylum.

This study also aims to shed light on the concrete relationship between art and politics that emerged uniquely in this period. I offer first a parallel analysis of the two major media that contributed to the definition as well as stereotyping of mental illness: photography and fiction. This analysis is essential to exploring further the operations of power that lay behind the representation of madness. The study of the photographic frames not only creates a link with the actual body of the inmate, but it also allows a more profound understanding of literary representations of madness. Both psychiatric portraits of patients as well as Jean Charcot's photographs of the hysterical woman had in fact an impact, direct or indirect, on Italian intellectuals. On the other hand, the study of literary texts is critical for registering the impact of these images in society.

The relationship between photography and power has been widely investigated in the United States and European contexts. Since its origin, photography has played a crucial role in the constitution of national imaginary and national identity in Europe. Born in conjunction with imperialist and expansionist endeavors, the representation of bodies in photographic portraits was used for differentiating classes and races according to physical characteristics (Verdicchio 7). In Italy, photography played a crucial role both in the

representation of *Italianità* and in the definition of other minorities. In particular, the Alinari brothers became very influential in the conceptualization of national identity and the national imaginary (69). Photography also offered psychiatric power a significant foundation upon which it could establish itself as a recognized science; the possibility of objectively documenting the existence of mental disorders became a significant proof of the existence of mental illness (Cagnetta 35).

My dissertation encompasses three fundamental moments of the Italian literary context between 1861 and 1917: *verismo*, *decadentismo* and *futurismo*. While the audience of psychiatric photography was usually limited to physicians and to some intellectuals, literature during this period was the key instrument in the diffusion of hegemonic ideology (Ruggiero and Vivanti 1079). My study shows that while naturalist writers Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana partly resisted the discourse of power promoted by psychiatric portraits, decadent writers such as Gabriele D'Annunzio became instead active promoters of the stereotyping of madness as well as hygienic politics that spread during the last decades of the nineteenth century. As a result, my study to some degree supports Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg's assertion that the profound separation certain critics posit between decadent culture and politics, should be reconsidered (2). We must consider the processes of aestheticization of politics, which according to Walter Benjamin emerged with the futurist avant-garde. My study shows that this process was already in play during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

Chapter II of my dissertation explores the first representation of female

madness in Italian literature as well as psychiatric portraits of female patients. It argues that the asexualization of patients' bodies was used to affirm normality and at the same time to offer an ontological weight to national manhood. In Chapter II, I focus on two novels, Giovanni Verga's *Storia di una capinera* (1871) and Luigi Capuana's first and last editions of *Giacinta* (1879/1889). I show how both Verga and Capuana's heroines are subjected in different ways to practices of asexualization. In Verga's *Storia di una capinera*, madness leads the protagonist to the complete annihilation of her gender identity, powerfully represented in the image of Sister Agata, the mad nun confined for several years in the convent mad cell. After outlining the representation of female madness in Verga's *Capinera*, I analyze the discourse of power through the study of psychiatric portraits of female patients and attempt to explain the reason for such representation. Through a parallel analysis of portraits of female patients and Alinari's representations of "normal" women, I show how in psychiatric portraits, in a similar fashion to Verga's Sister Agata, patients are also deprived of gender identity. I show the ways normality was produced in *fin-de-siècle* Italy through these portraits, specifically focusing on the production and reproduction of shame as the "constitutive outside" of these representations. Finally, I will address Capuana's first and last editions of *Giacinta* to show how the representation of madness mattered. Giacinta's active sexuality could not be represented in positive terms, but only in line with psychiatric portraits of patients, in terms of shame and guilt.

The relation between the asexualization of the female inmate's body and the project of national identity formation also informs Chapter III, in which I

explore the phenomenon of hysteria to argue that the body of the hysterical woman functioned as apparatus used to produce normalization. I focus on the relationship between Jean-Martin Charcot's photographs of Augustine, a female inmate at the Salpêtrière Asylum in France, and literary representations of the hysterical woman offered by Gabriele D'Annunzio. A fundamental turning-point in the representation of Augustine consists of the fact that the hysterical woman functioned as a producer of desire and fear. This fear stems from the fact that the hysterical woman is deeply linked to the denial of womanhood, represented specifically by the denial of the right to reproduce. This denial was deeply connected to national hygienic gender politics that began to spread throughout Europe during the last two decades of the nineteenth century and that would culminate in eugenic practices. In this chapter I argue that these affects were employed by the state to channel normal people towards heterosexual normativity.

Chapter IV shows how the futurist avant-garde overturned the madness apparatus at the beginning of the twentieth century. I show how the liberation of the mad people from the asylum in Marinetti's second founding manifesto *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* (1909) paralleled an epistemological search for freedom from a literary discourse and a sexual morality that had wrought a material violence upon the individual. I also show how the female inmate, as a woman who transgressed gender roles before confinement, represented for the first avant-garde a paradigm of modern sexuality. I explore the ways the avant-garde activated an act of freedom of the mad beyond the moonlight. I will specifically focus on the pivotal way futurist writers destabilized a system of

perception that relegated the mad to the domain of sub-humans. Finally, I address the unpublished manifesto *La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi* (1913) of Futurist writer Eva Amendola (Magamal) to further show how the matter of asylum played a role in the futurist revolution.

My dissertation takes a somewhat radical position. While I believe that psychiatrists intended to help patients, I will show how the deep relation between psychiatry and state power produced a situation in which patients were not only confined but also deprived of their most intimate identity. I therefore situate myself with those who, starting from Foucault, show how psychiatry functioned as a technique of power that was employed for controlling the population and to get rid of a part of social danger. In this context, I stand against the idea of mental illness as an ontological and permanent category and I refer to it in terms of social construction.

CHAPTER II  
ASEXUALIZATION,  
SHAME  
AND NATIONAL MANHOOD

In my introduction I focused on the relationship between the institutionalization of mental illness and the project of national identity formation in post-Unification Italy. At the core of the project was a crisis of masculinity rooted in the image of Italians as effeminate other. This image had its roots in centuries of foreign domination as well as in environmental theories that associated southern Europeans with effeminacy and laziness. The moral regeneration advocated by the founding fathers of the Italian nation led to a project of intervention including both the exclusion and the education of individuals. State power activated a system of apparatuses of discipline normalization aimed at create a national Italian identity. In the Italian context, the birth of psychiatry and of the modern asylum were part of this process of normalization. During this period, those women defined as mentally ill were women who transgressed their gender roles as mothers and wives, and for this reason they were considered a threat to heterosexual society.

In this chapter I will analyze literary and photographic representations of female madness between the 1860s and the beginning of the twentieth century and show their profound link to the quest for national identity in Italy. Photography

and literature played a key role in both the construction and the stereotyping of mental disorders. We must remember that the only way to establish psychiatry as a science during the nineteenth century was by trying to identifying an organic origin for mental illness; eventually psychiatrists opted for brain alterations as the explanation (Shorter 70). In psychiatric portraits, the emphasis on facial expressions—the *facies*— was employed to crystallize each mental illness, each “case,” into a specific type (Didi-Huberman 48). The movement of the soul was made visible in the face and facial expressions were also believed to create a direct link to brain alterations (49). Franco Cagnetta writes: “L'immagine riprodotta, sostituendo il substrato corporeo, avrebbe dato l'illusione di un substrato naturale [...] in mancanza dell'anatomia reale in cui si origini la malattia, l'immagine fotografica del pazzo diventò l'anatomia mitica della psichiatria” (33). Photography seemed to offer, for the first time, indissoluble as well as objective proof of the existence of mental illness.

The conclusion drawn by these and other critics helps to understand the role photography played in the representation and classification of madness. Nonetheless, while the affirmation of mental illness is undoubtedly at the core of these representations, I urge investigating further the operations of power that lay beyond the photographic frame. Whereas this criticism has mostly focused on the inside of the frame—the mentally ill—I intend to focus on the frame itself: the frontal portrait. Through an analysis of photographic portraits of patients in comparison with portraits of the sane, I argue that the image of madness was used in fact to define and affirm normality. I investigate the ways in which this



normality is produced through these portraits. I show how the asexualization of patients' bodies in psychiatric portraits—as reflection of real practices inside the asylum—was employed to bestow ontological weight upon a fictionalized idea of normality.

With the term ontological weight I refer to Mann's studies of lived gender according to which "gender is substantive in the sense that, at least for some of us, it constitutes such a core structure of the self, and of the world-self relation—its undoing is the self's undoing" (*Sovereign Masculinity* 1). The lived gender is deeply rooted in the notion of style; style is an expressive gesture that, through the body, is able to create an intrinsic relationship between the subject and the world: "through processes of sedimentation and stylization the most intimately experienced and viscerally lived realities of gender accrue ontological weight. Even as it belong to the individual subject at the level of what we call 'identity,' its power is deeply collective, establishing one's belonging in this or that gender" ("Gender Apparatus" 24). The lived gender, with its process of "sedimentation" and "stylization," occupies the totality of a person's lived experience. Gender in this sense has ontological weight; it constitutes such a core structure of the self as to become part of the making of one's identity. Most significantly, gender creates the base of recognition for oneself and for a collectivity; it saturates in other words the relationship of the individual to the collectivity. By contrast, gender misrecognition constitutes a crucial part of the self's undoing. Throughout this analysis I drawn on Mann's notion of ontological weight to explore *how* and *why* a certain representation of madness came to be standardized in the European and

Italian context.

Further, this chapter also shows how literature responded to and resisted the discourse of power advanced by psychiatric photography. Positivist theories had a major impact on the literature produced in the period between 1860s and 1890s. In the French context, Zola became one of the most influential representatives of naturalist literature; in his works he reinforced positivist ideas concerning the relationship between physical and mental states (Cavalli 16). Starting from this period, the representation of madness became a privileged topic of European fiction. Zola's literary treatment of positivist theories spread throughout Europe, including Italy. While these theories had considerable impact in Italy, Italian critics also contested Zola's determinism, perceived as the complete loss of the subject's agency. From the 1870s on, Francesco De Sanctis' idealism gained increased importance in Italy (26). Although still profoundly rooted in realism, De Sanctis's idealism prioritized the form over reality in artistic production. The form, originating in the writers' imagination, was able to shape reality and in this way it was able to convey moral teaching (Ruggiero and Vivanti 861).

Italian naturalist writers Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana were deeply influenced by Zola's and De Sanctis' ideas. In this chapter I show how in both *Storia di una capinera* (1871) and *Giacinta* (1879/1889) one can see the mechanisms of the asexualization of the female body. In line with psychiatric believes of the time, in both cases female madness is linked to active female sexuality. Furthermore, in both novels the protagonist undergoes a process of

asexualization, a process corresponding to sexual repression, loss of femininity, deprivation of a maternal role, or instead identification with the “bad mother.”

I will also show how both writers resisted to the discourse of power advanced by psychiatric photography. At the core of Verga’s and Capuana’s resistance to the apparatus of psychiatry is a different affective response to madness. Unlike frontal portraits of patients, the literary representation of female madness proposed by both writers is able to create feelings of empathy in the reader. While the reader sympathizes with the suffering of both the heroines of Verga’s and Capuana’s novels, he is also able to destabilize “frames of representability.” As Judith Butler suggests in *Frames of War* (2009) these frames are politically constituted and are able to determine whether a life can be apprehended as life at all. These frames must circulate in order to be established: “The frames that, in effect, decide which lives will be recognizable as lives and which will not, must circulate in order to establish their hegemony” (72). Through these frames, widespread throughout the media, it is in fact possible to create the whole system of recognizability. According to Butler the very system of recognition cannot take place outside the system of perception (72) and she argues that at times these frames can be destabilized:

When those frames that govern the relative and differential recognizability of lives come apart—as part of the very mechanism of their circulation—it becomes possible to apprehend something about what or who is living but has not being generally “recognized” as life. (12)

When the destabilization of frames occurs it is possible to apprehend a life

beyond the system of recognition. In this chapter I will show how both Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana are able to offer a counter-discourse to psychiatric power, especially as formulated through psychiatric photography. Whereas psychiatric photography became an active instrument of power to establish frames of representability, Verga and Capuana through their depictions of female madness, also differ drastically from decadent writers whom I will analyze in the following chapter. As I will show, decadent writers reproduced the discourse of power promoted by psychiatric photography.

### **Camouflage: The Asexual Body in Giovanni Verga's *Storia di una capinera***

At the end of *Storia di una capinera*, Maria, the young novice and protagonist of the novel, describes Sister Agata, the mad nun confined for several years in the convent lunatics' cell:

Ho paura di quella povera suor Agata ch'è rinchiusa da quindici anni nella cella dei matti. Ti rammenti quel volto scarno, pallido e spaventoso? Quegli occhi stupidi e feroci, quelle mani ossee dalle unghie lunghe, quelle braccia nude, quei capelli canuti? Essa si aggira senza tregua nel breve spazio della sua stanzuccia, abbranca le sbarre di ferro e si affaccia alla grata come una bestia feroce, seminuda, urlando, ringhiando!...Ti rammenti anche di quella paurosa tradizione del convento che quella cella non debba mai rimanere vuota, e che alla morte di una povera matta siavi sempre qualche altra disgraziata da rinchiudervi? [...]Ho paura, ho paura di quei capelli canuti, di quegli occhi, di quel pallore, di quel ghigno, di quelle mani che si avvinghiano alle spranghe della grata...se diventassi

così anch'io...Oh! No! No! (99-100)

Maria is taken by fear at the sight of Sister Agata, a monstrosity that, like some wild beast, prowls around the tiny space of the cell without pause. Her body is reduced to bones; her face is horrifying and pale; she has dull-witted eyes, long fingernails, and bony hands; her hair is white and untidy. Reading this passage, the reader's first reaction is a feeling of empathy with Maria's fear; we perceive this body as horrifying and frightening, as our focalizer Maria presents it. Fear stems from an image of madness that is now directly linked to confinement. This fear however also concerns a loss of female identity; if we did not know that Sister Agata was a nun, we could hardly understand that she was a woman. Sister Agata's body breaks the relationship with the collectivity; nothing of her body makes her recognizable as woman. To become like her, for Maria, means to become a body completely deprived of gender identity.

Asexualization is a central theme in *Storia di una capinera*. Cristina Mazzoni, in her study of the novel, reads Maria's journey as an allegory of the denial of her entrance into womanhood. According to Mazzoni, the allegorical representation of the denial of womanhood happens first through clothing: "In the form of the women's dress and the nun's habit, clothing in *Storia di una capinera* is represented respectively as a means of access to marriage and motherhood and as a carapace that stifles any such aspiration" ("L'abito non fa la monaca" 36). Mazzoni argues that the denial of Maria's entrance into womanhood moves from the deprivation of female clothes, to her physical illness that tears the protagonist's flesh, to the shaving of her hair while she takes her vows.

Nonetheless, I suggest that it is with the half-naked body of Sister Agata that this process ends. Sister Agata's body, grown in confinement, is an asexual body.

While reading this passage, however, we cannot help but feel full of pity for Sister Agata. While the reader is taken by fear, he/she also sees her body moving ceaselessly in the cell. We know she wants to escape; her bony hands are on the iron bars. The only thing she can do is howl and snarl like a beast. In fact, Maria addresses the injustice of her confinement:

La pazza! la pazza! anche lei vuole fuggire, poverina! La tengono chiusa...col cancello di ferro...non può dormire...non può morire...corre da mane a sera per quel piccolo spazio che le è concesso, rabbiosa, ululante...poverina! poverina! ...è spaventevole!... (114)

Maria's pity, elaborately and extravagantly signaled in her repeated "poverina," guides and stimulates our own.

*Storia di una capinera* represents the first of Verga's novels to have received undisputed success, with enthusiastic praise published in magazines and papers all over Italy (De Roberto 135).<sup>16</sup> The success of this novel was certainly bolstered by the subject matter—women's monastic life—so popular at the time (149). In Catholic Europe, the tradition of confining unwanted children to monasteries had long been established, and in the nineteenth century, the practice remained very strong in Sicily (149). Verga's story centers on Maria's passion for Nino, a young man she encounters during the summer of 1854 at her family's home in Monte Lice. Forced to return to the convent and take vows, Maria goes mad and eventually dies.

The association outlined by Mazzoni between confinement and the nun's habit also leads to another fundamental link: that between the asexualization of Maria's body and her becoming insane. Significantly, throughout the novel Maria's madness is increasingly related to active female desire. The first time she wishes to wear more elegant clothes, she thinks she must be insane: "Sono una scapata, sono una matta!..." (15). Soon after, when she meets Nino and feels attracted to him, Maria exclaims: "Guarda!... io non so come non stringessi la mano al signor Nino che mi era accanto!...Son sempre matta!" (21). References to madness recur several other times within the text; for example: "Sarà forse un cervellino strambo il mio, cui meglio conviensi la quiete del chiostro, e che qui trovasi fuori posto, agitato, inquieto ed anche un poco pazzarello" (29). The novelty of the unknown and overwhelming feelings she experiences towards Nino, leads Maria to think she must be mad.

From the start madness is linked to the sexual desire that Maria, as a nun, experiences as pitiful and sinful: "Quando scendo ad esaminare me stessa, mi trovo così colpevole, così abietta [...] Il mio peccato è così mostruoso, è vero [...] perché *amo il mio peccato!*" (98). Maria understands her love for Nino as a monstrous sin; nonetheless she cannot give it up; she admits she loves her sin. We must notice that the more insane Maria becomes, the more her physical aspect resembles that of a beast:

Marianna! mi pare di essere pazza...vorrei strapparmi i capelli; vorrei lacerarmi il petto colle unghie; vorrei urlare come una belva, e scuotere codeste grate di ferro che imprigionano il mio corpo, torturano il mio

spirito e che irritano la mia sensibilità nervosa...(99)

Maria wants to tear her chest apart with her own fingernails and scream like a beast. It is essential to notice the thematic parallels between this scene and the image of Sister Agata presented previously. Both Maria and Sister Agata are imprisoned behind the bars and they are both presented as monstrosities. In fact, the metamorphosis of Maria's body is accomplished when she is confined along with sister Agata to a cell for lunatics.

Confinement in such a lunatic's cell was a recurrent practice inside convents; Verga, in writing the book, was inspired by contemporary culture as well as personal events. In particular, he drew material from his mother Donna Caterina, who had been educated by nuns (De Roberto 155). As De Roberto shows in his study of *La capinera*, Donna Caterina's account also included the description of extremely drastic practices inside convents, such as the madwomen's cell (155).<sup>17</sup>

The image of Sister Agata however, also recalls Telemaco Signorini's painting *La sala delle agitate al San Bonifazio*.<sup>18</sup> In 1863, Signorini reproduced in this painting an interior of the Bonifazio asylum in Florence. The painting shows a room in which two small windows are situated near the ceiling and there is a barred door on the back wall. To the left there is a group of seated women: one is screaming at the others, several women have their heads bent, and one standing in the middle of the room looks absent and lost. There is a woman under the table who is barely visible because of the dark tones Signorini uses. When we compare this painting with the artist's preparatory sketches, the face of this woman under



the table in the sketch is lighter. What is striking about this woman is her obvious suffering: the woman portrayed, together with the rest of women in the room, represents a true spectacle of pain. Like Verga's Sister Agata, these women too, barely resemble any conventional and recognizable representations of women.

Gino Tellini, in his book, *Filologia e storiografia: Da Tasso al Novecento* (2002) points out too to the relationship between this painting and Verga's Sister Agata:

Mentre Verga lavora alla *Capinera*, Signorini espone per la prima volta (non senza scandalo), alla Promotrice fiorentina del 1869, *La sala delle agitate al San Bonifazio*, dopo avere tenuto il quadro in prudente decantazione per quattro lunghi anni, all'ombra del suo studio. E il lettore della *Capinera* ripensi non solo alla finale pazzia di Maria, non solo alla "cella" delle "mentecatte" (e alla relative testimonianza di De Roberto) dove in ultimo la protagonista è trascinata a forza e, al di là del "cancello," lasciata svenuta "sul nudo suolo", ma soprattutto al ritratto, disegnato e commentato da Maria, della "povera suor Agata" che da quindici anni e' rinchiusa nella "cella." (284)

Signorini waited three years before publicly exposing his work, and when he did so, the painting became object of scandal (Signorini 70). The work's lack of success finds explanation in national politics that emerged all over Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century. In line with Philippe Pinel's reform of the asylum there emerged the urgent need to propose a different image of mental institutions (Babini et al., *Tra potere e sapere* 75). One example can be offered in

the Italian context by Giuseppe Fantuzzi's photography of the San Lazzaro asylum. In the years between 1900 and 1910, Fantuzzi took several pictures of the institution.<sup>19</sup> These photographs represent different areas of the asylum. In looking at them the first thing the reader perceives is a sense of absolute order and control. Although space is the obvious protagonist of the picture, the inclusion of patients in the frames suggests that these photographs were also employed to show the inmates' everyday life inside the asylum.

These photographs were not taken spontaneously, and patients were directed to pose for the picture. Although the intention of these pictures might have been to document the life of inmates inside the asylum, we understand that the kind of life documented was specifically constructed for the picture. In these photographs inmates are made to appear in all ways similar to normal people. Even their clothing contrasts with traditional white uniforms. Compared to Signorini's painting, these photographs exclude any representation of despair and suffering.

The connotative meaning of these photographs is attesting to the power of the institution to normalize. In order for the asylum to work as an apparatus of repression, psychiatrists had to disseminate the idea that madness could be cured and that normalization could only happen inside mental institutions (Babini et al., *Tra potere e sapere* 75). Photography played a crucial role in disseminating a positive image of mental institutions; while documenting patients' possibility of rehabilitation, it became affirming of psychiatric power in society.

Looking at Signorini's painting, one can understand that while the state

promoted a positive image of the asylum, it also worked on preventing negative representations of it. This explains why a literary discourse concerning asylums is almost non-existent in Italian literature from this period (Vaccarino 200). The only representation of asylums we have is one by Edmondo de Amicis. In his *Il giardino della follia* (1904), the author idealizes mental institutions as places of care and love.<sup>20</sup>

This lack of literary discourse also suggests that if Verga wanted to offer a criticism of asylums, the only way to do so was through camouflage. The focus on women in monastic life and women in forced reclusion might have allowed Verga address this issue implicitly without being censored. As Cavalli Pasini suggests in her book, in the few representations of physicians that emerge in his works, Verga shows skepticism in regards to psychiatry (46). Explicit references to psychiatry recur also in *Storia di una capinera*. In describing Maria's madness, Verga employs such expressions as "nervousness," "blood," "fibers" and "veins," which demonstrates that he was aware of psychiatric lexicon and most likely wanted to create a direct link to it. Furthermore, during the Florentine years, it is likely that Verga, who also frequented the Caffè Michelangelo, made the acquaintance of Telemaco Signorini.<sup>21</sup> Indeed, as Tellini points out, this painting might have inspired the figure of Sister Agata.

Although the main focus of the novel is women's forced confinement, I suggest that the author, through Maria's words, offers a profound criticism of the treatment of patients inside the asylum. In *Storia di una capinera*, Verga shows that madness can be punished through practices of forced confinement. Further,

Verga also shows how confinement leads to the complete asexualization of the female body and to death. I shall now investigate the discourse of power that lies behind this process of asexualization by analyzing photographic portraits of female patients.

### **Frontal Portrait: A Practice of Fiction**

Photography played a pivotal role not only in the representation of mental institutions, but also and especially in the depiction of madness.<sup>22</sup> In 1858 British psychiatrist H.W. Diamond published an engraving in *The Medical Times* titled “Melancholy into Mania.”<sup>23</sup> The engraving was made out of one of the first existing calotypes of female inmates from the Surrey Country Asylum in Springfield, England. In looking at both the original calotype and the final engraving, it is possible to notice that in the process of engraving, both the background and the female dress are whitened. No flowers appear on the woman’s dress, and there is no longer a curtain in the background (Didi-Huberman 40). In line with Diamond’s depiction, the photography of patients generally followed similar parameters of representation: empty backgrounds, the wearing of uniform clothing and the emphasis on facial expressions. All this was presented in a standard frame: the frontal portrait. The lack of a *mise-en-scène* was itself a *mise-en-scène* and served to put emphasis on facial expressions and thus reinforce the cliché of madness (Cagnetta 50).<sup>24</sup>

At the origin of psychiatric photography as well as of the new conception of madness was physiognomy, the study of the body, particularly the face to determine character (27).<sup>25</sup> Sir Charles Bell in *Essays of the Anatomy and*

*Philosophy of Expression* (1806) was the first to distinguish “normal” from “pathological” expressions. Starting from morphological modifications that single motor muscles produced in the face, Bell argued that expressions derived from primitive and violent inputs, such as fight for survival and dangers (29). A fundamental contribution to the field was offered by Charles Darwin (1809-1882) who, in *The Expression of Emotions in Man and Animals* (1872) contested Bell’s theories, asserting that the origin of expressions is rooted in the physiology of the individual and in the species, according to the way they respond to the environment through natural selection (29). In the same book, Darwin also states that expressions are a sign of an earlier and primitive time:

With mankind some expressions, such as the bristling of the hair under the influence of extreme terror, or the uncovering of the teeth under that of a furious rage, can hardly be understood, except on the belief that man once existed in a much lower and animal-like condition. (13-14)

Physiognomy and, later, phrenology—the study of character in relation to the skull—<sup>26</sup> offered to psychiatrists the anatomical basis through which psychiatry could be established as a science:

Quando la psichiatria nacque con la pretesa di essere scienza medica e naturalistica, che ricerca nel corpo l’origine dei disturbi di cui si occupa, dovette cercarsi una base anatomica che li originasse: un organo. Quando ci si rese conto che non era possibile dimostrare con certezza quale è la sede organica e la base anatomica dei “disturbi” la psichiatria cominciò a interessarsi alla “fisiognomia” che suggeriva una diagnosi attraverso

“l’organo” della faccia. (Cagnetta 32)

Photography was employed for psychiatric study for the first time by British psychiatrist H.W. Diamond. In 1856 Diamond presented an essay at the Royal Society of Medicine in London titled *On the Application of Photography to the Physiognomy and Mental Phenomena of Insanity*. In it, Diamond argued that photography had to be considered a new science that uses the language of nature:

Yet the photographer secures with unerring accuracy the external phenomena of each passion, as the really certain indication of internal derangement, and exhibits to the eye the well known sympathy which exists between the diseased brain and the organ and features of the body.

(20)

According to Diamond, the importance of photography in the study of mental disorders consisted in the ability to grasp details that the eye could hardly perceive. In line with physiognomy, the aim of photography was essentially that of reproducing the *facies* (Didi- Huberman 49).

Duchenne de Boulogne also offered positive remarks on photography. In the introduction to *Album de photographies pathologiques complémentaires du livre intitulé de l’électrisation localisée* (1862), he argued that: “La photographie seule peut montrer la nature telle qu’on l’observe dans ces espaces de manifestations pathologiques” (I). In his study Duchenne systematically employed photography, praising the positive effects of the medium. In *Mécanisme de la phsysionomie humaine au analysis electro-physiologique de l’expression de patients* (1876) Duchenne argues that: “La vue de figures

photographiées, qui représentent, comme la nature, les traits expressifs propres aux muscles interprètes des passions, en apprend mille fois plus que les considérations et les descriptions les plus étendues” (64-66). Photography is considered a mirror of reality able to objectively reproduce facial expressions.

While psychiatrists used photography primarily for the study, classification and documentation of mental illness, photography was also employed for identification; in fact it became a key administrative tool. It is at this time that portraits of patients served more for legal identification than for diagnosis (Cagnetta 43). Psychiatric photography became the forerunner of criminal photography, especially as employed by Cesare Lombroso in his study on criminology (45).

In Italy, Augusto Tamburini introduced psychiatric photography for the first time in 1878 (42).<sup>27</sup> Tamburini’s photographs were shot by Emilio Poli, and their aim was to “fissare a permanenza la fisionomia dei malati nelle varie fasi della loro malattia allo scopo di costruire un elemento di studio per la semiotica delle malattie mentali” (cited in Cagnetta 43). His photographs, in line with psychiatric portraits of patients, are explanatory as well as descriptive; while they attempt to accurately record subject matter, they also aim at offering visual explanations on the basis of scientific grounds.

In relation to Tamburini’s photographs the director of the San Lazzaro asylum, Arrigo Tamassia wrote a significant essay titled *La fotografia nel nostro manicomio* (1878) in which he indirectly uncovers compelling facts related to the practice of psychiatric photography. First of all, he reiterates how the intention of

these framings was to show the power of the institution to normalize.

Unsurprisingly, Tamassia praises the use of photography, considered a fundamental tool for spreading a positive image of the asylum:

Così l'arte da una mano alla scienza, anzi ne incuora efficacemente gli intenti; il manicomio perde ogni impronta di prigionia o di tortura per acquistare quella d'un asilo di pace, di filantropia e di redenzione, ogni nuovo raggio di queste che vi penetra, trasformasi in correnti di salute, o di conforto per chi è oppresso dalla più grande delle sciagure.

(Parmiggiani 105)

Tamassia then exalts the use of photography in grasping the true essence of madness. In line with Darwin's theories, Tamassia stresses the relationship between madness and facial expressions:

Tutte insomma le passioni, le ambascie, i tormenti ineffabili della mente alienate trovano la loro copia fedele, senza che l'artificio dell'uomo abbia aggiunto del suo: è questo adunque un lavoro incosciente della natura, da cui la scienza può con piena fiducia attingere i materiali dei suoi studi.

(103)

Contrarily to our contemporary perception of photography as being able to highly manipulate reality, during the nineteenth century photography was believed to be a transparent representation of subject-matters. It was considered so accurate to become, in Tamassia's words, a physiological experiment: "eccoci quindi davanti ad un vero esperimento fisiologico offertoci dalla natura, che ci porge l'opportunità d'indagare le ragioni ed i rapporti d'una data espressione



fisionomica” (103). Photography is considered a tool for the analysis and investigation of human expressions.

What it is so striking about Tamassia’s assertion of the relationship between the mentally ill and the animal is the almost obsessive insistence on showing the lack of artifice in photographs of patients. At the beginning of his essay, Tamassia describes the equipment and setting used by Emilio Poli in taking photographs of patients: “Una stanzetta con 3 o 4 bocchette è il suo sacrario, una vecchia macchina fotografica ne è lo strumento principale, ed un cortile non troppo inondato dal sole è il suo campo d’azione” (101). Soon after, Tamassia addresses the “customers”: “i poveri malati ne sono la clientela: clientela senza albagia, senza alcuna pretesa che egli ne idealizzi le fisiognomie, o costringa i raggi del sole a stampare qualche bugia” (102). The emphasis on the setting used as well as on the “old camera” suggests the impossibility that Poli can or will idealize the image of madness. The lack of sunlight in particular is aimed at constructing the trustworthiness of these portraits.

Tamassia refers to the fictionality of portraits of normal people: “Accorrono i poveri malati colla massima docilità, non si mettono in orgasmo [...] né cercano mai quelle posizioni buffonesche, o tragiche, in cui vediamo drappeggiare la maggior parte delle fotografie dei sani” (102). Tamassia offers several examples of how sane people, during the practice of portraiture, “disimpegnano una parte di commedia” (102). Meanwhile the physician stresses the naturalness of portraits of patients:

Ma i pazzi queste bugie diplomatiche proprio non le conoscono. Coi loro

vestiti o sudici o scomposti, o bizzarramente assestati, coi loro vezzi cui attaccano tanto affetto, coi loro volti spiranti sinceramente il loro pensiero, coll'attitudine che a loro viene impartita dall'istinto, dall'abitudine, dalla malattia, si mettono davanti alla macchina fotografica che dopo pochissimi istanti li descrive sul vetro. Da questa posa naturale e spontanea del pazzo emerge il valore grandissimo delle immagini che si vanno ricavando, che da queste possiamo non poche volte rintracciare l'idea occulta e tirannica che accascia una povera mente. (102)

Tamassia insists on showing how mad people, unlike sane people, do not pose in front of the camera. But while photography was believed to offer the most accurate reproduction of the subject matter, the specific practice of portraiture was in fact deeply rooted in scenic practices. Portraiture spread with the diffusion of the *carte-de-visite* starting in 1854 (Pultz 16). Carte photography, compared to the daguerreotype and calotype, was very cheap, and for this reason was quickly adopted on a mass scale. Specifically, the emerging bourgeoisie made great use of these portraits; portraits came to represent the “collective body of the middle-class” (17).

Several expedients such as poses, make-up, headrests and curtains were used in the making of portraits (Didi-Huberman 62). Ernest Lacan, in *Esquisses photographiques* (1856) writes:

The portrait was the earliest application of photography. As soon as Daguerre's procedures were made public, fragile glass constructions resembling hothouses began to appear on the top of the floor of buildings,

where the public would come to pose with commendable patience under the burning rays of the sun. At the time, one had to pose for up to five minutes, and even then one had, in principle, to cover one's face with whiting to obtain a satisfactory image. (cited in Didi-Huberman 61-62)

In Italy, Carlo Brogi played a crucial role in the practice of portraiture. In 1895 he published *Il ritratto in fotografia: Appunti pratici per chi posa*. This book had an impact on Italian society and sold several hundred copies. The book offered advice to both photographers and subjects on how to make portraits in order to reach “la migliore e più sicura riuscita dei ritratti” (62). His guidelines primarily addressed the representation of bourgeois cultural norms that were used to preserve class status (Verdicchio 87).

One of Brogi's guidelines emphasizes the importance for the photographer to conform the subject to a model:

Più che studiare una posa, [il fotografo] deve intuire quale sia meglio confacente al modello, e nel peggior caso, contentarsi di quella che riesce a questi di assumere con la maggior possibile spontaneità. I movimenti fatti eseguire automaticamente, sono sempre a scapito della naturalezza, ed imprimono al ritratto un'aria manifesta di subita “coartazione”. (50)

Borgi argues that the photographic portrait is a living document of our affects. Photography works as a visiting card for the person portrayed. For example, Brogi shows the role of portraits in securing marriage for young women: “E nelle sembianze di leggiadre fanciulle che menano vita casalinga, ritratte con magistero d'arte della fotografia, non può a queste aprire un avvenire di felicità? Un ritratto

può dare benissimo occasione al matrimonio” (82). Brogi’s book constitutes the most noticeable example of how portraiture, especially for the bourgeoisie, was profoundly rooted in staging practices.

Going back to Tamassia’s essay, it is clear that his words are pivotal to understanding the paradox that accompanies the use of photography in psychiatric practice. If psychiatrists praised the capacity of photography to accurately record reality, they also had to be aware that photography, especially in the creation of portraits, was a practice of fiction. By insisting on the absence of poses, Tamassia indirectly shows how photography, as an art, can be deceiving. Didi-Huberman refers to this practice as “the paradox of spectacular evidence” (59), according to which an existence authenticated through staging (such as poses, make up and headrests) shows how photography was in reality a precarious instrument in the hand of psychiatrists (62). Didi-Huberman suggests not only that the knowledge of mental illness is in itself fictional, but also that photography always carries with it a relationship of similarity with the object (60). Photography, Didi-Huberman writes “is a practice of facticity” (61). If photography is believed to offer an objective proof of reality, Arrigo Tamassia’s essay shows how unreliable photography is. How is it possible to use the same format—frontal portraits—to objectively assert the reality of mental illness? And why is it so necessary to do so?

The use of the frontal-portrait format requires further investigation. Judith Butler, in “Photography and the Ethic of Torture,” argues that photography is “a structuring scene of interpretation”:

We do not have to be supplied with a caption of a narrative in order to understand that a political background is being explicitly formulated and renewed through and by the frame, that the frame functions not only as a boundary to the image, but as structuring the image itself [...] The “how” not only organizes the image, but works to organize our perception of thinking as well. (*Frames of War* 71)

Butler suggests that to understand the field of representability one must consider not just its content, but what is left outside: “we cannot understand the field of representability simply by examining its explicit contents, since it is constituted fundamentally by what is left outside, maintained outside the frame within which representations appear” (72). Butler argues that what is left outside, what we do not see inside the frame, becomes instead constitutive of the frame itself. If the “how”—in this case the frontal portrait—is key in organizing our perception of thinking, what is the operation of power that lay behind these frames?

### **Ontological Weight**

The Alinari collection includes a large number of portraits of bourgeois people. These portraits became influential for the representation of national identity in post-Unification Italy. Like Carlo Brogi’s manual, the Alinari portraits represent an image of *Italianità* in line with the expression *fare bella figura* (“to cut a fine figure”) (Verdicchio 69). This idea was key in the definition of Italian identity, and its origin can be traced back to the Renaissance, emblematically in Castiglione’s *Il Cortegiano* (Paulicelli 288). This idea interested all social classes, from rural to urban Italy, and determined public decorum in social and public

occasions (288).

In portraits, bourgeois women are usually portrayed frontally or standing to the side with their face towards the camera.<sup>28</sup> Their body is generally portrayed full length or three quarters; in some cases the frame includes only the head, shoulders and upper body. In line with nineteenth-century European norms of portraiture, backgrounds are either empty or reproduce an indoor environment. In most cases the subject is portrayed standing next to a pillar or sitting on a chair (Newhall and Fuà 99). The use of a painted background was also quite common from the end of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century; in some occasions these backgrounds were painted, and other times they portrayed an outside or domestic place (99).

*Ritratto della signora Salani* (1899) portrays a woman standing in a domestic setting. She is in profile and her face is turned slightly towards the camera; her arms are gently leaned on the table and her head is bent slightly to the left. The position of her body, together with a slight smile on her face, makes her appear very gentle. In general, in order to obtain this pose the sitter's gaze had to focus one hand above the photographer's head (*Donne in posa* 56). The erect position of the body was usually obtained through the support of a metallic tripod that from the floor reached the head of the subject; in this way the subject leaned back on a metal support (56).

Clothing plays a key role in the gendering of this woman. Clothing was used to reflect bourgeois values, such as public decorum and respectability, and became a fundamental element in bourgeois portraits: "L'abito rispecchia la

concezione della vita e della società, e la società Borghese stabilisce e irrigidisce vecchi galatei ed elabora nuove regole di comportamento” (56). In portraits of bourgeois women, clothing was also used to produce the silhouette. The silhouette—black on white—was the specific shape of the body created through clothing (Borghi 41). In contrast to middle- and lower-class women, the silhouette of bourgeois women tended to change over time; the silhouette served to underscore the social status of these women and to symbolize bourgeois values (41).

The silhouette also became a key concept of femininity:

L’ideologia della vera femminilità che tutto pervade, la sfera del privato e quella del sociale, fa combaciare perfettamente la donna e la sua forma. La donna della silhouette è una vera signora che consuma e non produce, che esiste come soggetto di piacere e non come soggetto storico. (41)

The silhouette was used to transmit an idea of femininity as body of desire rather than as historical subject (41). The bulky and most often uncomfortable dresses that bourgeois women would wear—and that were represented in the silhouette—testifies to the fact that those women did not work and had instead to embody values such as elegance and decor.

The same woman wears a tournure that, from the beginning of 1880s on, was used to replace crinoline. The tournure was smaller and less invasive than crinoline (*Donne in posa* 64).<sup>29</sup> The shape of the dress, together with the position of the body, creates the silhouette of this woman; the viewer perceives the silhouette to be what makes this woman look like a woman; the silhouette

functions as undeniable mark of her femininity.

Hair and accessories also contribute to the gendering of this woman. The hairstyle corresponds to the fashion of the period; starting from late 1880s, bourgeois women's hairstyle was very sophisticated: "Veri trionfi architettonici di capelli, variamente avvolti, intrecciati e ritorti, più e più volte attorno al capo, si innalzarono a formare non semplici corone, ma vere e propria mura, bastioni e torri" (62). Furthermore, the background also intensifies the belonging of this woman to womanhood. She is portrayed in a domestic setting: there is a hall table on the right with a lamp and a plant on it; there is a door in the background with a picture on the wall. The domestic environment creates a direct link between the woman and the space of the house. As I mentioned in the introduction, despite the changes brought by the development of capitalist society, women in Italy continue to be relegated to the sphere of the house (Molinari 117). The confinement of this woman to the house also excludes her from working spaces and consequently from becoming a subject of history.

Also relevant are Alinari's portraits of low- and middle-class women, depicted this time in the workplace.<sup>30</sup> These photographs were commissioned by factories and farms owners and depict some of the most representative female jobs in post-Unification Italy. Women worked as basket makers, embroiderers, and lacemakers: they were also involved in the manufacture of artificial flowers, leather, hats, umbrellas and jewels (Borghi 22). The depiction of working-class women in the Alinari collection was largely idealized:

Volti ordinate e puliti, mai minacciosi, abiti garbatamente impolverati e



contenuti, sguardi attenti, luoghi di lavoro accoglienti e puliti per l'occasione. Tutte le immagini rimandano ad un senso di ordine, simmetria, laboriosità, calma. (22)

The omission of women's stress and fatigue represents an obvious example of how in Italy the image of fare *una bella figura* also incorporated low- and middle-class people.

Unlike bourgeois portraits, working-class women are almost never portrayed alone; they are either portrayed with other women or with children. For example, one photograph portrays a woman threshing wheat. Her body is depicted full length; she stands in the middle of the frame behind a work-table. She stares at the camera and she smiles, suggesting that she is posing for the photographer. The background portrays an outdoor place, most likely the front house. There is a child in the foreground. The upper body of the child is visible, and he is not looking at the camera. The viewer's first impression in looking at the child is that his presence might be accidental.

Still, the inclusion of the child in the frame appears to be a constitutive part of the gendering of this woman. Besides the graceful expression of the woman's face, which represents a clear mark of femininity, to make this subject a woman is the direct connection with motherhood: her gender is defined through the suggestion of maternity. The inclusion of children in the representation of working-class women is a common feature during this period, and also during Fascism.

Another set of photographs from the Alinari collection portrays female

ironers at work. While generally women are portrayed in large groups, in a couple of photographs a woman is depicted alone. Quite interestingly, even if the subject stands as the undisputed protagonist of the frame, we can still see the arms of other women in the background. While the gendering of these bodies clearly relates to the gender specificity of their work/tasks, we understand that the idea of collectivity marks the femininity of these women. Once again women as objects of desire are excluded from being protagonists of history; they are bearers rather than makers of meaning. The sense of collectivity that emerges in these photographs again appears to prevent women from standing as individual subjects in history.

It is imperative to notice that in portraits of bourgeois women and of working women, women are always defined in relation to something else, whether clothing, a background, or another human being. While the gendering of bourgeois women is connected to the silhouette, in portraits of lower- and middle-class women that gendering relates to either a child or another woman. It is in this relation with the other that we *recognize* these women as women; it is through background, clothing, the position of the body and facial expressions that these bodies create a relationship with the social world and become recognizable. In this binding with the system of perception women do “look like a woman;” a conception which implies gracefulness, elegance, motherhood, collectiveness and submission.

In looking at female portraits from the San Clemente and San Lazzaro asylum (Fig. 1-2), by contrast, the first thing we notice is the lack of *mise-en-*

*scène* (see Appendix B for all figures).<sup>31</sup> While they still adopt the frontal-portrait format, photographs show only the head and shoulders of the patients. The frame cuts the body almost completely. In these portraits the background is white. Further, patients usually wear either white uniforms or old and worn-out clothes that are only partially visible. At first it is possible to perceive the empty background and the wearing of uniforms as evidence of a lack of artifice. As I mentioned in relation to Tamassia's essay, psychiatrists were aware of the threat implied in the making of portraits. This threat originated in the fact that the practice of portraiture was deeply rooted in staging practices. As a result, the lack of a *mise-en-scène* seems at first to suggest that photographs of patients were taken spontaneously, without artifice.

Nonetheless, the lack of a *mise-en-scène* operates on another level. The face and shoulder portraits, together with the prevalence of white, puts the face in the foreground. Franco Cagnetta in his book, has shown how white backgrounds and white uniforms were used to emphasize facial expressions (50). Yet in what sense are facial expressions emphasized? Unlike those in bourgeois portraits, the expressions of the patient do not convey pride: one patient looks down; another looks straight ahead; one patient smiles, another stares at the camera with her eyes wide open. Patients' expressions are not standardized, and each patient has his own expression. In portraying inmates, psychiatrists would not use any metallic support. In some cases a nurse, whose arms can be seen in the frame, support the body. Moreover, the assumption of the inferiority of the mentally ill seems to reinforce the belief that the mentally ill could not pose in front of the camera.

The awkwardness of their expressions, however—although perhaps at first glance appearing as natural because of the supposed lack of artifice—seems to stem precisely from this lack of artifice. Because of the absence in the frame of clothing and background, it is impossible to tell why a patient looks to the right, why another has his eyes wide open, or why another laughs. What we can see is that patients' faces are completely decontextualized. If in *Ritratto della signora Salani*, the gentle expression of her face found a correlative in clothing and background, in these portraits there is nothing that provides an interpretive context to their expressions. Consequently, it is possible to think that the abnormality of their faces originates in the same absence of background and clothing: the lack of a *mise-en-scène* reinforces the relation of these bodies with expressions and therefore, in line with Darwin's theories, with the animal, a relation that I mentioned as key in the representation of the mentally ill.<sup>32</sup>

Still, the process of de-contextualization needs further investigation. Clothing and fashion have a specific connection with time and place: indeed fashion locates a subject in a determinate chronological time as well as in a specific socio-geographical space. In the Alinari portraits of bourgeois subjects, this context is post-Unification Italy. We must notice that in portraits of patients the empty background, along with the wearing of uniform clothing, locates the mentally ill into a dimension that is out of time and out of space. By cutting out the body of patients, or making them wear uniforms, the subjects portrayed are completely displaced: the mentally ill belong neither to an early time, nor to the present and the future, but they have always existed in a timeless and spaceless

dimension.

I suggest that these portraits visually represent a timeless and spaceless condition of madness that is everywhere and always. In a period in which the idea of mental illness was just born, the possibility of attesting its existence forever could legitimize a certain exercise of power. This seems to explain why portraits of patients, although apparently lacking a *mise-en-scène*, were standardized all over Europe. These portraits were used to attest to the perennial existence of madness.

The lack of *mise-en-scène* in these portraits also functions at another and deeper level. The position of patients' bodies, the wearing of uniforms and usually the untidy hair, detaches these women from being objects of desire. Indeed, there is nothing desirable about them. Also, the white background does not relate these women to any specific context: a house, other women, a child. Again these bodies are completely decontextualized. A striking example can be found in Emilio Poli's photography from the San Lazzaro asylum. These photographs were shot in 1892 and, contrary to traditional portraits of patients, they were taken outside, either in the asylum yard or in the yard next to the institution (Parmiggiani 109). Moreover, in these photographs patients are portrayed in half- or full-length, they are depicted alone, in couple or in small groups.<sup>33</sup>

One photograph in particular shows a group of seven mentally deficient women in the asylum yard. On the print there are seven numbers, one to seven, written next to the patients. At the bottom of the print, the patient's names are identified next to the numbers.<sup>34</sup> What is impressive about the photograph is the

fact that six out of seven women portrayed have their head shaved; the seventh woman instead is playing with her hair, a gesture that emphasizes the lack of hair in the other women. A first reaction looking at this photograph is that the bodies portrayed are male. The shaved heads in particular connect these bodies with a collectivity in which—especially at the beginning of the twentieth century—having a shaved head means usually to be male. Thus, when one reads the female names on the bottom of the photograph, a sense of shock must arise: nothing in this photograph makes these women recognizable as women; the wearing of uniform and the shaved head especially drastically break the relationship of these women with the world. Indeed, the viewer, after a first shock, must struggle to perceive these women as women at all.

Further, in most of these photographs, women are portrayed in very untraditional positions: one woman moves her hands as if she was possessed; one has her hands crossed in a prayer-like attitude, another woman screams while she covers her face.<sup>35</sup> Once again, looking at these photographs, the first impression is a sense of de-familiarization: the positions of their body, their gestures are clearly untraditional. The abnormality is made even more evident through the use of the background present in several of these pictures. While the viewer creates a connection of familiarity with the yard, this connection is broken by the positions of patients' bodies. Again, the viewer struggles to recognize these women as women; their gestures break the relationship with a collectivity in which to be a woman implies elegance and decor.

Further, as in frontal portraits, there is nothing that contributes to the

gendering of these bodies. As opposed to the Alinari portraits, we see nothing desirable in these women. Instead we notice that these bodies, with their unconventional gestures, awkward expressions and blank background, *exceed* any traditional notion of femininity; they are constructed outside the norm, they exceed the field of normality. What the viewer experiences looking at these photographs is de-familiarization, displacement, misrecognition.

In this context, it is essential also to consider a fascinating set of unpublished photographs of patients taken before and after recovery in the San Clemente asylum, in Venice.<sup>36</sup> These photographs, probably taken during the 1880s, were essentially advertising photos used to document the power of the institution to normalize. Each frame contains two oval photographs of the same patient. At the bottom of the frame are letters and numbers that represent the patients before and after admission. Setting the two photographs one next to the other, forces the viewer to look for the difference between the normal and the mentally ill. One can notice the differences between “before” and “after” in clothing, the pose of the body, and facial expressions.

For example, one set of photographs, shows the sick woman on the left depicted with her arms crossed (Fig. 3). Her face looks down and she sketches half-smile. She wears the white uniform and a kerchief is set on her shoulders. Her hair is tied back and parted in the middle. The woman’s facial expression suggests a sense of resistance, probably to having her picture taken; a resistance that is increased through her crossed arms and the half-smile. This subject is very far removed from the gracefulness and elegance of conventional portraits of

women. Once again, this woman exceeds the field of normality; she breaks the relationship with the collectivity in which to be a woman means to be gentle, submissive and decorative.

In the photograph on the right, portraying the same woman after treatment, the subject has the same hairstyle. The uniform is now darker, and the kerchief is knotted in the front, appearing more elegant and suggesting an increased care for her appearance. The change in facial expression and position of the body between the two photographs is striking. The woman still looks down, but her face does not show any resistance, instead she looks submissive. Instead of having a slight smile, the woman has her mouth slightly open. Further, instead of the crossed arms that suggest a sort of resistance, the woman now holds a flower in her hands. All these details shade this subject as gentle, submissive and caring. Indeed, the facial expression and the flower contribute to the gendering of this woman; they reinsert the body within a system of perception and make her recognizable as woman.

In another set of photographs, a mad elderly woman on the left is depicted frontally (Fig. 4). The frame also includes most of the face, arms and hands of another woman who supports the body of the elderly patient. The patient wears a white uniform and her hair is completely hidden by the other woman's hands. The absolute white created by the white uniform and the white wall sets her face in the foreground. The old woman stares firmly at the camera, no smile on her face. Her eyes are half open. One perceives some sort of anger in her expression. Furthermore, while the inclusion of the second woman at first suggests that the



sick woman is unable to stand by herself, the viewer can notice that this woman not only supports her head, but also holds her hands down. This position suggests that the patient might be dangerous, unable to control herself, perhaps violent, certainly disruptive.

In the second photograph, the same woman now sits by herself, her hands clasped peaceably. She now looks to one side. It is impressive to notice how in this second photograph her facial expression is very similar to the facial expression of the previous patient of Fig. 3: her mouth is half open and her eyes as well, and she seems to look at someone out of frame. The woman looks gentle and submissive, the fact that she can sit on her own also tells us that she is no longer dangerous. The gendering of this woman is also enhanced through clothing: she now wears a dark coat, and has a flowered kerchief on her head. Obviously, her dark clothing drastically contrasts with the previous white uniform. It is through clothing and her facial expression that this woman now looks like a woman. Her facial expression in particular—like that of the other patient in Fig. 3—establishes an agreement with the collectivity in which to be recognizable as woman, a woman must look submissive.

Indeed, the idea of madness that emanates from portraits of mad people relates the mentally ill not only to the animal, but also to the asexual body. The bodies of patients portrayed, deprived of their own clothing, their gentle facial expressions, their poses, in some cases their hair, are completely constructed outside conventional parameters of femininity: they are completely asexualized. This idea might find explanation in psychiatric theories that associated female

madness to sexual transgression. As consequence of such theories, women with a transgressive and non-conformative sexuality were drastically asexualized in photographic spaces.

But while the mad person denies any notion of normality, he/she also limits and circumscribes the field of normality. While the mad body exceeds any notion of femininity with her untidy hair, her uniform, her abnormal gestures and odd expressions, she also circumscribes the field of the normal woman. Indeed, it is only by means of specific facial expressions, specific clothing and specific poses that a woman can be recognized as woman at all. It is only because of specific backgrounds that a woman can be perceived as such. We understand then that what the frame affirms is normality: it is normality that functions within the frame as its constitutive outside.

At this point it is imperative to remember that the idea of normality was and is highly fictional. Stewart-Steinberg in her book shows how the notion of normality was born in relation to the development of statistical science: “The famous ‘bell curve,’ or ‘normal distribution’ was used to define the normal human and normal human behavior because its shape matched the shape of large aggregates of social data, not because the normal human could be found in reality” (241). Stewart-Steinberg points out the fictional, “if not phantasmatic,” notion of the normal. Similarly Georges Canguilhem, in *The Normal and The Pathological* (1989), defines the normal in relation to the normative system: “the normal is the effect obtained by the execution of the normative project, it is the norm exhibited in the fact” (243). The term normal—which Canguilhem argues

was coined in 1759—is defined by norms; as a result the normality of the so-called normal originates directly from the normative system: “their normality will come to them from their normativity” (144).

Accordingly, it is possible to think of the *mise-en-scène* in photographic spaces as representative of the normative system; clothing, backgrounds and poses not only locate a subject in a specific space and time, but first and foremost they locate a subject in a specific normative system. Clothing, background and poses embody the norm, they give the norm its figural and material structure. In the specific case of the Alinari brothers, the *mise-en-scène* also became constitutive part of the creation of the *bella figura*, a key concept of *Italianità*. Position, expression, clothing, background and the use of contrast were key elements in the construction of Italian identity, in other words of the “normal” Italian. These practices were supported by light, a metallic tripod, and various other expedients.

In truth, both the idea of normality as well as the Alinari portraits tell us of the fictionality of Italian identity. Not only were portraits of normal people drastically based on a practice of fiction, but it was also the idea of normality that was itself fictional. What is more, we also know that in the Italian context, the Italian identity—still in search of definition—was also constructed as “negative myth”: the effeminate Italian type has no weight of its own; it lacks masculinity. How is it thus possible to acquire an ontological weight? How is normality actually produced through these portraits? We must consider in greater details this mechanism of asexualization. What else is contained in the frame that we do not

see?

Mann in her book discusses the lived gender in relation to the Imaginary and argues that gender works as *machine which effects a binding* (*Sovereign Masculinity* 107). The total concrete gender situation creates a binding with world and this binding operates particularly through shame. Shame originates from the process of non-recognition and is at the root of the disruption of the self (114). Mann also argues that the production of shame is key to the creation of national manhood: “Sovereign manhood stands on the precarious edge of shame. It must paradoxically remain in the presence of shame, because shame is what is converted to power in its self-constituting practice” (116). Production of shame assures, according to Mann, the realization of sovereign masculinity; this shame has to be produced consistently as it stands at the very foundation of the actualization of sovereign power. The philosopher argues that through a process of “analogical substitution,” the sexual shame of prisoners during the “war on terror”—inflicted through forced homosexualization and sexual humiliation—is converted into the sexual power of the regime. In the presentness of shame and suffering, sovereign masculinity is able to borrow an ontology and to acquire an ontological weight.

We must notice that the process of de-contextualization through background and clothing at the time in which throw the mentally ill into a dimension out of time and out of space; it also breaks the relationship of the individual with the Imaginary. While the uniforms, the untied hair and the blank background were specifically constructed for the picture, inmates in everyday life

inside the asylum would wear the same uniforms and the same hair that we see depicted in all these pictures. The white background is the wall of the asylum inside which patients were confined and deprived of their homes. That background is really white in the sense that it is really empty: there is nothing inside the asylum that looked like a home.

We must understand that the deprivation of patients' clothing and environment as not simply the deprivation of something somebody *owns*, of something somebody *has*—a dress, a specific hairstyle, make up—but in the process of “sedimentation” and “stylization” that is gender, this loss becomes a constitutive part of the inmate's self-undoing. The deprivation of clothing and background disrupts the very system of recognition within which the subject can recognize herself and others. If gender works as a *machine that effects a binding*, the body of the mad person drastically breaks the very binding that is at the core of the relationship between the individual and the world. As a result, the white background and white uniform visually represent a connection with the Imaginary that has been completely broken, that has been lost forever.

If this connection with the Imaginary is broken we understand that what really lay behind the frame is shame and suffering. Behind the asexual body of the mad woman, behind the awkward expressions of her face and the theatrical poses of her body, are the shame and suffering that originate from this broken relation with the Imaginary, from this process of self's undoing. It is imperative to remember that these practices of asexualization really took place inside the asylum. First-hand accounts of ex patients attest that the deprivation of gender

identity through the shaving of hair, the wearing of uniform clothing and sexual repression was at the core of the annihilation of the inmate's identity. Indeed, these photographs visually expose practices of sexualized torture that took place inside the asylum.

Although not in the frame, the shame and suffering of the inmate produced obsessively through practices of asexualization inside the asylum, functions in the frame as its "constitutive outside." Shame and suffering are the crucial subtext of these representations. If shame is what is converted to power, the shame and suffering of the inmate also establish a key connection with national manhood. Not only were these portraits used to circumscribe the field of normality; but they also provide this normality with its very materiality, its own weight.

It is because of the production and reproduction of this very shame—the one we don't see, but that lies in there *beyond* the asexual body of the mad woman—that the fictionalized notion of Italian identity could acquire an ontological weight. Through a process of "analogical substitution" the sexual shame of the mentally ill person, its "incontestable reality" and its "compelling" is "effortlessly grasped" and turned into the sexual power of the nation state (Mann, *Sovereign Masculinity* 198). This shame has to be produced and reproduced *ad nauseam* not only in its concrete reality, but also in its representation. By inflicting this kind of torture on the body of the female inmate and reproducing it indelibly in the photographic space, psychiatric power that was one and the same as state power could acquire an ontological weight.

Indeed, it was only by using the same frame—the frontal portrait—that it

was possible to affirm the idea of normality. This affirmation finds its materiality in the body of the mentally ill that provides ontological weight to the fictionalized idea of normality. The mentally ill person not only circumscribes the domain of the normal, but it also provides to the normal its very own ontological weight. The way it does so, is through the sexual humiliation and pain created by practices of sexualized torture. At stake here is a frame that concerns less an affirmation of the existence of mental illness, than an affirmation of normality.

At this point it is possible to explain the process of whitening operated by Diamond in the first existing calotype. I suggest that this process not only served to emphasize facial expressions, but it also deprived the body of the mentally ill of his or her gender identity. While this process took place everywhere in Europe at a time characterized by the reinforcement of sexual morality and heterosexual normativity, it became specifically compelling in Italy.<sup>37</sup>

Although the representation of madness was standardized in Europe, the written names of patients that appear in each photographic frame help to define the body of the mentally ill as specifically Italian. What is appropriated is a racialized internal other. We must note that the process of asexualization happened to male inmates as well. The relation with expressions in the first place was a way to associate the mentally ill with the feminine. In a similar fashion to the southerner who, according to Nelson Moe, came to embody the effeminate Italian, the mentally ill became another minority that state power invented in order to justify its own weakness. Of course there are differences between the feminization of southerners and the mentally ill. The mentally ill were forcibly

asexualized inside the asylum; they were forcibly subjected to this kind of torture. It is in the compulsive reproduction of suffering and shame, the same exact suffering that Verga portrays in the figure of sister Agata, that national manhood could acquire, among many other ways, an ontological weight.

### **Madness Matters: The Asexual Body from Giovanni Verga to Luigi Capuana**

Female portraits of patients are very similar and at the same time profoundly different from the image of Sister Agata in Verga's novel. In both the image of madness is related to both the animal and the asexual body; in both, these bodies represent a sort of monstrosity or aberration of nature; and in both we can perceive some sort of fear. Breaking the connection with the collectivity leaves the viewer without parameters of judgment; these bodies de-familiarize the viewer's perception, they create shock which then produces fear. Nonetheless, there is a major difference between the two representations of female madness. While looking at portraits of women we do not perceive the physical space of the asylum. It is impossible to see the iron bars on the windows or the locked door in the background; consequently, it is hard to think that these women want to escape. While it is still possible to discern some sort of suffering, we are not taken by any sense of pity. Why should we feel sorry for these women? On the other hand, looking at these bodies depicted in this white background, one is almost tempted to think that they deserve to be where they are. These bodies are framed: there is a science beyond them to tell us that these women are insane, dangerous. As a result, looking at these portraits we do not empathize with the suffering of these women; on the contrary, we empathize with psychiatric power.



Indeed, psychiatric portraits of patients establish frames of representability according to which the mentally ill are relegated to the category of the sub-human. As Butler suggests, these frames are established in order to control affects. The field of representability is fundamental to determine whether or not a subject can be recognized as such. On the other hand, Verga in his novel confirms the existence of the apparatus of psychiatry and at the same time resists it. Through the representation of Sister Agata, the writer destabilizes “frames of recognizability.” He offers a counter discourse to psychiatric power, a counter discourse rooted deeply in the reader’s emotional response. The reader of *La capinera* empathizes with Sister Agata’s suffering; he/she is able to apprehend a life beyond the system of recognizability.

A different critique of psychiatric discourse exists in the first edition of Luigi Capuana’s *Giacinta* (1879). *Giacinta* represents the first naturalist novel in the Italian literary context and the first novel to focus exclusively on female madness. The first edition was published with Brigola in 1879. Capuana, deeply influenced by naturalist theories, dedicated the novel to Emile Zola. The following scene is drawn from this edition and slightly differs from the last edition (1889). At the beginning of the novel Giacinta’s mother is gathering friends at her house; Giacinta is talking to one of her suitors:

La Giacinta, lo guardò negli occhi un istante; poi si adagiò sulla poltrona col capo riversato all’indietro e il viso alquanto di fianco. Una gamba allungata più dell’altra affacciava la punta dello stivaletto sotto la balza del vestito. Quel corpo piccolo e minuto, rannicchiato in tal guisa entro la

soffice imbottitura e quasi modellato dalle pieghe dell'abito, richiamava in mente l'idea di un gioiello, del suo scatolino di raso azzurro e della fine bambagia color di rosa. Il colonello, ond'esserle più vicino, sedette dietro di lei [...] La Giacinta ora accennava di sì o di no con un movimento del capo e del ventaglino di tartaruga tenuto in alto dalla mano destra; ora spalancava, sorridendo, i begli occhi nerissimi; ed ora aggrottando le sopracciglia atteggiava le labbra ad un'espressione di corrucio: ma allora il colonello fermavasi anche a mezzo di una frase, incerto ed esitante se dovesse o no proseguire. Il sorriso di soddisfazione che teneva subito dietro quella fierezza della Giacinta, accompagnato da un lungo abbassarsi delle palpebre e da un lieve dondolare del capo, dava benissimo a capire come spesso il colonnello avesse o modificato, o spiegato meglio il suo concetto. (Giacinta 4)<sup>38</sup>

Giacinta lies on the sofa with her head pushed back and turned to one side; her legs are stretched out, and her shoe is partially visible. Giacinta's body is very carnal. She is a beautiful young woman, her eyes are dark and wide open, and she smiles at the colonel. The seductiveness of her body is enhanced through the initial gesture of looking at the man in the eyes and then turning her head on one side. The heroine seduces the colonel, she invites him to continue looking at her. The colonel sits behind her to be closer. He is completely seduced by this body to the point that he feels embarrassed. He is uncertain and hesitant before the spectacle of Giacinta.

Like Zola's heroines, such as Nana, Giacinta is a spectacle of female

sexuality. In the novel, everyone is seduced by her: “Quella Giacinta vi fa farà ammattire tutti” (68), exclaims one of the women. Soon after this scene, the heroine is portrayed walking around the dining room. At the sight of her, groups of people move around to let her pass. She stops in the middle of the room, chatting and talking to everybody. Her presence makes the room animated; every man is fascinated by her presence and every man desires her: “La Giacinta non faceva nulla per incoraggiare i suoi corteggiatori. Li trattava tutti allo stesso modo. Molti anzi finirono col ritenerla un po’ grulla: altri la dissero calcolatrice” (69). Giacinta treats every men in the same way; she is either considered silly or calculating.

The heroine is fully aware of her sexual power. Her smile of proud satisfaction testifies to this. To make this body unique is the fact that her strength relates not only to her sexuality, but to her entire persona. Several times Capuana emphasizes Giacinta’s strength of character, referring to her: “orgoglio femminile soddisfatto” (8), “virilità del suo cuore” (13), “freddezza d’animo” (61). Giacinta is a virile woman and this virility originates in her ability to overcome the past.

The protagonist is a traumatized woman affected by moral pathology; she is the victim of childhood sexual abuse by her friend Beppe, and abandoned by her mother. The sexual abuse prevents her from loving in a normal way. To love in her own way means for Giacinta to reject her traditional role as wife; she can, in fact, only be a lover: “l’uomo del mio cuore potrà... forse..., un giorno, diventare... il mio amante, ma mio marito, no, mai!” (14).

Sexual abuse is obviously at the core of the social stigma that indelibly

affects the protagonist: “L’onta da cui sapevasi macchiata era un’onta incancellabile. Il pregiudizio della società riteneva così” (73). Signor Mochi, one of Giacinta’s suitors, stresses that she has been “tainted”: “Chi vuoi tu che la sposi? C’è sempre quella maledetta disgrazia che fa cascar le braccia ad ognuno. Il mondo è sciocco. Io come io, certi pregiudizi non li ho....ma il mondo non si rifà” (77). According to Mochi, nobody will ever marry Giacinta as her “cursed disgrace” will make every men run away from her.

In spite of her past however, Giacinta is portrayed neither in negative terms nor as victim. Instead, her inability to love in a normal way enables the protagonist to build a renewed female identity. In fact, she is able to turn the abuse into a challenge against Beppe and against society: “combattere, non lasciarsi sopraffare, cadere, se fosse stato necessario, ma senza viltà: ecco quel che le ribolliva confusamente nel cervello” (61). Giacinta builds her strength in the ability to overcome her past; also her capacity to dominate men, to impose her own way of loving, becomes the source of Giacinta’s pride.

In line with Zola’s naturalism and positivist theories, this first edition reveals a strong interest in physiognomy. Giacinta’s degenerate parents are marked as similar to animals as we see in the case of Signor Marulli, Giacinta’s father:

Era un uomo oltre la quarantina, di temperamento sanguigno, colla barba nerissima, cogli occhi prominenti, iniettati di sangue, le labbra tumide, ma in tutto l’insieme, di una fisionomia un po’ stupida, quasi intorpidita. A vederlo pareva che sotto quel torpore si dovesse nascondere un carattere

violento, brutale; ma non era così. (17)

Signor Marulli's dark beard, large bloodshot eyes and swollen lips make him similar to a beast; however more than a violent and dangerous animal, he is silly.

In a similar fashion, Capuana introduces Giacinta's mother:

La finezza volpina del suo carattere si scorgeva negli occhi piccoli e vivacissimi, nella fronte dura, piatta, colla pelle tirata e lucida sulle sopracciglia sottili; nel naso profilato, cartilaginoso, colle pinne alquanto tese che si rigonfiavano un pochino a certi movimenti delle labbra. (63)

The "fox-like" aspect of Giacinta's mother, her father's "bloodshot eyes," are indicative of a mental degeneration that like psychiatric portraits of patients related madness to the animal. These descriptions reflect how psychiatry influenced writers during this period; through the support of literature, psychiatry increasingly impacted the larger common sense. We must remember that literature, during this period, was the most influential instrument in the diffusion of hegemonic ideology (Ruggiero and Vivanti 1079).

Similarly to Giacinta, the degeneration of Giacinta's parents goes with an untraditional marital relation. If the father hides a "fisionomia un po' stupida" that "mostrava un'aria di rassegnazione animale" (44), her mother takes on the role of the *pater familias*: "La signora Marulli faceva di suo marito quel che più le piacesse" (17). Her depravation also leads to a lack of femininity:

In realtà bolliva nel suo cuore, lentamente depravato, tutti i bassi vizi del lusso, della gola, dell'avidità di denaro. In quei tormentosi anni di aspettazione e di cruccio, ella aveva visto morire nel suo interno il raggio

divino della donna e sorgere il fosco tenebrore dei peggiori istinti animali, senza la folle sensualità che in qualche modo avrebbe potuto, se non iscusarli, spiegarli. (19)

This points directly to psychiatric models that associated female madness with a transgression of gender roles; mentally ill women were women who exceeded their roles as mother and wives.

The physiological analysis is also used to describe Beppe, Giacinta's childhood companion and eventually her assaulter:

Beppe era un ragazzaccio dall'aria quasi minchiona, un po' tarchiato, con la testa grossa, i capelli folti e arruffati, gli occhi pieni di malizia e di voglie animali che si tradivano pure nel taglio delle labbra e nella torosità del collo. La sua aria minchiona celava però un'intelligenza svelta, di quelle che capiscono a volo, a un muover di labbra, a un ammiccare quasi impercettibile, celava una fermezza di propositi, una cocciutaggine illimitata tanto nel bene quanto nel male, un istinto di dispetto e di vendetta da confinare colla ferocia. (25)

Once again, physiological features are used to describe mental degeneration, which was directly linked to danger and criminality; in line with psychiatric theories degenerate were dangerous individuals whom society should fear.

If physiognomy plays a crucial role in the description of Giacinta's degenerate parents and friend, Giacinta herself, the product of animal instincts as well as a true case of moral pathology, is never described in such terms (except for sporadic references to her nerves). In the 1879 edition, Giacinta stands as a

strikingly unique character in the Italian literary context,<sup>39</sup> as a madwoman who transgresses her gender roles as mother and wife, but who can nevertheless still be portrayed in positive terms. In fact, her “virility” seems to stem precisely from refusing to a role as mother and wife. Although Giacinta eventually dies, Capuana shows sympathy and enthusiasm towards her.

Soon after publication, *Giacinta* became an object of criticism and scandal among Italian intellectuals (Santangelo 27).<sup>40</sup> Emilio Treves in *L'Illustrazione Italiana* commented: “Il racconto del signor Capuana—diciamolo apertamente ciò che si sussurra da per tutto e con indignazione—è un libro immondo” (cited in Santangelo 28). In particular Treves contested Giacinta’s attitude towards society: “se da bambina è stata vittima di un attentato al pudore, non c’è ragione perché essa proclami per natural conseguenza: ebbene, io voglio essere impudica per tutta la vita” (28). The main criticism, however, concerned Capuana’s empathy for his heroine: “Cotesta è la vita della signora Giacinta, a cui l’autore pretende dare un aspetto simpatico” (29).

Other intellectuals too commented on the moral as well as aesthetic mediocrity of the work. In the face of this criticism, Capuana decided to return to his novel, and in the following years two more editions of *Giacinta* appeared. The second edition was published in 1886 and the third and definitive one in 1889 with another publisher, Giannotta. The success of the new edition led to a second reprinting in 1914 with Cervieri and to a third, in 1931, with Treves.

In general, the main differences between the first and third editions concern linguistic and stylistic features.<sup>41</sup> Although the style Capuana employed is

undoubtedly a major difference between the two editions, another compelling change is in the representation of Giacinta.<sup>42</sup> Whereas in the first edition Giacinta's traumatic past became the source for constructing a renewed female identity, in the last edition her insanity is characterized by mechanisms of shame and guilt. Comparing a few passages in the first and last editions will illustrate this difference.

In the 1889 edition the adjective "virile" disappears completely from the text. The term "virilità" is only used once in relation to Giacinta's mother, Teresa. However, this term is preceded by the noun "sfumatura"—a hint of virility—which clearly diminishes its intensity. Although the protagonist still reveals some strength of character, Giacinta's assertiveness is drastically reduced. At the beginning of the novel for example, the protagonist approaches Andrea at the piano. In the first edition, Giacinta "piantò in viso all'Andrea un par d'occhi imperterriti" (11); in the 1889 edition Giacinta's eyes become "scintillanti che erano la sua bellezza" (13). The different description of Giacinta's eyes clearly speaks to a different representation of the female character. In the third edition her "shining eyes" reproduce a common place that associates women to beauty; it also links Giacinta to gentleness and elegance. This image radically contrasts with the courage and strength that stems in Giacinta's "undaunted eyes" in the first edition. Furthermore, the 1879 indications of Giacinta's strength are omitted: "forte carattere di donna" (14) and "virilità del cuore" (13).

Another telling example is in Giacinta's conversation with her mother. The 1879 edition reads: "La Giacinta, con la testa altamente rizzata, colle braccia tese



in giù, irrigidite e le pugna strette, colle palpebre abbassate, bianca come il marmo, sembrava una statua” (15). The 1889 edition by contrast reproduces this scene as follows: “Giacinta, con le braccia tese in giù irrigidite, coi pugni stretti, era diventata bianca come un cencio lavato” (18). The opposition between “a marble statue” and “a washed rag” once again decreases the assertiveness of the female character. Further, her smile is now marked by a “vivacità fanciullesca” (18), which strengthens the association between femininity and naïveté.

In the 1879 edition, virility leads Giacinta to acquire a true agency in the story; she is not only the subject of her own actions, but she is also the engine of other people’s actions. In the last edition, Giacinta’s reduced masculinity translates into decreased agency. For example, the 1879 edition opens with the scene in which Giacinta and the colonel are talking:

—Al solito, gli scrupoli! — esclamò Giacinta con una piccola mossa di dispetto che fu sul punto di compromettere la serietà dell'ufficiale. — È una scommessa; me lo dica, mi faccia questo piacere. Mi sgriderà poi, se ne avrà voglia...

—Io non la sgrido; non ne ho il diritto né l'autorità—rispose il colonello un po’ rabbonito—Però ho tanta stima di lei e le voglio...

—Tanto bene!—interuppe ridendo la Giacinta [...]

—Ho fatto male? — domandò la Giacinta alquanto stizzita di vedersi trattata a quell modo.

—Non ha fatto, bene almeno qui, innanzi a questa gente che da sempre una maligna interpretazione anche alle cose più innocenti.

Oh—fece la Giacinta—alzando le spalle e scotendo la testina accigliata e sdegnosa. (3)

In this scene Giacinta is described as a strong female character; she is assertive and voices her opinions; she also instigates the colonel with her words and gestures. By contrast, in the 1889 edition both her strength and her agency are diminished:

—Al solito, gli scrupoli! — esclamò Giacinta con una piccola mossa di dispetto. — È una scommessa; me lo dica, mi faccia questo piacere. Dopo se vorrà, potrà sgridarmi...

—Io non la sgrido; non ne ho il diritto né l'autorità — rispose il capitano.—Però ho tanta stima di lei e le voglio...

Tanto bene!—lo interruppe Giacinta, ridendo.

— Sì, tanto bene, che non posso vederla commettere, senza dispiacere, una leggerezza da nulla.

— Ho fatto male?

—Almeno qui, dinanzi a questa gente che suol dare maligna interpretazione anche alle cose più innocenti.

—Com'è severo! Oh! Oh! (4)

In response to the question “Ho fatto male?” Capuana omits “domandò Giacinta alquanto stizzita di vedersi trattata a quel modo,” as well as two other clauses “alzando le spalle e scotendo la testina accigliata e sdegnosa” and “aggraziatissima mossa d'impazienza.” These omissions reduce Giacinta’s strength of character. Furthermore, in the first edition Giacinta’s vexation was “sul

punto di compromettere la serietà dell'ufficiale,” whereas in the last edition it did not cause any reaction. In this way, Giacinta loses much of the agency that characterized her in the first edition; she is no longer the engine of other characters’ action.

Another telling example is in the scene that follows her conversation with the colonel. In the 1879 edition, Giacinta continues to instigate the colonel and to cause his reactions:

Ma il più delle volte dopo uno di questi vivaci atteggiamenti di lei, il colonnello si rizzava sul busto e si mordeva i baffi: pareva avesse una gran voglia di contraddire ma se ne asteneva. Succedeva allora un silenzio impacciato [...] Poi la Giacinta spingeva gli occhi verso il colonnello che aveva ripreso la sua positura e potando la punta del ventaglio alle labbra, lanciava *un ebbene? Un eppoi?* Che provocava la risposta. (4)

The 1889 edition has notable changes, Giacinta no longer incite the colonel to talk; she instead look around the room: “Il capitano seduto di fronte, molto accosto, cominciò a parlare sotto voce; e stando ad ascoltarlo attentamente, colle sopracciglia un po’ corrugate, ella intanto girava gli occhi attorno, da un gruppo all’altro del salotto” (5). In the first edition, Giacinta does not understand the colonel’s words. The colonel wishes to contradict her, but cannot; consequently there emerges an awkward silence—“silenzio impacciato”—between the two.

Moreover, in the 1879 edition, Giacinta is the one who “provocava la risposta” by using such expressions as “*Ebbene?*” “*Eppoi?*” The omission of these words in the 1889 edition is also followed by the fact that Giacinta, in a fashion contrary

from the first edition, carefully listens to him, “ascoltarlo attentamente.” All these expedients testify to a loss of Giacinta’s agency.

In the last edition, Capuana also adds the expression “ella intanto girava gli occhi attorno, da un gruppo all'altro del salotto” which is completely absent in the first edition. This points to a major difference in the later Giacinta: her discretion. In the 1979 version, it is the colonel who notices her mother’s searching gaze: “Guardava intanto con un'aria così fintamente distratta che il colonnello incontrandosi più volte negli occhi indagatori di lei non aveva concepito il sospetto di essere sorvegliato da una mamma in cerca di un partito per la figliola” (4). In the 1889 edition, the scene is significantly altered:

Alzando gli occhi, ella scorse in un angolo sua madre che le gettava,  
di sfuggita, certe occhiate penetranti come un succhiello.

— La mamma ci osserva — disse al capitano.

— Tanto meglio — rispose questi, guardando dalla parte dove la  
signora Marulli, col vestito nero accollato, orlato da un colletto  
bianchissimo, a  
cartocci, che dava risalto alla sua bella testa di donna matura, pareva  
ragionasse fitto fitto colla signora Villa, senza neppure badare ai continui  
dinieghi di questa. (6)

Not only is it Giacinta who, in this edition, notices her mother’s gaze, but the colonel’s answer “tanto meglio” also reveals a different representation of the male character: in this last edition the colonel appears in complete control of the situation. Soon after this scene Giacinta says of Andrea Garace, “Gerace ci

mangia con gli occhi” (6), to this the colonel replies, “Peggio per lui!” (6).

Giacinta’s loss of agency leaves room for the male characters to gain agency.

At the core of Giacinta’s decreased agency is her sexuality. In the 1889 edition Giacinta’s sexuality is largely repressed, as in the opening scene of the third edition:

Vedendola sdraiata lì con la testa bruna buttata all’indietro e la faccia verso di lui, stette a osservarla in piedi, dondolando la seggiola. Quella delicata personcina, ranicchiata tra la soffice imbottitura della poltrona e così ben modellata dalle pieghe dell’abito, gli richiamava alla mente l’immagine d’un gioiello tra la bambagia carnicina e il raso azzurro dell’astuccio; mentre Giacinta, vedendo apparirgli negli occhi la forte commozione che gli agitava il cuore in quel momento, sorrideva a fior di pelle. (4)

In this scene Giacinta faces the colonel instead of turning her head to one side.

While she is still compared to a jewel, all the description of the sensuality of her body is now omitted. The colonel stands in front of her, no longer beside her.

Also, instead of the proud smile, Giacinta now “sorrideva a fior di pelle.”

Furthermore, the description of Giacinta walking around the room, at the center of attention, is omitted.

In the first edition, Giacinta not only seduces others but also fully experiences her sexuality. The rape scene is recalled differently in the two texts.

In the first edition, the relation between Giacinta and Beppe is friendly and

Giacinta is fond of him: “Per la povera bimba Beppe venne un tesoro. Giocava a

palla con lei lungo i viali, le faceva delle barchette di carta da lanciare a fior di acqua nel canale, le raccontava delle fiabe che ella talvolta non capiva” (7). In the scene of abuse, Giacinta, while still rebelling against Beppe, also experiences brief instants of pleasure: “La Giacinta si sentiva invasa da un calore insoffribile, e lo baciava alla sua volta e ripetutamente [...] provava un languore, un venir meno, una sensazione indicibilmente dolce che la compenetrava tutta e le faceva abbandonar la testina sul petto di lui, come se le fosse montata una vertigine al cervello” (31). Giacinta’s sexuality is active, she repeatedly kisses Beppe and is overwhelmed by passion.

In the second edition, all this part disappears. Although we are dealing with an abuse, the change shows that Capuana sought to remove any sign of her sexual agency. In another passage, Giacinta, now an adult, recalls Beppe. The third 1889 edition reads: “e quando le passava dinanzi agli occhi l'immagine di Beppe, con quel testone nero e quelle pupille nere che l'avevano tenuta così sottomessa, sentiva vibrare per tutto il corpo una sensazione strana” (32). In the first edition, the term “sottomessa” is followed by the expression “che l'avevano, in alcuni momenti, aviluppata dei loro sensuali bagliori e resa umile e sommessa!” (39). The implication is that Giacinta’s submission was related to a sexual attraction that she felt for Beppe.

The reduction of Giacinta’s agency along with her discretion also points to another key feature that characterizes the new Giacinta. In the scene with Andrea Garace, Capuana omits all those references to Giacinta’s virility, replacing them by such expressions as: “abbassando il capo” (14), “esitava” (16) and in particular

her covering her face with her hands “coprirsi la faccia con le mani” (16). These expressions recur regularly in the last edition and point to the mechanism of guilt and shame that lie at the heart of Giacinta’s caution and circumspection. Still in the first chapter, when Giacinta and Andrea talk and confess their love, the 1879 edition describes Giacinta’s gesture of freeing her dress: “Improvvisamente la Giacinta si levò da sedere, e mentre chinavasi per liberare la veste impigliata sotto un piede dello sgabellino” (14). In the 1889 edition instead, the gesture of freeing her dress from the chair is glossed as a cover for Giacinta’s embarrassment: “allora, chinatasi per scostare lo sgabello, seppe nascondere, con quel pretesto, il suo imbarazzo” (17).

Giacinta’s active sexuality in this second edition becomes increasingly associated with guilt and shame. Whereas in the first, 1879 edition, the protagonist’s abuse and consequently her madness are at the origin of her strength of character, in the last, 1889 edition her insanity becomes the source of pity and shame. Accordingly, if in the first edition Giacinta’s inability to love in a normal way and to adhere to her traditional gender roles did not prevent her from constructing a new female identity, in the last edition this transgression necessarily turns into a failure.

The scandal related to the first edition of *Giacinta* helps us understand how madness was constructed during this period. As much as sexually transgressive women were confined into the asylum, they were also confined in literary representations. Active female sexuality could not exist, could not be portrayed in positive terms, as in the case of *Giacinta*’s first edition. If, for

example, we compare the image of Sister Agata with the image of the first Giacinta, we see how different these representations are. Giacinta is a spectacle of female sexuality; Sister Agata, on the other hand, is a spectacle of sexual repression. More in line with psychiatric portraits of patients, Sister Agata is a body completely deprived of gender identity, a fact which makes clear how the representation of madness was linked to the representation of the culpability the flesh. Foucault in *Abnormal* refers to this process of culpability in terms of “a moral physiology of the flesh,” according to which the concupiscence of the flesh became the psyche of the abnormal (189).

Still, in a similar fashion to Verga, Capuana, in the representation of the first *Giacinta*, also offers a resistance to the apparatus of psychiatry. This resistance is rooted in an image of female madness that, instead of provoking fear or repulsion, leads the reader to sympathize with Giacinta’s abnormal character. In a similar fashion to Verga, then, Capuana is able to destabilize “frames of representability.” Most compelling, the analysis of Giacinta is crucial to understanding the two processes of degendering and asexualization that constitute a key focus in my study. Giacinta is a woman who transgresses her gender role as mother and wife; according to psychiatric discourses she is degendered. Nonetheless Giacinta is still a woman; the way Capuana portrays her heroine in the first edition values her as a person who, although she does not want to get married, can still be a woman. The way Giacinta values her femininity is through her strength of character and sexual agency.

In the third edition shame, guilt and sexual repression correspond to an



operation of forced asexualization. While on the one hand, in the final edition Giacinta seems to be reinserted into conventional representations of femininity, the repression of her sexual agency must also be read as a process of asexualization. Since Giacinta transgresses her gender role as wife she must be punished, corrected, normalized, through the repression of her sexual agency. This is of course a literary representation, but what I am trying to show throughout this study is that inside the asylum a similar process of asexualization took place. In line with psychiatric portraits of patients and Verga's Sister Agata, Giacinta too undergoes a process of asexualization in the course of Capuana's revisions.

In the final analysis, the scandal that followed the publication of the first edition of Giacinta demonstrates how the representation of madness, and specifically female madness, became significant in Italian society; in other words, the representation of madness *mattered*. In line with psychiatric portraits, literary representations too had to represent madness in terms of asexualization. In these representations the shame and suffering of the inmate, produced obsessively through practices of asexualization inside the asylum also functions as its "constitutive outside." We must consider this shame and suffering as the very subtexts of these images, as the very foundation of what lay beyond the asexual body of the mad person, in order to fully understand *why* a certain representation of madness came to be standardized. These representations visually reproduce the production of shame that took place inside the asylum.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed how, after Unification, the representation

of madness, already significant in Europe, became prominent in the Italian context. Not only in literary representations but also through the medium of photography. Photography played a crucial role in the representation of both mental institutions and the depiction of madness. As in the case of Fantuzzi's photographs of the San Lazzaro asylum, photography was employed to construct a positive image of the asylum. In line with the power of normalization that aimed at the amelioration and maximalization of life, there came the urgent need to spread the idea that madness could be cured and that normalization could only happen inside mental institutions. Obviously this idea was used to legitimize confinement as an antidote to social danger.

Further, photography was used to frame the image of the mentally ill as sub-human. The emphasis on facial expressions was used to associate the mentally ill to the animal, to an inferior being. This association served as a tool to appropriate the body of the mentally ill and consequently justify their confinement.

In this chapter I have also investigated further the operation of power that lay beyond the photographic frame. I focused on the frame–frontal portrait–and investigated why psychiatrists decided to employ the same format that was used in conventional portraits of sane people. I argued that the frame concerned less an affirmation of madness than an affirmation of normality. I investigated the ways in which this normality was produced through these portraits. I argued that the asexualization of patients' bodies offered an ontological weight to national manhood. The pain and suffering of the inmate that emerged through these

practices and that was reproduced systematically in photographic and then literary spaces, was able to materialize a fictionalized idea of Italian manhood at a time in which Italian identity lacked a weight of its own.

The mentally ill person represents those “unlivable and uninhabitable zones of social life,” to use Butler’s expression, that became key in the constitution of *Italianità*. At stake here is a body that was not only excluded by the national project through practices of forced confinement, but a body that, in its figural representations as well as in its concreteness, was necessary to the notion of normality and consequently the notion of national identity in Italy. What this process implies is a material violence against the body of the mentally ill.

Photographs of patients give evidence of the reality of thousands of Italians who were confined in mental institutions. Specifically, practices of asexualization were at the origin of the complete annihilation of patients’ identity.

Finally, in this study I have shown the impact of psychiatric theories in literature. In particular, the relation between madness and the animal, which in psychiatric portraits of patients was emphasized through facial expressions, is crucial to understand how psychiatric belief largely impacted intellectuals during this period. Considering the pivotal role of literature in constructing dominant ideologies during this period it is also possible to understand their impact on building field of perception and recognizability.

In my analysis I pointed briefly to the effect of fear provoked by looking at both the image of sister Agata and portraits of patients. Fear emerged from an image of madness that was now completely deprived of gender identity. In the

case of Maria, Verga's heroine in *Storia di una capinera*, it is the fear of punishment, of becoming like sister Agata, that leads Maria to renounce to her desire and to behave "properly" in order to avoid being locked in the mad cell: "io dissi al medico che voglio uscire da questo lougo; promisi di essere buona, di lavorare, di fare tutto quello che si vuole da me, purché mi facciano uscire" (115). Maria promises the doctor to be good, obedient, to do everything he wants as far as he lets her go: "Io faccio tutto quello che vogliono...Son docile...ho paura...ho paura che mi rinchiudano con la matta..." (116). It is because Maria fears the image of sister Agata that she eventually decides to give up her love.

The theme of fear, together with desire, will become of new interest in the explosion of hysteria during the 1880s and 1890s. If the domain of affects is also, in line with Butler, politically regulated, in what ways does State power use affects in order not only to affirm normality, but also to produce normality? I will investigate this matter in the following chapter.

CHAPTER III  
MADNESS APPARATUS:  
HYSTERIA, AFFECTS AND EUGENICS

In the previous chapter I analyzed the discourse of power promoted through psychiatric photography and the ways in which Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana responded to and resisted such a discourse. I explored the link between the asexualization of the female body in both literary and photographic representations on the one hand, and the quest for national identity in Italy on the other. I argued that the asexualization of female patients' bodies became the necessary procedure for distinguishing, in a radical way, the mentally ill woman from the normal woman. The affirmation of normality was thus deeply rooted in what during that period was believed to be the right being in gender: femininity, submission, elegance and collectiveness. I have also advanced the hypothesis that the undoing of patients' gender identity offered the previously lacking ontological weight to national identity.

In my study, I have also begun to explore the emotional response to madness that originated in both literary and photographic representations. Whereas Giovanni Verga was able to destabilize "frames of recognizability" through the representation of the suffering of Sister Agata, in the case of psychiatric portraits of patients, the exclusion of the physical space of the asylum

led the viewer to sympathize with psychiatric power rather than with the suffering of these women. By excluding any scenes of torture, the photographs advanced the notion that the mentally ill deserved to be confined.

The affective response to madness became determinant during the last two decades of the nineteenth century in Italy. While on the one hand this period was one in which a large number of women were confined inside asylums,<sup>43</sup> on the other hand the representation of the hysterical or epileptic woman flourished widely in the European literary and photographic contexts. What is striking about how these women are represented is the repetition of common physical features: all the women portrayed are sick, usually affected by hysteria or epilepsy; they are either bad mothers or characterized by sterility; they are usually associated with either witches or mystics; and they have either an excessive or deficient sexuality. In several of these representations, the bed is a recurrent element; most of the women are confined to the space of the bed. Further, a crucial feature of all these representations is the feeling of simultaneous horror and desire that these images produce in the reader.

French neurologist Jean Charcot played a crucial role in the definition of the iconography of hysteria. His photographs—in particular those of female inmate Augustine published in the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1876-1880)—together with the actual demonstrations of hysterical women acting out their symptoms during his “Lessons du mardi,” had a large impact in Europe among intellectuals, physicians, artists and members of the general public (Hustvedt 23). Clara Gallini in *La sonnambula meravigliosa: Magnetismo e*

*ipnotismo nell'Ottocento Italiano* (1983) refers to Charcot's invention of hysteria as a general cultural phenomena (277), and Cristina Mazzoni in *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture* (1996) asserts that "it is with the seminal work of Jean-Martin Charcot that any discussion of turn-of-the-century hysteria must begin" (20).

According to both Mazzoni and Gallini, the impact of Charcot was related to the revival of mysticism and Christianity. The employment of mystical poses in Charcot's iconography was used to validate the association between hysteria and mysticism (Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria* 20; Gallini 277). As I will show in depth in what follows, this association was essential in legitimizing psychiatric discourses into an established tradition; a discourse that linked hysteria to a transgression of female sexuality.

In this chapter, I intend to explore further the reason of Charcot's such a cultural impact. In my reading of Charcot's photography I will focus on the production of affects of desire and fear that in my view constitute the crucial innovation of these images compared to frontal portraits of patients. To a much higher degree compared to frontal portraits, Charcot's photography is able to produce a dramatic emotional response in the viewer. The matter of desire has already been explored by criticism; for example Jann Matlock in *Scene of seduction: Prostitution, Hysteria and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-century France* (1994) refers to the Salpêtrière in general as a "play of desire set in motion" (133). Matlock specifically points to the ways female bodies were eroticized and turned into objects of desire during Charcot's demonstrations of

hysterical women in his “Lesson de mardi.”

Georges Didi-Huberman, in his pivotal study on Charcot’s photography, *Invention of Hysteria. Charcot and the photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (2003), also emphasizes the eroticization of Augustine’s body in the series entitled *Attitude passionnelle*. Didi-Huberman writes: “The spectacle of the *attitude passionnelle* was thus like the formalism of desire, the signifying event of a relation to the Other” (167). This “other,” in the historian’s perspective, is gendered: it is the male spectator—“the physician,” the “he”—who assisted Charcot’s “lessons de mardi,” as well the male audience to whom these photographs were showed. The writer also argues that Augustine challenges the viewer’s desire: “*she defies the spectator’s desire, she consecrates and defies his mastery*” (167). Didi-Huberman touches on a key point in relation to Augustine’s production of desire; her body is employed to challenge and at the same time to master the viewer’s desire. Nonetheless, the historian does not explore the reasons of such a challenge; eventually in his words the hysterical woman works mostly as producer of desire, she is employed, he follows, “*to sustain the desire of others*” (167). In my analysis I investigate further the matter of desire and the ways in which Augustine challenges and at the same time regulates the viewer’s desire. In truth, what is at stake in Augustine photography? I will investigate fear, the way fear mingles with desire, where fear originates and how fear operates in the spectator.

In the second half of this chapter I then consider how decadent Italian intellectuals promoted an image of the hysterical woman that was parallel and



partially indebted to Charcot's iconography.<sup>44</sup> I will focus specifically on the literary production of Gabriele D'Annunzio, who enjoyed widespread fame in Italy and in Europe during the turn of the century. By examining a selection of D'Annunzio's novels and short stories that include "La vergine Orsola" (1884) and "La vergine Anna" (1886), *L'innocente* (1892) and *Il trionfo della morte* (1894) I show how the hysterical woman was constructed as spectacle and how the production of desire and fear was also fundamental in the representation of these bodies.<sup>45</sup> The aim of this chapter is to understand how the representation of the hysterical woman began to work as an apparatus. In this perspective, I elucidate how the affective response produced by these images became part of a strategy of power that used affects to produce normalization.

The idea of the apparatus creates a link between the inside of the text and the outside. Criticism of the hysterical woman in literary texts has focused mostly on how hysteria was used as literary expedient. Disease and in particular the figure of the hysterical woman became a central topic among decadent writers. Mario Praz, for example, in *La carne la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (1930), links the figure of the hysterical woman to the *femme fatale* and points out the double link between horror and desire that stem from this image (188-288).

Mary Ann Doane explores the figure of the *femme fatale* in cinematic production and offers a feminist reading of this figure. In *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis* (1991) Doane writes: "The *femme fatale* is an articulation of fears surrounding the loss of stability and centrality of the

self, the I, the ego. These anxieties appear quite explicitly in the process of her representation as castration anxiety” (2). The *femme fatale* embodies castration anxiety; she represents a lack of stability, a weakness of male desire and subjectivity. In this way, the *femme fatale* represents a threat to male subjectivity.

While these studies point to key matters related to the representation of the hysterical woman, my focus in this chapter will be to show how this image worked in relation to the regulation of sexuality. To do so, I will explore the deep link between the representation of the hysterical woman and hygienic politics that spread throughout Europe during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. While the apparatus of the asylum continued to function as a large depository of unwanted women, the project of intervention became more and more tied to ideas concerning artificial selection. In this chapter I will show how literature became a major promoter of this project of intervention. The deep link between the hysterical woman and reproduction was used to affirm state power control over reproduction. By scrutinizing this link we see how the affective response to these representation of madness became part of a strategy of power that was used to produce normalization.<sup>46</sup>

### **Getting Rid of the Undesirables**

During the second half of the nineteenth century, social darwinism became one of the most influential ideologies of the western world (Mantovani 7).<sup>47</sup> At the core of this ideology was Darwin’s theory of evolution, according to which new species would develop over different generations through a process of natural selection. With the advent of Francis Galton’s eugenics at the end of the

nineteenth century, Darwin's theory found another avenue for success. In several works published between 1869 and 1905, Galton explored the possibility of enhancing the human race through artificial selection. In *Hereditary Genius* (1869), Galton began his studies by investigating the heredity of men of genius among British families (Maccabelli 114). According to Galton, the superiority of genius did not derive from "nurture," meaning education, environment and the social context, but from "nature"—the biology of the individual (115). Galton believed that genetic traits were transmitted via heredity from one generation to another. In later works, the anthropologist explored the ways through which it was possible to ameliorate the human race, by reducing the risk of degeneration and enhancing the reproduction of the best stock. In *Eugenics: Its definition, Scope and Aims* (1904) Galton advanced the idea of artificial selection, an idea that he drew directly from Darwin's *The Variations in Plants and Animals under Domestication* (1868) (115).

Artificial selection, according to Galton, was based on a double strategy. On the one hand it was necessary to get rid of the undesirables, such as the degenerate; on the other hand the desirables should be multiplied (Maccabelli 117). Galton suggests that degenerate should not reproduce: "a stop should be put to the production of families of children likely to include degenerates" (cited in Maccabelli 117). The threat of degeneration, Mantovani suggests, was at the foundation of the development of eugenics (15-17).

In his later years Galton introduced "eugenic certificates" in England that were used to control marriages and reproduction between individuals (Berlini 31).

With the development of Galton's theories in the United States and northern Europe, extreme practices of sterilization—and in some cases of euthanasia, such as the Nazis' T4—were employed to assure the procreation of only the “superior” race.<sup>48</sup>

In Italy the question of race became a prominent matter among scientists, anthropologist and physicians, such as Paolo Mantegazza, Giuseppe Sergi, Aldo Niceforo, Cesare Lombroso and Enrico Morselli (Mantovani 36). The hypothesis of the two Italian “races”—the north and the south—is just one example of the substantial impact of racist theories in the Italian context.<sup>49</sup> In particular, in the studies of Cesare Lombroso, Enrico Morselli and Giuseppe Sergi the notion of degeneration was perceived as a major threat in the constitution of a strong Italian race (Berlini 147).

We must note that before the spread of Francis Galton's theories on eugenics, ideas related to public hygiene and artificial selection were already circulating among Italian scientists and anthropologists (Mantovani 35). In 1871, for example, Paolo Mantegazza wrote *Elementi di igiene* (1871) in which he advanced ideas concerning the non-reproduction of mentally ill people:

Al giorno d'oggi l'igiene ha della scienza i più sacrosanti diritti per dire al tubercolotico, all'epilettico, al pazzo, all'idiota, al sifilitico, amate, *ma non generate*. E l'economia politica che non è poi un'igiene della società, deve dire al povero che ai suoi fanciulli non sa offrire che la fame o la casa degli esposti: *amate, ma non generate*. Malthus calunniato, frainteso, sarà un giorno uno dei santi dell'umanità, e già il Mayer, uomo onestissimo e

cristianissimo, faceva un primo passo su questa via, ricordando ai genitori che nei giorni che precedono il tributo mensile la concezione è rarissima.

Ebbene fate ancora un passo e dite: *amate, ma non generate*. (456)

While in this passage Mantegazza seems to appeal directly to people's conscience, asking the degenerate to love but not to reproduce, he quotes soon after Professor Reese's proposal to forbid marriages among people with physical and or mental ailments:

Per legge devono proibirsi le unioni di individui affetti da malattie che sono riconosciute ereditarie. Il celibato deve dunque essere imposto ai tubercolosi, agli scrofolosi, agli scorbutici, ai gottosi, ai pazzi, agli ubriacconi e specialmente ai sifilitici, e ciò per gravi ragioni di Stato che riguardano la pubblica prosperità. (457)

Professor Reese proposes that diseased people, among them the mentally ill, should be denied the right to marry and reproduce.

Mantegazza's ideas reflect a general movement in Italy towards intervention. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, debate increased concerning the quality and quantity of the population. Claudia Mantovani discusses the establishment of a "paradigma interventista" that applied to the control of the individual and of the population (Mantovani 91). Collective responsibility was key in this project of intervention (91). Discourses similar to those of Mantegazza were held by other influential scientists. Cesare Lombroso for example, although he was never a eugenicist, had a pivotal impact on the studies of degeneration in Italy as well as in Europe (49). Most significantly,

Lombroso believed that the death penalty was the only possible way to free humanity from the danger of crime; he considered the death penalty a philanthropic work of social purification (Berlini 26).

Giuseppe Sergi offers another example of how eugenic beliefs spread in Italy. In *Le degenerazioni umane* (1889) Sergi divided the human population into two groups:

Quindi risulta che nelle società umane possono distinguersi due categorie d'individui, i normali, o quelli che hanno superata ogni difficoltà, senza che in loro sia rimasta traccia della lotta sostenuta, e che sono dotati delle migliori disposizioni nel continuare a vivere e lasciare discendenza; e i degenerati, o coloro che portano seco i caratteri d'inferiorità e dello sforzo patito nel sopravvivere. (24)

According to Sergi, degeneration constituted a major threat among “normal” people. He thus promoted the idea of artificial selection through either education or repression, depending on the gravity of the degeneration: “Oggi noi dobbiamo tendere con tutte le forze a questa selezione artificiale coi due mezzi energici, repressione ed educazione, senza di essa non riusciremmo a migliorare la razza” (228). Sergi reached drastic conclusions, proposing either the deportation of the degenerate to deserted islands or denying reproduction in order to prevent degenerate traits from being transmitted to the following generations (228).

Another key contribution to this debate was offered by Italian psychiatrist and gynecologist Angelo Zuccarelli. In an article published in *Bollettino della società ginecologica di Napoli* (1901) and entitled “Per la sterilizzazione della

donna come mezzo per impedire la riproduzione dei maggiormente degenerati,” Zuccarelli first promoted the idea of women’s sterilization for non-therapeutic ends. His proposal, first discussed at the Congresso Medico Internazionale in 1894, reached other public spaces, such as universities, medical meetings and the parliament (Mantovani 52). Sterilization, according to Zuccarelli, had to extend to epileptics, alcoholics, criminals, syphilitics and other degenerates (Zuccarelli 1). A main preoccupation for Zuccarelli was the difficulty of educating and socially rehabilitating the insane; according to him it was much easier to artificially prevent the reproduction of inferior species than it was to educate them (Mantovani 53).

Whereas Zuccarelli’s ideas on sterilization gained little traction in Italy, other ideas related to hygiene in marriage did resonate there: prohibiting marriage between members of the same family; excluding from marriage those highly degenerate such as syphilitics, epileptics and alcoholics; listing potential criminals and perilous people from elementary school on, in order to prevent social danger (53). Together with these practices, confinement in mental institutions and prisons, and the death penalty for criminals, were the most common ways of getting rid of the undesiderables in Italy. As Berlini points out, Italian scientists were immensely concerned with developing public awareness of the danger of degeneration (126).

In this context, it is essential to remember that at the beginning of the twentieth century there emerged in Italy an increasing debate concerning the “sexual question” and conscious procreation (Mantovani 115). With some delay

compared to other European countries, Italy too witnessed the emergence of a rigid sexual morality. Morally correct sexual behavior was defined in relation to the collectivity and was based on sexual repression, self-discipline and monogamy (116). In an article that appeared in *La Voce*, “La questione sessuale” (1910), Giorgio Sorel, in a section titled “Il valore sociale della castità,” praises the positive aspect of chastity; sexual relations have to be limited to conjugal relations (259). Sexual morality was also deeply tied to hygienic politics; in the same article Giovanni Papini celebrates Paolo Mantegazza’s novel *Un giorno a Madera* (1876), in which the author promoted the non-reproduction of degenerate (Mantovani 121). Further, the article also reports a writing by Swiss psychiatrist Auguste Forel, one of the most influential supporters of sterilization for eugenic ends, whose theories had a large impact in Germany and France (121). In general, we must remember that the notion of responsibility, based on self-discipline, monogamy and sexual repression, became a leading idea in *fin-de-siècle* Italian society (118).

### **The Bête Noire**

Hysteria has been a subject of intense interest among scientists, intellectuals and physicians.<sup>50</sup> Especially during the nineteenth century, this phenomena reached its largest breadth of investigation; all over Europe the number of women confined in mental institutions drastically increased (Zavirsek 173). Paris in particular was established as the “hysteria capital of the world” (Hustvedt 27).

Among hysterics, the most recurrent symptoms physicians identified were:



A predilection for drama and deception, excessive emotionality, paralysis of the limbs, temporary deafness and muteness, heightened sensitivity of the skin, willful starving, spontaneous bleeding, feelings of strangulation, hallucination and somnambulism, and fits of contortions and seizures. (20)

Further, hysterical women were usually characterized as having either deficient or excessive sexuality: they were either nymphomaniacs or frigid (Gallini 286). The question of women's desire during the nineteenth century became a prominent subject of inquiry among physicians (Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria* 5). Women's desire was turned into a pathology, and female sexuality was considered as "always and already hysterical" (5). Hysteria in this context came to symbolize par excellence the medicalization of active female sexuality (5).

In studies of hysteria, one of the main problems among physicians was the fact that its cause remained unknown. During antiquity Hippocrates first associated hysteria with a "wandering womb," referring to a uterus that refused to stay in its proper place (Hustvedt 20). Hysteria was considered an organic disease of the female reproductive system. During the Middle Ages and Renaissance, the illness was instead related to demonic possession; consequently, it changed from an organic disease to a moral one (20). During Renaissance, hysterics were no longer considered sick women but witches, accomplices of Satan (Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria* 8). In the nineteenth century, the hypothesis of the wandering womb appeared unable to prove the origin of the disease; although convulsions and vapors were there, it seemed impossible to localize the essence of the illness (Didi-Huberman 71).

Jean-Martin Charcot, a French neurologist who worked at the Salpêtrière asylum in Paris, played a crucial role in the study and classification of hysteria. During this period the Salpêtrière, considered “a city within a city,” was the largest medical institution in Europe (Hustvedt 14), and in the press Charcot was described as the “Napoleon of Neuroses” (15). The French neurologist was a highly charismatic person, and his fame among physicians was immense. On Tuesday evenings he and his wife would hold parties at their house where many intellectuals, politicians, scholars and students would gather (17).

Charcot’s main innovation apparently—and only apparently—consisted first, in a complete rejection of the uterine theory (26). Charcot believed that hysteria was a neurological disorder to which patients were pre-disposed due to hereditary features of their nervous system (26). According to him, the chaos created by the continual repetition of similar symptoms could be studied, classified, and made visible through deep observation: “[hysteria] is not something out of a novel: hysteria has its laws. And hysteria submits to them! I can assure you that it has the “regularity of a mechanism” (cited in Didi-Huberman 76). Charcot established a paradigm of the “grande attaque,” isolating four separate phases of it (Hustvedt 22). Although there were many variations to this model, Charcot’s four phases functioned as a sort of “archetype” of the hysterical attack. As Charcot once stated: “In the hysterical attack nothing is left to chance” (22).

If, according to Charcot, the anatomical origin of hysteria was in the brain, the disease was still defined a “sphinx that defies anatomy” (22). The French neurologist was mostly interested in visually documenting the disease. Charcot

employed several expedients in order to make the disease visible: in particular, photography became an essential tool to isolate and fix the phases of the hysterical attack.<sup>51</sup>

When, a few years later, the study of hysteria would take, with Sigmund Freud's and Josef Breuer's *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), an undisputed development towards psychoanalysis, Charcot's main contribution to the field consisted in the figurative value he was able to attribute to hysteria; his photographs became iconic, symbols of hysteria (Didi-Huberman 186). Charcot attempted to increment the visibility of the body; in particular, hypnosis played a crucial role in his practice and was considered, as Didi-Huberman suggests, a true model of hysteria (185).

### **Flesh**

Looking at the photographs of Augustine included in the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*, vols. II (1878-79),<sup>52</sup> one notices the rigidity of her body, which suggests that she is posing for the camera. These photographs were taken by Paul Regnard, who used a wet collodion process that required an exposure time of two to three seconds (Hustvedt 178).<sup>53</sup> Consequently, the subject was required to sit still in order to obtain a sharp image. Augustine's poses suggest that the intention of these photographs differs from the frontal portraits of patients I analyzed in the previous chapter. While in portraits of patients, the main attempt was to show the naturalness of mental illness, these photographs seem instead to aim at assign a specific semiotics to hysteria.

Compared to those frontal portraits of patients, these photographs have

more contrast; light and dark are almost equally balanced in each print. Unlike the white background of traditional portraits, the background in these prints is dark. As a result, the dark background contrasts radically with the white color of both the bedsheets and Augustine's uniform. Through this expedient, Augustine's body is lightened in the middle of each of these pictures. The light hits her skin and makes her body the undisputed subject of the frame. Still, the white of her skin perfectly matches the white color of the sheets. While her body represents the main subject matter of these frames, her body and the bed are made to constitute a single entity. From the start we perceive the bed as a fundamental feature of the frame.

The setting—the bed—and use of light create a unity among all the photos of Augustine contained in the series; this unity implies that all these images must be read together. What is compelling to notice, however, is the circularity of the photographic narrative. The focus on the contraction of the hand in the last plate, “Contracture,” which follows *Attitudes passionnelles*, also recalls the first two plates, “Tétanisme.” The same can be said when looking at all plates together. “Contracture” is followed by “Etat normal” and after this plate, the attack starts over again. This sequence visually suggests that repetition is an essential feature of the hysterical attack. Hysterical women would in fact repeatedly experience their hysterical symptoms; in the specific case of Augustine, it is documented that while she had her first attack two months after she entered the Salpêtrière, the number of attacks increased drastically until she suffered 154 attacks in one single day (Hustvedt 170-171).

The first plate to represent Augustine is plate XIV, “Etat normal.” This photograph recalls traditional frontal portraits: Augustine’s upper body is visible and she sits on a chair, dressed in women’s street clothes (167). Nonetheless, the position of her body suggests that she is not sitting on a chair, but rather abuts on it; her knees are against the seat of the chair; her head is inclined to one side, supported by her left hand. While this happened probably because of the long time of exposure, this position creates a pause: from the start Augustine seems to be waiting for something or somebody.

In this image, both the chair and Augustine’s dress are dark, that thus not strongly distinguishable from the background. This expedient creates an emphasis on the only two lightened parts included in the frame: Augustine’s hands and her face. Her right hand is placed on her lap and shows no paralysis (167). Her gaze meets the camera and Augustine seems to almost smile at it. At first glance then Augustine looks like a “normal” woman; to guide the viewer’s understanding is the emphasis on her hands and face, realized through light and contrast.

This image contrasts radically with the following one, “Début de l’attaque: Cri” (Plate XV). This photograph portrays only half of Augustine’s body, she lies in bed. Her horizontal position links the bed to the idea of disease, and her white uniform also suggests that Augustine is a sick woman. As I mentioned in relation to frontal portraits of patients, the uniform was standard in the representation of the mentally ill. Furthermore, in this plate, disease is also connected to the idea of violence. Augustine does not only lay in bed, she is tied to it. Furthermore, the frame cuts her body almost entirely out, and leaves Augustine’s face as the main

subject-matter. The emphasis on her open mouth clearly speaks to the brutality of the crisis: Augustine is screaming because of the pain.

Disease is also the protagonist of Plates XVI and XVII, “Tétanisme” and “Tétanisme: attitude de la face” which reproduce the first phase of the hysterical attack—also known as “epileptoid.” In the first photograph Augustine lies in bed; her figure is in the middle of the frame. In the entanglement between the white uniform and the white bed sheets, the only parts of her body that remain uncovered are her arms and face. Consequently, the focus of this photograph is once again the same parts of the body that were emphasized through light and contrast in “État normal.” Nonetheless, in this case both Augustine’s hands and face present a contracture. Her eyes are wide open and look far left; her hands are bent outside and touch each other.

The contracture is also the protagonist of the second image, “Tétanisme,” plate XVII. These two photographs have the same title, only with the addition of “attitude de la face.” Compared to the previous photograph, the frame of this picture only includes half of Augustine’s body. Whereas her arms are still in the frame, where the contracture should appear the image is blurry. As a result the focus of this photograph, as in the previous plate “Début de la crise,” is again Augustine’s face. Nonetheless, instead of an open mouth to be emphasized in this plate is another kind of violence: the contracture of the gaze. Once again Augustine’s eyes are wide open; they stare at something unspecified situated on the up right of her body.

We must notice how a disease of the eyes usually affected hysterical

women. To name a few “ocular symptoms” of hysteria are: “paralysis of the motor apparatus of the eye, lid spasm, micropsia, macropsia, concentric shrinking of the visual field” and so on (Didi-Huberman 129). Of particular interest among physicians inside the Salpêtrière was the phenomena of the asymmetry of the gaze, which was considered a hysterical stigma (129).

Accordingly, both “Tétanisme” plates, with their focus on contractures of the body, are key in the definition of hysteria. Didi-Huberman suggests that “[The contracture] was a fixed moment of contortion and convulsion, the sculptural moment of a kind of motivity that is nonetheless completely unbridled: a statue of living pain” (124). In a similar fashion to facial expressions in portraits of patients, contractures functioned as a *mark* to attest the existence of hysteria. Hysteria is a disease that affects primarily the body, and most particularly the female body.

Nonetheless a comparison of the first of these photographs with the final engraving of it can be quite revealing.<sup>54</sup> Didi-Huberman again offers a suggestive description of the engraving:

The legs are denuded, in an additional contracture, like the revealed underside of a photograph that does not show enough; the tensing of the shoulders ‘expressively’ exaggerated; distinct foam emerges from the mouth, the restraints on the bed have disappeared. Richer even makes the hair more ‘expressive,’ like a wild torrent of passion. (126)

To this description I would also add that, in the final engraving, Augustine’s body is no longer covered with a blanket, and her right shoulder is bared, creating an

emphasis on Augustine's breast. Consequently, in the passage between the photograph and the final engraving, what we notice is a heightened eroticization of Augustine's body. Her naked legs and shoulder, as well as her loose wild hair, clearly suggest a body which, while becoming a statue of pain, is also eroticized. Indeed, the engraving creates a link between contracture and sexuality, between hysteria and eroticism.

### **Culpability**

The eroticization of Augustine's body is essential for considering the series of images captioned *Attitudes passionnelles*. This series follows soon after "Tétanisme, attitude de la face," and represents the third phase of the hysterical attack.<sup>55</sup> This session makes up the majority of plates—ten, to be precise: "Menace," "Appel," "Supplication amoureuse," "Erotisme," "Exstase," "Hallucination de l'ouïe," "Crucifiement," "Moquerie" and "Menace." If in the first two phases Augustine's attack was similar to that of other hysterics, Hustvedt points out how "passionate poses" were unique to her:

Augustine, then, was not only the most photogenic model but she was also the most gifted. Whether she deliberately froze her movements to allow Regnard a great shot is impossible to know. But the end results of what happened in that studio are the extraordinary portraits we have today.

(185)

Augustine was able to freeze her movements in such a way that she distinguished herself in the execution of these poses. These photographs became famous because of the "beautiful" result reached by Regnard (175).



We must notice that, at first glance, nothing about Augustine's body suggests disease: there are no contractures of the hand or of the gaze. However, it is also true that the emphasis of these photographs is still firmly on her face and hands. While in "Tétanisme" Augustine's arms presented a contracture of her hands, in these plates her arms and hands, especially in the case of "Appel," "Supplication amoureuse," "Erotisme," "Extase" and "Crucifiement" openly recall the poses of mystics. For example, Francesco Cairo in *Estasi di Santa Caterina da Siena* (1665) portrays the woman with her hands open and situated in front of her body which clearly recall Augustine's "Extase." In Caravaggio's painting *Maddalena in estasi* (1606) the woman is depicted supported on a chair, she has a bare shoulder and her face looks absent. As Clara Gallini notices in her book, other mystical poses include women depicted with their arms crossed and their eyes staring at the sky (273).

Indeed, this period witnessed the revival of mysticism and witchcraft all over Europe (Gallini 272). Mysticism came to be pathologized, and mystics diagnosed as hysterics. At the core of this pathology was female sexuality and eroticism. Mystics' relation to God was considered an excess of sexuality. Alfonso Asturaro in *Santa Caterina da Siena* (1881) points to the relationship between Santa Caterina and hysterical women:

Chi ben consideri cotesto stato di Caterina attraverso gli slanci amorosi verso Dio scorgerà la donna isterica, che ha avuto dalla natura l'irresistibile bisogno dell'amore umano e l'ha represso con ogni sorta di tormenti: scorgerà questo naturale impulso, represso in ogni forma,

ricomparire in un'altra: ma tanto più forte e furente, quanto più quella donna avrà concentrato tutta la sua attività, com'ella dice, occupato tutte le sue potenze in un'unica direzione. (cited in Gallini 277)

Santa Caterina's passion for God is compared to hysterical women's inexhaustible need for love. Mazzoni, referring to Nordeau's "Mysticism"—a section of his *Degeneration* (1892)—writes that Saint Teresa's and Ignatius's ecstasy "is associated with sexual feeling because both ecstasy and sex are characterized by 'the sharp pain which accompanies nerve action in over excited brain cells,' associated with sexual feelings" (*Saint Hysteria* 90). At the core of this relationship was this perception: mystical visions of God were perceived by physicians as an excess of sexuality.

Sexuality is also a central issue in Charcot's analysis. Freud himself recorded Charcot as saying that in hysterical cases "it's always the genital thing ...always...always...always" (cited in Mazzoni, *Saint Hysteria* 21).

Consequently, although Charcot never fully discussed the sexual aspects of hysteria—dismissing the relationship with the uterus—he adopted sexuality as a crucial subtext to his work. Sexuality, Mazzoni comments, "is thus the unspoken subtext of Charcot's oeuvre" (22). Mazzoni also points out how most of the terminology and experimental models Charcot employed were taken from the Christian tradition, such as the term *stigmata*. If *stigmata* on the one hand referred to the wounds of crucifixion, it also meant, in its definition of *stigmata diaboli*, the intercourse with the devil (25). Further, the Salpêtrière was commonly remembered as a haven for syphilitic prostitutes; this stereotype clearly reinforces

the relationship between female madness and eroticism (21).

Going back to Augustine photographs, we must notice that the more Augustine's positions recall those of mystics, the more her body is eroticized. For example, in plate XX, entitled "Supplication amoureuse," Augustine has her hands crossed in a prayerful attitude that explicitly creates a link to mysticism. Nonetheless her uniform also shows a part of her shoulder; the bare shoulder, similarly to the engraving that I discussed previously, links this representation to eroticism. The same happens in several of the following plates, namely "Erotisme," "Extase," "Moquerie" and "Menace." In addition, in "Extase" and "Moquerie" her legs are also visible. This expedient connects her body with sexuality and eroticism; it thus strengthens the relationship between mysticism and hysteria.<sup>56</sup>

In all these images, Augustine's hair is a central element. Generally, in portraits of female patients, we have seen that their bodies were drastically asexualized. Hair became a constitutive part of the asexualization of the female body: in all portraits hair was either tied tightly, covered with a head cloth, or even shaved. We should note that hair was also tied in portraits of bourgeois women, usually in sophisticated hairstyles. During the last two decades of the nineteenth century, in fact, it was very unusual to see women portrayed with loose hair in both photographs and paintings (*Donne in posa* 62). Loose hair was considered a seductive intimacy, appropriate for the bedroom, and was never publicly shown (62). The fact that Augustine's and other hysterical women's hair is loose suggests that the connotative meaning of these images is again to create a

link between hysteria and eroticism, and of course to transgression.

We understand that what these photographs create in the first place, through the juxtaposition between contractures of the hands and the poses of mystics, is a new semiotic of the hysterical attack. This link underscores the relationship of both mysticism and madness with sexuality. Whereas this relationship is made visible through Augustine's hands, it is in the vision, the eyes, that sexuality is fully expressed. If in fact an excessive sexuality is at the core of mystical visions, hysterical visions must also imply an abnormal female sexuality. It is in Augustine's eyes that the transgression of her female sexuality is fully embodied.

The relationship between hysteria and sexuality helps begin to explain the reasons behind Charcot's impact on the European context. During this period psychiatry was still attempting to affirm itself as an institutionalized science. Through the poses of mystics, Charcot was able to place the body of the hysterical woman into an established tradition. As Didi-Huberman writes, Charcot, in the reproduction of Augustine's ecstasies, turned the woman into "an attested form, a classic or typical form of hysteria in her so-called attacks of ecstasy" (142). The aim of Charcot and of the Salpêtrière was to put together scientific practices with "figurative, plastic and literary paradigms" (142).

In the second place, Charcot's innovation also relates to the question of shame and guilt that was central in the definition of female active sexuality. The revival of mysticism during this period took place because it was deeply related to the flesh, in particular, the phenomenon of possession in which the body of

someone possessed was turned into a theatrical stage. Foucault, in *Abnormal* (2003) considers convulsions as “the plastic and visible form of the struggle taking place in the body of the possessed” (224). Seizures and convulsions become, according to him, the prototype of mental illness; convulsions worked as a model for instinctual disorders that was at the origin of the domain of the abnormal (224). Foucault’s analysis of convulsions relates directly to the notion of “a moral physiology of the flesh” in which the concupiscence of the flesh became, according to him, the psyche of the abnormal (189).

I suggest that Charcot’s photographs were first and foremost able to make concrete, at the *representational* level, the relationship between madness and the culpability of the flesh. This relates directly to the Italian context for example, specifically *Giacinta*, which became the object of scandal. This was a period in which female active sexuality had to be associated with the idea of guilt and shame. In other words, this was a period during which the representation of madness begun to matter. If, as Gallini writes, the discourse on mysticism was already in play it was only with Charcot that the relationship between ecstasies, possession and hysteria found its true connection and acquired a generalized cultural function. This happened because Charcot was able to finalize—through the media of photography—the relationship between madness and guilt. Still, if the relation to mysticism offered an answer to the problem of representation, what else is implied in these frames?

### **Reproduction**

In plate XVII, “Tétanisme: attitude de la face,” the emphasis is on the

contracture of the gaze. In “Appel” (Plate XIX) the same identical frame is reproduced: half bed and half of Augustine’s body. The hands are included in the frame of any of these pictures. Thereafter in both of them the emphasis is on the face, specifically on Augustine’s eyes. Whereas in both the images Augustine gazes at something unspecified, we are talking about two different kinds of gaze. In “Tétanisme,” her gaze reproduces a contracture, it is linked to disease. Augustine is not looking at anything. In the second plate instead, Augustine seems to be looking at something or someone. To emphasize this is a complete movement of Augustine’s body: she is now fully turned towards the object of her gaze. In addition to this, her face is now openly smiling. This suggests that whatever or whoever she looks at, she must also find it pleasurable. This expression recurs in all following plates. In all of them Augustine’s eyes suggest the presence of someone else. Further, we can also notice that her smile, in the following plates, turns into a laugh. This happens in particular in “Eroticism” and “Extase.”

Additionally, in “Appel,” Augustine does not lie in bed anymore, but she leans on her arm. In fact, the more we proceed into this photographic narrative, the more one notices how her body assumes a more erect position, until she sits on the bed. While the bed in the first plates was directly related to disease, in most of the plates of *Attitudes passionnelles* the semi-erect position of Augustine’s body, together with the eroticization of her body, are also able to attribute another meaning to the bed: the bed is now the place of the sexual act.

In the session of the *Iconographie* titled “Période de délire” we are told

that Augustine is having an affair with an imaginary lover:

L'attitude change brusquement. X...fait: petit; petit; est assise a demi, voit un amant imaginaire qu'elle appelée (Pl. XIX). Il cède, X...se couche en se portant sur le cote gauche du lit et montrant la place libre qu'elle lui fait dans le lit. Elle ferme les yeux, la physionomie dénote la possession, le désir assouvi, les bras sont croisés, comme si elle pressait sur son sein l'amant de ses rêves. (162)

We understand therefore that in plate XIX, "Appel," the different gaze that characterizes Augustine is related to the fact that she looks at an imaginary lover. This would explain the smile on her face and the eroticization of her body. As I mentioned previously, through the connection with mysticism, hysterical visions were directly related to sexuality.

The sexual encounter continues and in the following image, "Supplication amoureuse" (Pl. XX). Borneville's text reads: " X...se soulève, s'asseoit, regarde en haut, joint les mains en suppliant et dit d'un ton plaintif: "Tu ne veux plus? Encore..." (162). In the following photographs "Erotisme" and "Extase" I and II (Pl. XXI, XXII and XXIII) Augustine's smile is now similar to a laugh. Here is the description:

Elle se couche a demie sur le côté gauche du lit, les bras entre- croisés, la physionomie souriante: elle se relève rapidement. Fait signe à son invisible de venir: puis, attitude extatique Pl XXIII, bientôt X....fait signe de venir, se recouche et reprend l'attitude de la possession ou de l'érotisme (Pl. XXI). (164)

Bourneville continues: “Ensuite elle sourit, donne des baisers, se met debout, est suppliante ‘Encore! Encore! Fait signe supplie: Tu ne veux plus...je vais monter’(164). It is possible to understand at this point that implicit in these images is the representation of a sexual act. Augustine is not only looking at an imaginary lover but actually having sex with him. In particular this happens during the phase “Crucifiement.” In plates XXIX and XXX the sexual act is emphasized through the movement of her hips: “X ...crachotte, puis elle parle: “Cochon, Chocon...je le dirai a papa...Cochon! Que tu es lourd! ...Tu me fais mal” En même temps elle a quelques petits mouvements du bassin (164).

It is imperative at this point to understand the nature of this sexual act. Bourneville dedicated considerable time recording Augustine’s hallucinations and memory from her past life (Hustvedt 186). He believed in the truthfulness of her words and decided to include this event in her case history. According to him, the nature of this sexual act was the performance of a rape. Augustine was raped and her mother apparently played a role in it. This past event would regularly be recreated during Augustine’s attack. Bourneville felt it was essential to include Augustine’s words in the text so that readers could appreciate the link that existed between real life events and the different phases of the delirium phase of the attack (186).

What I find very striking is the discrepancy between Bourneville’s text and the images. If the story we are told is the story of a rape, why does Augustine laugh? How can Augustine possibly enjoy herself? Why does she fully embrace the man who is supposed to rape her? Absolutely nothing of these photographs



suggests the violence that must be implicit in a rape. If according to Butler the photographic frame is an active instrument of power that operates “without any visible signs of its operation” (*Frames of War* 72), what is the operation of power that lay beyond these frames?

We must notice, in the first place, that the erotic body of Augustine contrasts radically with the representation of the asexual body offered in frontal portraits of patients. Whereas in frontal portraits women were deprived of any context able to define them as women, in these photographs the loose hair, the bare shoulders and legs, the hyper-eroticization of Augustine’s body, the provocative expression of her face undoubtedly makes this body hyper-feminine. Augustine is primarily an object of desire. Further, the image of the bed that is contained in each of these photographs brings to an extreme the eroticization of her body. The bed is the place of the sexual act; Augustine, we are told, is having sex with an imaginary lover.

But while the sexual act is implicit in the image of the bed, it is essential to notice that Augustine performs this act alone. In all the plates of *Attitudes passionnelles* Augustine looks at *someone*, she smiles and laughs at *someone*, she shows her body to *someone*, she speaks to *someone*, yet this someone is never present in the frame. What the frame excludes is the actual presence of a male partner. If the sexual act is the subtext of these images, this act never actually takes place: through the solo performance of Augustine what the frame affirms is the actual negation of a sexual relation.

Didi-Huberman in his book points out too to this failed sexual relation; he

argues that the sexuality of Augustine is a sexuality that can never be expressed:

Her gesture-making was merely the ostentation of a failure, failure par excellence: the sexual relation, always attempted, always contradictorily figured in a thousand and one *attitudes passionales*, and always made present as pure inanity, the shady and clamant vacuity of an empty embrace. (252)

According to Didi-Huberman the whole performance of Augustine is the failure of a sexual relation, a relation that is constantly acted out in her thousands poses but that actually never takes place. Didi-Huberman continues by arguing that Augustine, in performing this pantomime, is not a woman: “In this sense the hysteric pantomime is but a *countereffectuation*: The dancer is not a woman who dances, for these juxtaposed reasons: she is not a woman, but a metaphor summarizing one of the elementary aspect of our form-sword, cup, flower, etc;” (253). If, as the writer suggests, Augustine is “not a woman.” In what sense she is not? We must explore further this sense of denial.

Augustine, the embodiment of Eros, is a woman whose sexuality has now been reduced to the place and time of a photographic shot. In line with frontal portraits of patients Augustine too is an asexual body whose sexual desire and sexual agency, in reality, will never be fulfilled. Yet what else is denied to Augustine? We must consider at this point the crucial link between motherhood and womanhood. According to physicians of the time it was only through maternity that a woman could become a woman. For example, in his pivotal book *Sex and Character* (1903), Otto Weininger—although in a slightly later period—

writes:

For women the state of sexual arousal only means the greatest intensification of her whole existence, *which is always and absolutely sexual. W's existence evolves entirely around her sexual life, the sphere of copulation and reproduction, i.e., in her relationship with a man and with children*, and her existence is totally absorbed by these things, while M is *not only* sexual. (79)

Women's sexuality is only defined in relation to her reproductive function.

Women do not have a sexual conscience, as men do, and the only sexual agency is limited to reproduction. In relation to this, the image of the bed is again key of these representations. While the sexual act is implicit in the image of the bed in a society in which, as Foucault suggests, sexuality has been confined to the parents' bedroom, the bed is not only the place of pleasure but it is first and foremost the place of reproduction: the bed in a patriarchal society is forcefully related to the reproductive act.

Indeed, through the *solo* performance of Augustine, what the frame denies is not only the possibility of a sexual act, but it is first and foremost the possibility of reproduction. Since Augustine will never have sex, she, most likely, will also never reproduce. What the frames actually tell us is that Augustine will never be a mother. Augustine is "not a woman" because, unlike women, she cannot reproduce.

Augustine photography actually reinforces and brings to its extreme the asexualization of the female body that was depicted in frontal portraits. Not only

her sexual agency has been reduced to the time and space of a photographic shot, but also and most fundamentally, her gender identity as mother and woman has been completely erased. Augustine breaks drastically the relationship with the system of perception, her body represents the complete denial of womanhood; this denial is rooted in the fact that she will never be a mother. It is because of the extreme eroticization of her body and because of the image of the bed that these photographs, in a way much more effective compared to frontal portraits, are able to attest to the complete asexualization of the female body.

We must now consider the historical reality of these women and the historical context in which these images were born in order to fully understand the operation of power that lay beyond these photographs. These photographs were born during a time period in which, as I showed in the introduction of this chapter, there were deep concerns about the reproduction of the species. The spread of eugenics theories and hygienic politics all over Europe attempted to solve, through artificial selection, the threat of degeneration of the human species. In line with these theories, degenerate women were not only confined inside mental institutions, but also in some cases forcefully denied, through sterilization, the right to reproduce.

Indeed, beyond representation, we are dealing with women in the flesh who during that time were forcibly confined to lunatic asylums. Augustine is an inmate at the Salpêtrière mental hospital. The widespread confinement of mentally ill women that characterized France, Europe and Italy during this period makes clear that the denial of Augustine's sexual relationship, the denial of her

belonging to womanhood, was real. In reality hysterical women were denied the privilege of reproduction, denied the right of motherhood.

Furthermore, the Salpêtrière was also known as the “repository of unwanted and incurable woman” (Hustvedt 11). Because of the somewhat obscure origin of hysteria, Charcot rarely spoke of a cure for the disease. More than in curing women, he was in fact interested in visually documenting their illness. For this, the Salpêtrière was considered the place *par excellence* where women would die (Didi-Huberman 13). In 1863, the director of the general administration Husson wrote a book, *Rapport sur le service des aliénés du Département de la Seine pour l’année 1862*, in which he showed that there was a physician every 500 inmates and the cure rate was only 9,7 % (13). What is more, we must also consider that with the spread of eugenics theories hysterical women were also subjected to drastic practices of sterilization. In the specific French context, sterilization was so widespread that Zola dedicated to it a novel, *Fécondité* (1899), in which he strongly contested practices of sterilization in hysterical women (Bossi 27).

In the light of this, if the frame is constituted fundamentally by what is left outside, we might think that through Augustine’s erotic performance of a (failed) sexual relation, through the actual absence of the male partner, what the frame affirms is psychiatric and state power control over reproduction. What lies beyond these frames is not only the denial of Augustine’s sexual act, as Didi-Huberman points out, but it is the very condition of womanhood to be erased. By depriving the frame of a male partner and by bringing to its extreme the eroticization of

Augustine's body, these photographs visually expose the control of state power over reproduction.

Bertrand Marquer, in his book *Les romans de la Salpêtrière* (2008), points out how the eroticization of Augustine underscores male supremacy over the female body: "La femme hystérique en demeure l'incarnation la plus suggestive, puisque la Salpêtrière offre le spectacle d'une omnipotence masculine scientifiquement légitimée, dont l'efficacité est rituellement éprouvée" (Marquer 224). If, as Marquer shows, the hysterical woman was related to male control over the female body, it is possible to think that this control was also deeply linked to reproduction; reproduction is key in these representations.

In this regard, it is of the great interest to see how in relation to another female patient, Genevine. Bouvanille shows how the woman, after having several "imaginary" sexual acts with his lover, eventually hallucinated a miscarriage "in which she insists that she feels as she felt before: she sweats and her genitals are moist" (Didi-Huberman 148). The most thought-provoking part of this story is that, although we are dealing with an imaginary relation, her blood, as Didi-Huberman points out, was real (148). Genevine had a sexual relation with an "imaginary" lover, and yet she did have vaginal bleeding. What a striking paradox to emphasize the actual impossibility for this woman to reproduce!

We must also point out to the strong relationship of the Salpêtrière with national politics. Marquer shows how Charcot began working at the Salpêtrière in a period during which the link between politics and medicine was already established. In 1838 a law promoted the political role of medicine (67). During

this period science became an essential support for Republican ideology and many physicians, such as in the case of Bourneville, were politically engaged (57). The relationship between psychiatry and politics appear to further testify to the relationship between these images and state gender politics.

Whereas Charcot apparently detached himself from the uterine theory, the aim of his photographs appears to maintain and actually reinforce the link between hysteria and femininity, between hysteria and reproduction. Through the image of the bed as the symbol of a failed sexual relation as well as through the solo performance of Augustine, these photographs affirm the impossibility for these women to reproduce. These photographs sublimate the relationship between female madness and the asexual body. The denial of reproduction speaks directly to the spread of eugenics; psychiatric control over reproduction was part of state politics' concern with the regeneration of the human race all over Europe. Now, if the representation of Augustine is the embodiment of the denial of womanhood, in which ways desire operates and what does desire actually produce?

### **Madness Apparatus**

The medusa in Greek mythology was usually associated with seduction and terror. After being turned into a monster by Athena, she had the power to turn whomever met her gaze into stone. Living men should never look at her face. With the help of Athena, Perseus finally killed Medusa and when she died, Medusa gave birth. From her neck sprang the winged horse Pegasus and the hero Chrysaor. In "Tétanisme," Augustine's face explicitly recalls the image of the Medusa. A reversed Medusa, whose eyes have now been contracted and who,

through photography, has been turned herself to stone; a reversed Medusa whose privilege of reproduction has been denied.

We can notice that Augustine, like Medusa, has been turned into a spectacle. The more Augustine's body stands on the bed and is eroticized, the more her body turns towards the camera. Plates XXI, XXII, XXIII, XXVI clearly show this movement. The transformation of Augustine's body into a spectacle is finalized in the last two plates "Contracture" (XIX, XXX). In these two photographs Augustine's face is completely turned towards the camera. She stares at the viewer.

These two plates are positioned one after the other and, although framed differently and with a different background, they reproduce, in a quite impressive way, the identical image of Augustine: same identical position of her body, same exact expression of her face. These two images, both named "Contracture," must then be read together. The first thing to notice in Plate XIX is a radical change of setting. This is the only plate, besides for "Etat normal" in which the bed disappears. Augustine sits on a chair in the middle of the room. At first impression, one notices that her sexuality is brought to its extreme: her arms and legs are uncovered, the position of her leg and arm are very seductive. Her facial expression, in particular, is very provocative. She stares at the viewer in a very intense gaze; her mouth is closed and her lips are pursed.

The first thing we notice in this photograph is that the chair where Augustine sits is as black as the background. In this way the chair almost disappears in it. This expedient creates a suspension of her body. Similarly to



“Etat normal” Augustine seems to wait for somebody. Furthermore, what is striking about this photograph, is the fact that the inclusion in the frame of her full body makes it quite hard to actually notice the contracture of her arm. Her disease is still in the frame but it is framed in such a way that we can hardly notice it. This suggests why both this photograph and “Etat normal” have a chair as setting: in this photograph Augustine is made to appear as a “normal” woman.

A normal woman who is nonetheless hyper-eroticized; Augustine is a seductive body that is constructed to call the viewer directly into play: Augustine is for the viewer, her body stares at him, it seduces him, it awaits for him. She functions as a producer of desire. To a higher degree compared with the photographs of *Attitudes Passionnelles*, to desire this body is not an imaginary lover, but it is the viewer.

A radical turn takes place in the following plate. Augustine is portrayed in the same identical position, same position of her body, identical gaze. Although her position is the same two main changes take place. First, only half her body is visible, from her head to her hand. Second, Augustine’s body is now reinserted in the traditional background: the bed. These two expedients together overturn completely the image of Augustine. While she is still a hyper seductive body, her eroticization is now entirely linked to disease. It is essential to notice that the half frame of her body put her contracted arm in the foreground: Augustine, in the first place, is a madwoman. Moreover, because of the symbolism of the bed, we also know that Augustine is not only a madwoman, but that she is a woman who is the negation of womanhood: she is a woman who cannot reproduce.

Nonetheless Augustine is still there for the viewer. The identical gaze and position of her body still function as producers of desire. Yet at the same time that her body produces desire it also denies it: Augustine is a madwoman, she is a monstrosity, she is the negation of womanhood, she is a Medusa-like figure. Here desire is turned into fear: her contracted arm set in the foreground together with the eroticization of her body creates shock in the viewer. Her body is there for the viewer while it should not, it seduces the viewer while it should not, it pursues him, while it should not. Fear emerges not properly from Augustine's body, but from the viewer's desire towards her body.

In the perfect combination of eroticism and disease realized through this frame, in the perfect mixture of desire and negation of desire, I suggest what the body of Augustine produces is the regulation of this same desire: it forces the viewer to desire this body while at the same time it forces him/her to renounce his/her own desire. It forces the viewer to self-regulate him/herself towards his/her own desire. What this body produces is a self-regulatory principle: it is subjectivation, self-discipline of one's own desires.

It is essential at this point to explore further the production of this regulatory principle of desire in the light of national gender politics. In line with Butler's analysis, we know that affects are politically constituted. According to Butler our affective response is already inscribed inside a circuit of power: "Our affect is never merely our own, affect is from the start, communicated from elsewhere" (*Frames of War* 50). Butler's analysis of affects is a powerful example of how power is incorporated into the subject; affects are part of a strategy of

power that employs them in order to produce something. The process of incorporation of power is also a key idea of Foucault's notion of the apparatus. According to Foucault "power had to be able to gain access to the bodies of the individuals, to their acts, attitudes and modes of everyday behavior (*The Foucault Reader* 67). As Agamben suggests, an apparatus for Foucault "is first of all a machine that produces subjectivation." (20). Subjectivation implies the operation through which the subject is subjected. The incorporation of power produces certain acts and practices in the individual that become constitutive of the making of subjectivity. In other words, it is because of these very practices induced by means of the apparatus that the subject is constituted as subject at all.

Affects in the hysterical woman must also be understood as a process of incorporation of power. It is key at this point to remember that Augustine is not only a woman who cannot reproduce but she is first and foremost a woman who must not reproduce. The hysterical woman is the denial of womanhood, and this denial has been imposed over her body for the preservation and regeneration of the human race. Augustine, like all degenerates, represents the major threat of *fin-de-siècle* western society, she is another undesirable society must get rid off. In the intrinsic link between Augustine and national gender politics, it is imperative to understand that what her body denies is not simply reproduction, but it is first and foremost the *belonging* to the Nation. Not only for women to become like Augustine means to be excluded by the national project, but also for men to have a woman like Augustine means exclusion from the Nation. To desire this body implies a transgression that is deeply tied to nationhood. In truth, the fear the

viewer experiences in looking at this body is the fear of exclusion from the same society.

Starting from this fear, from the threat that is implied in the body of the hysterical woman as a non-woman and inmate inside the asylum, the viewer must regulate his/her desire in order to be part of the society. At stake in these representations is the Nation; it is a crucial idea of belonging that determines whether or not one can or cannot be part of the Nation. Fear concerns men in the first place; in the context of patriarchal society, it is in fact male desire before female desire that must be channeled.

In the threat implicit in Augustine's body we might also think at the regulation of this desire as also leading to certain acts and practices in everyday life able to channel people inside patriarchal society. At the time in which Augustine challenges the viewer's desire, it also channels him/her towards sexual morality and sex-norms. It is because of the simultaneous production of desire and fear that this image is able to impose itself in society in such a powerful way. It is because of desire and fear that this image is turned into the fulcrum of power. I suggest that what this body produces is normalization and most specifically, in the profound connection with national gender politics, heteronormativity. It is in the production of normalization through affects of desire and fear, that madness is turned into an apparatus: the madness apparatus.

Augustine differs from the Medusa myth. In the Medusa myth, living beings were forced not to look at her. In Augustine case, people must look at her body and regulate their own desire. Clearly, it is possible to think that a similar

reaction was present in real performances of hysterical women, during “*lessons du mardi*.” The “play of desire” that was obsessively performed at the Salpêtrière in front of a specifically male audience was less about producing desire, than regulating it through affects of fear. Talking about Charcot’s hysterical women as simply a producer of desire, fails to consider the deep connection between desire and fear that stems from this spectacle. A spectacle that is offered first and foremost to a male audience and that consequently is used as regulator of male desire.

In a higher degree compared to frontal portraits of patients Augustine works as a producer of desire and fear. It is through the production of desire, at first created through the eroticization of her body that this body is able to work in terms of apparatus. I intend now to explore how similar representations of hysteria occurred in Italian literature during this time period and show the connection with Charcot’s Augustine. How did Italian intellectuals rework this image? How was their representation of hysteria in line with contemporary hygiene politics?

### **Gabriele D’Annunzio’s “*La vergine Anna*” and “*La vergine Orsola*”**

Physical disease, mental illness and death were central topics of the decadent period (Biasin 10).<sup>57</sup> In a similar fashion to romantic writers, decadent writers employed disease to represent an existential condition related to the feeling of decadence that spread in *fin-de-siècle* Europe (10). Gabriele D’Annunzio is considered the most representative Italian decadent writers, together with Ugo Tarchetti and Antonio Fogazzaro, who are however more

linked to the movement of *Scapigliatura* (Avincola 46). D'Annunzio's success as writer, poet and play writer originated in his ability to constantly change his aesthetics, without conforming to any specific form (Ruggiero and Vivanti 1085). His fame in Italy and in Europe was mostly due to his lifetime attempt to construct, through his writings, his own persona as a model for humanity (1085). This humanity, in D'Annunzio's eyes, was highly selective and aristocratic; in line with a superficial reading of Nietzsche's theories of the "superman," he believed that the evolution of humankind was limited to a restricted number (1085).

In his writings the male protagonist usually represents this ideal type; while usually affected by degeneration, he also represents the most intellectually and ethically evolved part of humanity (Adriano 194- 195). D'Annunzio's interest in psychiatry is evident in his novels. In an interview with Ugo Ojetti dated January 1895, D'Annunzio outlines his position in relation to psychiatry:

La malattia concorre ad allargare il campo della conoscenza. Lo studio dei degenerati, degli idioti, dei pazzi è per la psicologia contemporanea uno dei più efficaci mezzi di speculazione, perché la malattia aiuta l'opera dell'analisi decomponendo lo spirito. Essendo un disordine patologico, l'esagerazione di un fenomeno naturale, la malattia fa l'ufficio di uno di quegli strumenti che servono ad isolare ed ingrandire la parte osservata. Infatti, le conquiste più notevoli della psicologia contemporanea sono dovute a psichiatri. (D'Annunzio, *Prose di romanzi* 1241)

Psychiatric knowledge is used as a tool for analysis and investigation. Cavalli

Pasini in her book, *La scienza del romanzo* (1982) points out how this knowledge in D'Annunzio is interiorized by the subject rather than used for objective description, like in the case of Verga and Capuana: "In definitiva qui domina il processo percettivo su quello descrittivo: vale a dire che come sempre in D'Annunzio il soggetto prevale sull'oggetto e la 'vista' dell'uno determina la 'visibilità dell'altro' (54). This process of interiorization is particularly present in D'Annunzio's representation of the hysterical and epileptic woman, which represents a predominant image in his novels.

Two of the earlier representations of hysterical and epileptic women are in *Le novelle della Pescara* (1902) a collection of short stories that belong to D'Annunzio's first production, also defined as a naturalistic phase. These stories take place in the Abruzzo region, a primitive land in the center of Italy from which the poet came from. "La vergine Anna" was published in 1886 and represents a thought-provoking example of mystical folly in the Italian literary context of this period. In the following passage, D'Annunzio describes Anna's ecstasies:

Con l'andare del tempo le estasi si fecero frequenti. La vergine canuta era colpita a quando a quando da suoni angelici, da echi lontano d'organo, da rumori e voci percettibili agli orecchi altrui. Figure luminose le si presentavano dinanzi, nel buio; odori paradisiaci la rapivano. Così pel monastero una specie di sacro orrore cominciò a diffondersi, come per la presenza di un qualche potere occulto, come per l'imminenza di un qualche avvenimento soprannaturale. Per cautela, la nuova conversa fu

dispensata da ogni obbligo d'opere servili. Tutte le attitudini di lei, tutte le parole, tutti gli sguardi furono osservati, commentati con superstizione. E la leggenda della santità cominciò a fiorire. (*Le novelle* 105)

Upon her arrival into the convent, Virgin Anna is affected by hysterical symptoms. The disease is first manifested in the form of mystical visions followed by the inability to speak. Soon after Anna experiences recurrent episodes of ecstasies. These episodes create a sense of “sacred horror” inside the convent; starting from this moment all her movements and actions are closely monitored and described. The fear of supernatural events confines Anna into the space of bedroom; she is told to stay in bed and exempted from any obligation of servile work.

The nuns perceive with fear Anna's inability to speak:

L'inaspettato ammutolimento sbigottì gli animi delle religiose. E tutte, stando in torno alla conversa, ne consideravano con mistico terrore gli atteggiamenti estatici, i movimenti vaghi della bocca mutola, la immobilità degli occhi, d'onde a tratti sgorgavano profluvii di lacrime. (105)

The nuns stare at Anna's ecstasies and at her diseased body with “mystic terror.” Suddenly, one day, Anna after a cry, she falls on the floor. Terrified by this event, the nuns remain still around her body. D'Annunzio describes the feelings of “stupore,” “murmure incerto,” “titubanze” (106) among the nuns, who eventually interpret this event as miracle. In August 1876 Anna enters the phase of cataleptic ecstasy. As Barbara Spackman suggests, this phase directly recalls Charcot's



photographs of the hysterical woman, particularly “Crucifiement” in *Attitudes Passionnelles* (*Decadent Genealogies* 128). Slowly, the ecstasies destroy her body; once again the body of the mentally ill is completely deprived of gender identity:

E allora alcuni anni passarono, in cui la povera idiota visse tra sofferenze atroci, con le membra rese inerti dagli spasimi articolari. Ella non aveva più alcuna cura della nettezza; non si cibava se non di pane molle e di pochi erbaggi; teneva in torno al collo, sul petto, una gran quantità di piccole croci, di reliquie, d'immagini, di corone; parlava balbettando per la mancanza dei denti; e i suoi capelli cadevano, i suoi occhi erano già torbidi come quelli dei vecchi giumenti che stanno per morire. (*Le novelle* 108)

The fear the nuns experience towards Anna is directly linked with the depiction of a body that can hardly be recognized as human. Anna does not eat anymore, she is toothless and bald. In a similar fashion to Verga's Sister Agata and to patients' photography, the madwoman resembles some sort of monstrosity, “non conservava nulla di umano” (108). The body of the madwoman breaks the relationship with the system of perception within which she can be recognized as woman at all; she de-familiarizes with the viewer and de-familiarization leads to fear.

We must note though, that the feeling of horror that stems in looking at this body differs from the fear Maria's experiences at the sight of Sister Agata. While this body creates fear, this body also produces desire. It is desire in looking

that leads the nuns inside the text to create a true *ritual* around Anna's bed:

Sul vespro, nell'oratorio si accendevano le lampade; le monache facevano la cerchia inginocchiandosi; e la rappresentazione sacra incominciava. Come l'inferma entrava nell'estasi catalettica, i preludii vaghi dell'organo rapivano gli animi delle religiose in una sfera superiore. Il lume delle lampade si diffondeva fiavole dall'alto, dando un'incertitudine aerea e quasi una morente dolcezza all'apparenza delle cose. A un punto l'organo taceva. La respirazione nell'inferma diveniva più profonda; le braccia le si distendevano così che nei polsi scarnificati i tendini vibravano simili alle corde di uno strumento. Poi, d'un tratto, l'inferma balzava in piedi, incrociate le braccia sul petto, restando nell'atteggiamento mistico delle cariatidi d'un battistero. E la sua voce risonava nel silenzio, ora dolce, ora lugubre, ora quasi canora, quasi sempre incomprendibile. (107)

The nuns are situated in circle around Anna's body, down on their knees; small lights are lightened; some organ music play is in the backdrop. Inside the text, Anna is fully constructed as spectacle. In time, the fame of her body spreads around the town; she becomes a legend for the inhabitants: "E il monastero sorse in grande onore" (105).

The reader, too, shares this desire of looking. D'Annunzio dedicates several pages to describing Anna's ecstasies. The detailed portrait of her body, along with the mystical character of her disease, holds the reader's attention: the reader is forced to stare at this body that moves in the space of the bedroom. Similarly to Augustine this body produces desire; a desire that from the start is

deeply linked to horror and fear. This fear is also linked to a denial of womanhood: Sister Anna's body is completely deprived of gender identity.

A similar representation of hysteria is offered in "La vergine Orsola," which chronologically precedes "La vergine Anna." These two stories mirror each other and portray two opposite representations of hysteria, the nymphomaniac and the frigid woman. If in "La vergine Anna" the story ends with the image of Anna dying in bed, this story starts with the same image of Orsola sick in bed. From the start, D'Annunzio offers a detailed description of Orsola's body: "i piedi gialli, squamosi, lividi nelle unghie," (26) "la lingua tremante, coperta di una crosta mista di muco e di sangue nerastro", "le labbra nerastre e i denti incrostati" (24), "gli occhi d'acciaio", "la bocca crudele" (24), "la cavità della faccia" (28), "i tessuti aderenti" (28) that degenerate. D'Annunzio's depiction focuses on the small and most reluctant parts of Orsola's body; her "squamous yellow feet," her "dark lips" and "encrusted teeth," "her steel eyes," and so on. As is common with hysterical women, Orsola cannot speak: "Ella stirava davanti a sé con le dita fragili le coperte, aveva un moto tremulo nelle labbra, nella gola il gorgoglio della parola che ella non poteva proferire" (25).

To increase the monstrosity of this body is the description of her hunger. While Orsola is deprived of several physiological functions, she experiences a voracious hunger:

Ella aveva fame, aveva fame. Una bramosia bestiale di cibo le torturava le viscere vuote, le dava alla bocca quel movimento vago delle mandibole chiedenti qualche cosa da masticare, le dava talvolta alle povere ossa delle

mani quelle contrazioni prensili che hanno le dita delle scimmie golose alla vista del pomo. Era la fame canina nella convalescenza del tifo, quella terribile avidità di nutrimento vitale in tutte le cellule del corpo impoverite dal lungo malore. (27)

The exact account of her mouth, guts and jaws undoubtedly increases the monstrosity of this body. In reading this passage, the reader shares a sense of disgust towards this body; Orsola resembles a corpse more than a woman. Nonetheless we must continue reading this passage: the elaborate narration of this body holds some sort of desire, D'Annunzio is taking the reader inside the text.

In a similar fashion to “La vergine Anna,” this desire is shared with the people inside the text; Orsola too is constructed as spectacle. The novel starts off with the representation of the viaticum that goes to Orsola dell’Arca’s house. The woman lies in bed; everybody is around her; people are on their knees with their face bent: “nella stanza di Orsola tutti erano in ginocchio, chini nella faccia” (24). The feeling that emerges from the spectacle of this body is again a feeling of horror:

Ella faceva con le mani scarne piccoli gesti incerti, vaghi conati di prendere qualche cosa nel vuoto, strani segni improvvisi che davano quasi un senso di terrore a chi stava da presso, e nelle braccia pallide le passavano le contrazioni dei fasci muscolari, i sussulti dei tendini; e a volte un balbettamento inintelligibile le usciva dalle labbra, come se le parole le si impigliassero nella fuliggine della lingua, nel muco tenace delle gengive. (23- 24)

Terror spreads around the room at the sight of Orsola's unexpected movements; she lies in bed, attempting to grasp something in the air; her muscles and veins are visible through her pale skins. Camilla, Orsola's sister, also shares this fear: "Camilla guardava con gli occhi rossi pieni di terrore e di dolore quella faccia terrea dove ogni segno di vita mancava a poco a poco, quella bocca aperta che pareva la bocca di uno strangolato" (25). Camilla perceives her sister with fear; this fear stems in looking at a body that is more death than alive.

The constitution of Orsola as spectacle, as object of somebody else's view, prevents her from seeing. This impossibility recalls another of the main feature of hysteria; as I mentioned in relation to Charcot, hysteria affected women's ocular apparatus. At the beginning of the novel, Orsola is completely deprived of the possibility of seeing: "Ma negli occhi non aveva mai uno sguardo. Le palpebre pesanti coprivano l'iride a metà, quell'iride senza colore spersa nella sclerotica che pareva come velata da un muco giallastro" (27). During the convalescence period, she first recovers her ability to see. She now wishes to stand up and to look outside the window. It is essential to note that the desire to look outside is paralleled by the desire for prohibited things. Similarly to a guilty Eva, Orsola picks an apple and voraciously bites it. She is then taken by an impetuous desire to look at herself in the mirror. D'Annunzio introduces at this point the image of a green capsule that "s'era aperta come in due valve scoprendo un grappolo denso di semi nerastri. Ogni seme pareva legato a filamenti sottilissimi d'una lucidità argentea, e il grappolo si manteneva compatto" (37). The image of the cluster functions in the text as metaphor of Orsola's sexuality. Soon after we are told that

Orsola is overwhelmed by erotic desire to the point that she experiences it as a “torture.”: “Così nella vergine si accendeva la brama. Il bisogno dell’amore prima latente, si levava ora da tutto il suo essere, diventava una tortura, un supplizio incessante e feroce da cui ella non sapeva difendersi” (40). We understand that at the core of Orsola’s recovery is the awakening of her sexuality. Like in Charcot’s Augustine, D’Annunzio creates a link between viewing and sexuality. It is also compelling to see how Orsola is taken by the desire to wear women’s clothes, as opposed to the nun’s robe: “grandi gonne di seta a fiorami, verdi e violette e cangianti [...] mantelline color di tortora orlate di merletti bianchi, veli intrecciati di fili d’argento, collari di tela fina ricamati a giorno” (41). The awakening of her sexuality is linked to the desire to be a woman, to fully identify with her gender identity.

Finally, Orsola decides to exit her house and meet the man she saw through her window. This act translates into an inevitable tragedy: she is raped by the man and gets pregnant. Overwhelmed by shame, she thinks of death as the only possible solution. She recalls other unwed mothers who committed suicide because of their pregnancy: “Non c’era più scampo—La figlia di Maria Camastra aveva bevuto il vetriolo ed era morta così, con un bimbo di tre mesi nel ventre. La figlia di Clemenza Iorio s’era precipitata dal ponte, ed era morta così, nella fanga della Pescara. Bisognava dunque morire” (60). Eventually Orsola decides to have an abortion. However, the surgery goes bad and she starts bleeding. The final scene describes Orsola’s brutal death: she lies on the floor and a blind man beats her to death with his stick.

Barbara Spackman and Cristina Mazzoni offer an analysis of these two novels that focuses on the link of both to Christianity and psychiatry. If for Spackman “the rhetoric of sickness” is used to criticize Christianity (*Decadent Genealogies* 115), for Mazzoni, in “La vergine Orsola,” Christianity is used to criticize psychiatric discourse (*Saint Hysteria* 76).<sup>58</sup> What interests me in this study is, however, to see how in both “La vergine Anna” and “La vergine Orsola,” the hysterical woman is constructed as spectacle and how this spectacle creates feelings of desire and fear. This happens not only inside the text for other characters, but also for the reader. D’Annunzio’s detailed description of the two women’s bodies, together with the mystical and religious tone of the ritual around them, is able to hold the reader’s desire.

In the representation of both virgins, D’Annunzio is clearly indebted to psychiatric discourses. In a similar fashion to the photographs of Augustine, D’Annunzio creates a profound link between viewing and active sexuality. In both Anna and Orsola, the ability of viewing is associated with active female sexuality. If this relation in Anna is metaphorically represented by the association to ecstasies and mystical visions, in Orsola it is directly represented through the awakening of her erotic desire. This link recalls the relationship between female active sexuality and mystical visions that I mentioned being key in the representation of Augustine. This relation reinforces the understanding that female desire that must be pathologized. Further, as is typical of any 19th-century narrative of the “wayward woman,” in both cases the hysterical woman is destined to die. Death is a key feature of many representations of female madness

during this period.

Through his depictions the writer perpetuates the discourse of power advanced by psychiatry. I want to argue though that the way he does so concerns less the relation with mysticism than the production of affects of desire and fear. It is through these affects that D'Annunzio enforces "frames of recognizability" that relegate the mentally ill to the field of sub-human beings. In this context, D'Annunzio differs from Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana. Whereas both authors in the representation of female madness were able to create feelings of empathy in the reader towards the mad body's suffering, D'Annunzio in both these short stories reproduces the discourse of power promoted by psychiatric photography.

Further, through my analysis I show how the detailed description offered by D'Annunzio is also able to hold the reader's desire and to create at the same time feelings of horror and fear. The production of these affects, while creating systems of perception, might also be understood, in line with Augustine, in terms of the Foucauldian apparatus. While desire calls the viewer into play and forces the viewer to stare at this body, the horror that originates from a body that breaks drastically the relationship with the collectivity, and also leads the viewer to reject it. In the light of the widespread "sexual question" in Italy and of the idea of responsibility based on sexual repression and self-discipline, we might think of this rejection as leading to certain acts and practices in the everyday life able to channel the viewer's inside heteronormativity. Not only to be like the two Virgins during the turn of the century means to be confined into a mental institution, but



also to desire this body, in a time period so concerned with the reproduction of the species, means to be excluded from the National project. The two virgins, like Augustine, belong to the domain of abject beings that are a threat to the regeneration of the human race. I shall now explore further the link between the hysterical woman and national gender politics in D'Annunzio's novels.

### **Hysteria and Race**

In the two stories about virgins, D'Annunzio anticipates some of the key concepts that he will expand in the *Romanzi della Rosa*, a trilogy that includes *Il piacere* (1889) *L'innocente* (1892) and *Il trionfo della morte* (1894). While *Il piacere* received prompt success in Italy, Treves refused to publish *L'innocente* and accused it of "immoralità palese" (Salierno 40). D'Annunzio replied to Treves in a letter in which he pointed to the moral value of his work: "il mio libro è il libro più profondamente morale che sia stato scritto negli ultimi cinquant'anni in Italia (40). After the large success of this novel abroad, Treves decided to reopen the relationship with D'Annunzio. In 1889 he also published *Il trionfo della morte*; the novel was a publishing success (41).

If in the two virgins female desire was pathologized, in the trilogy, the pathologization of desire belongs to both the hysteric and epileptic woman and to the male protagonist. In the representation of the hysterical and epileptic woman, especially in *L'innocente* e *Il trionfo della morte* the feeling of desire and fear are key of these representations. The movement of attraction and repulsion towards these bodies has already being investigated by several critics, such as Mario Praz, Paolo Valesio, Barbara Spackman, Federica Adriano and Joy Ramirex. For

example, Paolo Valesio in “The Lion and the Ass: The Case for D’Annunzio’s Novels” (1977), underlines this double movements and writes: “The symbolic action of erotic relationships in D’Annunzio’s novels follows, generally, a basic double movement of triumphant assertion (conquest, enjoyment), soon after followed by dissatisfaction, repentance, and a general flight away from the flesh and its ‘pleasures’” (71). The double movement of attraction and repulsion, of desire and horror indeed characterize the erotic relationships in D’Annunzio’s novels. In this session I aim to explore further the production of these feelings; although my analysis mostly reiterates key points that have been already underlined by the above mentioned critics, I will elucidate the relationship between the production of feelings to hygienic politics in Italy and advance hypothesis of their functionality in *fin-de-siècle* society.

*L’innocente* centers on the question of infanticide; Tullio Hermil and Giuliana, a couple of criminals and “degenerates,” decide to murder the offspring of Giuliana’s adulterous relation. The woman is always portrayed as bedridden, so her disease is constitutive of her representation. The first time Giuliana appears, she is described as follows:

Ma un giorno io mi avvidi che ella soffriva anche nella sua salute;  
m’avvidi che il suo pallore diveniva più cupo e talvolta si empiva come di  
ombre livide. Più d’una volta sorpresi nella sua faccia le contrazioni d’uno  
spasimo represso; più d’una volta ella fu assalita, in mia presenza, da un  
tremite infrenabile che la scoteva tutta e le faceva battere i denti come nel  
ribrezzo di una febbre subitanea. Una sera, da una stanza lontana mi

giunse un grido di lei, lacerante; e io corsi, e la trovai in piedi, addossata a un armadio, convulsa, che si torceva come se avesse inghiottito un veleno. Mi afferrò una mano e me la tenne stretta come in una morsa. (*Prose di romanzi* 365)

At this point of the narration Tullio is unaware of the origin of Giuliana's malady; the only thing he can perceive is the manifestation of her sickness through the body: "contractions," "convulsions," "paleness" and "cries." Since the very beginning, D'Annunzio emphasizes the feeling of anxiety produced by her disease. To experience fear and disgust are both Giuliana and Tullio. Giuliana suddenly cries: "Tullio, Tullio, che cosa orribile! Ah che cosa orribile!"; "Dí-mi chiese un giorno, con la bocca amara—se tu ci pensi, non hai ribrezzo di me? Ha che brutta cosa! E fece un atto di disgusto su sé medesima, e si accigliò e si ammutolì" (366). Giuliana understands her disease as an "horrible thing" that Tullio must perceive with disgust and repulsion. Tullio in fact is "frozen" with fear, "agghiacciato dal terrore io rimasi per un minuto senza poter proferire una parola, senza poter muovere le braccia" (366). We must notice that D'Annunzio uses several expressions to emphasize the feeling of horror and anxiety: "invasato dal terribile sospetto" "occhi esterefatti" "rabbrividendo e facendomi rabbrividire" "al mio folle terrore" (366-367).

Terrified by the spectacle of Giuliana's body, Tullio asks for an explanation until he finally acknowledges that she is affected by hysteria: "Seppi, dopo, che già da alcuni mesi la travagliavano malattie complicate della matrice e dell'ovaia, quelle terribili malattie nascoste che turbano in una donna tutte le

funzioni della vita” (368). Anxiety is linked to Giuliana’s disease; a disease that deprives Giuliana of her female functions and is able to completely annihilate her entire vital functions. Anxiety originates thus in the deprivation of her identity as woman.

Giuliana’s medical condition requires her to undergo surgery. In the scene of the surgery, Tullio once again feels both attraction and rejection of her body:

E una disperata pietà strinse le mie viscere d’uomo, per quella creatura che i ferri del chirurgo violavano non soltanto nella carne miserabile ma nell’intimo dell’anima, nel sentimento più delicato che una donna possa custodire:—una pietà per quella e per le altre, agitate da aspirazioni indefinite verso le idealità dell’amore, illuse dal sogno capzioso di cui il desiderio maschile le avvolge, smanianti d’innalzarsi, e così deboli, così malsane, così imperfette, uguagliate alle femmine brute dalle leggi inabolibili della Natura; che impone a loro il diritto della specie, sforza le loro matrici, le travaglia di morbi orrendi, le lascia esposte a tutte le degenerazioni. (373)

The surgical operation is carried on upon Giuliana’s womb. Not only it is her flesh but it is her soul, her entire persona as woman and mother, to be annihilated. Tullio connects the image of Giuliana to other degenerates; he feels piety for those “imperfect women” who still long for love and who, nonetheless, are destined to be exposed to all degeneration. These are women who, however, still own “the right of the species.” Some sort of irony seems to emerge from this passage; irony between the right of reproduction and degeneration, between the

sense of pity he manifests towards degenerate women and the desire of looking at Giuliana while she undergoes surgical intervention.

We must also notice that, after Giuliana commits adultery and gets pregnant, the desire Tullio experiences towards her body is now turned into a desire to kill the newborn Raimondo. The horror Tullio first experienced towards her is now completely turned into the product of her “womb”: “Impedire che il figlio nascesse era il mio segreto proposito. Tutto l’orrore della nostra condizione veniva dalla antiveggenza di quella natività, dalla minaccia dell’intruso” (527). Raimondo is a threat in Tullio’s eyes and for this reason he perceives him with fear.

While Tullio’s hate for Raimondo is linked to adultery, he perceives the murder of the infant as an act of regeneration for Giuliana’s body:

Ero convinto che la salvezza della madre stesse nella morte del figliolo.  
Ero convinto che, scomparso l’intruso, ella sarebbe guarita. Pensavo: “Ella non potrebbe non guarire. Ella risorgerebbe a poco a poco, rigenerata, con un sangue nuovo. Parrebbe una creatura nuova, scevra di ogni impunità. Ambedue ci sentiremmo purificati, degni l’uno dell’altra dopo un’espiazione così lunga e così dolorosa. (597)

The murder of Raimondo would bring to a regeneration of her body. In this passage D’Annunzio creates a link between the offspring Raimondo and Giuliana’s disease. This link also suggests that the anxiety he experiences for Raimondo is also linked to Giuliana’s body, most specifically to her condition as hysteric. Hate and horror seems again to relate directly to Giuliana’s hysterical

womb. The offspring then must be expelled not only because he is the product of adultery, but also because he is the product of a “hysterical womb,” the product of a degenerate woman; her womb before adultery causes horror and fear in Tullio.

In *L'innocente* D'Annunzio develops the link between hysteria and reproduction. In a similar fashion to Orsola, the offspring is the cause of the male protagonist's anxiety. Similarly to Orsola's offspring, Raimondo needs to be expelled. However if in “La vergine Orsola,” it was the woman to be driven by shame and guilt, in *L'innocente* it is the male protagonist to experience anxiety towards this body. Once again D'Annunzio perpetuate the discourse of power through affects; it is in the felling of desire and fear that the writer brings the reader to empathize with psychiatric knowledge rather than with the suffering of these women. Through affects D'Annunzio reinforce system of perception based on the exclusion of degenerate from the field of humanity.

In *Il trionfo della morte* D'Annunzio brings to its extreme the construction of the hysterical woman as spectacle. The first time Giorgio mentions Ippolita's disease, he uses these words:

Un terribile male, già da lei sofferto nell'infanzia, un male nervoso che aveva le forme dell'epilessia, era di nuovo apparso [...] Io ti vedo contorcerti, nell'accesso; io vedo i tuoi lineamenti scomporsi e illividirsi, i tuoi occhi volgersi disperatamente sotto le palpebre rosse di pianto...Io vedo tutta la terribilità del male, come s'io ti fossi vicino; e, per quanti sforzi io faccia, non riesco a scacciare l'orrida visione. E poi, *mi sento* chiamare. Ho proprio negli orecchi il suono della tua voce, un suono roco

e lamentevole, come di chi chiede aiuto e non ha speranza di aiuto. (49)

Since the beginning of the novel Ippolita is fully turned into a spectacle. Giorgio imagines her body contracting to the extreme; her physical features decompose and bruise; her eyes turn desperately under the red eyelids. In imagining this body, Giorgio sees the “awfulness of evil,” this body in his mind is turned into a “horrid vision.” Nonetheless he cannot help evoking this image; the insistent repetition of the verb “*Io vedo*” testifies to the uncontrolled attraction towards her body.<sup>59</sup> The same happens soon after when he sits in front of her diseased body:

Duro fatica a scriverti queste righe. Vorrei rimanere immobile, in silenzio, là nell’angolo, nell’ombra, a pensare, ad evocare la tua immagine, ad evocare il tuo male, *a vederti*. Provo non so quale attrazione irresistibile verso questa tortura volontaria...[...] Mio Dio! Vedo le tue mani pallide e convulse; e vedo tra le dita la ciocca dei capelli strappati... (49)

As is common in the representation of the *femme fatale*, desire and fear are once again associated with the body of the hysterical woman. What is more, in both these passages the verb “*Io vedo*”, set in the present tense, puts Ippolita’s body right in front of the reader: the reader takes part in the voyeuristic gaze of Giorgio. While we share the same horror, on the other hand we cannot help but continue reading this passage.

The juxtaposition of desire and horror is a constant in the novel, and desire stems directly from sickness and disease. Giorgio’s attraction towards this body is at first linked to eroticism. As usual, in the representation of the hysterical women, Ippolita’s hysteria is associated with sexual transgression: “La sua

sensualità è variabile, poiché ella è isterica, e il suo isterismo ha raggiunto, in altri tempi, il sommo dell'acuzie" (130). The destructive character of Ippolita linked to her excessive sexuality represents the cause of the feminization of Giorgio "E poco a poco, infatti, ella mi ha effeminato. Ella si compiace di impormi la sua opera voluttuosa" (131). The feminization of men inside the text is related to the male protagonist's inability to control his sexual instincts in front of Ippolita's spectacle.

The more we proceed into the reading, the more another kind of transgression emerges. At the core of Ippolita's destructive power is her sterility; Ippolita cannot reproduce. Her body represents a transgression that is not only linked to sexuality but to the matter of reproduction, "Ella è sterile. Il suo ventre è colpito di maledizione." Ippolita is the complete denial of womanhood; she, unlikely women, cannot reproduce. This transgression creates a first link between heredity and hysteria.

Race is a central topic in *Il trionfo*. At the beginning of the novel, Giorgio decides to find an answer to his own internal struggle by going back to his roots. During the visit to his father's house, Giorgio considers his father representative of his own and his own family's degeneration. At one point in the novel the protagonist reflects again on his father's degeneration and on the impact of his germs on his own body:

Egli portava nel suo organismo i germi ereditati dal padre. Egli, essere d'intelligenza e di sentimento, portava nella carne la fatale eredità di quell'essere bruto. Ma in lui l'istinto diveniva passione; la sensualità



assumeva quasi le forme d'un morbo. Ed egli n'era appunto afflitto come d'un morbo vergognoso. Egli aveva orrore di quelle febbri che lo assalivano d'improvviso e lo ardevano miseramente e lo lasciavano avvilito, arido, debole di pensiero. Soffriva di certi suoi bassi impeti come d'una degradazione. (117)

The horror he first experienced towards Ippolita's body is now turned towards himself. Horror emerges from the shame he manifests towards his own "race;" his own degeneration which manifests itself through carnal instincts and desires. At the core of Giorgio's personal crisis is the duality between the Ideal and the body, his body, his carnal instincts, are fully experienced as shameful.

After this scene that centers on the degeneration of Giorgio's family, D'Annunzio introduces again the image of Ippolita. She is still in bed, and her position recalls the cataleptic phase of the hysterical attack. Her image provokes horror and disgust in Giorgio. After several pages Giorgio associates her with the enemy:

"Ella è dunque la Nemica", pensò Giorgio. "Finché vivrà, finché potrà esercitare sopra di me il suo impero, ella m'impedirà di porre il piede su la soglia che scorgo. E come ricupererò io la mia sostanza, se una gran parte è nelle mani di costei? Vano è aspirare a un nuovo mondo, a una vita nuova. Finché dura l'amore, l'asse del mondo è stabilito in un solo essere e la vita è chiusa in un cerchio angusto. Per rivivere e per conquistare, bisognerebbe che io mi affrancassi dall'amore, che io mi disfacciassi della Nemica...(162)

The juxtaposition between Giorgio's reflection over his own "race" and the hysterical body of Ippolita creates a connection between a notion of race-based not on ethnic group but on family and heredity theory—and hysteria. This relation is reinforced in the scene of the sanctuary in which Aurispa reflects again on his own race. While he is looking for a possible way to maintain life, he envisions again Ippolita's body and he is afraid that the sacred disease appears again. It is compelling to see how once again he imagines one of her crises and uses a lexicon such as "panico, orribile, terrore, preoccupazione paurosa" (206).

This relation is strengthened soon after when Giorgio, while staring at Ippolita's feet, reflects on her degeneration: "Quante cose impure fermentano nel suo sangue! Tutti gli istinti ereditari della sua razza sono in lei, indistruttibili, pronti a svilupparsi e ad insorgere contro qualunque costrizione. Io non potrò mai far nulla per purificarla" (209). Giorgio perceives Ippolita's degeneration with fear; he acknowledges his impossibility to save her. Barbara Spackman in her book focuses on the issue of phallic fatherhood and phallic priority as major topics in *Il trionfo della morte (Decadent Genealogies 183-191)*. Giorgio Aurispa's impossibility of priority is determined by the fact that Ippolita has belonged to another man before him. In considering the above passage, the scholar underlines a key point in relation to Aurispa's fear:

Such a biological memory is precisely what Aurispa fears, not so much in Ippolita as in himself, for it is his own heredity that is perceived as inscribed in Ippolita's body. It is this genetic fatalism, rather than merely Ippolita's sterility, which leads him to renounce the perpetuation of both

his own life and life in general. Death triumphs in this novel because the flight from the flesh is total; Aurispa flees not only from the “flesh” of the sexual act but from his own flesh and blood. (187)

According to Spackman, Ippolita represents Aurispa’s heredity, flesh and blood, a heredity that is deeply linked to degeneration. In this sense her body becomes the projection of Aurispa’s degenerate “race.” I would expand on Spackman’s analysis by underlining the fact that Ippolita embodies the representation of a degeneration that does not only belong to Giorgio but to herself too. The intersection of “race” and degeneration is intensified at the end of the novel when Ippolita recalls the image of her “violent” and “cruel” mother, another madwoman affected by hysterical convulsions: “Un giorno mia madre uscì, e per caso restammo sole. Dopo alcuni minuti, sbigottite la vedemmo tornare su piangente, convulsa, disfatta. Mi prese tra le sue braccia e mi coprì di baci furiosi come folle, singhiozzando” (268). The spectacle of the woman’s crisis shocks Ippolita and her sisters; Giorgio too recalls her mother’s body:

Giorgio rivide nella memoria quel volto di vecchia isterica, in cui tutti i difetti del volto filiale apparivano esagerati: lo sviluppo della mandibola, la lunghezza del mento, la larghezza delle narici. Rivide quella fronte di Furia, su cui si rialzavano i capelli grigi aridi e spessi; quegli occhi incavati sotto l’arco dei sopraccigli, oscuri, che rivelavano l’ardore fanatico della chiesastra e l’avarizia tenace della piccola borghese di Trastevere. (268)

In the description of Ippolita’s mother, D’Annunzio emphasizes the monstrosity

of this woman and associates her to the animal. Soon after this vision, “the hysterical demon” agitates the protagonist: Ippolita too is taken by hysterical convulsions:

Egli persisteva, sebbene soffocato dal disgusto, vedendola spasimare, udendo lo strano rumore che le mettevano nel ventre i sussulti del viscere sterile e infermo. Tutta l’ignominia del sesso era sotto gli occhi suoi.

–Non più! Lasciami!

Ed ella a un tratto fu presa da un riso nervosa, frenetico, incoercibile, – lugubre come il riso d’una demente.

Sbigottito, egli la lasciò. Con un orrore palese, la guardava pensando “E’ la follia?” (280).

We must notice how again disgust, fear and horror stems from the spectacle of hysterical convulsions; convulsions leads to the complete deconstruction of Ippolita’s body. In this scene Ippolita is also turned into a monstrosity; this monstrosity originates in her mother’s hysterical demons. In the light of this, I suggest that Ippolita’s heredity, as the projection of Giorgio’s and her own heredity, is the representation of degeneration tout-court.

The final suicide/homicide act of the two protagonists is particularly telling. Giorgio understands that the only way to save himself is by killing Ippolita, the enemy. Ippolita is the center of his entire existence and the only way to put this obsession to an end is through murder. Besides the several interpretations that can be offered of this act, we must focus on the specific gender politics promoted in this novel. In the correspondence between Ippolita and

heredity, the same notion of degeneration appear to be expelled; the prohibition that is inflicted on her body as degenerate and sterile woman implies that the only way to “conservare la vita” is through expelling both their bodies.

In this novel D’Annunzio seems to bring to its extreme the hygienic politics that became popular during this period in Italy and Europe. Not only does D’Annunzio strengthen the relationship between sexual instincts and the culpability of the flesh, according to which all desire must be pathologized, but he also appears to become a great promoter of gender politics according to which the degenerate should not reproduce. This idea also emerges in the other novels analyzed. It is necessary to remember how *L’innocente*, although at first largely criticized in Italy, was surprisingly well accepted among scientists. For example, Scipio Sighele commented:

Gli uni hanno detto che il D’Annunzio non è che un imitatore di Tolstoy e di Dostoiewsky e gli hanno lanciato, se non un’esplicita accusa di plagio, almeno il rimprovero di un’esagerata russofilia [...] Nessuno, che io sappia, si è domandato se i [...] tipi di delinquenti da lui creati sono veri dinnanzi alla psichiatria e all’antropologia criminale; nessuno si è chiesto quanta scienza sia nella rappresentazione artistica di Tullio Hermil.

(*L’innocente* XLI)

The author of *La coppia criminale* (1893), Scipio Sighele dedicated a session of his book to infanticide. Although he still considered it a crime, Sighele seems to support infanticide over abortion. He writes: “Io comprendo e scuso una madre che, dopo aver resistito a tutte le angosce fisiche e morali di una gravidanza

colpevole, quando finalmente il figlio nasce, lo uccide, sacrificandolo al proprio onore” (54).<sup>60</sup> Sighele’s words seem to offer an explanation of why Giuliana and Tullio decides to murder Raimondo; they also seem to explain while the murder of Raimondo would bring to a regeneration of Giuliana’s body. Through this act Giuliana becomes a sort of hero, she sacrifices her illegitimate son for honor. In general, we must remember that Italian scientists and physicians would appreciate D’Annunzio’s portraits of criminals; D’Annunzio’s treatment of the subject reflects social theories of his time.

What is more, D’Annunzio’s lover Barbara Leone inspired the characters of Giuliana and Ippolita. The woman was also affected by hysteria and underwent genital surgery; through their correspondence D’Annunzio collected material for his novels (D’Annunzio, *Prose di romanzi* 1245). It is imperative to remember that hysterical women in Italy were also subjected to surgical operation, such as sterilization. In his study “Surgical therapy as treatment of hysteria in Italy: 1880-1889,” (1998) D. Vanni offers a case study of these operations, some of them resulting with negative effects.<sup>61</sup> For example, in 1885, Dr. Domenico Chiara undertook two cases of sterilization in two hysterical women in Florence. In a talk he gave at the Congress of the Society of Italian Surgery (1885) he stated that his presentation was “un riassunto di due casi di catrazione diretta contro quella grande nevrosi così frequente nella donna che è l’istero-epilepsia” (179). The outcome of the surgery was apparently satisfying in both women (179).

Sterilization was also carried on several other patients. For example, a professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Pavia, Alessandro

Cuzzi, sterilized a 38 year-old woman suffering from “istero-epilessia”(180). The consensus for this surgery was provided by Professor Tamburini, from the San Lazzaro asylum in Reggio Emilia, who, after exposing the woman to several other type of therapy (use of morphine, paraldehyde, ether, atropine, hypnosis, galvanism) decided that sterilization was the only possible solution (181). The outcome of the surgery was negative and the woman was hospitalized inside the San Lazzaro asylum.

Surgical therapy was apparently conducted for therapeutic ends and was based on the belief of the relationship between hysteria and the uterus. Nonetheless, in 1905, L. M. Bossi offered another key study concerning practices of castration and Malthusianism in Italy.<sup>62</sup> In *Malattie utero-uvariche e malthusianismo* (1905) Bossi talks about practices of castration carried on against “filiazione,” meaning specifically to prevent reproduction. Bossi points out how these practices increasingly spread in Europe. He also shows how these practices were carried on several hysterical women in Italy with usually devastating results; most often leading to the actual development of mental illness (27-31).

With the spread of Galton’s eugenics in Europe, mentally ill women were not only locked inside the asylum, but they were also subjected to more drastic practices of sterilization. Sterilization began to be employed not only for therapeutic purposes but to prevent the reproduction of degenerates, in other words for eugenics ends (Berlini 69). Now, in the light of hygienic and eugenics politics so largely spread during this time period in Italy and in Europe, one might wonder how these practices of surgical therapy and sterilization were actually

carried on for merely therapeutic ends; or if otherwise, eugenics ends constitute the actual subtext of these practices. Besides for the real reasons that led Italian physicians to intervene in the body of the mentally ill women, these practices remind us of the material violence that lies beyond the pathologization of desire and the medicalization of madness. With the excuse of normalization, not only were mentally ill people forcefully confined into mental institutions, but they were also submitted to practices of surgical intervention able to completely deprive women of their reproductive apparatus.

Throughout his representations of the hysterical woman, D'Annunzio largely contributed to the stereotyping of mental illness as well as to the production of heteronormativity in Italy. While on the one hand his images impacted directly the mentally ill people with ideas concerning the non-reproduction of degenerates, they also addressed "sane" people. We might think of these images as used to channel and control people's desire in a time during which, not only sexual morality was more and more understood in terms of sexual repression, but also in which degeneration was considered the major threat in the development of the Italian race. Once again the way in which D'Annunzio perpetuate the discourse of power is through affects of desire and fear. It is in the production of these affects that D'Annunzio perpetuates state power's system of subjectivation.

## **Conclusion**

Like Gabriele D'Annunzio, several other Italian writers such as Luigi Capuana, Antonio Fogazzaro and Ugo Tarchetti represented the hysterical or



epileptic woman in terms of degeneration. In several of these representations, the madwoman is denied the right of reproducing and if she does, she is eventually destined to drastic acts of abortion, murder and eventually suicide. Similarly to Charcot's Augustine, the image of the bed that I mentioned being key in several of these representations appears to create a direct link with national gender politics. I suggest that the hysterical woman in these Italian writers, similarly to Augustine, is again representative of State control over reproduction. Through these representations Italian intellectuals became strong promoters of hygienic politics in *fin-de-siècle* Italy.

The medicalization of madness and the stereotyping of mental disorders deeply affected the thousands of Italians who were confined inside mental institutions during this period. Literature and photography played a crucial role in the social construction of madness and in so doing they contributed in creating a material violence carried out on the body of the mentally ill. Literary and photographic representations of madness established system of perceptions and recognizability that imposed in Italian society and culture normative ideas of gender based on the exclusion of the mentally ill, especially women, as I have documented in this chapter, from the realm of humanity.

Further, starting with Charcot's Augustine, I mentioned how the greatest innovation brought by Charcot was the constitution of hysteria as image; the hysterical woman was turned into an apparatus. Similarly to Augustine, literary representations of the hysterical woman might also be understood in term of apparatus. While affects are used to create systems of perception, the interplay

between desire and fear turn the hysterical woman into the fulcrum of power itself: the hysterical woman is used to subject people in the outside society inside heteronormativity.

We must notice that these representations, while contributing to the stereotyping of mental disorders, also contribute to the affirmation of national identity and national manhood. In line with frontal portraits of female inmates and with practices of asexualization of the body, all the representations of hysterical women, starting with Augustine, brings to its extreme the asexualization of patients' body. These women embody the complete denial of womanhood; a denial that now is deeply linked to the denial of motherhood. In all these representations, the asexual body of the madwoman deprived of its most constitutive function—reproduction—breaks drastically the relation with the collectivity.

Once again we understand that what really stands beyond the asexual body of the hysterical woman, is shame and suffering. Shame and suffering work again as the “constitutive outside” of all these depictions. The medicalization of female madness and the pathologization of desire during this period led to repeated acts of violence inside the asylum. Of this violence Augustine and all the women confined into mental institutions were the first victims. In Augustine's case the repetition of the hysterical attack (that I mentioned equaling 250 attacks in a single day!) created a material violence in the body of the inmate. This violence was further intensified through photographic practice. It is documented that in order to take the photographs these women were submitted to real practices of

torture. Denise Marchiori in her article “L’enigma isteria” (2004) comments on this violence:

Nei periodi più intensi di servizi fotografici il corpo medico si adoperava nell’immobilizzare le pazienti affinché mantenessero pose abbastanza lunghe davanti alle apparecchiature. Queste erano sottoposte a trattamenti miranti a governare il sintomo, ma che talvolta imponevano misure non distanti dalla tortura: erano legate mani e piedi, erano soggette a elettroshock, pressione delle ovaie, rumori assordanti, subivano l’impiego dell’etere e dell’ipnosi. (174)

Women inside the asylum were not only deprived of their clothing, hair and environment, but also in the compulsive reproduction of the hysterical attack, they were tortured and deprived of their inner identity.

What is more, the procedures of surgical intervention and sterilization that spread in Europe during this period further attest to the violence implicit in the medicalization of madness. Hysterical women were not only locked inside the asylum, but they were also deprived of their reproductive functions during a time period in which motherhood and womanhood were deeply connected. These women were submitted to radical practices of asexualization able to completely annihilate their identity.

The quest for national manhood during the last two decades of the nineteenth century translated into drastic acts of violence inside the asylum. If, according to Mann, shame has to be produced consistently as it stands at the very foundation of the actualization of sovereign masculinity, we must understand

these literary representations as also reflecting practices of torture inside the asylum. Not only were these representations used to create systems of perception and to produce normalization, but they also visually expose the reproduction of shame inside the asylum. While the dimension of affects is employed for subjectivation in order to produce heteronormativity, it is in the actual undoing of inmate bodies that the notion of ontological weight is produced. Indeed, affects originate directly from the undoing of patient's lived gender.

It is only by considering the deep link between these literary representations and the asylum, between Augustine and Ippolita, that it is possible to fully understand the value, importance and impact of these images in society. The hysterical woman represents the crossroads of multiple discourses concerning sexuality and the regulation of sexuality in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. Behind this image lies a whole series of apparatuses of discipline normalization such as psychiatry, the asylum, torture, photography, literature, hygienic politics and education. In particular two operations of power intersect in this image. On the one hand, this body belongs to the ontological project of national manhood; this project not having a weight on its own, constantly needs to borrow an ontology from somewhere else. The concrete body of the inmate offers itself as ontological weight to a phantasmatic idea of national manhood. On the other hand, this body belongs to the system of apparatuses of discipline-normalization: the undoing of patients' identities is also used for the production of affects, in other words as system of subjectivation. While this image is used to establish frames of perception, it also works in terms of the foucauldian apparatus: it works itself as

locus of power used to subject people. As a result, while the first victims of psychiatric and hegemonic discourses are the mentally ill people confined inside the asylum, the regulation of sexuality based on sexual repression also affected the people in the outside society. I would like to insist on the material violence that this representation carries with it; a violence that, without considering the apparatus of asylum, would be hardly understood.

CHAPTER IV  
THE MAD'S FREEDOM:  
MADNESS, THE ASYLUM  
AND THE FUTURIST GENDER OVERTHROW

In chapters II and III, I attempted to uncover the discourse of power that lay beyond literary and photographic representations of madness in the period between the Unification of Italy (1861) and the beginning of the nineteenth century. Throughout this analysis I show the intrinsic link between the quest for national identity and the representation of madness, specifically female madness. This quest was deeply rooted in a crisis of masculinity that originated in centuries of foreign domination, as well as in influential environmental theories that motivated the nation-state to activate an increasing system of apparatuses of discipline normalization in order to regulate sexuality and reinforce heterosexual normativity. The confinement of thousands of Italians inside mental institutions responded to the need to control the population and to eliminate a kind of social danger: in particular, mentally ill women were women who were considered inadequate to fulfill their roles as mothers and wives, and for this reason they were perceived as a threat to patriarchal society.

The photographic and literary representations of madness during this period contributed strongly to the stereotyping of the mentally ill. The association

with the animal was used to attest the inferiority of the mentally ill and consequently to justify the oppression of social danger. However, I have attempted to investigate further the discourse of power that lay beyond these representations of madness, focusing on the asexualization of the mad body in both its representation and its concreteness to show how this body contributed to the quest for national identity. In line with Bonnie Mann's theories I argued that practices of asexualization inside the asylum were used to offer an ontological weight to a national identity that lacked weight on its own. The shame and suffering that emerged through this process of undoing was one of the ways through which the manhood of the nation to become gender powered.

Further, through my analysis of the hysterical woman, I have also attempted to demonstrate how the body of the mentally ill woman not only was used to affirm normality, but also began to work as an apparatus. The extensive production of affects of desire and fear that emerge from most representations of hysterical women starting from Charcot's Augustine became part of a strategy of power used to produce normalization. I demonstrated how beyond the image of the hysterical woman laid an entire series of apparatuses of discipline normalization; among them photography, mental institutions, education and psychiatry. The hysterical woman became the crossroads of numerous discourses about women and the regulation of sexuality in *fin-de-siècle* Italy, specifically related to hygienic politics and the development of eugenics.

At the core of the representation of the hysterical and epileptic woman stands the profound link between art and politics. While it is established that

photography played a crucial role in the social construction of madness, my study also showed how literature responded to and resisted the discourse of power promoted by psychiatric power. While naturalist writers Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana partially resisted the discourse of power promoted by psychiatric photography, decadent writers became active promoters of the stereotyping of mental illness.

In the present chapter I intend to further testify to the power of the image of the madwoman in society by showing the role this image played in the futurist revolution. It is well known that the first target of futurist discourses, before being a woman in the flesh, was the discourse around women that was symbolized by the decadent *femme fatale*. As I will show in what follows, starting from this literary image, the avant-garde promoted an artistic and gender revolution based on the complete overthrow of language, of traditional gender roles, and of the naturalized relationship between gender and sex. In this chapter, I will explore how at the core of futurist revolution lay an epistemological search for freedom from a literary discourse as well as from a ruling sexual morality that created material violence against the individual.

I will also contend that the madwoman, as a woman who transgressed gender roles before her confinement in the lunatic asylum, offered Marinetti a first crucial understanding of the discursive construction of gender and of gender regulations. While the body of the mentally ill woman was forcibly asexualized inside the asylum and deprived of gender identity, in futurist discourses the body of the madwoman is glorified as gender neutral. The madwoman, as a woman



who transgressed the familiar gender roles of mother and wife, became for the first Italian avant-garde a paradigm of modern sexuality.

A specific study of the topic of female madness and futurism has not yet been undertaken. While critics such as Cecilia Bello Manciocchi, Lucia Re and Paola Sica, in their analysis of Robert Enif's *Un ventre di donna* (1919) and Rosa Rosà's *Una donna con tre anime* (1918), uncover compelling facts related to futurist anti-psychiatric discourse that I will invoke in my analysis, a specific investigation of madness vis-à-vis the *fin-de-siècle* literary and political context is still lacking. This is probably because futurists drastically rejected the representation of the madwoman that naturalist and decadent writers portrayed. Nonetheless, I will show that the image of the madwoman is a recurrent *topos* in futurist discourses and creative writings. While at the core of decadent representations of madness was the pathologization of desire, in futurist discourses female desire is glorified in positive terms. Accordingly, while there is not an open discourse on female madness, futurists celebrate the same women who, at the beginning of the twentieth century, were diagnosed as mentally ill and confined in mental institutions.

In a similar fashion to Verga and Capuana, throughout their representations futurist writers offer a counter-discourse to the apparatus of psychiatry. Once again, resistance to the discourse of power is offered through affects: in their depictions futurists destabilize those “frames of representability” that relegate the mentally ill to the domain of sub-human beings. Instead of representing the mad body as a dying monstrosity and aberration of nature able to

create fear in the reader, futurists promote an image of female madness that is a powerful fulcrum of vital energy. In this way, futurists operate a radical overthrow of the madness apparatus. Through their writings, female futurists Enif Robert and Rosa Rosà are also able to reveal the material violence that lay behind the pathologization of female desire, and consequently to create feelings of empathy in the reader.<sup>63</sup>

My purpose in this study is to understand in greater depth the roots as well as the innovation of futurist gender politics. While considerable attention has been given to the relationship of futurism to fascism, and to futurism's misogynist character, here I aim to show the actual innovation of futurist discourse. In particular I would like to point to the anti-hygienic gender politics promoted in futurist discourses. While critics such as Cinzia Sartini Blum and Clara Orban have pointed to the role of women as functional to the reproduction of the species and considered this aspect one of the strongest proto-fascist elements of futurist discourses (Blum 79; Orban 55), I intend to demonstrate that the woman encouraged to reproduce in futurist discourses is the same woman who was denied the right of reproduction in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. The sexually active, anti-mother, anti-woman, androgynous and virile woman who is the protagonist of almost all futurist discourses and who is the same woman used for the "reproduction of the species" embodies a quite revolutionary and underexamined aspect of futurist gender politics. As I will show, understanding this anti-hygienic politics is crucial to fully grasping the real innovation and contribution of the avant-garde to *fin-de-siècle* gender politics as well to the discourse about madness

advanced by psychiatric and state power.

In this chapter I will address a variety of texts, including several manifestos by F.T. Marinetti; Valentine de Saint-Point's *Manifesto della donna futurista* (1912) and *Manifesto della lussuria* (1913); Italo Tavolato's *Contro la morale sessuale* (1913); Robert Enif's *Un ventre di donna* (1919) and Rosa Rosà's *Una donna con tre anime* (1918). The last section of this chapter is dedicated to futurist woman and former inmate Eva Kuhn Amendola and her unpublished manifesto *La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi* (1913). Eva Kuhn's writings represent a unique account of the ways patients were treated inside the asylum at the beginning of the twentieth century. This manifesto speaks first-hand of the material violence I have been trying to uncover in chapters II and III of this dissertation through the analysis of literary and photographic portraits. In particular, Eva Kuhn speaks of practices of asexualization inside the asylum, that I have been showing to be the cause of the annihilation of inmates' identity. While this chapter attempts to bring to light the leftist and most revolutionary part of early futurism, I will also outline the many ambiguities of futurist discourses. While the avant-garde attempted to overthrow the madness apparatus and liberate women from the bonds of patriarchal society, it also somehow strengthened the objectification of women as sexual objects.

### **Art and Gender Overthrow**

Futurism was born in a social context, the so-called Giolitti era, characterized by a strong development of Italian capitalist society (Ruggiero and Vivanti 1099).<sup>64</sup> During this period, Giovanni Giolitti promoted civil

modernization and democratic reforms that allowed the formation of a modern and productive bourgeois class. Where Giolitti was able to solve the political deadlock between socialist and progressive forces and thus to increase production, the intellectual bloc continued to constitute a major problematic in Italy. Intellectuals remained almost completely indifferent to the social, political and economic changes of modernity (1107). This attitude was particularly prevalent in literary magazines such as *La Voce*, *Leonardo* and *Il Regno*. As intellectuals attempted to participate in political and social discourses, their literary form remained strongly anchored in the aesthetic of classicism. Far from being open to the masses, the poetry of *Frammentismo*, autobiography and lyrical prose remained profoundly elitist (1120).

This was also a period in which “la questione femminile” increasingly affected political, artistic, cultural and social discourses (Puccini 9).<sup>65</sup> With the entrance of women into the workplace and the rise of suffragette movements in Europe, ideas concerning the emancipation of women spread in Italy. In particular, the socialist party was progressively linked to ideas of free love, the abolishment of marriage and the facilitation of divorce (10). Nonetheless, this atmosphere also increased antifeminist positions all over Europe. The threat to patriarchal authority that followed the entrance of women into work and social spaces created a backlash that strengthened misogynist attitudes against the emancipation of women. Of particular importance in this period were the works of Julius Möbius and Otto Weininger, whose ideas on the biological inferiority of women had a large impact in Europe. Sandra Puccini in her study points out how

the antifeminist debate also flourished among leftist parties. In particular, after the First World War, men reclaimed the jobs taken over by women during the war (51-64).

Within this ideological stasis futurism brought radical ideas for change to the Italian cultural context. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's open war against the past—*società passatista*—was followed by the attempt to reconstruct the present in line with the changes of modernity. In *Distruzione della sintassi: Immaginazione senza fili, parole in libertà* (1913) Marinetti stated that “Il futurismo si fonda sul completo rinnovamento della sensibilità umana avvenuto per effetto delle grandi scoperte scientifiche” (*Teoria e invenzione* 57). In order to create this new sensibility, Futurists envisioned a total destruction (*pars destruens*) and reconstruction (*pars construens*) of the universe that would affect all fields of knowledge: from the arts, including literature, theatre, painting, sculpture, photography, cinema and fashion, up to education, politics, social reformations and gender politics. The new aesthetic of modernity was based on mechanical beauty and on the exaltation of the machine. In line with this, futurists also envisioned the birth of a man-machine.

At the core of futurist revolution was the fight against liberal bourgeois, positivistic democratic culture and particularly Giovanni Giolitti's parliament (Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity* 29). “Antigiolittismo” was largely widespread among young generations; the idea of “revolution” in modernists grouped around the journal *La voce*, futurists and other intellectuals was related to the necessity to liberate Italy from the incompetence and laziness of the ruling

class. In particular, the attack against parliamentary related to the incapacity of the ruling class to represent popular sovereignty and for this reason it was perceived as strongly anti-democratic (Gentile, “From the Cultural Revolt” 106).<sup>66</sup>

The idea of modernity was also deeply rooted in nationalism; the regeneration of the Italian race was key in futurist and *vocianti* discourses (Gentile, *The Struggle for Modernity* 28). In his book *The Struggle of Modernity* (2003) Emilio Gentile saw in the project of making the consciousness an attempt to “create a new synthesis between nationalism and modernity” (28). The historian also claims that both futurists and *vocianti* “want to realize this synthesis through a total spiritual revolution that must begin from culture and invest and radically renew politics and society and the very character of the Italians, in order to ensure the birth of the new modern Italy” (29). The two avant-gardes were also strong supporters of war, considered the “only world hygiene” (29). Among young revolutionaries war was considered the only way to regenerate the Italian character and bring Italy to economic development (29). Notions of violence, fighting and destruction that constantly recur in futurist discourses culminated in the belief that only war could bring Italy to its renewal.<sup>67</sup>

Although many of the futurist innovations already belonged to an earlier tradition,<sup>68</sup> certainly some of the contributions the avant-garde made were radically new. Among these is the perfect coincidence between political and literary discourses, a coincidence that I mentioned being completely absent in literary magazines. The idea of “art-war” was at the core of futurist revolution. In *L'uomo moltiplicato e il regno della macchina* (1915), Marinetti points to the

power of literature in creating common sense: “noi siamo convinti d'altronde che l'arte e la letteratura esercitano un'influenza determinante su tutte le classi sociali, anche sulle più ignoranti, che ne sono abbeverate per via d'infiltrazioni misteriose” (*Teoria e invenzione* 257). Marinetti believed in the power of literature and art in creating mass consciousness and consequently operated a radical overthrow of artistic language. The poetics of “wireless imagination” and of “words in freedom” theorized in his *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1911) and *Distruzione della sintassi: Immaginazione senza fili, parole in libertà* (1913) was based upon a complete deconstruction of traditional syntax and on a drastic revolution of typographical characters. The avant-garde was also the promoter of the so-called *Serate Futuriste*, a sort of improvisational theater whose aim was to shock the audience, to challenge the feelings of the masses. This poetics was also deeply tied to the intent to abolishing schools, education and professors. Futurists were interested in youth and particularly in students, considered a key force in changing society (Verdone 31).

Antonio Gramsci, a well-known historian of fascism and leader of the Italian communist party, also pointed out the revolutionary character of the avant-garde, considered one of the unique expressions of “popular literature” in Italy:

I futuristi hanno svolto questo compito nel campo della cultura borghese: hanno distrutto, distrutto, distrutto, senza preoccuparsi se le nuove creazioni, prodotte dalla loro attività, fossero nel complesso un'opera superiore a quella distrutta: hanno avuto fiducia in se stessi, nella foga delle energie giovani, hanno avuto la concezione netta e chiara che l'epoca

nostra, l'epoca della grande industria, della grande città operaia, della vita intensa e tumultuosa, doveva avere nuove forme, di arte, di filosofia, di costume, di linguaggio: hanno avuto questa concezione nettamente rivoluzionaria, assolutamente marxista, quando i socialisti non si occupavano neppure lontanamente di simile questione, quando i socialisti certamente non avevano una concezione altrettanto precisa nel campo della politica e dell'economia, quando i socialisti si sarebbero spaventati (e si vede dallo spavento attuale di molti di essi) al pensiero che bisognava spezzare la macchina del potere borghese nello Stato e nella fabbrica. I futuristi, nel loro campo, nel campo della cultura, sono rivoluzionari; in questo campo, come opera creativa, è probabile che la classe operaia non riuscirà per molto tempo a fare di più di quanto hanno fatto i futuristi: quando sostenevano i futuristi, i gruppi operai dimostravano di non spaventarsi della distruzione, sicuri di potere, essi operai, fare poesia, pittura, dramma, come i futuristi, questi operai sostenevano la storicità, la possibilità di una cultura proletaria, creata dagli operai stessi. (20-22)

Gramsci emphasizes the destructive character of the first avant-garde: futurists promoted the destruction of bourgeois values and carried on this destruction through their art. Most significantly, futurists were able to create a direct impact on the masses; they had, according to Gramsci, an absolutely Marxist conception of life compared to socialist parties.

On the other hand, Walter Benjamin, in "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" (1936), also considered the deep link between art and



politics promoted by futurists to be one of the first expressions of the aestheticization of politics that became particularly prominent during Fascist propaganda (241). Benjamin underlines the strong relationship between futurism and fascism in constructing hegemonic discourses through art.

In the second place, among futurist innovations stands the crucial understanding of the importance of sex and sexuality in society. Not only the discourse about women seems to embody, as Silvia Contarini suggests in her book “toute la vision futuriste de l’univers” (*La femme futuriste* 24), but also this discourse was deeply tied to a general discourse about sexuality and heterosexual normativity in Italy.

In line with the ideology of renewal of the universe, the futurist avant-garde promoted a gender politics based on the contempt for women (*Teoria e invenzione* 10). Point 9 of the *Manifesto di fondazione del futurismo* (1909) reads: “Noi vogliamo glorificare la Guerra—sola igiene del mondo—il militarismo, il patriottismo, il gesto distruttore dei libertari, le belle idee per cui si muore e il disprezzo della donna” (10). Marinetti sets in parallel the scorn for women with the glorification of war, militarism and nationalism. The “scorn for women” in futurist discourses has engendered several contradictions and ambiguities that nowadays appear to be constitutive of futurist gender politics (Blum 1). These contradictions have usually led criticism to slip into two main groups: those such as Claudia Salaris and Cecilia Bello Minciocchi who argue that futurism stand for women’s emancipation and those who, such Cinzia Sartini Blum, Barbara Spackman and Silvia Contarini, point instead to its misogynist character and in

some occasions to its connection to Fascism.

On the one hand, futurism has been regarded as the most misogynist avant-garde in the European context (Re, “Futurism and Feminism” 253). The “scorn for women” was associated with a politics of gender based on hyper-virility and sexual violence. In this practice, futurists envisioned a world that was completely freed of the presence of women. In the fantasy of the male-mother Mafarka, no woman was allowed to be part in the birth of the man-machine. Women in this regard were glorified only for their role of “womb-producer,” to use Clara Orban’s expression, used for the reproduction of the Italian race (55).

On the other hand, the futurist avant-garde promoted radical innovations in *fin-de siècle* gender politics. Lucia Re, in her article “Futurism and Feminism” (1989), offers a thought-provoking perspective on this debate:

Futurism from its inception had the merit of raising issues regarding the representation and regimentation of sexuality, the political roots and ramification of sexual behavior, and the ideological overdertermination of gender divisions and gender roles in contemporary society. The slogan which is today taken by many to represent the quintessence of contemporary feminist thought –“the personal is political”–was already implicit in the ideology of futurism. This challenging and even in some ways revolutionary aspect of futurism–particularly if we consider the first phase of the movement–should not be underestimated, even though the playful even juvenile way in which the futurists expresses themselves makes their ideas on sexual politics appear worthy only of scant attention.

(256)

Lucia Re underscores the pivotal role of the avant-garde in uncovering matters concerning the regulation of sexuality and gender divisions in *fin-de-siècle* Italian society. Re also explains the double nature of the futurist “scorn for women”:

The futurist polemic against the late-romantic and decadent mythologization of sexual desire on the one hand, and the unmasking of moral conventions which allow for the regimentation of sexuality in social relations on the other hand, potentially possesses positive implications for the liberation of early twentieth-century woman from the prisonhouse of patriarchal discourse. (254)

In her analysis, Re shows that the futurist polemic addressed the literary representation of the *femme fatale* on the one hand, and on the other hand the woman constructed by heterosexual and patriarchal society. She also elucidates how Marinetti rejects “the notion of gender division based on biological essentialism” and instead perceives the inferiority of women as historical product (258).

We must remember that the war Marinetti led referred in the first place to the image of woman offered by the romantic and decadent literary traditions—in particular, to the epileptic or hysterical woman whose ungovernable nature, as I have showed in the previous chapter, was considered a threat to the male protagonist. In *Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo* (1915) Marinetti explicates the futurists' hate for this literary construction:

Quest'odio, appunto, contro la tirannia dell'amore, noi esprimeremo con

una frase laconica: “il disprezzo della donna.” Noi disprezziamo la donna, concepita come unico ideale, divino serbatoio d'amore, la donna veleno, la donna ninnolo tragico, la donna fragile, ossessionante e fatale, la cui voce, greve di destino, e la cui chioma sognante si prolungano e continuano nei fogliami delle foreste bagnate di chiaro di luna. (*Teoria e invenzione* 250)

The *femme fatale* embodies notions of love and sentimentalism that are regarded as an impediment for the evolution of men: “Noi disprezziamo l'orribile e pesante Amore che ostacola la marcia dell'uomo, al quale impedisce d'uscire dalla propria umanità, di raddoppiarsi, di superare e stesso, per divenire ciò che noi chiamiamo l'uomo moltiplicato” (250). In futurist discourses the *femme fatale* began to embody a universal notion of femininity that, detached from the female sex, was employed to symbolize an entire past tradition.

Further, while the first target of Marinetti was a literary figure, his war also addressed the woman constructed by patriarchal society. In the same manifesto *Contro l'amore e il parlamentarismo* (1915), Marinetti, in a very pivotal way in early twentieth-century society, argues against the biological inferiority of women:

Quanto alla pretesa inferiorità della donna, noi pensiamo che se il corpo e lo spirito di questa avessero subito, attraverso una lunga serie di generazioni, una educazione identica a quella ricevuta dallo spirito e dal corpo dell'uomo, sarebbe forse possibile parlare di uguaglianza fra i due sessi. E' ben certo, nondimeno, che nella sua condizione attuale di schiavitù, intellettuale ed erotica, la donna, trovandosi in uno stato

d'inferiorità assoluta dal punto di vista del carattere e dell'intelligenza, non può essere che un mediocre strumento legislativo. (251)

The inferiority of women is understood as the product of cultural and social factors—in particular the exclusion of women from education—rather than an innate characteristic of women. Consequently, where the “scorn for women” apparently addressed a literary discourse, it was first and foremost linked to a political discourse about women.

The scorn for women led to a radical overthrow both of heterosexual institutions and of the naturalized relationship between gender and sex. Marinetti promoted the abolition of marriage and of women as mothers and wives, and the legalization of divorce. In *Orgoglio Italiano rivoluzionario e libero amore* (1919) Marinetti condemns the institution of marriage, considered the cause of weakness in contemporary society:

Il matrimonio deprime e avvilisce la donna abbreviandone la gioventù e troncadone le forze spirituali e fisiche. Il matrimonio scoraggia e soffoca lo sviluppo del figlio, tronca la gioventù e la forza virile del padre, effemina l'adolescente, monotonizza e affloscia in un ambiente di mediocrità tre o più individui che avrebbero dato il loro più massimo rendimento slegati in libertà e piena avventura. (318)

Marriage is responsible for weakening women's spiritual and physical energy. In *Contro il matrimonio* (1919), Marinetti also underlines the power of this institution to enslave women: “Noi vogliamo distruggere non solo la proprietà della terra, ma anche la proprietà della donna” (319). It is however true that

Marinetti, soon after liberating women from the slavery of marriage, reduces them to the slavery of the nation: “La donna non appartiene ad un uomo, ma bensì all’avvenire e allo sviluppo della razza” (319). Indeed, women are used for the reproduction of the species.<sup>69</sup>

Very similar positions are stressed in several articles that appeared in *Lacerba* and *Roma Futurista* in 1918-1919. In particular, the futurist avant-garde was the promoter of free love and sexual liberation. These issues, while being already in play in socialist discourses, became very prominent among futurists.

Further, the futurist avant-garde articulated a first conceptualization of the body that was deeply rooted in asexuality. By mixing and matching gender and sex, as in the case of the male mother Mafarka and of the iron-hearth man-machine, Marinetti aimed at the complete annihilation of gender identity.<sup>70</sup> This fact was specifically true for women. The virilization of women advocated in futurist discourses was deeply linked to the effort to construct a woman beyond traditional notions of femininity. A compelling example can be found in Valentine de Saint-Point’s *Manifesto della donna futurista* (1912). In this manifesto, the female futurist promotes a new model of woman:

Ma nel periodo di femminilità in cui viviamo, solo l'esagerazione contraria è salutare. ED E' IL BRUTO CHE SI DEVE PROPORRE A MODELLO.

Non più donne di cui i soldati debbano temere “le braccia in fiore che s'intrecciano alle ginocchia il mattino della partenza”, donne infermiere che perpetuino le debolezze e le vecchiezze [...] DONNE

BESTIALMENTE AMOROSE, CHE DISTRUGGONO NEL

DESIDERIO ANCHE LA SUA FORZA DI RINNOVAMENTO. (Bello  
Minciocchi, *Spirale di dolcezza* 52)

As opposed to the traditional association between women and weakness, de Saint-Point argues that women should be brutal and that this brutality should also be expressed in their sexual desire. Further, she also advances the pivotal idea that humanity should not be divided into men and women, but only into masculinity and femininity: “È ASSURDO DIVIDERE L'UMANITA' IN DONNE E UOMINI; essa è composta soltanto di FEMMINILITA' e di MASCOLINITA'” (50). Separating gender from the biological sex, de Saint-Point advocates a universal project of virilization in which virility belongs to both men and women. This project clearly marks a key innovation in *fin-de-siècle* gender politics.

In the figure of the androgyne de Saint-Point envisions the constitution of a body beyond traditional categories of sex. The formulation of this body is sublimated in the final scene, when Caterina Sforza publicly exposes her sex to the crowd of people:

Che le prossime guerre suscitino delle eroine simili a quella magnifica  
Caterina Sforza che, mentre sosteneva l'assedio della sua città, vedendo  
dall'alto delle mura il nemico minacciare la vita di suo figlio per  
obbligarla ad arrendersi, mostrando eroicamente il proprio sesso, gridò:

“Ammazzatelo pure! Mi rimane lo stampo per farne degli altri.” (71)

Barbara Spackman, in her article “Fascist Women and the Rhetoric of Virility” (1995), argues that the exposure of the female sex must be interpreted as an affirmation of femininity and of sexual difference:

The exposure of her “sex” is thus at once an exhibition of virility—she makes the private public, exposes what should remain private, and refuses to be drawn back into the private sphere by the tug of umbilical cord—and an affirmation of femininity, of her sexual difference from men. She points to “her sex,” her genitals but also her sexual difference from men, in the very moment in which, in true virago fashion, she goes “beyond her sex” (“Fascist Women” 106).

As opposed to the pathologization of female desire in *fin-de-siècle* gender politics, active sexuality is at the core of futurist women’s virility. This theme comes up repeatedly in futurist writings, although always with numerous ambiguities. Marinetti’s exaltation of the naked female body over the clothed body is a recurrent thematic in his writings, as his love manual *Come si seducono le donne* (1916). While the exaltation of female active sexuality marks a revolutionary turning point in *fin-de-siècle* gender politics, we must also remember how in several occasions Marinetti reiterates and strengthens the objectification of the female body as simply a sexual object.<sup>71</sup>

Since many of the issues dealt with by futurism were already in play, such as the centrality of the female question and the abolishment of heterosexual institutions and misogyny, I suggest that what truly distinguishes the avant-garde is a first apprehension of what can be called the social construction of gender. If gender can be de-constructed, gender must first be constructed. Secondly, and in a similar fashion to Foucault, the avant-garde seems to grasp the idea that “sex is located at the point of intersection of the discipline of the body and the control of



the population” (*The Foucault Reader* 67). The centrality of sex in futurist discourses seems to speak to the key role that sexuality, according to futurists, plays in society.

It is imperative to point out how both the idea of art-war and futurist gender politics—which I mentioned as being two of the main innovations of futurist revolution—culminates in the image of the *femme fatale*. The *femme fatale* stands as the symbol of an entire past literary tradition against which futurists bring their war, and at the same time it stands as the symbol of a gender politics based on heterosexual normativity and sexual repression. Once again, as in D’Annunzio’s novels, the *femme fatale* stands at the crossroads between literary and political discourses. While, on the one hand, the *femme fatale* was one of the favorite topics of decadent literature, it was also deeply tied to national gender politics that aimed at the regeneration of the Italian race. I shall now investigate in more depth how these two levels—the literal and the political—intersect in futurist discourses and what lay at the core of futurist revolution.

### **“Volontà Estrinsecata”**

Marinetti’s *Zang Tumb Tuuum* (1912) represents one of the most significant experiments of futurist literature. What strikes the reader’s attention is the visual layout of the text: the contrast between small and large typography, the use of different characters, and the composition of words and sounds in parallel lines. The confusion increases once the reader approaches the text:

Correzione di bozze + desideri in velocità. Nessuna poesia prima di noi  
colla nostra immaginazione senza fili parole in libertà vivaaaaAAA il

FUTURISMO finalmente finalmente finalmente FINALMENTE POESIA

NASCERE treno treno treno treno tren tron tron tron (ponte di ferro:

tatatluuuuuuuuntlin) sssssssiiii ssiissii ssiisssssiiii. (*Teoria e invenzione*

563)

Through his fragmented syntax, use of onomatopoeias, accumulation and repetition of words, deformation as well as lengthening of vowels, Marinetti turns this writing into a chaotic text that, while calling the reader into play, at the same time rejects him/her. *Zang Tumb Tuuum* is a text that before producing meaning creates shock in the reader; the text radically questions traditional ways of reading.

*Zang Tumb Tuuum* sets into practice the theories exposed in *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1911) and *Distruzione della sintassi, immaginazione senza fili, parole in libertà* (1913). In his *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1911) Marinetti is sitting on the gas tank of an airplane and denounces the old syntax inherited from Homer. He promotes the abolition of syntax, the random disposition of nouns, the use of infinitives as well as the abolition of adverbs, adjectives and punctuation. All these expedients are necessary to free the words from the prisonhouse of Latin syntax.

Marinetti promotes the use of analogy, considered as the deep love between different things: “L’analogia non è altro che l’amore profondo che collega le cose distanti, apparentemente diverse e ostili” (*Teoria e invenzione* 42). From the single analogy Marinetti prescribes a strict net of images and analogies, whose main power consists in astonishing the reader: “Quanto più le immagini

contengono rapporti vasti, tanto più a lungo esse conservano la loro forza di stupefazione” (42). Through this net of analogy, the word, deprived of its traditional meaning, is set on the same level as all other words: “Non vi sono categorie di immagini” (43). The result of this poetic is disorder; where the Latin period called for order, the futurist poetic aims at creating “un maximum di disordine” (44).

According to Marinetti, the strength of analogy lies in its power to embrace matter: “Solo per mezzo di analogie vastissime uno stile orchestrale e policromo, polifonico, e polimorfo, può abbracciare la vita della materia”(42). To free the word from the bounds of the intelligence—that is coextensive with the Latin period—means properly to free matter: “La materia fu sempre contemplata da un io distratto, freddo, troppo preoccupato di se stesso, pieno di pregiudizi di saggezza e di ossessioni umane” (45). Marinetti envisions an act of liberation of words from an obsessive I, that has humanized nature by attributing human passions and preoccupations to all things in nature:

11. Distruggere nella letteratura l’ “io”, cioè tutta la psicologia. L'uomo completamente avariato dalla biblioteca e dal museo, sottoposto a una logica e ad una saggezza spaventose, non offre assolutamente più interesse alcuno. Dunque, dobbiamo abolirlo nella letteratura, e sostituirlo finalmente colla materia, di cui si deve afferrare l'essenza a colpi d'intuizione, la qual cosa non potranno mai fare i fisici né i chimici. Sorprendere attraverso gli oggetti in libertà e i motori capricciosi, la respirazione, la sensibilità e gli istinti dei metalli, delle pietre, del legno

ecc. Sostituire la psicologia dell'uomo, ormai esaurita, con l'ossessione lirica della materia. (44)

In this passage Marinetti stands against academic knowledge; he points to its impossibility to engender any interest in the individual. As opposed to traditional language, the poet advocates the necessity of embracing matter, of creating a relation of non-appropriation with the universe. This relation can only take place once the word has returned to its pure status, freed from the psychology of the “I.” “The lyrical obsession for matter” is the genesis of the so-called “wireless imagination” and of “words in freedom.” The further removed is from the previous tradition, the less comprehensible it is: “Bisognerà per questo rinunciare ad essere compresi. Essere compresi non è necessario.” (46)

We must notice that for Marinetti comprehension, like Homeric syntax, symbolizes an external imposition:

La sintassi era una specie di cifrario astratto che ha servito ai poeti per informare le folle del colore, della musicalità, della plastica e dell'architettura dell'universo. La sintassi era una specie d'interprete o di cicerone monotono. Bisogna sopprimere questo intermediario, perché la letteratura entri direttamente nell'universo e faccia corpo con esso. (46)

Syntax—which represents traditional academic language—has bounded people to the earth, preventing them from reaching the sky. The liberation of matter therefore parallels the liberation from an external imposition—a mediator—that has limited people’s relationship with the universe. The psychology of the “I” must then represent this sort of mediator against which futurists lead their war. At the

core of Marinetti's poetics emerges the opposition between the hatred for intelligence and divine intuition. Intuition, explicitly understood as the "amicizia e conoscenza della materia" (48) allows the liberation of matter as well as the creation of the man-machine: "Dopo il regno animale ecco iniziarsi il regno meccanico. Con la conoscenza e amicizia della materia, delle quali gli scienziati non possono che conoscere le reazioni fisico-chimiche, noi prepariamo la creazione dell'uomo meccanico dalle parti cangiabili" (48). The man-machine is the result of a linguistic revolution at the core of which lies the liberation of matter and therefore the connection between the Universe and the people.

Matter was first presented in Marinetti's African novel *Mafarka il Futurista* (1909). During his futurist exposition, Mafarka reiterates the discourse about matter: "La nostra volontà deve uscire da noi per impossessarsi della materia e modificarla a nostro capriccio" (*Teoria e invenzione* 224). While in the manifestos Marinetti called for the liberation of matter, in this passage he formulates an act of appropriation. Mafarka continues: "Così noi possiamo plasmare tutto ciò che ci circonda e rinnovare senza fine la faccia del mondo" (224). The appropriation of matter is used for the reconstruction of the universe in line with futurist ideologies.

In her book *The Other Modernism* (1996), Cinzia Sartini Blum notices the contrasting movement between Futurism's liberating and controlling tendencies (40). These two dimensions are specifically evident in the opposition between "paroliberist" texts and manifestos. Blum argues that eventually Marinetti, far from demolishing the unitary subject, empowers it with a new totalizing strength:

The fundamental goal is not to subvert the phallocentrism of the old symbolic order, but to produce a reassuring representation of self, founded on exclusive opposition and on the devaluation, domination and negation of otherness. The declared destruction of the literary “I” does not involve the deconstruction of the unitary subject, but its expansion, its transformation into a new all-powerful “I.” (41)

According to Blum, Marinetti’s goal is the actual exclusion and negation of otherness. In relation to Mafarka, Blum also suggests that “Mafarka announces man’s victory over nature” (45). Blum understands Mafarka’s attitude as a complete and final appropriation of nature. Her position is compelling because it emphasizes the contrasting tendencies that are also implicit in Marinetti’s relationship with matter. Nonetheless this liberating tendency needs further investigation. The above-mentioned passage emphasizes another crucial relation, the one between matter and will. Marinetti argues that will must be externalized in order to appropriate matter. The (de)-appropriation of matter is deeply linked to the externalization of will.

Will also emerges soon after when, in his war against women, Mafarka replaces love with a new religion based on will, lust and heroism (*Teoria e invenzione* 224). At this point Mafarka urges his people to be the makers of their own decisions:

Non avete dunque un’idea vostra...una volontà vostra ...voi che io vi vidi sempre correrme intorno con la solennità affaccendata e solenne dei tacchini? ...Traetevi d’impaccio da soli [...] Mi parli di riprendere lo

scettro?...Preferirei una verga da pastore!....Bella occupazione, e veramente degna di un eroe quale io sono, quella di controllare la dura dei soldati!...Dopo la vittoria a che servirebbe la mia presenza?... Che gli arabi fossero miei soldati me lo concedevo con orgoglio....Ma se essi diventassero il mio gregge ...oh! Triste sorte. (220)

The liberation of matter, that is coextensive with the liberation of words, is deeply linked to the liberation of will, with people's ability to make their own decisions.

The question of will recurs in the conceptualization of the man-machine. In *L'Uomo moltiplicato e il regno della macchina* Marinetti asserts, in a similar fashion to Mafarka, that the man-machine is a being whose will has been externalized:

Il giorno in cui sarà possibile all'uomo di esteriorizzare la sua volontà in modo che essa si prolunghi fuori di lui come un immenso braccio invisibile il Sogno e il Desiderio, che oggi sono vane parole, regneranno sovrani sullo Spazio e sul tempo domati. Il tipo non umano e meccanico, costruito per una velocità onnipresente, sarà naturalmente crudele, onnisciente e combattivo. (256)

The liberation of will, can only take place once the world has been freed by love and sentimentalism. The man-machine is a man whose hearth has been reduced to a stomach of the brain:

Per preparare la formazione del tipo non umano e meccanico dell'uomo moltiplicato mediante l'esteriorizzazione della sua volontà, bisogna singolarmente diminuire il bisogno di affetto, non ancora distruttibile, che

l'uomo porta nelle sue vene.

L'uomo futuro ridurrà il proprio cuore alla sua vera funzione distributrice.

Il cuore deve diventare in qualche modo, una specie di stomaco del cervello, che si empirà metodicamente perché lo spirito possa entrare in azione. (257)

The liberation from women is sublimated again in the figure of Mafarka, the male-mother who is able to procreate without the intervention of women: “E’ così che io sprigiono adesso la mia volontà, ancora giovane e possente, dal mio corpo già logoro per troppi sforzi inutili...E’ così che io trasformerò la mia volontà nel corpo nuovo di mio figlio” (224). In the act of male-reproduction Marinetti sublimates the final liberation of men from the bonds of any external imposition.

In Marinetti’s works there emerges a strong connection between matter, will and gender; between the “psychology of the I,” “the externalization of will” and the “scorn for women.” In this context, it is imperative to notice that the avant-garde does not only advocate the abolition of libraries, museums and academies, but it goes further into the abolition of discourse itself. It is only through the deconstruction of language—the liberation of words that equals the liberation of matter—that will can be externalized. The externalization of will in the futurist imaginary also corresponds to an overthrow of gender. The complete annihilation of gender identities through the matching and mixing of gender and sex, also leads to the externalization of will. I suggest that at the core of both futurist language and gender overthrow is a quest for freedom. The (de)-appropriation of matter and the externalization of will underscore a revolution that



aims at some sort of liberation. We must now investigate further this quest; what is this freedom about and from what exactly should futurists be freed? Further, how does this quest for freedom interact with the *femme fatale* that I mentioned being at the crossroads between political and literary discourses?

### **The Mad's Freedom**

*Mafarka il Futurista* (1909) was written soon after *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* (1909), the second founding manifesto of the Futurist avant-garde. In this manifesto Marinetti inaugurates the act of birth of the Centaur, the progenitor of the Futurist man-machine. In the futurist imaginary, this act must be accomplished by the murder of the moonlight; symbolizing the *femme fatale* inane widespread among romantic and decadent writers, particularly Fogazzaro and D'Annunzio.

The manifesto begins with “i grandi poeti incendiari” who intend to lay the great military railroad to reach the Gorinsakar, the high of the world (*Teoria e invenzione* 14). Their action can only be accomplished through war, that, similarly to the foundation manifesto, is associated to the scorn for women: “Sì, i nostri nervi esigono la guerra e disprezzano la donna, poiché noi temiamo che braccia supplici s'intreccino alle nostre ginocchia, la mattina della partenza!” (14).

Women are again associated with love and sentimentality, which are perceived as threat. At the sight of the madhouse on the ridge of a hill, Marinetti decides to liberate the madmen and madwomen. Before doing so, however, one of the futurists, Enrico Cavacchioli, undergoes a metamorphosis. While sitting in the shadow of the asylum—“il palazzo dei vivi” (16)—he feels his body rejuvenating and returning to his mother's womb “d'un passo sempre più infantile, verso la mia

culla...Presto, rientrerò nel ventre di mia madre” (16-17). In the meantime, Marinetti reaches the asylum and kills the two physicians with an automobile headlight. Three thousand madmen and madwomen “scamiciati e seminudi” (17) pour out from the open doors. After releasing “gli esseri più vivi, più sradicati, i meno vegetali” (17) and creating the army of madness, the futurist poets, together with the beasts and the madmen and madwomen, cross the borders of Podagra and Paralisi.

At nighttime the moon, little by little, breaks from the clouds. Once it finally appears, the madmen feel their heart “staccarsi dal petto e salire verso la superficie delle notte” (19). Suddenly, one of the madmen is struck by lightning and after he dies, a flower appears in his hands, “un fiore bianco e desioso, il cui pistillo si agitava come una lingua di donna” (19). Some of the madmen wish to touch it and once they do so, “vaporose chiome di innumerevoli nuotatrici” (19) come out from the petals. At this point the beasts run to help the mad and after a last call from the moon, a cry rises up from the plains: “Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna” (20). All together, madwoman, madmen, beasts and poets, build the electric railway and, once they reach the Gorinsakar, finally kill the moonlight.

With the murder of the moonlight the futurist avant-garde is victorious in its war against the past. This war, however, can only be accomplished with the liberation of the inmates from the asylum. This act of liberation has received very little interest, if none at all, on the part of criticism. Still, two matters in particular are of special interest in my discourse: first, the reference to the asylum that, as I mentioned at the beginning of this study, is almost completely absent in the Italian

literary context of this period; and second the inclusion of the madwoman in the act of generation of the Centaur. Silvia Contarini, for example, notices the presence of female inmates, yet she does not investigate this matter at all: “Ainsi, les seules femme alliées des futuristes seront les folles libérées de l’asile qui vont s’associer à l’armée des fous” (*La femme futuriste* 95). In general, while critics points to the complete exclusion of women in the act of generation of the man-machine; they have neglect to consider the inclusion of the madwomen in killing the moonlight. While the mad’s freedom apparently replicates the classical dichotomy between madness and wisdom—“E non abbiamo ancora scacciate dal nostro cervello le lugubri formiche della saggezza” (*Teoria e invenzione* 15)—, the reference to the “asylum” and to the “moonlight” allows a different interpretation. This interpretation addresses first the literary appropriation of madness in *fin-de-siècle* Italy.

As we have seen, the institutionalization of psychiatry in 1862 led to the widespread representation of madness in both literary and photographic spaces. Madness became one of the most privileged topics of naturalist and decadent literature. Particularly, during the 1880s, the incumbent representation of the hysterical or epileptic woman—the main target of futurist poets—testifies to the explosion of medical discourses concerning hysteria.

In *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* the literary appropriation of madness is represented by the fact that the mad are the real victims of the moonlight: “Il lucente e caldo sorriso della luna” (19) that struck one of inmates explicitly symbolizes a literary tradition that appropriated madness as one of the principal

topoi of literary representations. Consequently, the murder of the moonlight represents in first place, a literary liberation: to throw one's heart to the sky like a bomb means to liberate the mad from romantic and decadent appropriation. However, in the explicit reference to the asylum, it is possible to offer a more profound interpretation of this act of liberation. In *fin-de-siècle* Italy, if madness was the undisputed protagonist of literary representations, madness in society was completely non-existent: mentally ill people were systematically and forcefully confined in mental institutions. Consequently, madness was not only literarily appropriated, but it was first and foremost politically expropriated.

We must remember that the same literary discourse that appropriated madness also contributed largely to the stereotyping of mental disorders. Literature played a key role in creating systems of perception that resulted into the physical oppression of the mentally ill and in their exclusion from the field of humanity. Therefore, in the exposed crossroads between madness and the asylum the avant-garde stresses an existing link between art and politics, between the literary and political appropriation of madness. In this context, I suggest that the mad's freedom symbolizes an act of liberation from a literary discourse that has resulted in material violence against the individual. This violence was carried out on the body of the mentally ill who became emblematic of the material oppression of discourses. By putting together the represented and the real, futurists advocate the key role of literature in constructing hegemonic discourses.

It is essential to return now to the liberation of matter from the psychology of the "I"—the key idea of futurist language overthrow—and to the quest for

freedom. I suggest that at the core of this idea is the understanding of how literature is able to create a material oppression of people. To liberate the word from the psychology of the “I” means to break a specific system of oppression that has been carried on and perpetuated by literary discourses. In a way, the radical deconstruction of the literary language in Futurist works can be understood as a sort of what Monique Wittig defines a “Trojan horse”: a literature that in its radical innovation is able to work as a war-machine. At the core of Wittig’s language overthrow stands the understanding of the material existence of ideology:

When we use the overgeneralizing term “ideology” to designate all the discourses to the domain of Irreal Ideas we forget the material (physical) violence that they directly do to the oppressed people, a violence produced by the abstract and scientific discourses as well as the discourses of the mass media. I would like to insist on the material oppression of individuals by discourses. (25)

According to Wittig, the only way to liberate individuals from the bonds of hegemonic discourses is through a radical deconstruction of language. In a similar fashion, the only way to break systems of perception, “frames of representability,” is through a drastic overthrow of language. It is in this linguistic rupture that underscores the material violence of discourses, that I suggest the futurist quest for freedom lies.

It is necessary now to move this analysis further and consider in this act of liberation the inclusion of the half-naked and disheveled madwoman, as the only

woman allowed to take part in the generative act of birth of the Centaur. As I have shown in the previous two chapters, female madness was usually associated with women who transgressed gender roles as mother and wives and consequently with women who were considered a threat to patriarchal society. These women were forcibly confined in mental institutions and subjected to several practices of torture able to completely annihilate their identity. I have also argued that the hysterical woman in literary and photographic representations was turned into an apparatus—the madness apparatus—used to subject people and reinforce heterosexual normativity. As a result, beyond the literary representation of female madness lay a system of apparatuses of discipline-normalization that state power promoted in order to establish heterosexual normativity. While affects of desire and fear were specifically employed as means of subjectivation, the actual body of the madwoman offered itself as ontological weight to a phantasmatic notion of national manhood.

My analysis showed the actual power of the politics of gender that emerged in this period; a gender politics that in line with the spread of hygienic and eugenic theories operated a material violence on the body of the mentally ill people. I have also uncovered the power of literary representations in oppressing not only the mentally ill, but also people in the outside society. The widespread sexual morality based on sexual repression increasingly constrained people's sexual behavior and sexual freedom.

In light of this, I suggest that the inclusion of the “half-naked and disheveled” madwoman to kill the moonlight parallels a political act of sexual

liberation from a sexual morality that, also by means of confinement, became an actual threat to life. Through the inclusion of the madwoman Marinetti appears to point to the kind of material violence carried out by national gender politics of the period. The female inmate in particular is the first victim of a gender politics based on drastic practices of sexual repression.

Further, in the loop between the represented and the real, the inclusion of the “half-naked and disheveled” madwoman also attests to another kind of liberation. By opposing the female inmate to the decadent *femme fatale*, Marinetti opposes the real body of madness to the aestheticized one. In this opposition, I suggest that the madwoman functions in the text as its *pars destruens*: she liberates women from the image of women constructed by both literature as well as heterosexual institutions. If the madwoman is a woman who, in the historical real, exists “beyond her sex,” this means that gender roles must be constructed outside the historical reality. This means that the madwoman, as a woman in the flesh, attests to the existence of an ontology of women that exists prior to the discourse about women.

Consequently, it is possible to think that by means of the madwoman, the avant-garde realized how if gender can be done it can also be undone. If gender can be discursively constructed and politically regulated by specific institutions, it is only by abolishing such a discourse and such institutions that it is possible to liberate women and men from the bonds of socially constructed gender-roles. In so doing, while the madwoman demolishes *la morale sessuale passatista*, she can also be used first and foremost to construct a new sexuality.

As is in fact typical in futurist discourses, the madwoman not only stands as the *pars destruens* of *fin-de-siècle* gender politics, but she also stands as the *pars construens* of futurist modern sexuality. The madwoman released from the asylum establishes herself as a paradigm of modern sexuality. As a woman born from the traumatic changes of modernity and a woman whose excessive sexuality led to the transgression of traditional gender roles, the madwoman, as the only woman allowed to take part in the generative act of birth of the man-machine, became for the first Italian avant-garde the paradigm of futurist women's virility. Virility for women was deeply rooted in female active sexuality and as such it was entirely constructed beyond the category of sex.

In relation to this, it is imperative to point out how the issue of free love and sexual liberation became key in futurist discourses. Together with the abolition of marriage and the role of women as mother and wife, the avant-garde was also a notable promoter of sexual liberation. Several futurists became also promoters of erotic literature; for example, Valentine de Saint-Point was also the author of *Manifesto futurista della lussuria* (1913) in which she returns to the topic of sexuality and desire that was already partially advocated in *Manifesto della donna futurista* (1912). Saint-Point claims that lust is a strength: “la lussuria, concepita fuor di ogni concetto morale e come elemento essenziale del dinamismo della vita, è una forza” (Bello Minciacchi, *Spirale di dolcezza* 57). As Cecilia Bello Minciacchi points out Saint-Point argues that desire is genderless; desire belongs to both men and women (*Scrittrici della prima avanguardia* 101):

CERCHIAMO DI SCHERNIRE IL DESIDERIO, questa attrazione ad un



tempo sottile e brutale di due carni, qualunque sia il loro sesso, di due carni che si vogliono, tendendo verso l'unità. Cessiamo di schernire il Desiderio, camuffandolo con le vesti compassionevoli delle vecchie e sterili sentimentalità. (Bello Minciocchi, *Spirale di dolcezza* 60)<sup>72</sup>

Saint-Point's glorification of female desire is an intriguing counter-discourse to *fin-de-siècle* sexual morality that turned female desire into a pathology. Italo Tavolato in *Contro la morale sessuale* (1913) also criticizes sexual morality and the institution of marriage:

In questo ventesimo secolo di moralità, l'ipocrisia intellettuale diventata definitivamente questione di buona educazione, è riuscita a consolidare l'opinione che la sessualità sia una cattiva abitudine o una ridicola superfluità. La sessualità è un male. E la santificazione della rinuncia inquina i cori e i cervelli, e porta nel mondo tanto dolore e tanta imbecillità. La maggioranza crede disonorata una donna che abbia subito ben volentieri l'atto, detto coito in linguaggio scientifico, istintivo va e vieni in neomalthusiano ed estrema onta in gazzettesco e in volgare teologico. Non pertanto i mariti continueranno a disonorare le loro mogli, e queste non saprebbero fare figlioli senza l'ausilio dell'estrema onta. Quindi il matrimonio non è altro se non la legalizzazione del disonore.

(cited in Marinetti, *I manifesti del futurismo* 233)

Tavolato condemns the hypocrisy of intellectuals in spreading ideas that perceive sexuality as a bad and useless habit. He also condemns the institution of marriage considered the legalization of dishonor. At the core of Tavolato's discourse is the

glorification of sexual freedom:

La sessualità non è davvero responsabile del guaio, che i più se la considerano come uno strofinamento particolarmente piacevole di due epidermidi particolarmente sensibili. Responsabile del guaio è bensì la morale: la morale ha ridotto la vibrazione sessuale del mondo alla scossettina prolificatrice dei benpensanti. (243)

The real problem, according to Tavolato, is not sexuality but the current sexual morality based on sexual repression.

Tavolato is also the author of “Elogio alla prostituzione” published in *Lacerba* in March 1914. Prostitution became a recurrent literary topic during the Giolitti period (Verdone 43).<sup>73</sup> In a similar fashion to Valentine de Saint-Point and Italo Tavolato, other writers also addressed the issue of sexuality and prostitution in their works. Compared to symbolists and romantic writers, it is also essential to notice how the topic of the prostitute in futurist writings became more and more related to social protest (44).

While the topic of mental institutions in *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* was symbolic of the power of literature to create a material violence in the individual, mental institutions interested Futurists first-hand. In 1915, in an interview with *La provincia di Padova*, Marinetti stated that futurists find themselves in the threshold of mental institutions for 6 years (Bohn 56). The radical revolutionary tone of the first avant-garde and the promotion of sexual freedom made Futurists the target of moral and public scandal that led to several trials for public obscenity documented in Settimelli's and Corra's *I processi del futurismo per oltraggio al*

*pudore*.

In this section I advanced what might appear to be a strong interpretation of the mad's freedom. My aim was to consider this act of liberation vis-à-vis the historical reality in which this manifesto was born. In the explicit reference to the asylum and to the moonlight, futurists appear to point to the paradoxical nature of madness during this period. Madness, while the object of obsessive representation in literary and photographic spaces, was also non-existent in society because it was systematically confined. By considering the radical overthrow of language and gender promoted by futurists, the liberation of inmates from the asylum seems to be situated at the crossroads of these two matters. We shall now investigate further how futurists, throughout their creative works, promoted an act of the "mad's freedom" beyond the moonlight. While on the one hand, futurists conducted a complete overthrow of the madness apparatus, they became also actively involved with the reformation of the asylum.

### **Representation of Madness and Anti-Psychiatry Discourse in Futurist Creative Works**

The relation between madness, the engendered body and anti-psychiatry discourses occur often in Futurist creative works. A compelling example is offered by Enif Robert's *Un ventre di donna* (1919), written in collaboration with F.T. Marinetti during the First World War. This autobiographical novel recounts in parallel two different wars: Marinetti's fight in the trenches and Enif's fight against her diseased womb (Contarini, "Guerre maschili" 132). The first part consists of a diary of Enif's personal struggle against her pain; the second part

centers on the epistolary correspondence between Enif and the futurist poet Marinetti. To relieve Enif's pain, Marinetti suggests the cure of the desire which "consiste nell'aumentare, mediante un desiderio sistematico i legami ardenti con la vita terrestre" (124). Enif sets into practice Marinetti's cure through futurist writings; the optimism that stems from this practice enables the protagonist to overcome pain.

As Paola Sica points out, the centrality of the female body in *Un ventre di donna* makes this novel unique in the Italian literary context (11). Associated to different female diseases, such as female cancer of the rectum and hysteria, the womb symbolizes metaphorically the condition of women, and specifically physically degenerate women (Kriss 36). In the novel, Enif's personal struggle against her pain engenders a criticism against science, bourgeois culture and literature (36).

The book begins with a preface titled "Coraggio + Verità" written by Enif Robert and "unconditionally" approved by Marinetti. This piece is a statement of poetics in which Enif urges the necessity to portray non-aesthetic realities in literature. The aim of her project is to show the truth: "LA VE-RI-TA" (Robert and Marinetti XIV). The writer also formulates a new definition of "DONNA FUTURISTA;" in her view this term must translate with the equation "courage+ truth" (XIV). This means that also futurist women have to be realistic in their writings, far from the sentimentalism which, by contrast, still characterizes their works.

Enif's criticism against romantic literature as well as other female futurist

writers is linked from the beginning with the necessity to speak human carnal desire without sentimentalism:

Ma di, dunque, con rude franchezza il tuo desiderio umano e carnale,  
quale te lo suggerisce la tua sensibilità legittima e consapevole; parla del  
tuo diritto sensuale e fecondo, senza impasticciarlo con analogie di raggi e  
di profumi assolutamente estranei alla tua nudità che canta l'amore. (XIII)

The protagonist celebrates human desire and considers sexuality a “right” that everybody has. She introduces at this point the image of a sick woman, her friend:

Una bella signora mia amica era da molto tempo ammalata. A me, a tutti,  
raccontava di disturbi nervosi, di...febbri del pensiero (testuale!) di  
angosciosi stati d'animo che le davano alte temperature, ecc. Si faceva,  
insomma, credere affetta da una malattia interessante. Infatti, quel povero  
sistema nervoso vibrante, sensibile, scosso di continuo da fremiti elettrici,  
com'era...estetico! Quanto il bel viso pallido, quanto la bella persona  
sdraiata in posa pittoresca di sofferente...intellettuale! (XIV)

The aesthetic recollection of the woman's pain kills Enif's compassion; aesthetics hides the real nature of pain. The cause of this aestheticization of disease is to be found in the literature the woman favors. Enif condemns romantic and decadent literature and also the literature produced by futurist women—“le azzurre”—that according to her is still full of sentimentalism.

We must note that the woman described by Enif appears to be an overt reference to the hysterical woman in romantic and decadent literature. The “nervous disorder” with which she believes herself affected directly recalls the

aestheticization of madness in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. As we saw in all representations of hysterical women in literature, the wounded womb was key in the definition of hysteria. Further, the hysterical woman also seem to embody par excellence the “mythologization of the sexual desire” outlined by Lucia Re in her article and that Enif contests at the beginning of the preface (“Futurism and Feminism” 254).

The protagonist of the novel, from the very beginning, stands as a very untraditional woman. She is a widow and a mother; she refuses to remarry, against her family’s will; and she maintains an extra-conjugal relationship with a man named Giorgio. The protagonist’s untraditional behavior towards bourgeois values and patriarchal society makes her similar to a madwoman. Dr. Freschi for example defines her as extravagant and abnormal; in particular, he asserts her masculine character: “Ecco: per quanto sia difficile definirla, dirò che lei mi sembra un cervello troppo virile in un corpo troppo femminile” (97). In line with theories of the time, women with a developed intelligence were considered “too masculine” and consequently perceived as abnormal. Enif’s abnormality is also linked to active sexuality; several times she experiences her erotic desire when she is alone with the physician: “Sotto la mano di Freschi, provai la più curiosa, la più inaspettata sensazione erotica!” (26). The physician questions her capacity to control her mind: “E’ convinto che io non sia più veramente padrona del mio cervello” (28), and eventually suggests hospitalizing her in a mental institution: “Poi mi dice che Salsomaggiore non è indicato per il mio male; che devo partire subito! Lo guardo trasognata. Capisco che dando retta a loro c’è da finire davvero là dove l’ineffabile professore romano voleva mandarmi: al manicomio!” (160).

From the very beginning, the writer rejects identifying with the madwoman. Enif contests her insanity: “Non sono pazza. Ho i nervi di una donna non comune, nervi che pensano, vogliono, si avviticchiano e si staccano, si arrampicano sull’impossibile, e che l’amore non può soddisfare” (7). Enif reclaims her “normality;” her nerves are those of a woman who is able to “think” and “know” what she wants. References to fever, nerves and madness emerge constantly in the text. While on the one hand Enif tries to define herself outside the parameters of madness, on other hand the physician defines her even more as a madwoman.

Thus, the criticism directed toward bourgeois society develops into a specific attack against psychiatry. Through the figure of Dr. Freschi, the novel openly condemns positivist science. Enif repeatedly shows the failure of physicians to find a diagnosis as well as a cure for her pain: “Freschi non capisce nulla. Mi sono divertita per tre ore a ridicolizzare la medicina. Freschi è uscito irritato” (23). While in the preface Enif condemns the process of aestheticization in literature, in the novel she shows how this process not only refers to literature, but to science in the first place. In the text the writer uses the term “aesthetic” also in relation to medicine: “So che il professore ha messo una cura meticolosa nell’eseguire la satura esterna, per rendere quasi invisibile la cicatrice. Egli è dunque preoccupato dell’estetica, eseguendo una lunga manovra di punti complicati” (69). This fact directly recalls the process of aestheticization of female madness that was sublimated by Charcot’s photography inside the asylum. Physicians inside the asylum, before intellectuals, aestheticized the “nervous disorder” of the women depicted in the preface.

Through her writing Enif uncovers the violence that lay behind psychiatric practices. Several times the writer refers to physicians as assassins such as in these cases: “Il professore è una bestia” (68); “Lo battezzero’ *Jack lo sventratore*” (72); and “Assassini! Macellai! Sveglia, no! Tagliare, no! La mia carne è mia!...Comando io! Ho diritto!” (81). Enif uncovers the ways physicians tend not only to pathologize untraditional female behavior, but also to cure them through surgical therapy. As Minchiacchi points out in her book, Enif denounces, in a very untraditional way “aspetti scabrosi delle cure mediche fino ad allora esclusi dalla letteratura” (*Scrittrici della prima avanguardia* 368). Among scientific practices, the writer specifically condemns hysterectomies. Enif laments the doctor’s decision to impose surgery as a way to cure her: “Egli spera che l’asportazione del male valga a calmare le mie irrequietezze, a rendermi...*normale*” (Robert and Marinetti 75).

We must notice that the charge against *medicina passatista* and in particular against hysterectomy relates directly to the deprivation of the maternal role. At the beginning of the novel, Enif recalls when she gave birth to Carlino “Ricordo però la gioia profondamente carnale che provai otto giorni dopo il mio parto [...] Ecco la mia creatura, nata da me, voluta da me, portata da me nel mio ventre” (4). If at first Enif wants to undergo hysterectomy, in order to enjoy her sexuality without remaining pregnant (53), she then laments the tragic loss related to her diseased womb: “Tu mordi i miei figli, quelli che aspetterei formarsi e vivere sotto il getto raggiante della creazione. Tu distruggi il mio fervore materno e mi dilani!!” (201). The loss of the maternal role is experienced as complete



deconstruction of her identity, emphasized by the exclamation “mi dilani!!” (201).

What is compelling to underline is how Enif shows the negative results of surgical therapy. After she undergoes the surgery, there are complications, and she cannot be cured. Through her writing she points to the suffering of her body:

Tento di alzarmi dal letto. Ho la faccia tragica. L'idea della violenza mi sconvolge. Debbo dire delle cose mostruose, perché le dolci facce monacali sono costernate. Urlo affannosamente la mia esasperazione. Mi scatenano in un delirio frenetico, in fiotti di parole mozzate dal singhiozzo. Maria tenta frenarmi. Non posso più. Dico, dico, dico....finisco in un pianto acuto, ributtandomi sui guanciali. Il professore assiste attonito, senza replicare, e se ne va mormorando:

—Oh! Che caso! Che caso! (81)

In this passage Enif reveals her pain and frustration; she screams and cries; she shows her fear of surgery. Indeed, this passage juxtaposes D'Annunzio's recollection of Giuliana's surgery in *L'innocente*. Throughout her writing, Enif is able to offer a realistic perspective of what it means to be a woman and specifically to be a woman who is subjected to surgical therapy. While physicians attempt to cure female disease through medicine and surgical therapy, Enif is able to make the reader empathize with her own perspective. Compared to D'Annunzio's novel, there is no desire in looking at her diseased body, but feelings of empathy towards her suffering. Similarly to Verga's *Capinera*, Enif Robert, through her autobiographical writing, is able to destabilize “frames of representability;” she is able to offer a resistance to the apparatus of psychiatric.

In the last chapter Enif presents the image of another woman affected by a disease of the womb. The fictional character of this last chapter breaks the autobiographical tone of the novel. This chapter recalls the story of the Principessa De Ruderis, an aristocratic woman tortured by a “misteriosissimo e incomprensibile” disease of her womb (209). Once again, a group of physicians tries to understand the origin of the pain. In a similar fashion to D’Annunzio’s “La vergine Orsola,” and “La vergina Anna,” Enif shows the constitution of this woman as spectacle: “In realtà quegli illustri medici erano stati chiamati a consulto intorno al letto della giovane e bellissima sposa del principe Eutanasio De Ruderis, cento volte milionario, avaro e maniaco” (209). After the Prince dies, Principessa De Ruderis suddenly goes insane. She decides to undergo hysterectomy, gets up from the bed, goes towards the balcony and shows herself “nuda, energica e risoluta” to the crowd of soldiers who “applaudirono freneticamente, senza stupore, all'apparizione, pure tanto strana, di quella meravigliosa donna ignuda” (218).

In this last scene, Principessa De Ruderis’ naked body offers again a counter-discourse to psychiatric power. In a similar fashion to Marinetti’s opposition of the *femme fatale* to the “disheveled and half-naked” madwoman taken from the asylum, this image radically contrasts with the image of the woman at the beginning of the novel. While they are both presented as madwomen, the Principessa De Ruderis reflects a different conceptualization of madness. De Ruderis has gained full agency over her actions. It is essential in this context to remember that women had no power of decision that superseded that of

their husbands as well as physicians (Showalter 4). In this sense, the princess stands as revolutionary woman who is now able to decide by herself what is best to do with her body. Her agency is also fully related to female active sexuality. In exposing her sex, like Caterina Sforza in Valentine de Saint-Point's *Manifesto della donna futurista*, the Principessa De Ruderis goes "beyond her sex": she transgresses her gender role and exposes her sexual difference.

We must also consider that Enif Robert is able to create a completely different emotional response in the reader compared to both naturalistic and decadent writers. Not only does she uncover, throughout her writing, the material violence of surgical therapy and create feelings of empathy in the reader, but also in the portrait of the Principessa de Ruderis, Enif empowers this woman with vitalizing energy; she is "naked, determinate and energetic" (203). This portrait is a revolutionary representation of madness in *fin-de-siècle* literary context. The Principessa de Ruderis contrasts powerfully the feelings of fear, disgust and terror that characterizes almost all representations of hysterical women in decadent writers. By breaking the production of these specific affects, I argue that Enif operates a radical overthrow of the madness apparatus. The different emotional response that the futurist writer creates throughout her writing radically deconstructs the system of perception that relegates the mad body to the realm of sub-human beings.

A similar representation of female madness appears in Rosa Rosà's *Una donna con tre anime* (1918). Unlike Enif's autobiographical piece, this short novel is strictly fantastic. *Una donna con tre anime* centers on the story of a petit-

bourgeois housewife, Giorgina Rossi, who undergoes three drastic changes of personality. At the beginning of the story, Giorgina is described as a quite insignificant housewife. She barely says anything compelling; she is physically unattractive, shy and devoted. The only thing she can do is go shopping. As Lucia Re points out in her work, Giorgina's role as housewife represents the typical separation of gender roles at the beginning of the century in Italy:

According to the ideology of gender evoked by the novel and still prevalent at the time in many sectors of society (despite the changes brought by the war), the woman belongs in the home not only because her duties are there but also because her purity, her innocence and her morality are threatened by all that lies beyond the home: the promiscuity of unknown streets and squares, the dangers of public life – including the life of politics – are to be avoided at all costs. (Rosa Rosà's "A Woman" 11)

Although this period witnesses a large number of women entering the work force, women's position was still limited to the house.

The three metamorphoses turn Giorgina into a completely different woman: she becomes amoral, sexually active, independent and masculine, and she learns how to write. In other words, they turn Giorgina into a madwoman. It is essential to remember that at the beginning of the twentieth century, housewives like Giorgina who were considered inadequate to their role, were considered insane and held in asylums (Molinari 118). During her first transformation, Giorgina is empowered with vibrant and erotic energy:

Giorgina Rossi, con le mani tremanti e il cervello preso da una specie di

tumultuosa vertigine, divenne ad un tratto cosciente di una serie di mutamenti radicali svolgentesi nei suoi nervi con rapidità folgorante. Intensificazione formidabile di tutta la sua vitalità, di tutta la sua personalità vivente e pensante. Poi, in modo particolarmente spiccato, una crescita vertiginosa di tutte le sue sensibilità femminili, un'esplosione improvvisa di un caldo fascino sensuale. (Rosà 45)

Giorgina is vitalized by a powerful and positive energy; she is turned into a new woman: she longs for change and rejects the monotony of her previous life; she walks around the city, she talks to strangers; she is attractive and completely uninhibited:

La realtà, che fino ad allora le era apparsa come un grande blocco unico grigio indifferente, si rivelava ora di un colpo come un vasto e multiforme agitarsi di aspetti diversi, una corsa affannata e frettolosa di volontà avida di sorpassarsi. Un turbine di desideri e di passioni diverse e contraddittorie che si urtano, si combattono, si annullano, ansiose di precipitarsi allo scopo. (52)

The metamorphosis completely changes Giorgina's perception of life and also awakens her sexual desire. She is positively overwhelmed by this whirlwind of new and contradictory passions. Later in the novel she experiences a second metamorphosis, back to her normal state. She begins suddenly to make revolutionary discourses about science. Again, she is seized by a vitalizing and positive energy: "Essa si sentiva divenuta il centro di un'enorme rete di fluidi e di energie irradianti e distese attraverso spazi infiniti" (59). Her physical appearance

changes once again, and she looks much less feminine. As Lucia Re points out, this transformation allows Giorgina to take over a field, the one of science that has been appropriated by men (“Scrittura della metamorfosi” 324). In so doing Giorgina, similarly to de Saint-Point, represents the figure of the androgynous being (324).

Very compellingly, Giorgina’s story is set in parallel with the story of three physicians Ix, Ipsilon and Igreca. At one point of the novel the three physicians heard about Giorgina’s case. In line with positivist science, they study Giorgina’s ancestors in order to find the origin of her “pathology.” This search reiterates ideas concerning heredity and degeneration that were popular during the last decades of the nineteenth century. Nonetheless this search fails because the physicians cannot find any real form of degeneration in Giorgina’s family. They first decide to administer electric therapy; but while this therapy appears to be effective as no other symptoms appear, the three physicians eventually conclude that these transformations might occur again due to the reappearance of other storms:

Ora come la coesistenza di più personalità nello stesso organismo causerebbe l’abolizione della continuità della coscienza e quindi di tutte le responsabilità etiche e legali, bisognerà in questo avvenire forse prossimo, provvedere ad un cambiamento completo di tutti i codici morali e legali, che da tanti secoli reggono la società. (70)

In a quite ironic way, they agree that the cause is a storm and that Giorgina represents a natural evolution of the female sex. Like Enif’s novel, *Una donna*

*con tre anime* openly contests science and scientific practices. The failure of the three physicians to find the origin of Giorgina's pathology, in a similar fashion to Dr. Freschi in *Un ventre di donna*, speaks to the inability of positivist science to find a correct diagnosis and a "cure" for women's untraditional behavior. In particular, as Lucia Re points out in her article, the reference to electric therapy recalls directly practices that were followed inside the asylum (Rosa Rosà's "A Woman" 10). Before the advent of the electroshock in 1939, electric therapy was already in use inside mental institutions. This fact further testifies to practices of violence conducted inside the asylums (10). At the end of the novel, Rosa Rosà proposes a new role for science:

Io credo che è un dovere di ogni scienziato mettere la sua sapienza e il suo ingegno al servizio del bene sociale. Così credo che a noi spetti di essere i propugnatori della divulgazione della verità che tutti dovranno conoscere, per non essere colti, di sorpresa, dalla fatalità evolutiva che incombe.

(Rosà 71)

Science has to adapt to the changes of modernity and be put at the service of social good. During those years other futurists, such as the Giannini-Corradini brothers, carried on the debate against science. In the *Manifesto della scienza futurista* they condemned positivist science and embraced extra-sensorial phenomena, such as occultism and telepathy (Sica 14).

We must notice, though, that the actual innovation of this novel is in the representation of the mad body. Giorgina is a pivotal depiction of female madness at the beginning of the twentieth century in Italy. Through this representation

Rosa Rosà, like Enif, instead of raising feelings of fear and terror in the reader, portrays the madwoman as the fulcrum of positive, vibrant and erotic energy. Through this representation, the writer also overthrows the madness apparatus: she deconstructs systems of perception that relegate mad people to sub-human categories. It is in the production of this different emotional response that I argue the real innovation of this novel lies.

The topic of madness, its relation to female active sexuality and anti-psychiatric discourse, recurs in other futurist creative works. For example, in futurist paintings, as Clara Orban underlines, women are always portrayed as “gender neutral” (62). This occurs for example in Umberto Boccioni’s *Idolo moderno* (1911), and *Antigrazioso* (1912). In the case of *Idolo Moderno*, the woman is also directly associated with the madwoman. As Orban writes: “the woman depicted appears demented because of her enlarged eyes” (63). In *Antigrazioso* the gender-neutral body of the woman is also directly related to writing. The woman is portrayed sitting on a chair with a pen in her hand and a piece of paper in the table. The background drastically breaks with domestic spaces and inserts the woman, similarly to Enif and Rosa Rosà’s, into the intellectual and artistic dimension of futurism.

Aldo Palazzeschi, in *Il codice di Perelà* (1911), satirized bourgeois and patriarchal society and he also offers a criticism to mental institutions and psychiatry. In *Il controdolore* (1913) Palazzeschi also promotes a new role for mental institutions: “12. Trasformare i manicomi in scuole di perfezionamento per le nuove generazioni.” References to madness and “straitjackets” are also present



in Marinetti's *8 anime in una bomba: Romanzo esplosivo* (1919), in which the madwoman is once again associated with active female sexuality and the Italian soul. In *Poupées Electriques* (1909) Marinetti represents, in the figure of Maria, the metamorphosis from the decadent hysterical woman to the sexually free futurist madwoman.

In their writings futurists deeply deconstruct the image of the madwoman offered by decadent writers. Deconstruction operates again through affects. The madwoman portrayed in futurist discourses does not produce feelings of fear in the viewer, but instead stands as powerful source of life and energy. Further, instead of being a spectacle of female sexual repression, these representations advocate sexual freedom and active female sexuality. Through their depictions, futurists operate a concrete act of the “mad’s freedom”: they liberate the inmate from a literary discourse that has largely contributed to the physical oppression of the mentally ill. These depictions completely overthrow the madness apparatus promoted by decadent writers. Yet what does it exactly mean to overthrow the madness apparatus?

We must notice that these representations, while offering a counter-discourse to psychiatry, also stand as powerful resistance to *fin-de-siècle* gender politics. In the previous chapter I showed how at the core of the madness apparatus was the threat of exclusion from patriarchal society. Madwomen were not only confined into the asylum but they were also strongly encouraged or drastically prevented the right of reproduction. The production of feelings of desire and fear were used to create systems of perception that relegated

madwomen to the domain of abject beings and at the same time to channel people within heterosexual society. In futurist representations of madness, the liberation of the madwoman from the “moonlight,” while breaking the system of perception, also promotes a radical counter-discourse to hygienic and eugenic politics of gender promoted during the turn of the century. Not only are these women portrayed as powerful and vital fulcrums of energy—that radically oppose the sick and dying body of decadent representations—but also the simple fact that these women are never destined to die at the end of the novel is a revolutionary counter-discourse to hygienic politics of the period.

It is essential to remember that the promotion of sexual freedom, the abolition of women as mothers and wives and the liberation of women from the prisonhouse of patriarchal society—all matters that at that time were considered the basis of female madness—were not only literary representations: futurists in real life promoted a new role of women that contrasted the traditional role of women in *fin-de-siècle* society. Futurists, at the beginning of the twentieth century, promoted a pivotal anti-hygienic gender politics meant to overthrow the gender politics of the period.

Indeed, while the glorification of women for the reproduction of the species has been perceived as strongly misogynist and pre-fascist, it engenders instead pivotal ideas in relation to *fin-de siècle* gender politics. The woman glorified to reproduce in futurist discourses is the very same woman who was denied the right of motherhood in Italy. While these women are the protagonists of literary discourse, the promotion of these women in society was real. At stake

in these representations is a literary and political discourse that valorizes the right to existence for those women, whom society has labeled as physically degenerated and excluded from the field of humanity. I would like to insist on the crucial innovation of futurist depictions of female madness within the context of *fin-de-siècle* society, an innovation that can only be understood in the light of the material violence carried on by national gender politics of the period. I shall now move to explore first-hand this material violence by considering the manifesto of former inmate and futurist woman Eva Kuhn Amendola.

**Magamal: *La pazzia e la riforma del manicomio***

Eva Kuhn Amendola, the wife of Giovanni Amendola, joined the Futurist avant-garde in 1912.<sup>74</sup> Profoundly fascinated by Marinetti's ideology, Eva Kuhn became active and collaborated with *Roma futurista* and *Cronache di attualità*, using the pseudonym Magamal, the name of Mafarka's brother in the homonymous novel written by F.T. Marinetti. Among her published writings are "Velocità," published in *L'Italia Futurista* (1916), and "Appello futurista al popolo d'Italia" appeared in *Roma Futurista* in 1919. Eva Kuhn is also the author of a novel *Eva la futurista*, and of a futurist film *Sinfonia colorata*; neither was ever published or distributed (Minciocchi, *Spirale di dolcezza* 156).

During her life, Eva Kuhn suffered repeated mental/nervous breakdowns for which she was hospitalized several times. Sporadic references to mental institutions emerge in both Eva Kuhn's *Vita con Giovanni Amendola* and in Giorgio Amendola's *Una scelta di vita*. In relation to her hospitalization in a nursing home in 1905, Eva Kuhn recalls her experience: "Mi ammalai

all'improvviso di una strana febbre celebrale e rimasi senza coscienza per alcuni mesi in una casa di salute" (48). Eva Kuhn blames Annie Besant, the head of the Theosophical Society, for her breakdown. She also assesses that her "febbre celebrale" was inherited from her mother:

Per tutto un anno rimasi nelle mani degli psichiatri: avevo ereditato da mia madre la tendenza a fortissime emicranie con congestioni cerebrali. Anche in seguito, verso i quarant'anni, ebbi di nuovo una grave malattia celebrale, dovuta a cattiva circolazione, essa mi costrinse per lungo tempo in una casa di salute, dove rimasi per parecchi anni ignara della tragica sorte di mio marito. (75)

Giorgio Amendola, in *Una scelta di vita*, also recalls his mother's hospitalization, this time in 1921:

Forse per effetto di una insolazione mia madre fu colta da una delle sue solite febbri cerebrali. Questa volta stavamo in una casetta isolata, a mezza costa tra Capri e Marina Grande. Mia madre si agitò tutta la notte, gridando invettive contro la contessa Casati, la stravagante nobildonna Milanese, che era stata per più anni al centro delle cronache mondane italiane ed europee, e alla quale Marinetti aveva dedicato il suo ritratto dipinto da Carrà. La Casati aveva una villa ad Anacapri, accanto a quella di Axel Munthe. Con Annie Besant, la papessa della teosofia, la contessa Casati era per mia madre nei suoi momenti di delirio, la personificazione del male. (51)

It is essential to note that in these published works, there is no mention of

treatments inside the mental institution. Only in a reference at the end of *Vita con Giovanni Amendola*, does Eva Kuhn show concern with regard to psychiatry. This happens when she was hospitalized in the private clinic of Prof. Mendicini:

Durante l'inverno successivo cominciai a soffrire molto di terribili emicranie. Mio marito scelse per me un buon sanatorio a Viterbo.

Ricevevo regolarmente lettere e piccolo pacchi con dolci dai cari figlioli, soffrivo in modo indescrivibile di nostalgia e di angosce, ma soltanto nel 1933, mentre mi trovavo a Centocelle nella clinica private del Prof.

Mendicini, mia figlia Ada, che aveva finito l'università e si era laureata in medicina, riuscì a liberarmi dalle mani degli psichiatri. (447)

The references to the asylum in these published works differs deeply from the actual manifesto Eva Kuhn wrote concerning madness and the reformation of the asylums. *La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi* (1913) was first discovered by Claudia Salaris in Giorgio Amendola's home and has remained so far unpublished.<sup>75</sup> The essay was written in 1913, soon after Eva Kuhn joined the futurist avant-garde but it was conceived in 1905, the year of her hospitalization in the nursing home. The manifesto is dedicated to Marinetti and signed "Magamal Futurista." On the front cover there is a reference to Oscar Wilde "Sanare l'anima per mezzo dei sensi e i sensi per mezzo dell'anima" (written in both English and Italian) and one to Aldo Pallazeschi's *Il contro dolore* ("Trasformare i manicomi in scuole di perfezionamento per le nuove generazioni"). The closing line, at the bottom of the cover page, reads: "parole di una pazza."

The manifesto is a 60-page handwritten document and constitutes a unique account of maltreatments inside the asylum during this period.<sup>76</sup> The intensity Eva Kuhn shows in this writing suggests that it was written in one stretch; for this reason several parts are quite hard to decipher. Although the essay lacks a certain degree of organization, it is possible to distinguish two main parts: the first part shows the practices of physical and moral torture conducted inside the asylum; the second part proposes ways in which the asylum and psychiatry should be reformed, also in relation to futurist life.

From the very first line, the manifesto attests its participation in the futurist movement. Like all futurist manifestos, the essay starts off with the powerful first person plural pronoun “noi”: “1-Noi sosteniamo che la psichiatria allo stato attuale presenta la più scandalosa ignoranza in fatto di malattie psichiche e che il manicomio di oggi in specie qui in Italia è una vera vergogna dell'Umanità” (1).<sup>77</sup> This use of “noi” suggests that asylums were topics of futurist discourses; among the many reformations that futurists envisioned it is possible to think that were also concerned with mental institutions.

Unlike in her published works, in this essay Eva Kuhn expresses anger at this system of confinement: “E’ assurdo e bestiale il manicomio di oggi, tipo di prigione orribile, dove i malati sono tagliati da ogni contatto colla vita sana, che sola potrebbe (saziarli) e dove sono costretti a putrefarsi anima e corpo” (2). The asylum is described as a horrible prison in which inmates’ souls and bodies putrefy. This deterioration speaks directly to practices of physical and moral torture that were systematically conducted inside the asylum. Very compellingly,

Eva Kuhn also points to the fact that humanity is unaware of the atrocities committed inside the asylum: “3-L’Umanità ignora la metà degli orrori, che giorno dopo giorno si passano tra le mura dei manicomi o delle cosiddette case di salute (!)” (2). It is crucial to keep in mind, as I have shown at the beginning of this study, that mental institutions were typically portrayed only in positive terms, to promote an image of the asylum in line with the power of normalization. This fact explains the lack of knowledge advocated by the futurist woman: state politics prevented any discourse concerning abuses inside the asylum and inmates were in no position to be heard.

In the first part of the manifesto Eva Kuhn condemns several practices of physical torture that were inflicted on patients. She points to the terrible hygienic conditions of the institution, filth and malnutrition. In particular, she denounces the use of restraint strips. Inmates were tied to their beds for hours and days; a practice of the cruelest inhumanity according to Eva Kuhn:

Legare una persona in posizione orizzontale in un letto per un tempo da 14 fino a 18 ore e spesso anche di più, legarla con fasce, spesso troppo stirate, braccia, gambe e spesso persino il volto (è un fatto!) è una crudeltà disumana e assassina ed immonda che dà per conseguenza dei risultati lugubri (?) per il malato. (5)

Magamal asserts that the consequences of these disturbing practices are morally devastating for inmates. In particular, she denounces the indifference that both “suore-infermiere” and physicians show towards their patients, the violence of their treatments as well as their promiscuous relations. She also points to the fact

that patients are treated as objects: “Ma né il dottore psichiatrico, né l’infermiere hanno l’immaginazione abbastanza viva per concepire tutto il male che fanno: per loro il pazzo è un essere insensibile, è un oggetto” (10). Both nurses and physicians tolerate a material violence on patients by thinking that they are insensitive, they are like “objects.”

The year in which Eva Kuhn was confined corresponds to the period in which several scandals inside Italian mental institutions were reported all over Italy. For example, a shocking report from the San Servolo asylum in Venice showed that patients were found chained to walls for days, months and even years. Further, the management of the entire institution was in the hands of a single priest, and not even a physician. This situation was not exclusive to the San Servolo; several other institutions were kept in similar terrible conditions (Canosa 119-135).

Eva Kuhn also recounts other practices of moral torture, among them, the deprivation of work, boredom and in particular loneliness, which she considers the worst:

Solitudine la più atroce. Nessuno ti ascolta, ti da retta. I dottori non hanno tempo, gli infermieri non hanno voglia. Il malato è + dalla bramosia di trovare quelle + per sfogare tutta la sua angoscia, raccontare le sue allucinazioni quasi sempre infernali. Il dottore proibisce ogni contatto perfino coi pazienti. Il povero malato a poco a poco incomincia a credere che tutto fuori nel mondo sia finito, che tutti siano morti e questa coscienza della solitudine gli impedisce di reagire contro la malattia. A che



progredire se tutto fuori è finito. (15)

Loneliness is a typical subject in testimonials of ex-patients from mental institutions; patients were left completely alone, most often abandoned by their own family and friends. Loneliness was also reinforced by the lack of social activity and social interaction among patients. The forced isolation of patients inside the asylum, made worse by practices of physical and moral torture, was one of the most atrocious ways in which the asylum became the space for the complete annihilation of inmate identity.

Eva Kuhn also points to the annihilation of identity was perpetuated through sexual repression: “La morte della sessualità è il principio della morte della personalità” (28). Eva Kuhn argues that sexual repression is the actual cause of mental illness:

E’ appunto l’attuale sistema repressivo (?) della società il quale vuole impedire lo slancio libero volenteroso, la scarica libera della elettricità +, è questo sistema (che favorisce lo sviluppo di tutte quelle malattie psichiche che cominciamo con una ipermaterializzazione della psiche. (29-30)

Sexual repression speaks directly to the process of asexualization of the mad body that has constituted the starting point of the present study, a process that was evident in both psychiatric portraits of patients and in literary representations. Eva Kuhn shows that the asexualization of the mad body—which I argue was used for the production and reproduction of shame—operated a material violence on the individual.

As opposed to sexual repression, Eva Kuhn advocates active sexuality,

which she considers instrumental in the recovery of the mentally ill:

Quanti paralitici sarebbero salvati se invece di essere condannati all'+, avrebbero avuto l'occasione di vivere un grande amore fisico, caotico con un essere forte, elettrico ed appassionato. E' solo l'amore fisso (?) che agevola la fermentazione (??). L'amore elettrico-erotico, lo slancio voluttuoso verso un altro essere ++++è l'unico elemento vitale, che impedisce la disgregazione (?) della personalità. (28-29)

In line with futurist ideals, Eva Kuhn also advocates sexual freedom and sexual liberation.

In a very pivotal way compared to other accounts of asylum, Magamal also proposes several reforms that should take place inside the asylum. For example, the recruitment of intelligent volunteer, the promotion of dance, work, several labs, theatre, large library to increment the study of literature and culture:

I malati dovrebbero avere la possibilità di lavorare, di creare, di viaggiare, di divertirsi, di appagare i bisogni sessuali ed emotivi. Nel manicomio dovrebbero prestare servizio vari professori di arte, di mestiere, di ballo, di canto, di +. I malati non dovrebbero accorgersi che sono in una prigione.

(20-21)

Eva Kuhn also promotes the use of psychotherapy, in line with other European countries. In Italy the organicistic approach was very well established; this approach led to the exclusion of other forms of therapies and also impacted treatments inside the asylum. Magamal also attempts to explain the origin of mental illness, which according to her, is to be found in the crystallization and

hyper-materialization of vital energy (25).

At the core of these reforms, Magamal considers Futurism and “la vita futurista” the most appropriate therapy for mental illness: “Ed il futurismo che ++ la vita verso una sensibilità nuova, verso nuovi ideali, è ++ la migliore terapia e di + i migliori mezzi per + ogni paralisi, ogni mania, ogni forma di + e di isterismo” (31). Eva Khun’s position recalls Enif Robert’s *Un ventre di donna*; in both women, futurism is considered a vital energy able to heal people from the traumatic changes of modernity.

At the end of the manifesto Magamal outlines her intention to return to this topic in another, more complete work that most likely was never written.<sup>78</sup> Further, she stresses her intention to work on other two manifestos: “Delinquenza e la riforma delle prigioni” and “Prostituzione e la riforma delle case di tolleranza.” In this way, she points to the true value of Futurism that, according to her, must consist in social intervention and activism: “Distruggere manicomio, prigione e bordello di oggi—ecco le riforme pratiche che sono il compito del vero futurismo. I futuristi sono spesso estetici sterili e non vogliono un lavoro etico” (59). In this last sentence, Eva Kuhn also advances a critique of certain expressions of Futurism that betray, according to her, the “real” Futurism.

Eva Kuhn’s manifesto is an exclusive account of mental institutions during this time period in Italy. It is not surprising that her manifesto, in line with a national politics that prevented any negative representation of the asylum, was never published. Her work is in direct dialogue with the writings of several other ex-patients from the same or later period such as Adalgisa Conti, Alda Merini and

Lia Traverso. Her manifesto uncovers, in a very powerful manner, the ways in which psychiatric power, far from curing patients, operated a material violence on the individual.

Further, the extreme passion that drives Eva Kuhn in her writing and the reformatory tone of the manifesto makes this writing an extraordinary innovation comparable to other testimonials such those of Alda Merini and Nicola Fanizzi. The several reform Magamal envisioned for the recovery of mental illness also attest to the revolutionary spirit of the first avant-garde and to the direct involvement of some futurists with the “mad’s freedom” beyond the moonlight.

## **Conclusion**

In this chapter I have not addresses the most misogynist aspects of the futurist avant-garde and have focused instead on some its most progressive aspects. Certainly the extreme exaltation of female active sexuality also led to another kind of appropriation of the female body. If the madwoman was considered a paradigm of modern sexuality, active female sexuality was mainly used for constructing the hero Mafarka, the rejuvenated body of Enrico Cavacchioli in *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna*. In this sense women were still objectified as sexual objects. Moreover, the large promotion of the “anti-mother” and “anti-woman” figure in both male and female futurist discourses along with the radical suppression of feelings and sentimentalism make us wonder whether the act of liberation promoted by futurists eventually reiterated a similar process of asexualization of the body.

Nonetheless, while these matters are of the utmost importance and must be

taken into consideration, my aim in this chapter has been to uncover the key innovations of futurists in the context of *fin-de-siècle* representations of madness and gender politics. In this chapter I have shown how at the core of futurist revolution lay an epistemological search for freedom from a literary discourse and a gender politics that operated a material violence on the individual. In my reading of the second founding manifesto of futurism *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* I suggested that the mad's freedom represented an act of liberation from a literary discourse that had resulted in a real oppression for people. This discourse operated a material violence not only on mentally ill people, but also on the people in outside society. I showed how this act of liberation paralleled an act of sexual liberation from a ruling sexual morality based on sexual repression.

I also contended that the madwoman functioned as both the *pars destruens* and the *pars construens* of futurist gender politics. While the female inmate deconstructed the image of woman as it was promoted by literary discourse and heterosexual society, she also established herself as paradigm of futurist modern sexuality. As a woman who, in reality, transgressed gender roles as mother and wife and had an active sexuality, the madwoman testified to the existence of an ontology of women that existed prior to the discourse about women.

What is more, through the reading of futurist creative writings and manifestos, I explored how futurists activated a project of the “mad's freedom” beyond the moonlight. On the one hand futurists—through their representations of the madwoman—offered a revolutionary resistance to the madness apparatus. This resistance originated in a pivotal image of madness that instead of arousing

feelings of terror and fear, was the fulcrum of positive and vital energy. In this way, the avant-garde, to a greater degree than Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana, completely deconstructed “frames of representability” that relegate the mentally ill to the domain of abject beings. On the other hand, the first avant-garde promoted a concrete act of the “mad’s freedom” by promoting a new role for psychiatry and mental institutions. In denouncing maltreatments inside the asylum, Eva Kuhn along with other futurists, also attempted to liberate the mad body from the ontological project of national manhood.

I explored further this act of overthrow of the madness apparatus. By breaking the system of perception that relegated mad people to the domain of inferior beings, I suggested that the first avant-garde became a pivotal promoter of an anti-hygienic gender politics in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. By advocating for sexual freedom and the liberation of women from the prisonhouse of patriarchal society, the first avant-garde advanced ideas concerning sexuality that gave the right to existence and reproduction to those women society labeled as degenerate and excluded from the project of nation-building. Again, I would like to insist on the crucial innovations the first avant-garde proposed in relation to madness and gender politics in *fin-de-siècle* Italy.

## CHAPTER V

### CONCLUSION

Despite the end of the asylum era, the stereotyping as well as the marginalization of the mentally ill still endures and has indeed in some ways increased in contemporary society (Crepet 55). In the press, in the movies, in everyday life, the mentally ill are still perceived with fear. In this sense the mad are still subjected to the judgment of biological essentialism that associates them with notions of dangerousness and inferiority. Further, the over-diagnosis of mental illness in contemporary society and the ever-increasing business of psychopharmaceutical also tell us that psychiatric and state power still retains an undisputed control over non-conformist behavior.

The first aim of this dissertation was to remind us of the social construction of mental illness. Throughout my study I have shown how the stereotyping of mental disorder during the nineteenth century, and the association of the mad with the inferior and the sub-human, was part of a strategy of power used for the control of the population. Mentally ill people were those whose behavior was considered a threat to society; mentally ill women were women who transgressed their gender roles as mothers and wives, and for this reason were considered a threat to patriarchal society.

It is imperative to understand the *invention* of mental illness as a justificatory mechanism that state power activated to eliminate people—especially the poor—who were such a “threat to society.” In this sense, mental institutions functioned as prisons that employed the idea of normalization to dispose of undesirable individuals. Unlike the prison system, though, no crime had to be committed; the crime was already inscribed onto the body of the mentally ill. With the birth of modern psychiatry and the spread of biological determinism, the mentally ill person was a person whose potential for danger was used to justify oppressing him or her.

With this, I do not mean to say that specific psychological conditions and states of psychic suffering do not exist. As I noted in the introduction, in the specific context of *fin-de-siècle* society, the very confinement of women inside the house could drive women mad. As female futurists’ writings also show, states of suffering and discomfort did exist in women. My aim is instead to show how our contemporary perception of mental illness and its specific relation to the notion of dangerousness has been constructed over time. In this sense, I oppose the consideration of mental illness as an essential category and I refer to it in terms of social construction.

Next, throughout my study I have explored further *how* and *why* a certain image of madness came to be standardized in the European, and especially in the Italian context. Whereas Italian literary criticism has usually treated the topic of madness as a literary expedient or a metaphor, my aim was to investigate further the operation of power that lies behind literary depictions of female madness. To



do so I considered together literary and photographic representations of madness in an attempt to bridge the represented and the real, literary depictions and the actual body of the inmate.

I started from the key consideration that in Italy psychiatry was institutionalized the year after Unification, and as a result the making of “abnormal” identities went hand in hand with the making of Italians. That identity—the Italian—was still in search of a definition and, most compellingly, was constructed as “negative myth,” in Emilio Gentile’s expression. The association of Italians with the effeminate other—an image that originated in centuries of foreign domination as well as in deterministic environmental theories—led to a crisis of masculinity (Patriarca 45).

In my dissertation, I considered this crisis of masculinity vis à vis practices of asexualization of the mad body occurring inside the asylum. These practices became clear in reading patients’ testimonials. For both male and female inmates the deprivation of clothing, the wearing of uniforms, the repression of sexuality and in particular for women the deprivation of the maternal role led to the complete annihilation of inmates’ identities. Asexualization refers then to the repression of both sexual agency and gender identity.

Throughout my study, I have explored how these practices of asexualization played an active role in the social construction of female madness. I argued that the body of the mad person, in both its concrete historical reality and its representation, functioned as an abject or excluded other whose role was key in the constitution of national identity. While this body was used to affirm normality,

my goal was to investigate how this normality was *produced* through both these representations and the actual body of the inmate.

Two specific lines of investigation intersected in my study: on the one hand, the real body of the inmate and its relation to the ontological project of national manhood; on the other, the dimension of affects produced by the same body in its representation and the way in which these affects were employed as systems of subjectivation. These two lines intersected insofar as they both originated from practices of asexualization of the body and they were both employed in the quest for national identity. Still, there is a major difference between the system of subjectivation produced through and by affects, and ontological weight. I understand the idea of ontological weight as a means of materialization of national manhood that cannot be offered through subjectivation. While the system of apparatus largely contributed to the enforcement of heteronormativity, the manhood of Italian identity was materialized through the presentness of shame and suffering produced in the concrete body of the inmate through practices of asexualization.

For the first line of investigation I drew on Bonnie Mann's study of the ontological weight and practices of sexualized torture during the "War on Terror." By ontological weight, Mann implies that gender creates a primary link between the individual's biological and social world. Most significantly, gender constitutes the basis of "recognition" (77). If gender constitutes such a core structure of the self, its undoing is the self's undoing. Mann explores the connection of lived gender with the Imaginary and argues that at the core of this connection is

shame.

In Chapter II, I started my analysis by comparing psychiatric portraits of patients from late nineteenth century from the San Clemente and San Lazzaro asylums to portraits of “normal” people. This analysis was key to understanding conformative and non-conformative conceptions as well as representations of womanhood in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. I showed how in portraits of sane people from the Alinari brothers women were always defined in relation to something else. Through background, clothing, the position of the body, and facial expressions these women could be *recognized* as women; it was in this relation with the other that these bodies secured a relationship with a system of perception that made women “look like a woman;” to look like a woman—in *fin-de-siècle* Italy—implied gracefulness, elegance, motherhood, collectivity and submission.

By contrast, I showed how in female portraits of patients the lack of a *mise-en-scène* operated a process of de-contextualization of the body. As opposed to the Alinari portraits of women, these bodies drastically broke the relation with the collectivity; in this way these depictions also broke the system of recognition. Deprived of their clothing, their gentle facial expressions, their poses, in some cases their hair, the bodies of patients portrayed were constructed entirely outside conventional parameters of femininity: they were completely asexualized. I have also argued that at the time in which the mad body exceeded any notion of femininity it also circumscribed the field of the normal woman. In truth, it was only by means of that specific facial expression, that specific clothing and that specific pose that a woman could be recognized as a woman at all. I argued that

these portraits were used to affirm normality, during a time in which the notion of normality—based on statistical science—was highly fictional.

Nonetheless, considering the “phantasmatic construction” of *Italianità* that lacked masculinity, I examined how this normality was produced through these portraits. I took into account the reality of these women inside the asylum. While the uniforms, the unbound hair and the blank backgrounds were apparently constructed for the photograph, in everyday life inmates inside the asylum had the same uniforms and the same hair that we saw depicted in all these pictures. In line with Mann’s theories, I showed how in the mechanism of “sedimentation” and “stylization” that is gender, the deprivation of a patient’s clothing and environment became an essential part of the inmate’s undoing. Empty background and white uniform visually depicted a connection with the Imaginary that was lost forever.

Considering this fact, I argued that behind the asexual body of the mad woman lay the shame and suffering that originate from this process of the self’s undoing. These photographs graphically uncovered practices of sexualized torture that took place inside the asylum. I suggested that the shame and suffering of the inmate produced compulsively through practices of asexualization inside the asylum worked in the frame as its “constitutive outside.” What is more, this shame and suffering also created a fundamental connection with national manhood. Not only were these portraits used to circumscribe the field of normality, but they also provided this normality its own materiality. Through a process of “analogical substitution” the sexual shame of the mentally ill person

was converted into the sexual power of the nation state. Through the production and reproduction of this very shame, the fictionalized notion of Italian identity could acquire an ontological weight.

This shame had to be produced and reproduced *ad nauseam* not only in its concrete reality, but also in its representation. I then investigated how in literary representations of madness similar processes of asexualization took place. This process was represented through loss of femininity, sexual repression, deprivation of the maternal role or identification with the bad mother, sterility, abortion and death. I argued that the representation of madness mattered in *fin-de-siècle* Italy and investigated the mechanism through which this depiction came to be standardized. I focused on earlier representations of female madness in Verga's *Storia di una capinera* and Luigi Capuana's *Giacinta*; I showed how the scandal that followed the first *Giacinta* was linked to the fact that Giacinta's active sexuality was represented in positive terms. The repression of her sexual agency in the second edition corresponded to a process of asexualization of the female body.

The process of asexualization became an obsessive feature of decadent writers during the last two decades of the nineteenth century, particularly in Gabriele D'Annunzio's novels. In these novels the madwoman was completely asexualized and especially deprived of her major reproductive functions. I argued that in all these representations, the shame and suffering of the inmate still functioned as the "constitutive outside." I suggested that it was only by considering this shame and the practices of sexualized torture conducted inside

the asylum that it was possible to fully understand how a certain idea of madness came to be standardized and why this specific representation related to national manhood.

While investigating the asexualization of the body, I began to explore the dimension of affects produced through and by this body—my second line of investigation. I drew on Judith Butler’s notion of “frames of representability” and Foucault’s notion of the apparatus, and started from the key consideration that affects are politically constituted. I showed how in psychiatric portraits the process of asexualization, created through white background and white uniforms, led the viewer to experience de-familiarization, displacement, misrecognition. The shock that emerged from the broken relationship with the collectivity led to fear. I explored this fear in light of Judith Butler’s notion of “frames of representability,” according to which the frames able to determine whether or not a subject can be recognized as subject must be exposed in order to control affects. I argued that the production of fear and horror become part of a strategy of power able to relegate the mentally ill to the domain of subhuman and abject beings.

Further, in Chapter III, I showed how during the 1880s a new production of affects came to light. Starting with the pivotal work of Jean Charcot’s photographs of Augustine, the hysterical woman in both literary and photographic spaces became a producer of fear mixed with desire. I investigated the deep link between the production of these affects and the spread of hygienic and eugenic politics in *fin-de-siècle* Italy and Europe. These theories aimed at the regeneration of the human race and strongly prevented, through forced sterilization, the

reproduction of the degenerate—including the mentally ill. I showed how reproduction became a key concept of the images of Augustine. While Augustine's body was hyper-eroticized and thus apparently unlike the asexual body of frontal portraits, I show how her body eventually represented the complete denial of womanhood. In the solo performance of a *failed* sexual relation her body represented the impossibility of women to reproduce in a time period in which motherhood and womanhood were deeply linked. I considered the reality of this denial by showing how mentally ill women were not only locked inside the asylum but were also subjected to drastic practices of sterilization to deprive them of their reproductive function.

By taking into account this key dimension, I further explored the production of affects in the hysterical woman. I showed how in the interplay of desire and fear the mad body was used as a regulatory principle of desire. In considering the deep link between these representations and national gender politics I argued that what was at stake in these representations was the Nation—was a key idea of belonging that decides whether or not one could or could not be part of the Nation. It was not only the case that for women to become like Augustine meant to be secluded inside the asylum; for men too to desire this body meant to be cast away from the national project. The fear the viewer experienced in looking at this body was the fear of exclusion from society. I then suggested that the regulation of desire would possibly lead to specific practices in everyday life able to channel individuals inside heterosexual normativity. By means of the production of normalization through affects of desire and fear I argued that

madness was turned into an apparatus: the madness apparatus.

My aim in this analysis was to uncover the material violence that lay behind the image of the hysterical woman. I showed how the hysterical woman represented the crossroads of multiple discourses concerning sexuality and the regulation of sexuality in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. Behind this image lay a whole series of apparatuses of discipline normalization, among them psychiatry, the asylum, torture, photography, literature, hygienic politics and education.

Throughout my dissertation I explored how literature responded to or resisted the discourse of power advanced by psychiatric photography. While the mechanism of asexualization of the body was fundamental in perpetuating the discourse of power in the reproduction of shame, I showed how the actual resistance to and acceptance of this discourse was created through affects. While psychiatric photography played a key role in constructing systems of perception, Italian writers Giovanni Verga and Luigi Capuana in offered a resistance to the apparatus of psychiatry. Through their depictions, they were able to create empathy in the reader who sympathized with the suffering of the mad women. Through the production of these affects they were able to destabilize frames of representability and make the viewer “apprehend a life” beyond the system of recognizability.

By contrast, decadent writers, in particular Gabriele D’Annunzio, become active promoters of the discourse of power. The production of affects of desire, fear, horror and disgust that became a key feature of his representations contributed to the reinforcement of a system of perception that associated the



mentally ill with inferior beings. What is more, I also suggested that these depictions contributed to the enforcement of heterosexual normativity. I proposed that literary representations of madness also came to work as an apparatus to produce subjectivation. Consequently, the regulation of sexuality based on sexual repression also affected those in the society outside it.

In Chapter IV, I showed how the avant-garde at the beginning of the twentieth century radically overthrew the madness apparatus. I started from the consideration that two of the futurists' major innovations were the complete deconstruction of literary language on the one hand, and on the other the radical overthrow of heterosexual society and of the naturalized relationship between sex and gender. These two innovations intersected in the image of the *femme fatale* that represented both a past literary tradition as well as the image of women constructed by heterosexual society. I suggested that at the core of the futurist revolution was a quest for freedom. I investigated this quest by considering the second-founding manifesto of futurism, *Uccidiamo il chiaro di luna* (1909). In this manifesto Marinetti inaugurates the act of birth of the Centaur, the progenitor of the Futurist man-machine. This act of generation could only be accomplished with the murder of the moonlight, which symbolizes the past literary tradition and in particular the image of the *femme fatale*, widespread among romantic and decadent writers. In order to do, Marinetti portrays the liberation of the inmate from the asylum. By putting together the represented and the real, I argued that behind this act of liberation was the crucial understanding of the material violence carried out by literature in the oppression and marginalization of the mentally ill

people. I also suggested that the inclusion of the female inmate in this act of liberation paralleled an act of sexual liberation from a ruling sexual morality that became, by means of confinement, an actual threat to life.

Further, I showed how the avant-garde operated a concrete act of the “mad’s freedom” beyond the moonlight. This act was conducted on a double level. On the one hand, through their literary works, futurists radically deconstructed the image of madness promoted by decadent writers. Instead of creating feelings of horror and fear, they turned the madwoman into a fulcrum of vital energy. In a higher degree than Giovanni Verga and Capuana, futurists completely destabilized the frames of perception that relegated the mad body to the field of abject beings. These representations must be considered a revolutionary counter-discourse to psychiatric power in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. On the other hand, I showed how futurists also promoted an actual act of reformation of mental institutions. I examined in particular the unpublished manifesto by Eva Kuhn Amendola, *La pazzia e la riforma dei manicomi*—a unique account of maltreatment inside mental institutions from the beginning of the twentieth century. The innovation of this manifesto consisted also in the series of reforms Eva Kuhn proposed in relation to the asylum; these changes reflect the direct engagement of futurists with social reforms.

Finally, I suggested that by disrupting the system of perception and overthrowing the madness apparatus futurists seemed to promote an anti-hygienic gender politics that contrasted with *fin-de-siècle* gender politics. In the writings of futurist women, such as Valentine de Saint-Point, Enif Robert and Rosa Rosa and

of several futurist men including F.T. Marinetti, the promotion of sexual freedom, the abolition of women as mothers and wives and the liberation of women from the bonds of patriarchal society—all matters that at that time were considered the basis of female madness—were not only literary representations: futurists promoted a new role of women that radically contrasted with the traditional role of women in *fin-de-siècle* society. I argued that what was at stake in futurist representations was a literary and political discourse that glorified the right to existence for those women whom society had classified as physically degenerate and excluded from the domain of humanity.

To conclude, in my dissertation I have advanced some ambitious claims that will certainly require further exploration and proof. What I hope I was able to show in my analysis, though, is the material violence that lay behind literary representations of madness in *fin-de-siècle* Italy. The quest for national identity and national manhood in Post-unification Italy translated into concrete acts of violence inside the asylum, where the mentally ill were not only deprived of their freedom but were also subjected to practices of physical and moral torture able to completely annihilate their identity. This violence was also perpetuated in the society at large, where the widespread sexual morality based on sexual repression strongly constrained human behavior and sexual freedom, especially for women. In closing, I want to emphasize the material violence that these representations carried with them, a violence that could hardly be understood without considering the apparatus of the asylum.

## APPENDIX A

### NOTES

---

#### Chapter I

<sup>1</sup> Romano Canosa defines the 1870s the years of the “great confinement” in Italy. In 1871 Andrea Verga reports 40.275 inmates out of 24.530.395 inhabitants; this statistic did not include Sicily, Sardegna, and several asylums in the north of Italy. In 1888, another statistic reports 22.424 inmates out of 30.497.610 inhabitants; in 1989, 36.873 out of 31.479.217. In 1910 the number of inmates increased to 54.311 during the fascist period it reached 96.423 inmates. In these statistics the number of male inmates is only slightly superior to the number of female inmates. See Canosa 87-99. Concerning the history and development of psychiatry as well as of mental institutions in Italy see Babini (1982, 2009) and Canosa. It is also fundamental to remember that those confined were essentially the poor; see for example Sorcinelli.

<sup>2</sup> As of the 1973 edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM II) homosexuality is no longer considered a mental illness. On February 8, 1973, a committee of gay activists met with the Committee of the American Psychiatry Association (APA) to urge the removal of homosexuality from the DSM; after the meeting homosexuality was removed from the DSM-II and only some homosexuals were considered to be suffering from Sexual Orientation Disorder. Information about this meeting is included in Bayer.

<sup>3</sup> Substantial bibliography of literary works as well as accounts of mental institutions has been collected after the Basaglia Law (1978). I propose here only a limited selection. Works from ex-patients include: Diana De Rosa's *I mangiatori di pane. Il diario di Antonio Tomisich nel manicomio di Trieste (1909-1910) e altri scritti*, Adalgisa Conti's *Gentilissimo sig. dottore questa è la mia vita: manicomio 1914*; Giovanna Del Giudice's *Il manoscritto di Augusta F.*; Maria Luisa Marsigli's *La marchesa e i demoni: Diario di un manicomio*; Lia Traverso's *D'ogni dove chiusi si sta male*; Alda Merini's *L'altra verità: Diario di una diversa*; Fiore di Poesia, *La nera novella*; Nicola Fanizzi's *Lasciateci stare: Narrazioni dal manicomio*. Of Franco Basaglia's works I cite Basaglia (1971) and (1973).

<sup>4</sup> The spirit of change and reformation of the asylum was widespread all over Europe. During the middle of the eighteenth century, William Battie in England was the first to argue for the positive benefits of hospitalizing patients. Italian physician Vincenzo Chiarugi also offered an essential contribution to the reformation of asylums. Chiarugi was the first to propose more human treatments inside the Bonifazio mental hospital in Florence. In *On Insanity* (1793-94)

---

Chiarugi first proposed the idea of the therapeutic asylum; in his view the asylum should be a place used for the treatment of the insane, and not for their segregation. Chiarugi also proposed practices of moral treatment to be used together with physical treatment. At the beginning of the nineteenth century moral therapy included agricultural work, strolling in the garden, play *bocce*, reading, writing and praying. Organic therapy included such practices as horizontal and vertical bed strength, cold showers, the roundabout machine (*macchina rotatoria*) and the dark room. These were all real practices of torture. As Gualandri wrote in his *Osservazioni stilistico-pratiche raccolte nel manicomio di Sant'Orsola in Bologna 1842-1851*:

Io non ho mai veduto mezzo più aspro e più barbaro di quello che porta il nome di letto orizzontale di forza, e verticale. L'ammalato bisognoso di quel violento artificio vien disteso orizzontalmente dentro una cassa quadrilunga, o senza coperchio, il cui fondo è sostenuto da pilastri di muro in cotto ed ha al centro forame rotondo destinato al passaggio degli escrementi che si raccolgono in un vaso sottoposto. Nella cassa è un paglione ben sudicio, nel mezzo del quale è un corrispondente forame. (cited in Canosa 39)

Information concerning maltreatment inside mental institutions before and after the institutionalization of psychiatry in Italy as well as Chiarugi's reform are documented in Canosa (35-50). I return to this topic in the last chapter of this dissertation in relation to Eva Kuhn's account of the asylum. In the European context, similarly to Chiarugi, John Conolly in England introduced the non-restraint method. For more information concerning the reform of asylums in Europe see Shorter 1-32.

<sup>5</sup> It is essential to remember that the dispute concerning the organic *versus* the moral origin of mental illness continued for decades also in Italy. Only with the spread of psychiatric Darwinism and with Morel's notion of degeneration was the biological origin of mental illness strengthened. See Canosa 49-86.

<sup>6</sup> For a general study of the asylum in relation to the development of bourgeois society, see the classic studies of Foucault (1988) and (2003); Castel; Dörner and Goffman (1961). See also Szasz (1997).

<sup>7</sup> In 1862 psychiatrists Andrea Verga and Domenico Gualandri of the Società Frenetica Italiana, recognized themselves as autonomous category. In this year, they founded their first medical journal "L'Archivio" (Babini et al. 32).

<sup>8</sup> The 1904 Giolitti law can be found online: <http://www.oaser.it/wp-content/uploads/2008/07/l-14-febbraio-1904-n-36.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> For a study on the Italian Southern Question see in particular Moe, Schneider, Teti and Burgio (1998) and (1999).

<sup>10</sup> For a study concerning Italian colonialism and the representation of the African

---

Other, see Burgio (1999) and (1998); Tommasello, and Biffoli and Torre.

<sup>11</sup> Giacomo Vaccarino, in *Scrivere la follia* (2007), offers the only study to briefly address the topic of mental institutions and literature. In the last chapter he focuses on the representation of mental institutions in Italian literature from the end of the nineteenth century to the contemporary period addressing such authors as Edmondo De Amicis, Aldo Palazzeschi, Lorenzo Viani, Alda Merini and Nicola Fanizzi.

<sup>12</sup> Julia Kristeva in *Power of Horror* first introduced the notion of the abject.

<sup>13</sup> More information about *cicisbeismo* are contained in Patriarca 36-44 and Banti and Ginsborg 71-76.

<sup>14</sup> For studies concerning the condition of women in Italy during the *fin-de-siècle* see for example Puccini, Molinari, Ferrante, Babini and Minuz. Molinari in her book also offers a fascinating chapter on women confined inside psychiatric institutions in northern Italy and their accounts of the asylum. See Molinari 111-159.

<sup>15</sup> To these facts, it is also essential to consider the inhuman conditions of many working-class women during the *fin-de-siècle*; for more information on this topic see Puccini 14-19.

## Chapter II

<sup>16</sup> Most of the information concerning *Storia di una capinera* is drawn from De Roberto and Gambacorti. For more information concerning the success of Verga's novel see De Roberto 163-175 and Gambacorti 195-199; 246-250. Information concerning the several reprints of *La Capinera* is discussed in De Roberto, 135. De Roberto talks about 13 reprints. A more detailed description of Treves' publications and editions is offered in Gambacorti 127-140. For more information concerning the debate and reception of Verga's novel see De Roberto 169-175.

<sup>17</sup> Other events and sources contributed to the writing of *La Capinera*. In 1854 Verga's family escaped Catania because of the cholera outbreak; during this period, he encountered a young nun with whom he spent some time before she returned the convent after the end of the epidemic (De Roberto 145-147). Further, two of Verga's aunts were nuns belonging to an enclosed order.

<sup>18</sup> The painting is reproduced in Signorini 70.

<sup>19</sup> Fantuzzi's photographs are reproduced in Parmiggiani 143-153.

<sup>20</sup> A reference to the asylum is also contained in Carolina Invernizio's *Il treno della morte* (1905). Similarly to De Amicis' *Nel giardino della follia*, Invernizio also idealizes psychiatric institutions:

---

Ma da molti anni questi orrori non esistono più; i nostri manicomi sono stabilimenti igienici, modelli del genere, ove gli ammalati, oltre ad un trattamento affettuoso, trovano le maggiori comodità, quali non potrebbero avere nelle loro case. I dormitori sono spaziosi, allegri; le stanze particolari bellissime, ridenti, le sale eleganti, I giardini spaziosi, le vivande eccellenti. (cited in Vaccarino 201-202)

It is astonishing that these two books came out in the same exact time during which several scandals—due to torture and maltreatment, lack of hygiene and employees—were reported in several Italian mental institutions (Canosa 119-135).

<sup>21</sup> Florence during the second half of the nineteenth century and especially after 1965 (the year in which became the nation's capital) was the most popular cultural city in Italy. The city promptly became the meeting-point of numerous Italian artists, including Macchiaioli painters. In particular, the Caffè Michelangelo was considered the center of intellectual and artistic debate. For more information see Oliva and Moretti, 57-61 and De Roberto, 138.

<sup>22</sup> For a general study of psychiatric photography see in particular Burns and Didi-Huberman. In relation to the Italian context see Cagnetta, Crepet and Parmiggiani. I am also indebted to Anna Dalbo for letting me consult parts of her dissertation "Fotografare la follia. La fotografia psichiatrica nel manicomio dell'isola di San Servolo." Dalbo's full manuscript is held at the ex- San Servolo asylum in Venice.

<sup>23</sup> The engraving is reproduced in Didi-Huberman 40.

<sup>24</sup> It is essential to notice the remarkable relationship between psychiatric photography and police photography. Criminal photography used the same *mise-en-scène*, and criminal anthropologists like Cesare Lombroso were interested in both portraits of criminals and on their skulls. The main difference however seems to lie in the use of uniforms in psychiatric portraits *versus* normal clothing in criminal photography. For further information see Didi-Huberman 51-54 and Turzio.

<sup>25</sup> The history of physiognomy finds its origin in Aristotle who in his *Soria degli animali* established physiognomy as a natural and moral science. Johan Kaspar Lavatar (1741-1801) was the founder of the "science" of physiognomy in bourgeois society (Cagnetta 27-28).

<sup>26</sup> Phrenology—the study of character in relation to the skull—was first theorized by Joseph Gall (1758-1828). Gall believed that it was possible to deduct the character of individuals, by touching specific parts of the skull (Cagnetta 29).

<sup>27</sup> Augusto Tebaldi and Vitige Tirelli also worked on collecting several photographs of patients, offering other essential contributions. After this time, photography was employed systematically inside asylums. In 1880 an edict

---

required mandatory use of photography inside public and state asylums. While photography was used for scientific purposes, it was also employed for identification and incrimination (Cagnetta 42-43).

<sup>28</sup> Alinari portraits of bourgeois women along with the one of Signora Salani are held at the Alinari Collection in Florence, Italy. Reproduction of these portraits can also be found in Borghi.

<sup>29</sup> For more information concerning fashion in *fin-de-siècle* Italy see Maffai and Giorgietti.

<sup>30</sup> Photographs of working class women that I discuss in this session are reproduced in Borghi 40-43.

<sup>31</sup> I personally collected these photos, and the following ones that depict patients before and after hospitalization, from my visits at the San Clemente and San Lazzaro asylums. The photographs from the San Lazzaro asylum are reproduced in Parmiggiani 126; 132

<sup>32</sup> Didi-Huberman also briefly mentions this process of decontextualization. See Didi-Huberman 40.

<sup>33</sup> The set of photographs from the San Lazzaro asylum is reproduced in Parmiggiani 114-121.

<sup>34</sup> I saw the written names of patients when I consulted these photographs at the San Lazzaro asylum. This photograph is reproduced in Parmiggiani 121.

<sup>35</sup> See Parmiggiani 119, 118 and 115.

<sup>36</sup> This set of unpublished photographs is held at the Fondazione San Servolo IRSECS.

<sup>37</sup> Elaine Showalter in her book *The Female Malady* (1987), offers an opposite interpretation of portraits of British female patients. In relation to Diamond's photographs of patients at the Surrey Asylum, she points out how Diamond was inspired by literary and aesthetic models of femininity and always attempted to photograph his patients in ways able to conform to Victorian ideals (87). Most striking, she also points out how inside British asylums inmates were strongly encouraged to care about their looks, such as their hair and clothing (84). For what I am aware of nothing of what Showalter discusses was happening in Italian asylums; crucial works on Italian asylums, such as those of Canosa and Babini, do not discuss this issue. Nonetheless by reading direct testimonials of female patients, I strongly doubt that in Italy, psychiatrists encouraged such a care for appearance. This fact seems to further testify to the relationship between the



---

asexualization of bodies and the concern for national manhood in Italy.

<sup>38</sup> The 1980 edition is a reprint of the 1879 1<sup>st</sup> edition of *Giacinta*.

<sup>39</sup> In this context it is essential to point out how in portraying this woman Capuana attempted to offer a description as authentic as possible of a madwoman; he was in fact inspired by real events. Furthermore, Capuana was not concerned with morality, but he only wanted to show how a series of events during childhood could lead to certain behaviors in adult life. See Madrignani 154.

<sup>40</sup> For more information concerning Capuana's criticism and reception of the three editions of *Giacinta* see Santiago. Reactions in the form of letters and magazine review to the first edition are also contained in Paglieri 225-244.

<sup>41</sup> Madrignani in his book describes the main differences between the first and last editions. Among these are the omission of *francesismi*, provincialisms and neologisms; the more appropriate vocabulary; the employment of shorter sentences and the reduction of description in place of the dialogue. All this resulted in a more vivid and fluid narration. For more information concerning stylistic differences between the first and last editions see Madrignani 220-225. We must also remember that in the period that separates the first and last edition Capuana underwent a literary conversion strongly impacted by De Sanctis' idealism, Capuana became increasingly concerned with the relationship between art and reality and begun to detach himself from Zola and the French naturalism. Capuana's conversion reflects a more general crisis within positivist believes. During the 1880s, many physicians as well as intellectuals started to question the capacity of science to explaining reality. Inside the asylum there emerged an explosion of practices of occultism, magnetism and hypnosis. Clara Gallini discusses practices of occultism, magnetism and hypnosis in Italian asylums in her book *La sonnanbula meravigliosa* (1986). See Gallini 209-221.

<sup>42</sup> Paglieri mentions some of the differences concerning the repression of *Giacinta*'s sexuality in the last edition. See Paglieri 216-217.

### Chapter III

<sup>43</sup> Gallini in her book *La sonnanbula meravigliosa* (1986) mentions 788 cases of hysterical women out of 6,482 inmates recorded in Italian mental institutions in 1888. See Gallini 271.

<sup>44</sup> The broad impact of Charcot on French literature has been discussed by Bertrand Marquer in *Les romans de la Salpêtrière: Reception d'une scenographie clinique, Jean-Martine Charcot dans l'imaginaire fin-de-siecle* (2008). Also Peter Koehler in "Charcot, La Salpêtrière, and Hysteria as Represented in European Literature" (2013) discusses the impact of Charcot in European literature,

---

including the Italian context. In his study Koehler mentions Matilde Serao's *Fantasia* and Luigi Capuana's *Tortura* and *Profumo*. Clara Gallini has discussed the relationship between Charcot and Italian physicians such as Cesare Lombroso and Enrico Morselli in relation to practices of hypnotism that spread inside mental institutions during the 1880s. See Gallini 198.

<sup>45</sup> My selection of representations of hysterical women in Italian literature is of course limited. Some other books from the period include Ugo Tarchetti's *Fosca*, Antonio Fogazzaro's *Malombra*, Matilde Serao's *Fantasia*, Luigi Capuana's *Profumo* and several short stories such as "Mostruosità," "Il dottor Cymbalus," and "Un Vampiro."

<sup>46</sup> Jann Matlock in *Scene of Seduction* offers a similar perspective in regard to the hysterical woman and the prostitute, although in the French context. Matlock talks of literary representations used to regulate female sexuality (13).

<sup>47</sup> Aside for the primary texts by Mantegazza, Sergi and Zaccarelli, for all the information concerning this section, I have drawn on Berlino, Macciocchi and Mantovani.

<sup>48</sup> After Galton, Richet in France was the first to theorize sterilization. Switzerland instead was the first country to adopt sterilization for eugenic, meaning non-therapeutic ends. The countries that most widely adopted practices of sterilization were the United States and Germany (Berlino 33-69).

<sup>49</sup> Key books from this period concerning the two Italian races and the racialization of the South are Alfredo Niceforo's *La delinquenza in Sardegna: Note di sociologia criminale* (1897) and *Italiani del nord e Italiani del sud* (1901) and Giuseppe Sergi's *Gli arii in Europa e in Asia* (1903). Napoleone Colajanni offered a first response to these theories in *Per la razza maledetta. Osservazioni* (1898).

<sup>50</sup> For further studies on hysteria see Showalter, Chesler, and Gilbert and Gubar.

<sup>51</sup> The first to introduce photography at the Salpêtrière was Charcot's assistant, Emile Bournville. Bournville collaborated with the *Revue photographique des hopiteaux de Paris* with the aim to collect and illustrate the most interesting cases at the Salpêtrière. See Hustvedt 162.

<sup>52</sup> The photographs of Augustine that I discuss in this chapter are included at the end of the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*.  
<http://ia802607.us.archive.org/26/items/iconographiepho00regngoog/iconographiepho00regngoog.pdf>

<sup>53</sup> The collodion process was introduced for the first time in 1851; it was a

---

positive-negative process like the talbotype and replaced the daguerreotype. The negatives were on glass, not paper, and developed in pyrogallic acid. See Newhall 35.

<sup>54</sup> The engraving is reproduced in Didi-Huberman 128.

<sup>55</sup> A second phase named *Clownism*, or stage of the grand movements, preceded *Attitudes Passionnelles*. During this phase Augustine would repeatedly sit up and slam herself down again on her bed. She would also sometimes execute the “circular arch,” in which she would bend her back and support herself on her head and feet. There are no photos of Augustine that portray this phase. See Hustvedt 174.

<sup>56</sup> It is intriguing to compare these photographs with artistic nudes and pornographic photography and paintings that developed in France during the second half of the nineteenth century. Gustave Goubert in particular used to paint from Vallou de Villeneuve’s photographic nudes, as in the case of *The artist’s Studio* (1855) (Pultz 38-39).

<sup>57</sup> For further studies on the decadent period see Avincola and Ruggiero and Vivanti, 1000-1098.

<sup>58</sup> Barbara Spackman also points out the compelling relationship between “La vergine Anna” and Freud and Breuer’s *Studies on Hysteria*. See Spackman (1989), 127.

<sup>59</sup> Barbara Spackman and Federica Adriano also points out the voyeuristic gaze of Giorgio. See Spackman (1989), 190 and Adriano 186.

<sup>60</sup> Cesare Lombroso in *La donna delinquente* distinguished the infanticidal woman from the degenerate. As an occasional criminal the infanticide woman was moved by passion and love, and acted in relation to social norms and the environment. As a result, it was her political passion that moved her act. See Lombroso (1980), 213-216. See also Stewart-Steinberg 184-228.

<sup>61</sup> The first technique employed in Italy was called “oophorectomy,” and consisted of the removal of the ovaries and the fallopian tubes. This practice, first introduced in the United States and Germany, was believed to remove all hysterical symptoms. The first such operation in Italy took place in 1880, in Milan. It is documented that the patient died soon after for hemorrhaging. Besides these drastic practices of sterilization, other surgical therapies included ovarian-salpingectomy, bilateral normal ovary-otomy, and the above-mentioned oophorectomy became usual practices in Italy. See Vanni 178-180.

<sup>62</sup> Malthusianism was a wide-spread philosophy inspired by Thomas Malthus’ *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), in which Malthus theorized the need

---

of limiting the population to prevent the misery of famine that would lead to the global extinction of men. Malthus' theories had a key impact on Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859).

#### **Chapter IV**

<sup>63</sup> For a collection of futurist women's writings see Salaris (1982) and Bello Minciocchi (2007).

<sup>64</sup> For a general study of the Giolitti period see Gentile (2003) and (1984); and Ruggiero and Vivanti 1099-1311.

<sup>65</sup> For more information concerning the relationship between the socialist party and the woman question in Italy see Puccini, Bortolotti and Merfeld.

<sup>66</sup> For further information on nationalism and young generation see Gentile (1984), 103-111.

<sup>67</sup> Nationalism, among other matters, has been regarded as a direct link between futurism and fascism. Emilio Gentile for example stands against this position by arguing that this connection is based on a "drastic simplification of the historical reality of a very complex phenomenon." In a higher degree compared to other European countries, the idea of the Nation was central among young intellectuals. The myth of the new Italy, Gentile argues, "was at the very origin of Italian modernism." See Gentile (2003), 28.

<sup>68</sup> De Maria discusses this matter in his book. Mario Morasso in *La nuova arma. La macchina* (1905) already introduced the topic of the machine into the Italian imaginary. War was also prominent among Italian writers such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Giovanni Pascoli and Corradini. As far as stylistic innovations are concerned the relationship with French symbolism—particularly Mallarmé—is undoubted. See Marinetti (1968): XIX-LXXI.

<sup>69</sup> Cinzia Sartini Blum for example argues that the abolishment of the institution of marriage was employed more to reinforce male identity than to release women: "Self-defense then is the primary impetus for Marinetti's unconventional tirade against marriage and the family. At stake is the complete destruction of institutions, because they are in crisis, threatens the formulation of patriarchy and male identity" (84).

<sup>70</sup> Silvia Contarini for example argues that the engendered body fantasized by Marinetti is in fact the reduction of the two sexes into one male sex. See Contarini (2006), 15.

<sup>71</sup> Marinetti's book provoked a debate among futurists. *L'Italia Futurista* published most of these responses in 1917. Particularly hostile to Marinetti's

---

*Come si seducono le donne* were the female futurist writers. Enif Robert for example, in “Una parola Serena” vindicated women’s intellectual capacities over their sexuality. Rosa Rosa in “Le donne del postdomani” asserted a new possibility of equality between the two sexes after the war. In general, futurist women advocated women’s full agency not only in the choice of sexual partner, but also in their intellectual capacities. For a detailed commentary on these responses, see Minciocchi (2007): 116-140 and Salaris (1982): 106-119.

<sup>72</sup> In a similar fashion to Marinetti, de Saint-Point stands against romantic love. However as Minchiacci points out her position also differs from Marinetti. Marinetti considers sexual relations as biological functions, similar to drinking and eating; for Saint-Point, by contrast, sexuality is deeply linked to spirituality. See Minchiacci 86-102

<sup>73</sup> For a general discussion of erotic literature and futurism see Verdone, 31-59 and Nazzaro 138-155.

<sup>74</sup> All the bibliographical information concerning Eva Kuhn’s life is drawn from Minciocchi (2007), 155-157; E. Amendola (1961) and G. Amendola, 91-117; and Salaris (2001) 57-60.

<sup>75</sup> The manifesto is held at the *Getty Research Institute* in Los Angeles (© 2012 Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York / SIAE, Rome). A reference to the manifesto is in Salaris (2011), 59-60.

<sup>76</sup> From the same period see also Diana De Rosa’s *I mangiatori di pane: Il diario di Antonio Tomisich nel manicomio di Trieste (1909-1910) e altri scritti*, and Adalgisa Conti’s *Gentilissimo sig. dottore questa è la mia vita: manicomio 1914*.

<sup>77</sup> I was unable to read and transcribe the full manifesto. I use (?) when I was not certain of the word transcribed and (+) when a word is missing.

<sup>78</sup> Eva Kuhn made the acquaintance of an anarchist worker, with whom she had a correspondence. In a letter discovered by Salaris, Eva Kuhn shows her intention to contribute an article on the reformation of the asylum to “*Umanità Nuova*.” See Salaris (2011), 57.

APPENDIX B

PHOTOGRAPHS

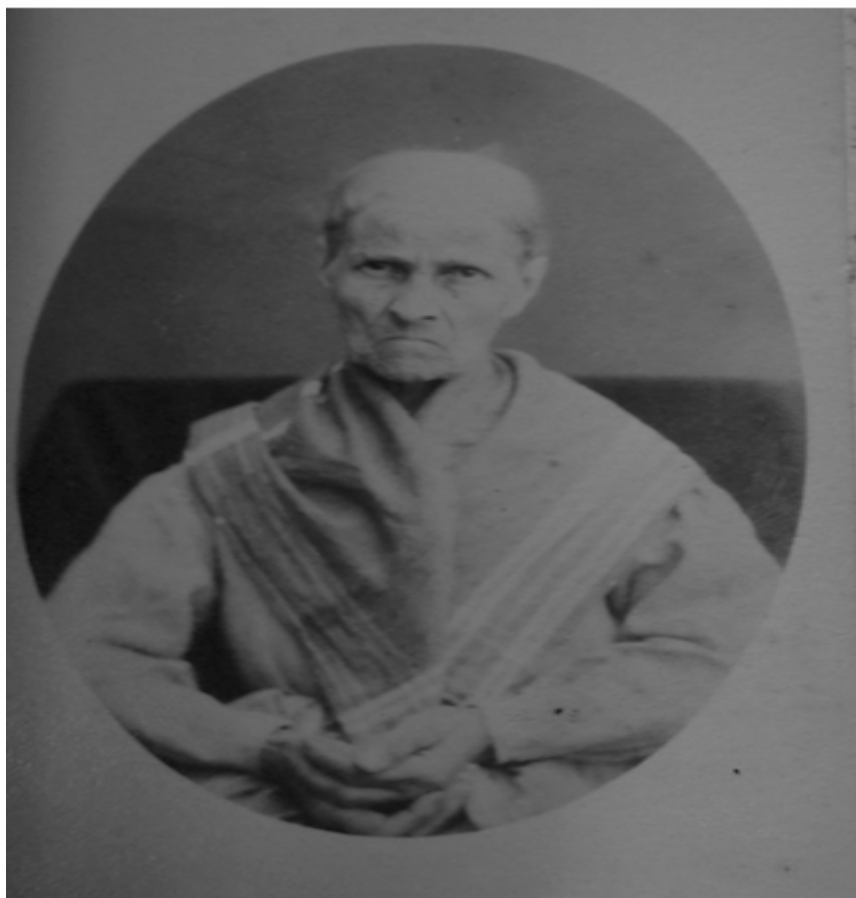


Fig. 1. Madwoman in the San Clemente asylum, in Venice



Fig. 2. Female patients in the San Clemente asylum, in Venice



Fig. 3. Photograph of a patient taken before and after recovery





Fig. 4. Photograph of a second patient taken before and after recovery

## REFERENCES CITED

- Adriano, Federica. *Alienazione, nevrosi e follia: Esiti della ricerca scientifica nella narrativa Italiana tra Otto e Novecento*. Tesi di Dottorato in Scienze dei Sistemi Culturali; Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, University of Sassari, 2009.
- Agamben, Giorgio. "What is an Apparatus," in *What is an Apparatus and Other Essays*. Trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009. Print.
- Althusser, Louis. "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin, Philosophy and Other Essays*. Trans. Ben Brewster. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972. Print.
- Amendola, Eva Kuhn. *Vita con Giovanni Amendola*. Firenze: Marino Parenti, 1961. Print.
- Amendola, Giorgio. *Una scelta di vita*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1977. Print.
- Avincola, Sandra. *Il decadentismo: la coscienza della crisi*. Roma: Nuova Omicron, 1997. Print.
- Babini, Valeria Paola. *Liberi tutti: manicomi e psichiatri in Italia: una storia del Novecento*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009. Print.
- Babini, Valeria Paola; Cotti Maurizia; Minuz Fernanda and Tagliavini Annamaria, eds. *Tra potere e sapere: la psichiatria Italiana nella seconda metà dell'Ottocento*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982. Print.
- Babini Valeria, Minuz Fernanda and Tagliavini Annamaria, eds. *La donna nelle scienze dell'uomo*. Milano: Franco Angeli Libri, 1986. Print.
- Bayer, Ronald. *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: the Politics of Diagnosis*. New York: Basic Books; 1981. Print.
- Banti, Alberto Mario and Ginsborg Paul, eds. *Storia D'Italia. Il Risorgimento*. Torino: Giulio Einaudi Editore, 2007. Print.
- Basaglia, Franco. *L'istituzione negata: Rapporto da un ospedale psichiatrico*. Milano: Einaudi, 1973. Print.
- Basaglia, Franco; Ongaro Basaglia, Franca; Lemert, Edwin McCarthy; Ruesch, Jurgen and Scalia Gianni, eds. *La maggioranza deviante*. Milano: Einaudi, 1971. Print.

- Bell, Charles. *Essays of the Anatomy and Philosophy of Expression*. London: John Murray, 1824. Print.
- Bello Minciocchi, Cecilia, ed. *Spirale di dolcezza +serpe di fascino. Scrittrici futuriste*. Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2007. Print.
- . *Scrittrici della prima avanguardia: concezione, caratteri e testimonianze del femminile nel futurismo*. Firenze: Le Lettere, 2012. Print.
- Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" in *Illuminations*. Ed. Hannah Arendt. San Diego, CA: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1968. Print.
- Berlini, Alessandro. *Il filantropo e il chirurgo: eugenetica e politiche di sterilizzazione tra XIX e XX secolo*. Torino: L'Harmattan Italia, 2004. Print.
- Biasin, Giampaolo. *Literary Diseases: Theme and Metaphor in the Italian Novel*. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975. Print.
- Biffoli Dezzutti, Domenica, and Torre Andrea. *Immagini dell'Altro nella cultura europea contemporanea*. Torino: L'Harmattan Italia: 1996. Print.
- Breuer, Josef and Freud Sigmund. *Studies on Hysteria*. New York: Basic Books, 1957. Print.
- Blum, Cinzia Sartini. *The Other Modernism: F.T. Marinetti's Futurist Fiction of Power*. Berkeley: University of California Press; 1996. Print.
- Bohn, Willard. *The Other Futurism: Futurist Activity in Venice, Padua and Verona*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004. Print.
- Borghi, Liana, ed. *Oltre la posa: immagini di donne negli Archivi Alinari*. Firenze: Fratelli Alinari Editrice, 1984. Print.
- Bortolotti, Franca Pieroni. *Socialismo e questione femminile in Italia, 1892-1922*. Milano: Gabriele Mazzotta Editore, 1974. Print.
- Bossi, Luigi Maria. *Malattie utero-uvariche e malthusianismo*. Milano: Società Editrice Libreria, 1905. Print.
- Brogi, Carlo and Mantegazza Paolo. *Il ritratto in fotografia: Appunti pratici per chi posa*. Firenze: Salvatore Lanzi, 1895. Print.
- Burgio, Alberto. *Nel nome della razza: Il razzismo nella storia d'Italia 1870-1945*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1999. Print.

- . *L'invenzione delle razze: Studi su razzismo e revisionismo storico*. Roma: Manifestolibri, 1998. Print.
- Burns, Stanley. *Patients & Promise: A Photographic History of Mental and Mood Disorders*. New York: Burns Archive Press, 2006. Print.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies That Matter: On Discursive Limits of Sex*. London: Routledge, 1993. Print.
- . *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* London-New York: Verso Books, 2009. Print.
- Cagnetta, Franco. *Nascita della fotografia psichiatrica*. Venezia: Marsilio, 1981. Print.
- Canguilhem, Georges. *The Normal and the Pathological*. New York: Zone Books, 1989. Print.
- Canosa, Romano. *Storia del manicomio in Italia dall'unita' a oggi*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1979. Print.
- Capuana, Luigi. *Giacinta*. Ed. Paglieri Marina. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1980. Print.
- . *Giacinta: romanzo*. Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1931. Print.
- . *Profumo*. Milano: Curcio, 1977. Print.
- . *Homo*. Milano: Fratelli Treves, 1888. Print.
- Castel, Robert. *The Regulation of Madness: The Origins of Incarceration in France*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988. Print.
- Cavalli Pasini, Annamaria. *La scienza del romanzo: Romanzo e cultura scientifica tra '800 e '900*. Bologna: Pàtron, 1982. Print.
- Charcot, Jean Martin, Bourneville Emile and Regnard Paul. *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*. Paris: Progrès Médical, 1876-1880. Print.
- Chesler, Phyllis. *Women and Madness*. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1972. Print.
- Colajanni, Napoleone. *Per la razza maledetta. Osservazioni*. Firenze: Remo Sandron, 1898. Print.
- Contarini, Silvia. *La femme futuriste: mythes, modèles et représentations de la femme dans la théorie et la littérature futuristes (1909-1919)*. Nanterre: Publidix-Presses, 2006. Print.

- . “Guerre maschili/guerre femminili: corpi e corpus futuristi in azione/trasformazione” in *A Century of Futurism, 1909-2009*. Eds. Luisetti, Federico and Somigli Luca. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina; 2009. Print.
- Conti, Adalgisa. *Gentilissimo sig. dottore questa è la mia vita: manicomio 1914*. Milano: Jaca Book, 2000. Print.
- Crepet, Paolo, and Giannichedda Enrico, eds. *Inventario di una psichiatria*. Milano: Electa, 1981. Print.
- D’Annunzio, Gabriele. *Prose di romanzi*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1988-1989. Print.
- . *Le novelle della Pescara*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: I Giganti di Gulliver, 1995. Print.
- . *Il trionfo della morte, Le vergini delle rocce*. Roma: Newton, 1995. Print.
- . *L’innocente*, Ed. Maria Rosa Giacon. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1996. Print.
- . Gabriele D’Annunzio: *Lettere a Barbara Leoni*. Ed. Federico Roncoroni. Milano: Biblioteca dell’Eros, 2008. Print.
- Dalbo, Anna. *Fotografare la follia: La fotografia psichiatrica nel manicomio dell’isola di San Servolo*. Tesi di Laurea in Antropologia Culturale, Etnologia, Etnolinguistica, Faculty of Letters and Philosophy, Venice. 2008.
- Darwin, Charles. *The Origin of Species*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996. Print.
- . *The Expression of the Emotions in Man and Animals*. London: London J Murray, 1904. Print.
- . *The variations in Plants and Animals under Domestication*. New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1892. Print.
- De Amicis, Edmondo. *Nel giardino della follia*. Livorno: Belforte & C. Editori, 1902. Print.
- De Boulogne, Duchenne. *Album de photographies pathologiques complémentaires du livre intitulé de l’électrisation localisée*. Paris: J.-B. Baillière, 1862. Print.

- . *Mécanisme de la phsyssionomie humaine au analysis electro-physiologique de l'expression de patients*. Paris: JB Bailliere, 1876. Print.
- De Roberto, Federico. *Casa Verga e altri scritti verghiani*. Firenze: Felice le Monnier, 1964. Print.
- De Rosa, Diana. *I mangiatori di pane: Il diario di Antonio Tomisich nel manicomio di Trieste (1909-1910) e altri scritti*. Tivoli: Sensibili alle Foglie, 1998. Print.
- De Sanctis, Francesco. *Scritti politici di Francesco De Sanctis*. Ed. Giuseppe Ferrarelli. Napoli: Antonio Morano e Figlio Editori, 1900. Print.
- . *Storia della letteratura Italiana*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991. Print.
- De Saint-Point, Valentine. "Manifesto della donna futurista" in Bello Minciacchi, Cecilia, ed. *Spirale di dolcezza+serpe di fascino. Scrittrici futuriste*. Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2007: 50-57. Print.
- . "Manifesto futurista della lussuria" in Bello Minciacchi, Cecilia, ed. *Spirale di dolcezza+serpe di fascino. Scrittrici futuriste*. Napoli: Bibliopolis, 2007: 57-62. Print.
- Del Giudice, Giovanna, ed. *Il manoscritto di Augusta F.* Tivoli: Sensibili alle Foglie, 1996. Print.
- Diamond, Hugh Welch. *The Face of Madness: Hugh W. Diamond and the Origin of Psychiatric Photography*. Ed. Gilman Sander Lawrence. New York: Citadel Press, 1976.
- Didi-Huberman, Georges. *Invention of Hysteria: Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003. Print.
- Doane, Mary Ann. *Femmes Fatales: Feminism, Film Theory, Psychoanalysis*. New York: Routledge, 1991. Print.
- Donne in posa. Un contributo alla storia della fotografia nelle Marche*. Ed. Fondazione Cassa di risparmio della provincia di Macerata, Tolentino: Unitre, 1999. Print.
- Dörner, Klaus. *Madmen and The Bourgeoisie*. Oxford: B. Blackwell, 1981. Print.
- Fanizzi, Nicola. *Lasciateci stare: Narrazioni dal manicomio*. Tivoli: Sensibili alle Foglie, 2004. Print.

- Ferrante, Lucia; Palazzi, Maura and Pomata Gianna, eds. *Ragnatele di rapporti: patronage e reti di relazioni nella storia delle donne*. Torino: Rosenberg & Sellier, 1988. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. Trans. Richard Howard. New York: Vintage-Random House, 1988. Print.
- . *Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*. New York: Picador, 2003. Print.
- . “Truth and Power: Interview with Alessandro Fontana and Pasquale Pasquino,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980. Print.
- . *The Foucault Reader*. Ed. Paul Rabinow. New York: Pantheon Books, 1984. Print.
- Fogazzaro, Antonio. *Malombra*. Stoccarda: Spemann, 1889. Print.
- Gallini, Clara. *La sonnambula meravigliosa: Magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento Italiano*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1983. Print.
- Galton, Francis. “Eugenics: its Definition, Scope and Aims,” in *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 10, n. I (1904): 1-6. Print.
- . *Hereditary Genius: An Enquiry Into Its Laws and Consequences*. Nord Press: 2010. Print.
- Gambacorti, Irene. *Verga a Firenze: Nel laboratorio della Storia di una capinera*. Firenze: Le Lettere, 1994. Print.
- Gentile, Emilio. *The Struggle for Modernity: Nationalism, Futurism, and Fascism*. Westport, CA: Praeger Publishers, 2003. Print.
- . *La Grande Italia: the Myth of the Nation in the Twentieth Century*. Trans. Suzanne Dingee and Jennifer Pudney. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009. Print.
- . “From the Cultural Revolt of the Giolitian Era to the Ideology of Fascism” in F.J. Coppa, ed. *Studies in Modern Italian History*. New York: Peter Lang, 1986: 103-119. Print.
- Gilber, Sandra and Gubar Susan. *The madwoman in the Attic: the Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-century Literary Imagination*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. Print.

- Gioberti, Pietro. *Del primato morale e civile degli Italiani*. Ed. G. Balsamo Civelli. Torino: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1920. Print.
- Giorgietti, Cristina. *Manuale di storia del costume e della moda*. Firenze: Cantini, 1992. Print.
- Goffman, Erving. *Asylums. Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates*. Garden City, N.Y: Anchor Books, 1961. Print.
- . *Stigma. Notes on the Management of a Spoiled Identity*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 1986. Print.
- Gramsci, Antonio. “Socialismo e fascismo,” in *L’Ordine Nuovo (1921-1922)*. Torino: Einaudi, 1966. Print.
- Hacking, Iann. *The Timing of Chance*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Print.
- Hustvedt, Asti. *Medical Muses: Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century Paris*. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2011. Print.
- Invernizio, Carolina. *Il treno della morte*. Milano: Editrice Lucchi, 1973. Print.
- Koehler, Peter. “Charcot, La Salpetriere, and Hysteria as Represented in European Literature” *Elsevier Science & Technology* (2013): 93-122. Print.
- Kriss, Ravetto. “SigarO +Figaro=Sfigaro,” *Carte Italiane* v. 1. 13 (1994): 34-52. Web.
- Lombroso, Cesare. *L’uomo delinquente studiato in rapporto all’antropologia, alla giurisprudenza ed alle discipline carcerarie*. Milano: Ulrico Hoepli, 1876. Print.
- Lombroso, Cesare and Ferrero Guglielmo. *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale*. Milano: Fratelli Bocca Editori, 1915. Print.
- . *The Female Offender*. Littleton: Rothman & Co., 1980. Print.
- Madrignani, Carlo. *Capuana e il naturalismo*. Bari, Laterza: 1970. Print.
- Maffai, Giulia. *Storia della moda*. Roma: Editori riuniti, 1998. Print.
- Mantegazza, Paolo. *Un giorno a Madera*. Genova: ECIG, 1991. Print.
- . *Fisiologia della donna*. Milano, Treves, 1893. Print.
- . *Elementi di igiene*. Milano: Gaetano Brigola Editore, 1871. Print.



- Marchiori, Denise. "L'enigma isteria: Peregrinazioni di una *Pathosformel*" in *Leitmotiv* n. 4, (2004): 171-194.
- Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *Teoria e invenzione Futurista*. Ed. Luciano De Maria. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1968. Print.
- . *I manifesti del futurismo*. Firenze: Lacerba, 1914. Print.
- . *Poupées Electriques. Drame en trois actes, avec une préface sur le futurisme*. Paris: Bibliothèque International d'Édition, 1909. Print.
- Marsigli, Maria Luisa and Basaglia Franco. *La marchesa e i demoni: Diario di un manicomio*. Milano: Feltrinelli, 1973. Print.
- Marquer, Bertrand. *Les romans de la Salpêtrière, réception d'une scénographie clinique: Jean-Martin Charcot dans l'imaginaire fin-de-siècle*. Genève: Droz, 2008. Print.
- Matlock, Jann. *Scene of Seduction: Prostitution, Hysteria and Reading Difference in Nineteenth-century France*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994. Print.
- Maccabelli, Terenzio. "Nascere diseguali: considerazioni su eugenetica ed ereditarismo in Italia," *Società e storia*, n. 123 (2009): 113-137. Print.
- Malthus, Thomas. *Essay on the Principle of Population*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. Print.
- Mantovani, Claudia. *Rigenerare la società: l'eugenetica in Italia dalle origini ottocentesche agli anni Trenta*. Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino, 2004. Print.
- Mann, Bonnie. *Sovereign Masculinity: Gender Lessons from The War on Terror*. London: Oxford University Press, 2014. Print.
- . "Gender Apparatus: Torture and National Manhood in the U.S War on Terror," *Radical Philosophy*, v. 168 (July/August 2011): 22-32. Print.
- Mazzoni, Cristina. *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996. Print.
- . "L'abito non fa la monaca": Clothing and Gender in Giovanni Verga's *Storia di una capinera*," *Italian Quarterly* 34.133-134 (1997): 33-46. Print.
- Merini, Alda. *L'altra verità. Diario di una diversa*. Milano: Rizzoli, 1997. Print.
- . *La Terra santa e altre poesie*. Manduria: Lacaita, 1984. Print.
- . *La Nera Novella*. Milano: Rizzoli, 2007. Print.

- Merfeld, Mechthild. *L'amancipazione della donna e la morale sessuale nella teoria socialista*. Milano: Feltrinelli Editore, 1974.
- Merleau-Pointy, Maurice. *Phenomenology of Perception*. Trans. Smith Colin. London: Routledge, 1962. Print.
- Möbius, P. Julius. *Über den phisiologische Schwachsinn des Weibes*. Karlsruhe: C. Marhold, 1907. Print.
- Moe, Nelson. *The View from Vesuvius: Italian Culture and the Southern Question*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002. Print.
- Molinari, Augusta. *Donne e ruoli femminili nell'Italia della Grande Guerra*. Milano: Selene Edizioni, 2008. Print.
- Morel, Benedict-Augustine. *Traité des dégénérescences physiques, intellectuelles et morales de l'espèce humaine et des causes qui produisent ces variétés malades*. Paris: J.B. Baillière, 1857. Print.
- Mosse, George. *Nationalism and Sexuality: Respectability and Abnormal Sexuality in Modern Europe*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985. Print.
- Newhall, Beaumont and Lovisetti Fuà Laura. *Storia della fotografia*. Torino: Einaudi, 1984.
- Niceforo, Alfredo. *La delinquenza in Sardegna: Note di sociologia criminale*. Cagliari: Edizione della Torre, 1977. Print.
- . *Italiani del nord e Italiani del sud*. Milano: Fratelli Bocca, 1901. Print.
- Nordau, Max. *Degeneration*. New York: D. Appleton, 1895. Print.
- Nozzoli, Anna. *Tabù e coscienza: la condizione femminile nella letteratura Italiana del Novecento*. Firenze: La nuova Italia, 1978. Print.
- Oliva, Gianni and Moretti Vito. *Verga e i verismi regionali*. Roma: Edizioni Studium, 1999. Print.
- Orban, Clara. "Women, Futurism and Fascism" in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian fascism, and Culture*. Ed. Pickering-Iazzi, Robin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995: 52-75. Print.
- Palazzeschi, Aldo. *Il codice di Perelà: Romanzo futurista*. Eds. Marchi Marco and De Maria Luciano. Milano: SE; 1991. Print.
- . "Il controdolore," in Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. *I manifesti del futurismo*. Firenze: Lacerba, 1914. Print.

- Patriarca, Silvana. *Italian Vices*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Print.
- Parmiggiani, Sandro, ed. *Il volto della follia: Cent'anni di immagini del dolore*. Milano: Skira, 2005. Print.
- Paulicelli, Eugenia. "Fashion: Narration and Nation" in *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Italian Culture*. Eds. Zygmunt G Barański and Rebecca J. West. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001. Print.
- Penfold, Susan and Walker, Gillian. *Women and the Psychiatric Paradox*. Montreal: Eden Press, 1983. Print.
- Prezzolini, Giuseppe. "La questione sessuale" in *La voce* II, n. 9 (10 febbraio 1910): 259-266. Print.
- Pinel, Philippe. *Traité médico-philosophique sur l'aliénation mentale*, New York: Arno Press, 1976. Print.
- Praz, Mario. *La carne la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica*. Milano-Roma: Società Editrice "La Cultura", 1930. Print.
- Puccini, Sandra. "Condizione della donna e questione femminile (1892-1922)," in *La questione femminile in Italia dal '900 ad oggi*. Ed. Giulietta Ascoli. Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1979. Print.
- Pultz, John. *The Body and the Lens: Photography 1839 to the Present*. New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995. Print.
- Ramirez, Joy. *Fatal Images: Seduction and Desire in 19th and 20th Century Myths of the Femme Fatale*. Phd Dissertation, University of Colorado, 2004. Print.
- Re, Lucia. "Futurism and Feminism." *Quaderni d'Italianistica* n. 7 (1989): 253-72. Print.
- . "Scrittura della metamorfosi e metamorfosi della scrittura: Rosa Rosà e il futurism," in *Les Femmes-Ecrivains en Italie (1870-1920): Ordres et libertés, actes du colloque des 25 et 26 mai 1994*. Ed. Emanuelle Genevois. Paris: Université de la Sorbonne Nouvelle, 1994: 311-327. Print.
- Re, Lucia and Siracusa, Dominic. "Rosa Rosà's 'A Woman with Three Souls' in English Translation," *California Italian Studies* 2:1 (2011): 3-40. Web.
- Robert, Enif and Marinetti Filippo Tommaso. *Un ventre di donna: Romanzo chirurgico*. Milano: Facchi Editore, 1919. Print.

- Rosà, Rosa. *Una donna con tre anime*. Milano: Studio Editoriale Lombardo, 1918. Print.
- Ruggiero, Romano and Vivanti Corrado. *Storia d'Italia*. Torino: Einaudi, 1972-1976. Print.
- Russo, Antonella. *Storia culturale della fotografia italiana: dal neorealismo al postmoderno*. Torino: G. Einaudi, 2011. Print.
- Salaris, Claudia. *Le futuriste: donne e letteratura d'avanguardia in Italia, 1909-1944*. Milano, Edizioni delle donne, 1982. Print.
- . “Incontri con le futuriste” in *L'arte delle donne nell'Italia del Novecento*. Eds. Iamurri Laura and Spinazze' Sabrina. Roma: Meltemi Editore, 2001. Print.
- Salierno, Vito. *D'Annunzio e i suoi editori*. Milano: Mursia, 1987. Print.
- Santangelo, Vincenzo. *Luigi Capuana e i suoi critici*. Roma: Ciranna, 1969. Print.
- Scarry, Elaine. *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1985. Print.
- Schneider, Jane. *Italy's "Southern Question": Orientalism in One Country*. Oxford; New York: Berg, 1998.
- Shorter, Edward. *A History of Psychiatry: From the Era of the Asylum to the Age of Prozac*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.
- Showalter, Elaine. *The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980*. New York: Pantheon Books, 1985. Print.
- Sighele, Scipio. *La coppia criminale: Studio di psicologia morbosa*. Torino: Fratelli Bocca, 1893.
- Signorini, Telemaco. *Telemaco Signorini. Una retrospettiva*. Ed. Dini Francesca et al. Firenze: Artificio Edizioni, 1997. Print.
- Serao, Matilde. *Fantasia*. Milano: Adriano Salani Editore, 1926. Print.
- Sergi, Giuseppe. *Gli arii in Europa e in Asia*. Milano: Fratelli Bocca, 1903. Print.
- . *Le degenerazioni umane*. Milano: Fratelli Dumolard, 1889. Print.
- Sica, Paola. “Il testo, il corpo e la cultura futurista: Riflessioni sul romanzo *Un ventre di donna*,” *Quaderni del 900*, v. 5 (2005): 11-23. Print.
- Soldani, Simonetta and Turi Gabriele. *Fare gli Italiani: scuola e cultura nell'Italia contemporanea*. Bologna: Il Mulino, 1993. Print.

- Sorcinelli, Paolo. *Miseria e malattia nel XIX secolo: I ceti popolari nell'Italia centrale fra tifo petecchiale e pellagra*. Milano: Franco Angeli Editore, 1979. Print.
- Spackman, Barbara. *Decadent Genealogies: The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989. Print.
- . "Fascist women and the rhetoric of virility" in *Mothers of Invention: Women, Italian fascism, and Culture*. Ed. Pickering-Iazzi, Robin. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995: 100-117. Print.
- . *Fascist Virilities: Rhetoric, Ideology, and Social Fantasy in Italy*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996. Print.
- Stewart-Steinberg, Suzanne. *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007. Print.
- Szasz, Thomas. *The Manufacture of Madness: A Comparative Study of the Inquisition and the Mental Health Movement*. New York: Harper & Row, 1970. Print.
- Tarchetti, Ugo. *Fosca*. Milano: Mondadori, 1988. Print.
- Tellini, Gino. *Filologia e storiografia. Da Tasso al Novecento*. Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 2002. Print.
- Teti, Vito. *La razza maledetta: origini del pregiudizio antimeridionale*. Roma: Manifestolibri, 1993. Print.
- Tomkins, Silvan. *Shame and Its Sisters: A Silvan Tomkins Reader*. Ed. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Adam Frank. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995. Print.
- Tommasello, Giovanna. *L' Africa tra mito e realtà: storia della letteratura coloniale*. Palermo: Sellerio, 2004. Print.
- Traverso, Lia. *D'ogni dove chiusi si sta male*. Roma: Sensibili alle foglie, 1996. Print.
- Turzio, Silvana. *Le fotografie del museo di antropologia criminale di Cesare Lombroso*. Milano: Mondadori, 2005. Print.
- Vaccarino, Giacomo. *Scrivere la follia: Matti, depressi e manicomi nella letteratura del Novecento*. Torino: EGA 2007. Print.
- Valesio, Paolo. "The Lion and the Ass: The Case for D'Annunzio's Novels," *Yale Italian Studies*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Winter 1977): 67-82.

- Vanni D, Cabras PL and Vanni P, "Surgical therapy as treatment of hysteria in Italy: 1880-1889," *Italian Journal of Anatomy and Embryology*, vol. 103 (4) (1998): 177-182. Print.
- Verdicchio, Pasquale. *Looters, Photographers, and Thieves: Aspects of Italian Photographic Culture in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Pub. Group, 2011. Print.
- Verga, Giovanni. *Storia di una capinera*. Milano: Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1991. Print.
- Verdone, Mario. *Teatro del tempo futurista*. Roma, Lerici, 1969. Print.
- Weininger, Otto. *Sex and Character: An Investigation of Fundamental Principles*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2005. Print.
- Wittig, Monique. *The Straight Mind and other essays*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1992. Print.
- Zavirsek, Darja. "A Historical Overview of Women's Hysteria in Slovenia," *The European Journal of Women's Studies*, 7, no. 2 (2000): 169-188. Print.
- Zola, Emile. *Fécondité*. Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1899. Print.
- Zuccarelli, Angelo. *Per la sterilizzazione della donna come mezzo per impedire la riproduzione dei maggiormente degenerati*. Napoli: Melfi et Joele, 1901. Print.