The Ecstatic Dis-Order: A Cultural and Literary Investigation of Post-Unification Italy (1861-1915)



Frances Clemente

Pembroke College

Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

University of Oxford

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term 2023

Short Abstract

The Ecstatic Dis-Order: A Cultural and Literary Investigation of Post-Unification Italy (1861-1915)

Frances Clemente

Pembroke College

Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term 2023

This thesis explores the way the notion of ecstasy permeated Italian culture between 1861 and 1915 in a variety of different discourses, and, specifically, those related to religion, science, and 'occulture'. Focusing on mystical ecstasies, magnetic ecstasies, mediumistic trances, hypnotic trances, and hysterical *extases*, I show how ecstatic subjects were often regarded as ab-normal, disorderly individuals needing to be overseen, governed, or repressed, consequently unveiling the power dynamics informing the relationship between ecstatics and normative agencies. I also show how some of the most significant authors of Italian post-Unification literature, i.e., Matilde Serao, Antonio Fogazzaro, Luigi Capuana, and Gabriele D'Annunzio, delivered literary depictions of ecstasy, finding in the latter a fundamental trope to explore the disorderly, inner tensions of the self, partly anticipating Freud's theorisations on the unconscious and the death drive. My research is underpinned by the theoretical framing of this double 'ecstatic dis-order', unveiling a dialectical tension between ecstatic, disorderly drives and normative, orderly ones, against the backdrop of the development of modern Italy and the modern Italian self.

Long Abstract

The Ecstatic Dis-Order: A Cultural and Literary Investigation of Post-Unification Italy (1861-1915)

Frances Clemente, Pembroke College
Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages

Thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Trinity Term 2023

Throughout medieval and modern history up until the first half of the nineteenth century, ecstasy – following the Greek etymon of the term, *ék-stasis* (=standing out), the moment in which the subject steps out of themselves and their normal state of being – was mostly considered in Western societies as a mystical phenomenon, centring on the direct experience of divine bliss, or, conversely, as a state of trance induced by communion with the devil, as it was theorised by demonologists and inquisitors. During the second half of the nineteenth century, however, a number of different ecstasies related to diverse fields were seen to circulate across the Western world, endowing the ecstatic phenomenon with new connotations that widened and challenged its traditional, more popular religious-linked meaning. Along with mystical ecstasy and devilish possession, the second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of magnetic ecstasies, mediumistic trances, hypnotic trances, and hysterical *extases*. This had particular implications in Italy, where the pervasive presence of the Church and Catholicism had contributed to the interpretation of ecstasy as a state primarily pertaining to the religious-Christian discourse. With the undermining of the recurring association of ecstasy with a religious phenomenon, the new Italian kingdom witnessed the displacement of the ecstatic state from the hegemony of the Catholic Church and its spheres of influence, and its penetration within modern positivist medicine and the later nineteenth-century 'occulture', giving rise to the abovementioned multifarious expressions of ecstasy.

The exploration of disparate sources pertaining to the Italian post-unification culture that all nonetheless deal with the notion of ecstasy in its diverse representations has led me to detect the existence of a dialectical tension between two patterns marking the country's post-unification history. On the one hand, there is an ecstatic dis-order, displaying 'ecstatic' subjectivities and situations that undermined the order the establishment was striving towards, pervading it with chaos and disarray, and challenging normativity and orthodoxy. On the other hand, there is a static order exerting, through different agencies, a power of repressive and normative surveillance upon those 'ecstatic' subjectivities and situations in order to maintain the cohesion and steadiness of the self and of the newly unified country, and retain the power of its more or less established bodies. This is a profoundly

modern tension, inextricably linked to the timeframe addressed in this thesis, that of Italy in the years between its Unification in 1861 and its entry in WWI in 1915, involving the consolidation of control devices and apparatuses striving to exercise and maintain power on bodies and minds, as well as the emergence and awareness of a growing social, political, and individual freedom within those bodies and minds.

The investigation of such a modern tension becomes especially fruitful in Italian literature of the period, where authors fictionalise and problematise the ecstatic phenomenon by relating it to the hidden drives of the self. In literary works, ecstasy serves as a formidable gateway to the world of the unconscious and a tool to investigate the modern Italian self. In delivering their personal depiction of ecstasy, superimposing mysticism, the occult supernatural, medical descriptions of hysteria, and sexualised depictions of bliss, Italian writers not only echoed the tensions at work between normative establishments/agencies and ab-normal ecstatic subjectivities, but also discovered the fragmentation of the self and the shattering drives underlying that fragmentation which constitute the kernel of the modern self and, as such, were being investigated by scientists in the period under study. That is, while corroborating the emergence of an ecstatic dis-order at a historical-cultural-political level, a dis-order related to dynamics involving the outer world, Italian literature detected a second ecstatic dis-order located within the inner world, reaching the dis-orderly shores of the unconscious, along with that destructive drive to death, in tension with the life instincts, which would be theorised by Freud in *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920).

The thesis has a twofold structure, reflecting the two above-mentioned ecstatic dis-orders – one relating to the outer world, the other to the inner world. In Part 1, I show how the notion of ecstasy permeated Italian culture in a variety of different discourses, and specifically, those related to the three crucial domains of religion, science, and 'occulture', revealing how the traditional, religious-linked definition of ecstasy acquired new, multifaceted connotations. I disclose such permeation by providing both theoretical and embodied accounts of the ecstatic phenomenon in the different fields analysed, remarking how ecstatic subjects were often regarded as ab-normal individuals needing to be overseen, governed, or even repressed and, consequently, unveiling the power dynamics informing the relation between ecstatics, on the one hand, and the, more or less established, agencies attempting to control them, on the other hand. Revealing in each domain analysed a dialectical tension between static order and ecstatic dis-order, I also point out how such tension frequently takes on a highly gendered connotation. Mystical, magnetic, spiritualistic, and hysterical ecstatics are often women who find themselves subjected to a normative power held by a male figure. By exiting both their normal state of consciousness and their 'normal' social status of subjection, such ecstatic subjects place themselves outside the sphere of control of the dominant patriarchal culture. They are not in

control of their bodies and minds, but neither are the patriarchal authorities operating within the State, Church, 'occulture', and science. Through their ecstatic otherness, women, as well as feminine/feminised individuals, question and undermine the normative patriarchal order fostered by the political, religious, occult, and scientific agencies, counteracting the latter's repressive order with their ecstatic dis-order.

Throughout Part 1, I offer an account of mystical ecstasy, exploring the ambivalent way it was perceived by the religious establishment in the years under study, providing the cases of Gemma Galgani and Palma Mattarelli as examples of such ambivalence. I then focus on magnetic ecstasies and mediumistic trances, retracing the spreading of magnetic culture and Spiritualism in post-unification Italy and revealing how certain ecstatic subjectivities (e.g., Eusapia Palladino) refused to be controlled, reclaiming a disruptive space of power. Finally, I address the way Italian positivist science medicalised ecstatic phenomena by exerting its imposing, clinical gaze, by resorting to hysteria and hypnotism, and/or relating it to unconscious mechanisms of the mind. While examples of ecstatic dis-order are provided throughout Part 1, the latter ends with a more focused analysis of four cases of ecstatic dis-order: the occult ecstasies of Beppina Sansone, the mystical/psychotic ones of David Lazzaretti, the collective ecstasies of the possessed women of Verzegnis, the ecstasies of Lucia Carnesi relating to the 'Drama of Mezzojuso'.

In Part 2, I show how some of the most significant protagonists of Italian post-Unification literature found in the ecstatic phenomenon a fundamental trope to explore and uncover the inner tensions of the modern Italian self, partly anticipating Freud's theorisations in relation to the unconscious and the death drive. Among the significant number of works written by Italian authors between 1861 and 1915 addressing the ecstatic phenomenon – works by prominent exponents of post-unification literature such as Arrigo Boito, Tarchetti, Praga, Verga, Capuana, Fogazzaro, Neera, Serao, D'Annunzio, De Roberto, De Amicis –, I provide close readings of those expressing most comprehensively the dialectical tension between ecstatic dis-order and static order I have outlined above and exploring more explicitly the disquieting, hidden drives of the self that are revealed in states of ecstasy: Matilde Serao's *Cuore infermo* (1881), Antonio Fogazzaro's *Piccolo mondo moderno* (1901) and *Il santo* (1905), Luigi Capuana's 'Forze Occulte' (1902), 'Un vampiro' (1904), and 'Fatale influsso' (1906), and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Le martyre de Saint Sebastien* (1911). Articulating the tensions between ecstatic dis-order and normative order confronted by the collective, national body, these works explore and give voice to the mysterious tensions of the individual body (and mind), unveiling a second, ecstatic dis-order related to the inner and hidden, i.e., unconscious, drives of the individual.

Each literary work analysed focuses on a different form of ecstatic dis-order involving the alteration/infraction of a certain normative order – revealing a conflict which usually echoes tensions the authors themselves were confronted with – and disclosing the troubling drives of each protagonist's inner, unconscious world. Serao's *Cuore infermo* addresses the dis-order unfolding from a woman's encounter with passion, exploring the conflicts arising from the clash between the normative obligations imposed by society upon women, systematically engrained in their everyday life, and their unrestricted desires, and eventually unveiling the woman's disquieting self-shattering drive manifested in erotic ecstasy. Fogazzaro's *Piccolo mondo moderno* and *Il santo* tackle the ecstatic dis-order of a passionate man who sublimates his drives towards God and becomes a sort of saint. Such ecstatic dis-order unearths an opposition between the normativity embodied by the religious establishment and the a-normativity, or abnormality, represented by the ecstatic religion of the individual, an intimate form of religion in which the ecstatic encounter with God emanates directly from the believer's unconscious. Capuana's short stories deal with the ecstatic dis-orders stemming from the occult world and challenging the materialist normative order. The characters of these short stories find themselves facing occult dis-orders pointing to an ecstatic Otherness which is inextricably linked to the *other* within the self, i.e., their unconscious other. Closing the circle, D'Annunzio's mystery play engages with the queer dis-order conveyed by saint Sebastian's experiences of ecstasy, pointing to the infraction of the gender normative order and unleashing the self's drive to ecstatic laceration.

Despite the fact that each author and text analysed in Part 2 focuses on a specific form of ecstasy and the alteration/infraction of a specific, established normative order elicited by that specific ecstatic form, the literary ecstatic dis-orders taken into account are all subject to the pathologising eye of the scientific order which classifies them as manifestation of an abnormal, usually hysterical, condition. Hysteria being the female malady par excellence, it is no coincidence that the literary ecstasies investigated relate to individuals that are either female or bear female connotations. The perfect embodiment of ab-normal, ecstatic othernesses, these female/feminine figures incarnate the alteration/infraction of that order which in the period under study subsumed all static, normative orders, i.e., the male-shaped, patriarchal order, questioning, if not subverting, it through the ecstatic otherness they represent. Such questioning and subversion match the representation of the female figure in late nineteenth-century Italian literature as a 'liberazione dalla coscienza', the 'potenze oscure' trying to lure the male characters away from the 'luce della coscienza', the 'zona paurosamente inaccessibile, che l'uomo paventa e da cui tuttavia è morbosamente attratto' (Cavalli Pasini 237, 239). Female/feminine figures open to outer, socio-cultural ecstatic dis-orders as well as the inner, unconscious ones.

Combining historical-cultural investigation and literary analyses, this study resorts to ecstasy as a unique lens through which to explore and analyse Italian culture and literature, allowing us to visualise some of the dynamics underlying the development of modern Italy and the modern Italian self, in relation to their outer, normative agencies as well as inner, unconscious tensions. In particular, it aims at bringing some new perspectives to our understanding of a particularly fertile and complex period of Italian culture such as the one coinciding with the years between the Italian Unification in 1861 and Italy's entry in WW1 in 1915, suggesting – in line with Stewart-Steinberg's perception of an 'uncanny double of Italy' (229) in the post-unification period up until 1922, and Camilletti's detection of an 'Italia lunare' between 1958 and 1971 – the existence of an 'Italia estatica' between 1861 and 1915.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements…… p.10
Abbreviations…… p.12
Illustrations…… p.13
Introduction…… p.16
Part 1. Ecstasy in Religion, 'Occulture' and Science…… p.46
1. Secularisation, Disenchantment and Re-enchantment…… p.46
2. Religion…… p.48
2.1 The Italian Case: In the Church's Shadow…… p.48
2.2 Mystical Ecstasy: A Disorderly Religious State…… p.50
2.3 The Cases of Gemma Galgani and Palma Mattarelli…… p.60
3. 'Occulture'…… p.71
3.1 Magnetic Ecstasies: from Somnambulists to Fascinators…… p.73
3.2 Mediumistic Trance…… p.85
3.3 Eusapia Palladino's Unruly and Erotic(ised) Disorder…… p.90
4. Science…… p.97
4.1 The Birth of Italian Psychiatry: Medicalising Ecstatic States…… p.97
4.2 Hysterical *Extase* and 'Scientific' Hypnotic Trance: Charcot's Turn…… p.101
4.3 Ecstasy According to Italian Scientists…… p.109
5. The *Querelle* around Ecstasy…… p.128
6. Four Cases of Ecstatic Dis-Order…… p.133
6.1 Beppina and Capuana…… p.133
6.2 David Lazzaretti…… p.141
6.3 The Possessed of Verzegnis…… p.149
6.4 Lucia Carnesi and the 'Drama of Mezzojuso'…… p.156
Part 2. Literary Representations of Ecstasy…… p.164
7. Erotic Ecstasy in Serao's *Cuore infermo*: from Constrained Order to Uninhibited, Deadly Dis-Order…… p.164
8. Fogazzaro's Ecstatic and Unconscious-Driven Spirituality: Counteracting Religious Dogmatisms with Spiritual Dis-orders…… p.186
9. Occult, Ecstatic Dis-order in Capuana's Short Stories: Unveiling the *Oltre* that is 'fuori di noi e dentro di noi'…… p.205

10. Beyond the Gender Principle: Queer Dis-Order in D'Annunzio's Ecstatic *Le martyre de Saint Sebastien*……...…….....…….…….....p.226
Conclusions....…….…….....…….... p.252
Bibliography……..p.256

Acknowledgements

This thesis is the result of a number of conversations which took place at 89 Banbury Road and 26 Polstead Road with my two supervisors: Giuseppe Stellardi and Emanuela Tandello. These sessions have been the highlight of my doctoral journey, constantly encouraging my thinking, stimulating my insights, and granting me that serenity of mind and heart without which I could have not written this work. To my supervisors: you have been more than I could have ever wished for. You have given me an example of discreet, kind, intuitive, elegant, clear, gracious, acute, sophisticated, and sincere scholarly and human behaviour. In the years to come, I hope I will be able to replicate such behaviour myself and, thus, do justice to your legacy. I am for ever grateful for your mentorship and friendship, and will always treasure the conversations we shared over these three years. Thank you for your unwavering support and belief in me.

I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to my funding bodies, the OOC AHRC DTP, the Clarendon Fund, and the Baillie Gifford Scholarship, who have enabled me to undertake my studies by lifting me from the burden of financial pressure and according me that confidence which only comes when you are remunerated for your work. I would especially like to thank Rebecca Costello from the OOC AHRC DTP. She has been one of my main points of contacts in these years, assisting me with extreme efficiency and kindness through the many bureaucratic procedures a doctoral student must face. While they are not directly involved in the process of writing-up a thesis, I believe it is people like Rebecca who make one's doctoral journey successful.

I wish to truly thank Fabio Camilletti, who was the first to believe in this project and helped me shape it in its initial, crucial phases.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Guido Bonsaver, Nicola Gardini, Elizabeth Leake, Kate Mitchell, Francesca Southerden, and, above all, Simon Gilson for their productive and encouraging feedback on different chapters of the thesis.

Lastly, I would like to thank Alessandra Aloisi, Fabio Camilletti, and Paola Cori as organisers of the conference *Leopardi occulto gotico irrazionale*, which took place in Birmingham on June 16, 2018. By accepting the abstract of a young master student, they have provided her with an otherwise unimaginable gateway to the academic world and introduced her to notions which significantly inform the present study.

Throughout these doctoral years I have been surrounded by love and support. For this, I must thank my beloved long-time friends, Antonella, Lea, Patrizia, Sara, Valeria, Beatrice, Virginia, Ciro, Edoardo, Gian Andrea, Raimondo, Roberta, Alessandra, Gabriele, Ida, who are always so far and yet

so close, and my precious Oxford friends, Alice, Alice, Claudio, Emily, Olmo, Serena, Jan, Konradin, Henner, Daniel, Sid, Rakhshan, Ruwa, Olga, who have made these years far from home years at home.
I would like to thank Antonella and Marina, my high school teachers, who first ignited my passion for literature, history, and culture. My gratitude towards them is boundless and so is my love.
Thank you to Mister Luciano Spalletti and the players of the SSC Napoli Football Club team for making the last months of my doctoral journey a roller-coaster of emotions culminating in utter ecstasy. You did it, champions.
Finally, this thesis is dedicated to my precious four. To my father Franco, my first reader and the person I am always, ultimately, looking up to. To my mother Barbara, who fills my days with warmth, and has showed me with her immeasurable energy that a day has 48 hours and you must enjoy and take advantage of each one of them. To my sister Elsie, who grounds my existence in ways that are not expressible in words. To my darling Greta, the keeper of my heart: you are the hope, joy, light of my life.

Abbreviations

FO = Capuana, Luigi. 1974. ‘Forze occulte’ in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 2, pp. 366-376

V = Capuana, Luigi. 1974. ‘Un vampiro’ in *Un vampiro* in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 3, pp. 203-221

FI = Capuana, Luigi. 1974. ‘Fatale influsso’ in *Un vampiro* in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 3, pp. 222-235

MSS = D’Annunzio, Gabriele. 1995. *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* in *Tutto il teatro*, ed. by Giovanni Antonucci (Rome: Newton), pp. 1-101

PMM = Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1901. *Piccolo mondo moderno* (Milan: Hoepli)

S = Fogazzaro, Antonio. [1905] 1906. *Il Santo* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi)

CI = Serao, Matilde. [1881] 1882. *Cuore infermo* (Turin: Casanova)

Illustrations

Fig.1: Gemma Galgani 'ex extase'. Photograph by Beppe Giannini (1901), included in *Lettres et Extase de Gemma Galgani. Publiées par le père Joachim de l'Immaculée Conception, passioniste* (1920) <https://archive.org/details/lettresetextases00galg/page/n7/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.2: Front page of Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre, *Les stigmatisées II. Palma d'Oria. Examen de la thèse rationaliste, liste historique des stigmatisés* (1873) <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.l0063881643&view=1up&seq=9> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.3: 'Madamigella Luisa nell'estasi di contemplazione' in Francesco Guidi, *Il magnetismo animale considerato secondo le leggi della natura e principalmente diretto alla cura delle malattie* (1863), p. 372 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.$b120750&view=1up&seq=393> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.4: 'Il magnetizzatore Donato ed i suoi esperimenti' in *L'Illustrazione Italiana*, XIII (23), 6 June 1886, p.162 <https://archive.org/details/RAV0070589_1886_00023/page/n9/mode/2up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.5: Eusapia Palladino in trance during a sèance in Genoa. Photograph by Eugenio Gellona, included in Cesare Lombroso's *Ricerche sui fenomeni ipnotici e spiritici* (1909), p. 50 <https://archive.org/details/LombrosoSpiritici/page/n57/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.6: Eusapia Palladino smiling in trance during a sèance in Genoa. Photograph by Eugenio Gellona, included in Cesare Lombroso's *Ricerche sui fenomeni ipnotici e spiritici* (1909), p. 50 <https://archive.org/details/LombrosoSpiritici/page/n57/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.7: 'Disposizioni sui manicomî e sugli alienati. Custodia e cura degli alienati'. Published on the *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, Monday, February 22, 43, p. 818 https://archive.org/details/19040222_043/page/818/mode/1up [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.8: Salvador Dalí, *Le Phénomène de l'extase* (1933) in *Minotaure. Revue artistique et littéraire*, 3-4: 77, Source gallica.bnf.fr / BnF <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k1525973g/f85.item.zoom#> [consulted on 18 June 2023]

Fig.9: 'Planche XXIV. Période terminale: extase' in Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Régnard's *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1876-1877) < https://archive.org/details/b29348626_0001/page/109/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.10: 'Planche XXIII. Attitudes passionelles. Extase' in Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Régnard's *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1878)

<https://archive.org/details/iconographiepho00regngoog/page/n293/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.11: 'Planche XXII. Catalepsie provoqueée par une lumiéere vive' in Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Régnard's *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1879-1880) <https://archive.org/details/b21912865_0003/page/n257/mode/1up>

Fig.12: 'II. Periodo' in Gaetano Rummo, *Iconografia fotografica del grande isterismo* (1890) <https://archive.org/details/IconografiaFotograficaDelGrandeIsterismo/page/n20/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.13: 'II. Periodo' and 'III. Periodo' in Gaetano Rummo, *Iconografia fotografica del grande isterismo* (1890) <https://archive.org/details/IconografiaFotograficaDelGrandeIsterismo/page/n21/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.14: 'III. Periodo' and 'IV. Periodo' in Gaetano Rummo, *Iconografia fotografica del grande isterismo* (1890) <https://archive.org/details/IconografiaFotograficaDelGrandeIsterismo/page/n23/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.15: Portrait of Beppina Poggi standing. Photograph by Pietro Semplicini, provided by Casa Museo Luigi Capuana (Mineo)

Fig.16: Portrait of Beppina Poggi sitting on a chair. Photograph by Pietro Semplicini, provided by Casa Museo Luigi Capuana (Mineo)

Fig.17: Portrait of Beppina Poggi sitting in an armchair. Photograph by Pietro Semplicini, provided by Casa Museo Luigi Capuana (Mineo)

Fig.18: Portrait of Beppina Poggi leaning on a small column. Photograph by Pietro Semplicini, provided by Casa Museo Luigi Capuana (Mineo)

Fig.19: Portrait of Davide Lazzaretti in Giacomo Barzellotti, *Monte Amiata e il suo profeta* (1909) <https://archive.org/details/monteamiataeilsu00barzuoft/page/n7/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.20: Portrait of Davide Lazzaretti (n°8.) in 'Tav. LXI. Mattoidi e pazzi morali-rivoluzionari' in Cesare Lombroso, *L'uomo delinquente in rapporto all'antropologia, alla giurisprudenza ed alla psichiatria. Atlante* (1897) <https://archive.org/details/BRes061652/page/n87/mode/1up?view=theater> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.21: Fernando Franzolini, 'L'epidemia di ossesse (istero-demonopatie) in Verzegnis studiata dai dottori Giuseppe Chiap e Fernando Franzolini. Relazione del Dott. Fernando Franzolini' (1879), in

Rivista sperimentale di freniatria e di medicina legale, p. 89 <https://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=mdp.39015073010418&view=1up&seq=445> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.22: Scipio Sighele, 'Il dramma di Mezzojuso' (1894) in *Mondo Criminale Italiano. Seconda serie (1893-1894)*, ed. by Augusto Guido Bianchi, Guglielmo Ferrero, and Scipio Sighele (Milan: Omodei Zorini), p.13 <https://archive.org/details/ilmondocriminal01sighgoog/page/n26/mode/1up> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.23: Il Sodoma, *St Sebastian* (1525), Palazzo Pitti, Florence <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Sodoma_-_St_Sebastian_-_WGA21550.jpg> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.24: Gustave Moreau, *The Martyred St. Sebastian* (1869), Saint Louis Art Museum, Saint Louis <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Gustave_Moreau_-_The_Martyred_Saint_Sebastian_-_19-1968_-_Saint_Louis_Art_Museum.jpg> [consulted on 12 June 2023]

Fig.25: Ida Rubinstein as Saint Sebastian. <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/d185eb50-900d-0139-a2c3-0242ac110003>

Fig.26: 'Mme. Ida Rubinstein dans "Saint-Sebastien". Design original de M. Léon Bakst' <https://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/052bb590-7d98-0132-0553-58d385a7bbd0>

Introduction

1. 'estasi […] d'altra natura'

Ed accarezzano – le fronti umane
Estasi arcane […]
(Ferdinando Fontana, 1877)

In 1887 the doctor, anthropologist, and writer Paolo Mantegazza – one of the most significant representatives of Italian positivism – published a two-volume treatise on the ecstatic state, *Estasi umane*, prompted by the desire to address what he believed to be a shortcoming in the contemporary understanding of the phenomenon. According to Mantegazza, the meaning of the word *estasi* contained in Italian dictionaries was limiting as it could only serve as an explanation for religious ecstasy. In alignment with his positivistic approach and the wider process of secularisation that Italy, like other Western countries, was undergoing in the second half of the nineteenth century, Mantegazza resolved to deliver a new, 'precise' and 'scientific', definition of ecstasy as a psychic phenomenon, a 'gruppo ben distinto e determinato di fatti psichici', no longer exclusively tied to religious connotations (Mantegazza 1887a: 5-7). In his work, Mantegazza argues that in order for this 'stato eccezionale' (1887a: 7) to take place, two elements must occur: particular conditions of the nervous system and 'agenti esterni' (1887a: 26) matching those conditions. With the change of the latter, the former vary, giving rise to different kinds of ecstasy. The doctor suggests that each historical period has its own peculiar ecstasy, claiming:

> Se santa Teresa fosse nata ai nostri tempi e nel mondo industriale di Bristol e di Manchester, non sarebbe forse divenuta una santa, né avrebbe avuto le visioni ascetiche, ma avrebbe pur sempre avuto estasi amorose, o estetiche, o *d'altra natura*. (Mantegazza 1887a: 28)[1]

Indeed, in Saint Teresa's time and throughout medieval and modern history up until the first half of the nineteenth century, ecstasy was mostly considered in Western societies as a mystical phenomenon, centring on the direct experience of divine bliss, or, conversely, as a state of trance induced by communion with the devil, as it was theorised by demonologists and inquisitors.[2] During the period in which Mantegazza wrote his treatise, however, a number of different ecstasies related

[1] Italics mine.
[2] Examples of ecstatic phenomena detached from this religious-Christian interpretation can be found in the revival of Neoplatonism and Hermeticism during the Renaissance period, which brought back the syncretic notion of *exaltatio* and platonic frenzy, or, most relevantly for this study, in the birth of Mesmerism and the practice of magnetic trances in the eighteenth century.

to diverse fields were seen to circulate across the Western world, endowing the ecstatic phenomenon with new connotations that widened and challenged its traditional, more popular religious-linked meaning.[3] Along with mystical ecstasy and devilish possession, the second half of the nineteenth century saw the emergence of magnetic ecstasies, mediumistic trances, hypnotic trances, and hysterical *extases*. With the undermining of the recurring association of ecstasy with a religious phenomenon,[4] the new Italian kingdom witnessed the displacement of the ecstatic state from the hegemony of the Catholic Church and its spheres of influence, and its penetration within modern positivist medicine and the later nineteenth-century 'occulture',[5] giving rise to the abovementioned multifarious expressions of ecstasy. This situation had particular implications in Italy, where the pervasive presence of the Church and Catholicism had contributed, and contributes still today, to the interpretation of ecstasy as a state primarily pertaining to the religious-Christian discourse. As mirrored by some of Italy's most popular cultural products – from Dante's *Commedia* to Bernini's *Santa Teresa* (1645-1652), to Fantozzi's farcical rendition of the phenomenon in *Il secondo tragico Fantozzi* (1976) –,[6] in Italian culture ecstasy appears to be inextricably linked to mysticism and other forms of extraordinary religious experiences.

Standing between religious tradition and secularisation, disenchantment and re-enchantment, the multifaceted ecstasies occurring in the years under study – mystical ecstasies as well as, to quote Mantegazza, ecstasies 'd'altra natura' – can be regarded as a powerful site through which to investigate Italy's complex and laborious process of modernisation. The exploration of such distinctive modernity – whose archaeology has been thoroughly explored by Camilletti and Piperno –[7] becomes especially fruitful in Italian literature of the period, where authors fictionalise and problematise the ecstatic phenomenon by relating it to the hidden drives of the self. In literary works,

[3] The emergence of these new forms of ecstasy did not take place overnight but was the result of the progressive scientisation and secularisation, on the one hand, and the revival of occultism, on the other hand, that interested Western societies in the long nineteenth century and culminated in the second half of the century with, respectively, the birth of positivism, and the consolidation and dissemination of practices and beliefs like animal magnetism and Spiritualism. By Spiritualism I refer to that system of thought 'based on the belief that departed souls can interact with the living' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*), corresponding to the Italian word 'spiritismo'.

[4] Fachinelli stresses the existence of such an equivalence, seeing in it a 'sequestro' of the ecstatic experience, 'una sua delimitazione culturale all'interno dell'area religiosa' (1989: 1309).

[5] I use the term employed by Partridge, according to whom: 'in modern societies occulture typically includes nonsecular discourses that thrive beyond the privileged cultures of "official" religion. Occultural ideas are "occulted" in the sense that they are othered as profane, ephemeral, or irrational by the dominant discourses of both secular and nonsecular institutions' (2018: 3). Camilletti resorts to Partridge's word in *Italia Lunare* (2018), where he explores the 'ramificazioni dell'"occultura" italiana' between 1958 and 1971, postulating a profound relation 'fra "occultura" e seconda modernità italiana' (2018: 16, 18).

[6] I am referring to the scene in which Fantozzi, played by Paolo Villaggio, is in ecstasy and is visited by the Archangel Gabriel.

[7] Camilletti detects in the Classicist/Romantic quarrel 'a progressive negotiation […] between the opposing flanks, marking the aftermath of Italian culture in the extreme', 'between backwardness and innovation, tradition and revolution, conservativism and modernity' (2016a: 47). In her monograph on the 'oblique influences' of Giambattista Vico's thought on poet Giacomo Leopardi, Piperno tackles the distinctive character of Italian modernity, highlighting the tendency of Italian culture to 'negotiate' 'reason and imagination, rational and irrational' (2018: 39).

ecstasy serves as a formidable gateway to the world of the unconscious and a tool to investigate the modern Italian self. Combining historical-cultural investigation and literary analyses, this study on ecstasy in post-unification Italy aims at bringing some new perspectives to our understanding of a period which has remained for a long time 'strangely under-studied and under-theorized' (Stewart-Steinberg 1),[8] suggesting – in line with Stewart-Steinberg's perception of an 'uncanny double of Italy' (229) in the post-unification period up until 1922, and Camilletti's detection of an 'Italia lunare' between 1958 and 1971 –[9] the existence of an 'Italia estatica' between 1861 and 1915.

Ecstasy has been a part of human history since the dawn of time. Regarded as a manifestation of the divine, in Ancient Greece it took the form of intoxicated, dancing maenads (the priestesses of the Dionysian cult), while in Eastern philosophies and religions such as Buddhism it was related (and still is) to a moment of spiritual awakening leading to a state of nirvana. Providing a clear-cut, univocal definition of ecstasy is a practically impossible task, as the definition of this umbrella term relies entirely upon the historical, cultural, and geographical framework considered. McDaniel refers to the 'wide range of associations and understanding' linked to 'ecstasy' (19), significantly quoting a list of more than 100 synonyms of the term. Mantegazza too, in his *Estasi umane*, points to the term's 'manto gigantesco' (1887a: 6) and the difficulty of narrowing down a scientific definition of the term. We might nonetheless begin with a first broad designation of the ecstatic phenomenon, relating to its etymology. Following the Greek etymon of the term, *ék-stasis* (=standing out), and releasing the word from the exclusively positive connotations with which it is commonly perceived today – that is, as 'a state of extreme happiness, especially when feeling pleasure' (Cambridge Dictionary) and as 'the point at which *any* positive emotion reaches its climax' (Moores 25) –, in its neutral and most essential sense, ecstasy appears as the moment in which the subject steps out of themselves and their normal state of being.[10] This altered, exceptional state entails a transcending of one's bodily and mental boundaries, a going beyond one's rational consciousness to enter an unknown limbo-like state.[11] The

[8] Focus has been 'on either the Risorgimento period immediately preceding Unification or on the following fascist period' (Stewart-Steinberg 1).

[9] Stewart-Steinberg is referring to Lombroso's scientific explorations and discoveries, a result, in her words, of 'an inward glance at his own body, at Italy, at modernity, where the haunting Other took its place from within the depths of a personal history' (229). Camilletti explores this 'haunting Other', what he calls 'Italia lunare' in the frame of post-1960 Italian culture, significantly relating Leo Talamonti's 'gente di frontiera', Franco Basaglia's 'matti', Carlo Levi and Ernesto De Martino's 'contadini', and Franz Fanon's 'dannati', to Foucault's abnormals, in that they are all 'degli esclusi, tenuti ai margini da dispositivi di controllo sociale che li etichettano, alternativamente, secondo i criteri del "primitivo" e del "patologico"' (2018: 148).

[10] Barnstone talks of a 'displacement from a condition of stasis' (3). Mantegazza insists on the importance of the term's 'bella etimologia greca', pointing to the meaningfulness of the concept of being outside oneself ('lo star fuori') (1887a: 7). The *Grande Dizionario della Lingua Italiana* edited by the Academia della Crusca (2018) presents the phenomenon as a psychic state in which the subject 'non è più mentalmente presente ai fenomeni dell'esperienza normale' and 'evade il proprio ambiente di vita' (428).

[11] In Mantegazza's words a 'lago sconfinato che tutto assorbe e confonde' (1887a: 40).

phenomenon is temporary, lasting only a brief moment, after which the subject returns to their normal state of consciousness.

This designation of ecstasy as a fleeting moment in which the subject steps outside of the reality they normally belong to, entering a disruptive and unsettling state of Otherness in which they have no real control over their actions and/or thoughts, can be applied to a wide range of ecstatic phenomena relating to different moments of history and culture, including, but not limited to, the ecstasies that are prominently explored in this thesis, i.e., mystical ecstasies, magnetic ecstasies, mediumistic trances, hypnotic trances, hysterical *extases*. Why, then, focus on the precise temporal and geographical framework of post-unification Italy? Does this period bring new elements to the designation of the ecstatic phenomenon just presented? If so, what are these elements and why are they relevant to the Italian context as opposed to others? Do these elements manifest more prominently and/or with more significant repercussions in the newly unified Italian state than in other countries? Finally, what role does literature play in the fictionalisation of ecstatic phenomena and how does it relate to those elements?

In this introduction, I am going to start answering these questions by resorting to the work of a philosopher who devoted his entire attention to the understanding of modernity and the modern subject: Michel Foucault. Foucault will allow me to present the theoretical framework this thesis relies on, which I have condensed in the expression 'ecstatic dis-order'. After having disclosed the significance of such ecstatic dis-order and the way it emerged in some of the main cultural domains of post-unification Italy – Religion, 'Occulture', and Science –, I am going to address the extent to which it mostly bore a gender connotation, the privileged subjects of the ecstasies explored being women. Moving on to the literary side of things, I am going to uncover the emergence of ecstatic dis-order in Italian literature of the period, presenting ecstasy as a literary *leit-motif* revealing unconscious, disorderly drives. Lastly, I am going to clarify my methodological-theoretical approach, situate the thesis within existing literature, and provide an outline of the thesis' structure.

2. Ecstatic Dis-order in Post-Unification Italy (Part 1)

In the history of modern Italy, order and surveillance are terms mostly associated with the fascist period. With the creation of the totalitarian state, Mussolini established an oppressive regime of surveillance which controlled and disciplined the Italian citizens, brutally repressing those who opposed the dictatorship. Of course, Fascism did not come out of nowhere and the seeds which eventually brought about its creation were planted in the culture that preceded its advent. Traverso sees the material and cultural premises of Nazism and, more in general, of the other hideous

experiences that led Europe to the Second World War, including Fascism, in events and conditions that occurred before 1914 and shaped European modernity: the industrialisation and serialisation of killing, the circulation of the ideologies of colonial expansion and racial supremacy, and, most importantly for our discourse, the employment of practices of social dominion, i.e., disciplinary policies, that, as notably theorised by Foucault, spread during the entire course of the nineteenth century.

As described in *Discipline and Punish* (1975), for Foucault, modernity is inextricably linked to the birth of a disciplinary power attempting to govern and regulate human bodies, turning them into 'docile' (1995: 138) mechanisms that can aptly fit the economic, political, and military framework of the modern industrialised age.[12] Such 'disciplinary coercion' – 'a political anatomy of detail' which Foucault traces back to 'the supervision of the smallest fragment of life and of the body' informing theological and ascetic Christian practices (1995: 139-140) – 'dissociates power from the body', reducing its forces 'in political terms of obedience' (Foucault 1995: 138). That is, it enacts regulation to oppose freedom and prevent liberation. Among the institutions asserting disciplinary power, a significant role is played by science and, specifically, nineteenth-century medical positivism, marked, in Foucault's famous reading, by the clinical 'gaze' and, in a perhaps less notable Foucauldian analysis, by the identification and exposure of the 'abnormal' individual.

In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1963), Foucault detects a significant transition in the modern scientific world, resulting in the passage from health-related to normality-regulated medicine:[13]

> […] it might be said that up to the end of the eighteenth century medicine related much more to health than to normality […]. Nineteenth-century medicine, on the other hand, was regulated more in accordance with normality than with health; it formed its concepts and prescribed its interventions in relation to a standard of functioning and organic structure […]. (2003a: 40)

The nineteenth-century medical approach replaced the eighteenth-century attention to 'the internal structure of *the organized being*' with that of the '*bipolarity of the normal and the pathological*' (Foucault 2003a: 41). Human behaviour was subject to alterations from the 'normal working order' and anything that 'deviated' from that order (Foucault 2003a: 40) was considered sick, declining, degenerated. Over these pathological, disorderly conditions, the medical world cast its 'clinical gaze': a focus that was 'organized in a new way', it provided doctors 'with the power of decision and

[12] 'from such trifles – Foucault remarks, referring to the 'whole corpus of methods and knowledge, descriptions, plans and data' informing disciplinary power – no doubt, the man of modern humanism was born' (1995: 141).
[13] Already in *Madness and Civilization* (1961), Foucault pointed to the fact that from the seventeenth century onwards '[u]nreason began to be considered as a certain distance from a social norm' (2006a: 102).

intervention', and 'could and should grasp colours, variations, tiny anomalies, always receptive to the deviant' (Foucault 2003a: 109). A 'gaze that dominates' (Foucault 2003a: 203), what the clinical gaze saw and controlled was 'a new space': 'the tangible space of the body', 'that opaque mass in which secrets, invisible lesions, and the very mystery of origins lie hidden' (Foucault 2003a: 150).

In a series of lectures delivered at the Collège de France in 1974-1975, Foucault added a new passage to his archaeological narration by coining a category which explicitly addresses the pathological-normal binarism at work in nineteenth-century medicine: that of the 'abnormal'. In his opinion, the conjunction of the medical and the judicial leads to the creation of a 'practice concerned with abnormal individuals', introducing 'a certain power of normalization' and gradually tending 'to constitute itself as the authority responsible for the control' of such individuals (Foucault 2003b: 42). More specifically, Foucault claims that 'around 1850-1870 a new psychiatry is born', which 'dispenses with illnesses' and turns to 'behavior with its deviations and abnormalities' (2003b: 308), passing from 'the analysis of mental illness as delirium to the analysis of abnormality as instinctual disorder' (2003b: 224). The category of the abnormal, and the definition of the norm against which to regulate and re-order the abnormal individual, gives rise to and legitimates the medical exercise of power, more so than in previous scenarios. Diseases are now replaced by a nosography of abnormal behaviours that constitute a danger to society and must be controlled, not cured:

> as soon as psychiatry becomes a technology of the abnormal […] the project of curing has no meaning. […] Psychiatry no longer seeks to cure […]. With the medicalization of the abnormal and by dispensing with the ill and the therapeutic, psychiatry can claim for itself the simple function of protection and order. (Foucault 2003b: 316)

Replacing 'most social interventions and controls, so as to become the general body for the defence of society against the dangers that undermine it from within' (Foucault 2003b: 316), at the end of the nineteenth century, medicine has developed into the main disciplinary power: a 'technique of government of men' directed towards the aim of 'normalization', towards 'a sort of normative project' (Foucault 2003b: 48-50).

Going back to the definition of ecstasy provided earlier, ecstatic subjectivities can be regarded, and indeed were regarded by science in the period under study, as abnormal subjectivities. The state of being outside of one's normal state, ecstasy is an ab-normal condition deviating from what is considered to be the norm of human behaviour. Arguing that it 'may be healthy or unhealthy' and

linking it to mysticism, mediumship, and hysteria,[14] in her seminal 1911 study on mysticism, Underhill describes ecstasy precisely as 'an abnormal bodily state':

> Taken alone then, and apart from its content, ecstasy […] indicates the presence of certain abnormal psycho-physical conditions: an alteration of the normal equilibrium, a shifting of the threshold of consciousness, which leaves the body, and the whole usual 'external world' outside instead of inside the conscious field […]. (430)

Often pathologising such 'abnormal psycho-physical conditions', later nineteenth-century doctors exposed the hazardous disorders lying beneath ecstatic states, exerting their discriminating, dominating gaze over them. Scientists were not the only ones to cast a governing glance over ecstatics and consider them as disorderly, threatening subjectivities. Disciplinary power acted through other, more or less established, agencies.

The Catholic Church had been dealing with ecstatic phenomena ever since its foundation, trying to govern those ambiguous, potentially transgressive, and uncontrollable states of the body and mind, always liable to be confused with devilish possessions. Towards the second half of the nineteenth century, the scientific hystericisation of mystical phenomena prompted the clerical authorities to be more watchful than ever of mystical behaviours and to take on a similar approach to science before ecstatic phenomena: a regulatory, controlling one. A striking example, when in 1858 the Church was confronted with Bernadette Soubirous's allegedly supernatural religious states in Lourdes, it reacted by unceasingly 'watch[ing], question[ing] and discipline[ing]' (Harris 1999: 161) the child in order to ascertain she was no hysteric. When unable to guide and control those phenomena, the religious establishment sometimes ended up resorting to the reading provided by its secular nemesis, i.e., science, dismissing ecstatic individuals as pathologically abnormal.

While occult spiritual beliefs may be regarded as part of an ecstatic dis-order in their being 'othered […] by the dominant discourses of both secular and nonsecular institutions' (Partridge 2018: 3), some of their proponents eventually displayed a controlling gaze which was similar to that exerted by the religious and scientific establishments, and placed them on the other side of the divide as agents of order. The new wave of occultism, which spread throughout the nineteenth century through the practices of animal magnetism and Spiritualism, brought occult trances back in a new, modern form, one that can be connected to Foucault's notions of disciplinary power and governmental techniques of control. Within the very frame of magnetic ecstasies and mediumistic trances, in fact, a power

[14] Ecstasy is not 'the peculiar privilege of the mystics', being also 'common in the strange and little understood type of personality called "sensitive" or mediumistic' and 'a well-known symptom of certain mental and nervous illnesses' like hysteria (Underhill 430).

dynamic arose between the ecstatic subjectivity (the magnetised subject or the medium) and the static agent directly or indirectly allowing for the ecstasy to take place (the magnetiser or the medium's agent), in which the latter tried to control, order, and administer the former's ecstatic, disorderly potential.

Finally, in the second half of the nineteenth century the disorder associated with ecstatic phenomena was aggravated by the disorder detectable in sexuality.[15] From the perspective of sexuality, the term ecstasy refers to the state of greatest pleasure experienced during sexual activity, equivalent to sexual climax or orgasm. From the second half of the nineteenth century, in line with the explosion of sexual discourse in the field of medicine, a prominent, more subtle association of sex and eroticism with states of ecstasy emerged, one that was based on their disorderly nature. When not directly linked to matrimony and reproduction, sexual ecstasy was pathologised by science as it displayed a body – usually a female, hysterical body – which eschewed control and performed unnecessary, abnormal excess. If the religious discourse had always been wary of the dangerous association of devilish possession with sexual orgasm, the nineteenth-century medical superimposition of hysteria and erotic excitability, evident in states of ecstasy, increased the Church's suspicion towards mystical ecstasies. Moreover, ecstatic phenomena relating to animal magnetism and Spiritualism too were seen to be linked to sexuality and sexual transgression, emphasizing the disorder associated with such states.

The ecstasies investigated in this study are subject to a controlling force or order, relatable to the concepts of disciplinary power and abnormality associated by Foucault to the later nineteenth-century context. To a certain extent, Western modernity itself can be read as the story of the modalities through which more or less established institutions/authorities attempted, and in many ways succeeded, to maintain, in an age of ever-growing freedom, a power of control increasingly directed upon the body and whose role, quoting Foucault, was to 'ensure, sustain, and multiply life, to put this life *in order*' (1978: 138).[16] It is this interest to and attention for the (physical and mental) body and its seemingly uncontrollable, abnormal expressions like ecstasy that the domains of science, religion, and occulture shared from the second half of the nineteenth century, conceiving the devices through which to maintain control over ecstatic phenomena, and providing the very grounds for ecstatic phenomena to spread and release their liberating force.

What takes place in the years between the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century can be regarded as a clash, a dialectic tension between a static, regulatory order and an ecstatic, liberating dis-order. This is a profoundly modern tension,

[15] According to Foucault, '[s]exual abnormality […] around 1880-1890 […] emerges as the root, foundation, and general etiological principle of most other forms of abnormality' (2003b: 168).
[16] Italics mine.

inextricably linked to the timeframe addressed in this thesis, involving the consolidation of control devices and apparatuses striving to exercise and maintain power on bodies and minds, as well as the emergence and awareness of a growing social, political, and individual freedom within those bodies and minds.[17] The perspective espoused by this thesis in the exploration of ecstatic phenomena relies precisely on this modern tension surfacing in the second half of the nineteenth century, rooted, as argued by Foucault, in positivist science as well as in the Catholic Church's attempts, since the second half of the seventeenth century, to 'penetrate the body', 'submit it […] to an exclusive power and thereby always maintain the precise direction of the flesh' (2003b: 217). The decision to take into account certain kinds of ecstasies – mystical ecstasies, magnetic ecstasies, mediumistic trances, hypnotic trances, and hysterical *extases* – and exclude others – like alcohol- and drug-induced ecstasies (intoxication) or ecstasies experienced through art (creative frenzies or Stendhal's syndromes) – is a result of this chosen perspective.[18] The exclusion of non-Western forms of ecstasy, like shamanic ecstasies and other ecstatic practices coming from the Eastern world, which are only tangentially addressed, relies upon the chosen geographical frame of the thesis. Before I further address the friction between ecstatic dis-order and controlling, normative order lying at the core of my thesis, after having partially justified the temporal framework of my research, I will now explain my focus on the Italian context. Resorting to Foucault can again be helpful.

In his lectures on the abnormal Foucault states that the 'recurring problem' of nineteenth-century culture is 'that of discovering the core of monstrosity hidden behind little abnormalities, deviances, and irregularities' (2003b: 56). The person mentioned by Foucault as the embodiment of this type of practice is the Italian doctor, anthropologist, and criminologist Cesare Lombroso.[19] Foucault's privileging of Lombroso as the king of abnormal witch-hunters testifies to the importance of the role played by the father of criminal anthropology and the overall Italian positivist school within Western later nineteenth-century culture. As Cavalli Pasini remarks, the Italian doctor's influence on contemporary culture 'ha dello straordinario' (88), his studies placing 'per la prima volta l'Italia nel contesto di interessi europei, e giunge[ndo] addirittura ad ascriverle una sorta di aleatorio

[17] Through Foucauldian lens, the ecstatic phenomenon can be understood as a sort of 'technology of the self' opposing the technologies of power. In Stewart-Steinberg's reading of Foucault's technology of the self, which she links to 'psychoactive substances', the latter can 'expose technologies of domination', 'subvert them', 'neutralize or at least weaken hegemonic social forces and thereby open up new ways for individuals "to understand themselves"' (11). I believe the same can be applied to the ecstatic phenomena emerging in post-unification Italy. This thesis aims precisely at unveiling the above-mentioned scenario, Part 1 by exposing the ecstatic potential to challenge the hegemonic and normative system, Part 2 by exploring the possibilities of self-understanding opened up by this situation.

[18] Though predominant in the years under study, such states of ecstasy involve different forms of relationality (with the self and the Other/others, both animate and inanimate), and do not present or not to a significative extent this aspect of collision between order and disorder. Moreover, their exploration would require an historically, phenomenologically, psychologically, and, in the case of intoxications, biologically different discourse on and analysis of the phenomena, intrinsic to, respectively, chemical processes, and creative process and processes of aesthetic reception (art-making and art-experiencing).

[19] 'This is the problem posed by Lombroso's studies of delinquents' (2003b: 56).

primato' (86).[20] Given his weighty impact on the Italian positivist school, Lombroso's 'obsessive pathologization of the unexplainable', leading to 'veritable catalogs of Otherness' (Mazzoni 1996: 49) including ecstatic subjectivities,[21] makes Italy a most fitting and relevant frame (perhaps *the* most fitting and relevant frame) for the investigation of abnormal, ecstatic phenomena and dynamics involving the orderly agency of disciplinary, controlling forces directed upon such phenomena. The relevance of the Italian post-unification frame for such an investigation is validated not only by its scientific fabric, but also its religious and occult as well as sexual and political ones.

Because of its privileged relationship with Catholicism and its proximity to the Vatican, Italy has always held a strong, religious-linked connotation. In a country so thoroughly rooted in Catholic tradition, the transition to the liberal state, and the ensuing implementation of the secularisation and modernisation processes, brought about a complex scenario with regards to the establishing of who should have the power and responsibility to control the bodies and minds of the Italian people, traditionally administered by the Church. The loss of the latter's temporal power resulted in an intensification of its attempts to preserve whatever power it could over the Italian citizens against the increasing secularising forces. On a historically fertile ground for the emergence of mystical phenomena, ecstatics were among the subjects over which the clerical spheres tried to retain their authority. As suggested earlier, the Church either governed and appropriated to its advantage ecstatic phenomena or, when this was not possible, kept its distance from them, afraid of the possibility of drawing on the signs and manifestations of the Devil or of nervous pathologies like hysteria, instead of those of God.

A further factor that helps to explain why Italy in this period constitutes a distinctive and productive field of investigation concerns the occult scene. This is due to a number of reasons, including the influential 'presence of the Holy See' (Leporiere 106), and two factors relating to animal magnetism and Spiritualism. The first factor is linked to the fact that in Italy animal magnetism, which spread at a later stage than in other countries and peaked in the decades following unification, marginalised the role of the patient/magnetised subject, endowing the magnetiser with greater power, and, thus, prompting the activation of important dynamics of dominance-submission within the magnetic couple. Gallini suggests that the marginalisation, even forgetting, of the 'desiderio del paziente' by Italian magnetisers might be linked to the 'presenza, nella nostra penisola, di forti strutture sociali di tipo tradizionale […] che, con le loro gerarchie e i loro autoritarismi, finivano per rendere impensabile la possibilità di autodeterminazione di qualsiasi soggetto, specie se donna' (65). The second factor is related to the leading, perhaps unprecedented, role Italy attained in the occult

[20] This is testified by the fact that Max Nordau's *Degeneration* (1892), a book symptomatic of the entire fin-de-siècle culture, is dedicated to Lombroso.
[21] Catalogs depending on 'parametri calcolabili di anormalità, o extranormalità' (Cavalli Pasini 89).

turn-of-the-century landscape thanks to the presence on its territory of one of the most famous mediums of the period, Eusapia Palladino. Her ecstatic trances managed to draw the attention of international celebrities such as A.C. Doyle, the Curies, and French physiologist Charles Richet. Along with the attention she attracted, Eusapia Palladino also prompted the interest of patrons wanting to control her mediumistic potential, to guide and govern her ecstatic dis-orders, a situation which, once again, exposes the power dynamics at work with ecstatic phenomena.

From the perspective of the history of sexuality too, as pointed out by Babini, Beccalossi, and Riall, and Ross, late nineteenth-century Italy constitutes a crucial site of investigation. This is because of the spreading of '[n]ew ways of thinking about sexual behaviours and desires', the appearance and expansion of 'sexual identities and subcultures', the emergence of 'sexology […] as a new field of enquiry', and, consequently, the increase of 'the regulation of sexual behaviour' by the Italian government (Babini, Beccalossi, and Riall 2). Scholars insist on the prominent role played by Italy within sexual discourse, the country 'produc[ing] some of the most significant theorists of the modern idea of sexuality' (Babini, Beccalossi, and Riall 2). Italian positivists, Lombroso on top, played a prominent role in diagnosing great sexual excitability and sexual pleasure as elements of abnormal disorders, encouraging the need to oversee, manage, and control sexuality,[22] and with it, its ultimate expression, i.e., ecstasy as sexual pleasure, in the new Italian state.

Finally, the Italian frame provides a most significant case-study for political and historical reasons related to its post-unification project of, in the famous words attributed to D'Azeglio, 'making the Italians' now that Italy had been made. If Italian positivist science functioned as a disciplinary power, the exercise of the dominating clinical gazes was matched by the implementation of a persistent strategy of control and repression by the Italian government which, in a way, foreshadowed the later and much more dire regime of oppression brought about by Fascism. The new Italian state prompted a policy of surveillance upon its citizens, who, as Stewart-Steinberg observes, 'were to be both free and secular, and yet also obedient and moral' (73). Such disciplinary strategy is evident in the use of asylums, since the 1870s, as a legal instrument to isolate abnormal individuals, the pedagogical project to resolve nervous disorders by a controlled training of the body that 'shut down human passions' (Stewart-Steinberg 190, 175-176), the 'repressive policy towards popular unrest' (Riall 75) taken up by the Italian government.[23] The Scapigliati writers tellingly reproached the development of post-Risorgimento Italy as the 'rigido organizzarsi d'uno stato autoritario' (Tessari 29). Falling into what Stewart-Steinberg has called 'an uncanny double of Italy', 'a dark continent

[22] As remarked by Ross, Italian scientific publications of the time 'scrutinized and passed judgment on bodies, desires and sexual practices, especially on those who embodied or enacted perceived sexual "abnormalities" and "vice"' (2015a: 4).

[23] The violent neutralisation of the problem of brigandage provides an evident instance of this repressive policy.

[…] peopled by monsters, madmen, criminals, prostitutes, and spirits', corresponding to 'the "other side" of the project of making Italians' (229), the ecstatic phenomena spreading in the second half of the nineteenth century can be deemed as the embodiments of a liberating response to the policy of control and discipline promoted by the new State as part of its wider nation-building process. An uncontrollable, disinhibited, and disorderly movement from below which unsettled and undermined the orderly, restraining movement imposed from above: a space of anti-normative resistance.

More precisely, the exploration of disparate sources pertaining to the Italian post-unification culture that all nonetheless deal with the notion of ecstasy in its multifarious representations has led me to discern the existence of a dialectical tension between two patterns marking the country's post-unification history. On the one hand, there is an ecstatic dis-order, displaying 'ecstatic' subjectivities and situations that undermined the order the establishment was striving towards, pervading it with chaos and disarray, and challenging normativity and orthodoxy. On the other hand, there is a static order exerting, through different agencies, a power of repressive and normative surveillance upon those 'ecstatic' subjectivities and situations in order to maintain the cohesion and steadiness of the self and of the newly unified country, and retain the power of its more or less established bodies. Not proposing to claim any universal knowledge of the ecstatic phenomenon or provide universally valid definitions of it – I am conscious of the unfeasibility of such endeavours –, what I intend to do in the course of this thesis is to explore the ecstatic dialectical scenario I have just outlined and the different perspectives it opens up, producing one of many possible readings of the ecstatic phenomenon and its social, political, cultural, and psychological implications, entirely contingent on the cultural framework I have chosen to analyse, that of Italy in the years between its Unification in 1861 and its entry in WWI in 1915.

The reason why the investigation of this 'Italia estatica' ends with the outbreak of the First World War in Italy is because by that time most forms of ecstasy that had spread through the previous decades were overshadowed by a form of ecstasy epitomising a different and even more disquieting kind of modernity: 'the ecstasy of sheer destruction, found in battle frenzy' (Mc Daniel 139). The third point of the 'Manifesto del Futurismo', written by Filippo Tomaso Marinetti and published on the 20th of February 1909, echoes this shift from a literary perspective: 'La letteratura esaltò fino ad oggi l'immobilità pensosa, l'estasi e il sonno. Noi vogliamo esaltare il movimento aggressivo, l'insonnia febbrile, il passo di corsa, il salto mortale, lo schiaffo ed il pugno' (6). If ecstasy can be either 'absolute freedom' or a 'dance of death' (Larsen 176), with its entry in the world conflict, Italy takes up the latter connotation of the phenomenon. A destructive, male-connoted ecstasy, exalting

'the joy in killing, the glory of revenge, the adrenaline rush of war' (Mc Daniel 139),[24] enters the Italian minds, opening a new, dire chapter of Italian history.

3. 'Eve: The Mother of Ecstasy'

In its attention to the gendered connotation of ecstatic phenomena in post-unification Italy, this study wishes to answer Sanson and Mitchell's call for scholarly attention 'on the topic of women's roles and lives in Italy's nineteenth century […] and in the fertile and lively period following Unification more specifically' (9). The millenary opposition between the male, fatherly figure, regarded as the 'simbolo atavico di razionalità e certezza, di protezione e fiducia', and the 'figura alternativa […] della donna', 'predisposta, per imposizione esterna, ad incarnare le forze della natura, della primitività, delle potenzialità supernormali' becomes particularly prominent in the second half of the nineteenth century (Cavalli Pasini 201). The women I refer to in the thesis embody such supra-normal forces and voice them through an ecstatic dis-order for which they achieve a space of autonomy in an otherwise predetermined, rational, male-shaped world. Their ecstasies appear as a site of dis-order which both suffers and disrupts that order which is represented by the patriarchy.[25] As will be shown, in the period under investigation ecstasy mostly emerges as a feminine phenomenon. Eve, resorting to Barnstone's poignant words, is the 'Mother of Ecstasy' (1). Mystical, magnetic, spiritualistic, and hysterical ecstatics are often women who find themselves subjected to a normative power held by a male figure. Even when they are not women biologically, i.e., are assigned male sex at birth, they are feminised and ascribed female attributes as a way to demean their intellectual and bodily agency.

The condition of women at the time of Unification was one of subjugation, dominated by 'the doctrine of separate spheres between the genders' (Mitchell and Sanson 2), that prescribed to men the public sphere and to woman the private, domestic one. In the years that followed Unification, things started to change: women began to acquire a growing role in the nation's affairs, 'concomitantly alongside the nascent movement for female emancipation' (Mitchell and Sanson 4). Despite the stirrings of this new order (and/or precisely because of it), however, post-unification Italian women were still treated as inferior to their male counterparts. Many theories arose that posited the '"naturale" debolezza biologica della donna' and 'conseguente sua precaria costituzione psichica', legitimising her 'ovvia subordinazione sociale' (Cavalli Pasini 206). In particular, women were attributed by nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century hegemonic discourses and public

[24] A 'wargasm' or 'joy of violence' (Mc Daniel 129) culminating with the Nazist genocide, described by Dan Stone in ecstatic terms.
[25] See Storchi, Spunta, and Morelli for a comprehensive reading of the female identity's 'complex relationship – and often resistance – to the patriarchal order' (XIII) in Italy, from Unification to the 21st century.

opinion both a greater excitability and passivity than men – a conception that was fostered by the expert advice of doctors like Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Lombroso. In the eyes of contemporaries, this distinctive condition of sensitivity and docility made women especially disposed to ecstasy. The belief of the fragile, precarious, and subordinate condition of women brought together the 'diversi settori gnoseologici', revealing a 'singolare consenso di idee e di intenti' among them (Cavalli Pasini 206). The religious, occult, scientific spheres shared this conception of women as frantic and subdued subjects, and, thus, subjects prone to ecstasy.

Harris has pointed out the 'feminization of religion' (1999: 212) that took place in the nineteenth century.[26] Testifying to such feminisation, Mantegazza remarks that religious ecstasy is more frequent in women than men, the former being inclined to religion and exaltation: 'La donna è più religiosa e più disposta alle esaltazioni della sensibilità; ed è quindi naturale che anche nel mondo ascetico essa ci offra più frequenti esempi di estasi' (1887a: 80).[27] He also differentiates between female and male experiences of mystical ecstasy by focusing on one of its components, i.e., adoration:

> Nelle adorazioni della donna vi è più affetto, in quelle dell'uomo più ammirazione. La donna adora Dio con un'alta sensualità, con tenerezza, con passione; l'uomo lo adora con venerazione, con stupore, con più intelletto che amore. […] se santa Teresa avesse scritto il *Paradiso* della *Divina Commedia* ci avrebbe dato un poema più intelligibile, più caldo, ma meno teologico. (1887a: 246)

The general implication is that women are driven by passion and men by reason, with passion corresponding to dependency and submission, and reason to autonomy and sovereignty, hence '[l]a donna più spesso si prosterna, l'uomo più spesso adora' (Mantegazza 1887a: 255). In *Fisiologia della donna*, he makes a step further in his assessment of the woman as a non-rational creature by arguing: 'Essa è essenzialmente mistica, è paurosa, e nello stesso tempo curiosa delle tenebre; paura e tenebre, due elementi dei quali vive il sentimento religioso' (1893: 120).[28] As Gallini suggests, Mantegazza's depiction of women is grounded in 'un passato di barbarie, oscurantismi, sragionevolezze, superstizioni' (332) which has been nurtured by patriarchal culture. To be sure, the 'association of women with certain styles of mysticism', Hollywood remarks, does not correspond to 'some universal feminine traits' but to a 'specific set of social and cultural constraints that women faced' (12). While suffering such constraints and the dominance of the male clerical establishment, women mystics

[26] A 'feminization' involving, as noted by Harris, Scaraffia, and Stewart-Steinberg, an increasing alliance between the Church and women which, however, continued to offer the clergy the means to exploit, subordinate, and control women.
[27] Muratori had already pointed out to the greater frequency of ecstatic experiences in women, linking it to their greater 'fantasia'. As Gallini writes quoting Muratori: 'Il mondo dell'estasi […] si connette alla fantasia, alla donna e ai "tempi barbarici". Si produce più facilmente tra le donne, essendo "vivacissima la Fantasia delle Donne […]"' (Gallini 320).
[28] Quoted by Gallini 331.

found a way to claim their agency against the oppressive power of their male superiors. In *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (1995), Jantzen has unveiled the gendered power dynamics underlying medieval female mysticism. As McDaniel glosses:

> The experience of women mystics was a potential source of power, which was understood by Catholic theologians as threatening to the male hierarchy of the church and a subversive force which had to be controlled. Otherwise mystics, like women and other oppressed groups, would resist the power and authority of the church. (77)

Significantly, those who would not subject themselves to the Church were turned from mystics into heretics. Gemma Galgani's case, which I will focus on in Part 1, provides a significant example of this dynamic: in her mystic encounters with Jesus-God, Galgani defies the priestly authorities surrounding her, challenging their power. The power dynamic characterising the experiences of female mystics regarded also women involved in magnetic and Spiritualistic practices.

The consideration of the female figure as the 'evocatrice di potenze e suggestioni remote', the 'tramite ideale per quel contatto col mistero cui aspira la coscienza dei tempi nuovi' as well as the 'canale più confacente ad una comunicazione con l'*aldilà*' (Cavalli Pasini 210), made her the true protagonist of 'occulture'. Women played a prominent role in animal magnetism and Spiritualism, one which posited them both as passive instruments in the hands of an external agent – which could be either human or spiritual –, and agents in control of their bodies and minds who could in fact exert an influence on others.

The magnetiser-somnambulist couple produced a 'storica divisione di ruoli' which assigned to men 'una capacità di iniziativa consapevole' and to women 'il carattere di una debolezza psicologica' (Gallini 309), displaying the latter as 'puro fantoccio' (Ottolenghi 364)[29] in the magnetiser's hands. Magnetisers, who held the power to manage the mysterious fluid, were always men, whereas somnambulists, who subjected themselves to the fluid and to its administrator, were always women. As was argued at the time, this depended upon 'la debolezza e instabilità emotiva della donna, la sua inferiorità fisica e intellettuale, il predominio in lei dell'immaginazione contrapposto a quello dell'intelligenza nell'uomo' (Gallini 73), qualities which allegedly made women more receptive to the fluid's action. While positing them as a submitted subject, animal magnetism, on the other hand, created a new social role for women in which they could express themselves and increase their 'potere rappresentativo' and 'autonomia di azione' (Gallini 75). The stage of magnetic ecstasy represents the climactic moment in which the somnambulist bodily and

[29] Quoted in Gallini 314.

mentally eschews the magnetiser's authority. For a few instants, in the alternate reign of ecstasy, not even the magnetiser's masculine power can reach her.

Like magnetic practices, Spiritualism too disclosed new opportunities for women: 'Pur "controllate" dagli spiriti, spesso maschili, e gestite da imprenditori e agenti, ovviamente uomini, esse potevano essere in qualche misura indipendenti' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 110-11). The séance provided the female mediums – for most mediums were women – with a 'spazio discorsivo attraverso il quale accedere alla sfera pubblica da cui erano normalmente escluse' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 112). Tromp has emphasized the disruption of social codes and structures underlying Spiritualism and granting women 'a new kind of self-determination' (68) which led them to live an unconventional life. While the interpretation of occult practices and female mediums as deviant would 'reproduce and reinforce dominant gender stereotypes' (Johnston 689), Spiritualism, in Owen's words, 'validated the female authoritative voice and permitted women an active professional and spiritual role largely denied them elsewhere', occasionally providing 'a means of circumventing rigid nineteenth-century class and gender norms' (4-6). Trance states, again, represented the peak of a practice allowing women to voice and explore their freedom. Reinforcing 'social roles of passivity and the instrumentalizing of the female body', these alternate states of consciousness also gave them 'a space in which to speak' placed 'outside of dominant power structures' (Gutierrez 200). As claimed by Tomatis in his exploration of nineteenth-century female agents of occultism, the experiences of 'veggenti, sibille, sonnambule' can be regarded as stories of 'fantasmagoriche liberazioni', 'contro-fatture, esorcismi queer, incantesimi di liberazione, esercizi di demonologia rivoluzionaria', 'pratiche che mettono in discussione l'idea stessa di potere' and through which to counteract the male-connoted 'ottica del predominio, della volontà di potenza e del suo continuo, estenuante esercizio' and to 'ridisegnare e ripensare l'identità femminile' (240).[30]

Finally, regarding the scientific world, despite his 'great act of "courage," his "discovery" of masculine hysteria' (Didi-Huberman 80), Charcot rather reproduced 'the traditional vision of the "raging womb"', reinforcing 'the conventional image of hysteria as a feminine disease' and its 'most extreme and ancient characterizations […] of feminine disinhibition' (Harris 1991: L). Following his lead and justifying it with women's alleged inclination to hyperaesthesia and greater excitability, Italian scientists continued to regard hysteria as a typically female malady, a 'retaggio della donna' (Cavalli Pasini 246). In *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (1893), Lombroso argues 'la maggior frequenza tra le donne dell'isterismo', which in his opinion 'si potrebbe in fondo definire l'esagerazione della femminilità' (1893: 203). Hysterical states of ecstasy display this

[30] 'Che si mostrino sul palcoscenico o in un asilo psichiatrico, in un teatro o in una cella umida, non fa differenza: quelle performance sono tutte apparizioni (suppurazioni?) periodiche delle stesse ferite, espressioni di un trauma che si rinnova di generazione in generazione, manifestazioni della stessa entità mostruosa: l'eteropatriarcato' (Tomatis 240).

exaggeration. So do hypnotic trances which, once again, are more frequent in women than men. If Bourneville and Régnard claim that 'il est peu de femmes que l'on ne puisse hypnotiser' (1879-1880: 162), according to Giulio Belfiore, 'il *sesso femminino,* molto sensibile e facilmente eccitabile, subisce a preferenza l'influenza dei processi ipnogeni' (48).[31] While on the one hand the nosographic diagnoses of hysteria as a typically feminine illness reveal the perpetration of the oppressing patriarchal order, the nervous malady also emerges as a site of liberating expression, however 'rudimentale' (Gallini 316), for women. The hysterical-ecstatic body manifests a disorder which rises against the patriarchal hegemonic order, rebelling to it. As Goldstein writes, reporting the view of social historians, 'nineteenth-century female hysteria functioned as an unavowed declaration of war on male domination and hence as a complaint about gender roles', underlying 'intense but covert power struggles' in which the hysterics 'challenged medical expertise' (2009: 73). Tellingly, hysteria and female liberation were intertwined in the years under study. According to Italian doctor Giuseppe Pellegrini, for instance, women were divided into hysterics and emancipationists.[32]

Female ecstatic experiences reveal women's disruptive power in front of the patriarchal society that oppresses them. They are both the site of repression and of expression, liberation and even revolution. They offer themselves as the 'terreno ideale di scontro e di incontro tra i due poli – natura e storia, irrazionalità e ragione', reaching 'una sempre più consapevole soggettività' (Cavalli Pasini 201).[33]

4. Ecstasy as a Literary *Leit-motif* Revealing Unconscious, Disorderly Drives (Part 2)

As Lester (155) and Lakhdari (201) point out, ecstasy figured as a recurrent theme in the Western literature of the second half of the nineteenth century and, especially, of the turn of the century. Italian literature was no exception. Expressing a need for 'un'esplorazione che travalica i margini del reale', it came to privilege, as other foreign literatures, the narration of 'personaggi "eccezionali"' placed 'in situazioni abnormi, fuori dai codici prestabiliti' (Cavalli Pasini 253, 72). Out of the substantial number of Italian writers who engaged with the phenomenon between 1861 and 1915, many of them recognised that ecstasy perfectly subsumed such abnormal exceptionality, appreciating its collision with normativity and stability. In delivering their personal depiction of ecstasy, superimposing

[31] Worthy of mention is Morselli's opinion on the matter, leading him, rather revolutionarily, to see gender as a social construct: as remarked by Stewart-Steinberg, he shifted from the claim 'that the biological category of woman is particularly prone to hypnotic phenomena […] to a sociological or cultural categorization, claiming that it is those social groups most habituated to obedience who can be more easily put into a hypnotic state: women, children, soldiers, domestic servant, sailors, and workers' (69).
[32] See Pellegrini's *Ciarlatani ed ingenui* (1886).
[33] Cavalli Pasini is referring to women in general, but her suggestion can be successfully applied to ecstatic women.

mysticism, the occult supernatural, medical descriptions of hysteria, and sexualised depictions of bliss, they not only echoed the tensions at work between normative establishments/agencies and ab-normal ecstatic subjectivities, but also discovered the fragmentation of the self and the shattering drives underlying that fragmentation which constitute the kernel of the modern self and, as such, were being investigated by scientists in the period under study. That is, while corroborating the emergence of an ecstatic dis-order at a historical-cultural-political level, a dis-order related to dynamics involving the outer world, Italian literature detected a second ecstatic dis-order located within the inner world, reaching the dis-orderly shores of the unconscious,[34] along with that destructive drive to death, in tension with the life instincts, which would be theorised by Freud in *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920). In his poem 'A Giovanni Camerana' (1877), the scapigliato writer Arrigo Boito encourages his fellow writer to pursue what he calls the 'estasi del singulto' in order to find 'qualche vero':

Anzi affronta gli spasmi ed il martíro,
Cerca nell'ansia del tormento occulto
Dopo il duol del sospiro
L'estasi del singulto;
Troverai qualche vero.[35]

The authors analysed here took up Boito's advice by choosing to explore the ecstatic phenomenon, discovering within it complex, disquieting truths, and trying to express them through literary language. D'Annunzio's 'mistero che ciascuno di noi in sé chiude' (in Ojetti 326), Serao's *altrove*, Fogazzaro's *verità*, and Capuana's *mondo occulto* speak through ecstasy, and the medium most apt to convey them is literature.

As pointed out by Cavalli Pasini, literature shares the same scientific interest for the 'caso-limite' (9), for figures and situations that are beyond what is normal, normed, known, static. Within Italian culture, the 'tensione gnoseologica' directed towards 'l'esame degli aspetti più insondabili della personalità umana' (Cavalli Pasini 177), finds a privileged, more productive observatory in literature rather than science:

> È indicativo che in àmbito italiano non dal settore scientifico bensì da quello letterario, e nella fattispecie da certo Capuana […] e da certo D'Annunzio […], partano le avvisaglie più coattive

[34] Finn's claim in his study on late nineteenth-century French literature that '[a]wareness of and anxiety about the unconscious materialized in a number of phenomena' such as 'the mindset of the hysteric; posthypnotic suggestions and crimes; the double, or dual/multiple personality; the unknowable female psyche; even late nineteenth-century degeneration theory' (1), can be widened so as to include ecstasy among such phenomena.
[35] The Scapigliati's interest in ecstatic phenomena as a mean to access the truth further corroborates their role of precursors of the literary production of the later nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century.

> e produttive verso un'interpretazione dei fatti psichici […]. Ed è proprio la letteratura che, prendendo l'abbrivio dalla diffusione di talune tematiche in campo scientifico, riesce a proporre delle soluzioni che almeno tentano di dare forma e sostanza all'inesplicabile. (Cavalli Pasini 22)

Influenced by contemporary scientific research, as well as by the occult and religious scene, Italian post-unification literature devoted its attention to the inexplicable, ineffable state of ecstasy, producing crucial intuitions, more essential, even, than the one provided by science. To the latter, D'Annunzio maintains, art is able to offer 'indizi di verità ancora nascoste' and 'documenti rivelatori' (1913: 565),[36]expressing

> con più forza e con più lucidità quel che la natura esprime oscuramente, rappresentando con la maggior possibile esattezza verbale i più complessi fenomeni interiori per rendere visibili i loro rapporti nascosti […]. (D'Annunzio in Ojetti 321)

It is precisely because of this potential to disclose 'indizi di verità ancora nascoste', to enlighten 'con più forza e con più lucidità […] i più complessi fenomeni interiori per rendere visibili i loro rapporti nascosti' that this thesis treats literature not as one among other cultural documents equally useful to the exploration and understanding of a research topic,[37] but as a distinctive and critical document, deserving prominent space. Literature addresses the ecstatic discourse in a way that the historical-cultural discourse, because of the very nature of its 'rigid' language, cannot, unlocking perspectives that cannot be unlocked by other disciplines or getting there in a more immediate, essential way. Considering the literary and its ability/tendency to transcend the normative, one might even regard literature altogether as a realm of ecstatic dis-orders. To analyse this crucial space of investigation underlying the hidden drives of the modern Italian subject, I will resort to Freud's work on the unconscious and on the death-instinct, from his *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), written in collaboration with Breuer, to the short-essay 'The "Uncanny"' (1919) and *Beyond the pleasure principle* (1920). I will also look at different theorists who go back to Freud's ground-breaking intuitions and re-elaborate them in diverse ways, adding new elements to their complexity – thinkers like George Bataille, Hélène Cixous, and Leo Bersani.

While striving to deliver an accurate definition and explanation of the ecstatic phenomenon, in his *Estasi Umane* Mantegazza recognises the difficulties with which 'la povera e imperfetta nostra parola tenta di designare uno stato incerto o molto complesso della nostra scienza' (1887a: 6). Italian

[36] The quotation is from D'Annunzio's article 'La morale di Emilio Zola', published in *Tribuna* on the 15th of July 1893.
[37] This is the cultural studies approach.

writers too acknowledged the ineffability inherently characterising ecstasy.[38] In the short story 'Donato Del Piano' (1888), Federico De Roberto quotes French writer and theologian Jacque-Bénigne Bossuet writing that ecstasy is excluded from human language: 'Vi sono degli stati dell'animo troppo fini per essere nominati, troppo spirituali per ammettere un'espressione sensibile. L'estasi è uno di questi stati. Il puro Spirituale è escluso dal linguaggio umano' (1470). In 'Donnalbina, Donna Romita, Donna Regina' (1881), Matilde Serao claims that 'non han parola le convulsioni spasmodiche, le allucinazioni, le estasi dolorose. Altrimenti storie meravigliose e drammatiche sarebbero narrate al mondo' (1895: 131). Yet, it is precisely those marvellous and dramatic stories that Matilde Serao and her fellow writers told, taking up the endeavor of putting into words the ineffable ecstatic state by investigating the motifs and tensions it subsumes.

An immersive reading has allowed me to identify a significant number of works written by Italian authors between 1861 and 1915 addressing the ecstatic phenomenon, works by prominent exponents of post-unification literature such as Arrigo Boito, Ugo Iginio Tarchetti, Emilio Praga, Giovanni Verga, Luidi Capuana, Antonio Fogazzaro, Neera, Matilde Serao, Gabriele D'Annunzio, Federico De Roberto, Edmondo De Amicis.[39] Among such works I have chosen to close-read those expressing most comprehensively the dialectical tension between ecstatic dis-order and static order I have outlined above and exploring more explicitly the disquieting, hidden drives of the self that are revealed in states of ecstasy. A novel, a cycle of novels, a group of short stories, and a theatrical drama constitute the corpus of my investigation: Matilde Serao's *Cuore infermo* (1881), Antonio Fogazzaro's *Piccolo mondo moderno* (1901) and *Il santo* (1905), Luigi Capana's 'Forze Occulte' (1902), 'Un vampiro' (1904), and 'Fatale influsso' (1906), and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Le martyre de Saint Sebastien* (1911).

5. Methodological-Theoretical Approach

[38] Both Barthes and Lacan have addressed this ineffability. In *The Pleasure of the Text* (1973), Barthes distinguishes between *plaisir* (='pleasure'), 'linked to a *comfortable* practice of reading', and *jouissance* ('bliss') – of which, by the critic's own account, ecstasy is a synonym –, 'impos[ing] a state of loss' that 'discomforts', 'unsettles the reader's historical, cultural, psychological assumptions', and 'brings to a crisis his relation with language' (14). At the core of Barthes' reflexion lies the consideration of bliss as something unspeakable, a consideration which the critic elucidates by drawing on psychoanalysis and, specifically, Lacan's concept of *jouissance*: 'Bliss is unspeakable, inter-dicted. I refer to Lacan ("What one must bear in mind is that bliss is forbidden to the speaker, as such, or else that it cannot be spoken except between the lines […]")' (21). As remarked by Hollywood, in *Seminar XX*, 'Lacan insists on the inadequacy of analytic discourse in the face of feminine jouissance and the/A' (163).

[39] To name a few, Tarchetti's *Una nobile follia* (1866) and *Fosca* (1869), Boito's 'L'Alfier nero' (1867), Verga's *Eva* and 'Il come il quando, ed il perché' (1880), Neera's *Teresa* (1886) and *Nel sogno* (1893), Praga's *Memorie del presbiterio* (1894), De Roberto's 'La bella morte' (1911). In poetic works too, which my thesis does not take into account – the analytical component inherent to prose serves more aptly the aim, pursued by writers of the period under study, to explore in detail ecstatic states and all they involve –, there seems to be a conspicuous attention to ecstasy. Praga's *Penombre* (1864), Ferdinando Fontana' *Poesie e novelle in versi* (1877), Luigi Gualdo's *Le Nostalgie* (1883), and poems by Antonio Ghislanzoni such as 'Induzione logica' (1878), bear witness to such attention.

Contemporary scholarship in Italian studies has been productively invaded by 'rich and multidisciplinary intersections' (O'Connell and Sica 137). This thesis fits into this broad multidisciplinary trend, taking into account a variety of sources from different fields – religious, occult, medical, anthropological, psychological – while, at the same time, granting a prominent space to literary analysis, by bearing in mind 'the beauty and power that are peculiar to literature' as well as its being 'useful in ways that we cannot predict, or dictate' and that are linked to 'the world of perception, thought, and emotions' (O'Connell and Sica 139). The twofold structure of this study, reflecting the two above-mentioned ecstatic dis-orders – one relating to the outer world, the other to the inner world –, explains the theoretical approach employed: the combined use of Foucault, on the one hand, and, on the other, of Freud and the different theorists that go back to and re-elaborate Freudian thought. Aware of the ongoing debate regarding their ambivalent relationship, by resorting to both thinkers, I do not intend to make any claim on the proximity of, nor on the difference between, their work.[40] I do, however, feel the need to contextualise and justify my methodological-theoretical choice by pointing out some correspondences in the ideas of these two pioneers of modern thought that are relevant to my argument.

As Derrida argues in a 1994 article with reference to Foucault's use of Freud in *Madness and Civilization* (1972), Foucault's 'interpretation or topography […] of the Freudian moment is always uncertain, divided, mobile, some would say ambiguous, others ambivalent, confused, or contradictory' (234). In presenting his argument, Derrida resorts to the phrase with which Foucault opens an important passage in the middle of *Madness and Civilization*: 'We must do justice to Freud'. The reason why the father of biopolitics wants to do justice to the father of psychoanalysis is the following:

> Freud went back to madness at the level of its *language*, reconstituted one of the essential elements of an experience reduced to silence by positivism; […] he restored, in medical thought, the possibility of a dialogue with unreason. […] It is not psychology that is involved in psychoanalysis: but precisely an experience of unreason that it has been psychology's meaning, in the modern world, to mask. (Foucault 2001: 188 quoted by Derrida 237)

Foucault praises Freud as the doctor who re-opened 'the possibility of a dialogue with unreason', standing in direct opposition to the normalising positivist psychiatry. While the latter has tried to 'mask', reduce 'to silence' madness, Freud has opened up to it, releasing it from an oppressive

[40] On this see Birman, Kelly, Miller, Toews, and Whitebook.

silencing, and, significantly, has done so 'at the level of its language'. In other words, Freud has let unreason voice its truth.

As is well known from Freud and Breuer's study on hysteria, flashes of the unconscious may be found in madness. What Foucault calls un-reason, referring to Freud's dialogue with the latter, is something capable of unleashing the un-consciousness. An equation can then be established, by which reason corresponds to consciousness and unreason to unconsciousness. The fact that, in Derrida's reading, Freud's opening up to the dialogue with unreason is explained as something that stands beyond 'the density of a *discovery*', rather embodying 'the sovereign violence of a *return*' (Foucault 2001: 188 quoted by Derrida 237) – the latter world immediately evoking Freud's notion of the 'return of the repressed', a return of repressed, unconscious desires and/or fears which disrupt the normal functioning of the conscious mind –, substantiates this equation. Towards the end of the article, Derrida seems to further corroborate it by claiming that for Foucault the 'most decisive importance of psychoanalysis' consists in 'exceeding both consciousness and representation', in going 'beyond the realm of the representable' (257). Freud's opening to the dialogue with unreason is coupled by his going beyond the conscious world, i.e., reaching the realm of the unconscious. Finally, the Freud who is considered worthy of notice by Foucault – 'the tragic Freud' who 'breaks with psychology, with evolutionism and biologism' and 'shows himself *hospitable* to madness' – 'is the Freud who talks it out with death', 'the Freud, then, of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*' (Derrida 255). In Derrida's reading of Foucault and Freud's ambivalent relationship, it is '[o]n the basis of this experience of death' that Freud 'is reintegrated into this modernity from out of which *The History of Madness* is written' (255).

The aforementioned equation un-reason = un-consciousness can be further extended so as to include the experience of ecstasy. The phenomenon of ecstasy appears as a state which is beyond the normal, normative one, just as the state of unreason is situated beyond the state of reason, and the state of unconsciousness beyond that of consciousness. Normality corresponds to reason and a condition of consciousness, ab-normality to unreason and a condition of un-consciousness. This correspondence is validated by the fact that, as the literary analyses included in Part 2 will show, the ab-normal, beyond-rational experience that is ecstasy opens up to the unconscious by freeing itself from the oppressive silence that certain positivist medicine tries to reduce it to. Finally, going back to Derrida's final argument on the proximity between Foucault and Freud as the theorists of a 'modern man' (256), among the unconscious, shattering drives ecstasy incorporates stands the death drive. It is this inextricable link to the unconscious and death drive that makes ecstasy, as it emerges in the second half of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth, a profoundly modern phenomenon, and as such liable to be analysed through Foucauldian and Freudian lens.

It is perhaps not by chance that the present project is not the first thematic study on ecstasy that has incorporated in its methodological-theoretical frame both Foucault and Freud's work. In *Hysteria Complicated by Ecstasy* (2009), Goldstein explores the ecstasies suffered by eighteen-year-old Nanette in the thermal town of Aix-les-Bains (Savoy) between 1822 and 1825, and their examination by Dr Antoine Despine. She resorts to both Foucault and Freud to relate Nanette's situation to 'unconscious inner conflicts […] dependent on historical change' and the desire to find 'some freedom from society's relentless demands on her biological performance' (2009: 118). The scholar justifies her theoretical approach by pointing to the fact that for Foucault '[w]hat is important [in psychoanalysis] […] is not the theory of development, not the sexual secret behind the neuroses and psychoses, but a logic of the unconscious' (2009: 203). Her interpretation of Nanette's ecstasy 'does not rely on the unmasking of hidden sexual wishes' (2009: 203) but on unconscious conflicts occasioned by historical contingencies. While it takes into account other forms of ecstatic expressions relating to a different temporal and geographical frame, my investigation of ecstasy in post-unification Italy shares with Goldstein's study that twofold and interdependent attention towards the normative political, social, cultural demands imposed upon ecstatic bodies and the unconscious tensions that those bodies harbour. I believe that the two elements underlying and characterising the ecstatic phenomena I am exploring are precisely a reaction to the normative impositions of society and, resorting to Foucault's words related by Goldstein, 'a logic of the unconscious'.

While relying on a Foucauldian and Freudian theoretical framework, the thesis also embraces a gender perspective and, in its last chapter, a queer standpoint.

The gender perspective is inherent to the very notion of ecstasy, previously pointed out, as daughter of Eve (Barnstone 1), a notion which is historically, culturally, socially, politically, and literary rooted, and which has led me to substantiate my thesis, in both direct and indirect, explicit and implicit ways, with the thought of feminist thinkers like Hélène Cixous, Catherine Clément, Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Carla Lonzi, and others. Such thinkers have directed their attention to female ecstasy, or *jouissance*, postulating the liberating energy intrinsic to women as figures that have been historically oppressed, marginalised, and othered. Many of them have tackled this Otherness by taking into account mystical, occult, and hysterical characterisations of women and their ecstatic experiences. My resorting to their works and, at the same time, that of Freud, who is from several perspectives an 'enemy' of feminist thought, is justified by the fact that my interest in him and psychoanalysis is related to the notions of the unconscious and the death drive, not those of sexual difference which I firmly reject.

In *The Newly Born Woman* (1975), cowritten with Cixous, Clément explores the 'ambiguous, antiestablishment' feminine roles of the sorceress and the hysteric, remarking how their

'symptoms'/'attacks' 'revolt and shake up the public, the group, the men, the others to whom they are exhibited', 'introduc[ing] disorder into the well-regulated unfolding of everyday life' (5). Going back to Lévi-Strauss, Sartre, and Mauss' work on 'anomaly', Clément explains how '[s]ocieties do not succeed in offering everyone the same way of fitting into the symbolic order' and that 'those who are […] between symbolic systems, in the interstices, offside, are the ones who are afflicted with a dangerous symbolic mobility' (5). These are 'the people afflicted with what we call madness, anomaly, perversion, or whom we label, says Mauss, "neurotics, ecstatics, outsiders, carnies, drifters, jugglers and acrobats"'; their 'mobility', the opposite of stasis, i.e., in another world, ec-stasis, is both dangerous for them and 'dangerous – or productive – for the cultural order itself': 'more than any others – Clément points out –, women bizarrely embody this group of anomalies showing the cracks in an overall system' (7).

Following Clément discourse, Cixous insists on the disruptive power associated with female mystical phenomena by relating it to hysteria and placing both 'within an opposition between repressive and oppressive dominant social structures (including religion) and desire' (Hollywood 4). In her opinion, the mystical-hysterical experience 'marks the return of repressed desire and unleashes a liberating force that works against the conservative and rigidifying power of religious belief and practice' (Hollywood 4). More specifically, Cixous postulates 'a bond between woman's libidinal economy – her *jouissance*, the feminine Imaginary – and her way of self-constituting a subjectivity that splits apart without regret', 'being the equivalent of dying, […] answering herself with anomalies, without the ceaseless summoning of the authority called Ego' (90). In a remarkable passage, she defines woman's experience as an experience of ecstatic dis-order:

> She has never 'held still'; explosion, diffusion, effervescence, abundance, she takes pleasure in being boundless, outside self, outside same […].
> She doesn't hold still, she overflows. An outpouring that can be agonizing, since she may fear, and make the other fear, endless aberration and madness in her release. […] No matter how submissive and docile she may be in relation to the masculine order, she still remains the threatening possibility of savagery, the unknown quantity in the household whole. (Cixous 91)

Cixous reads women's ecstatic experience as the consequence of a cultural and social repression: 'When "*The* Repressed" of their culture and their society come back, it is an explosive return, which is *absolutely* shattering, staggering, overturning, with a force never let loose before' (95).

In 'La Mystérique', included in *Speculum of the Other Woman* (1974), Irigaray addresses the experience of mystical-hysterical women, theorising a 'place where consciousness is no longer master, where, to its extreme confusion, it sinks into a dark night that is also fire and flames'; this is 'the only

place in the history of the West in which woman speaks and acts so publicly' (191). She also claims that woman 'is the representative-representation (*Vorstellung-Repräsentanz*) […] of the death drives that cannot (or theoretically could not) be perceived without horror, that the eye (of) consciousness refuses to recognise' (Irigaray 55). Finally, in works like 'Stabat mater', included in *Tales of Love* (1983), Kristeva devotes her attention to female mystics and female *jouissance*, regarding them, respectively, as 'figures of dissent' whose 'discursive model is fundamentally "other"', and as an 'excessive' and 'transgressive' phenomenon that 'breaks through and ruptures the (paternal and phallic) symbolic order of language' (Mazzoni 1996: 87; 84, note 64).

As pointed out by Ann Rosalind Jones, all these thinkers 'agree that resistance to institutions and signifying practices that include myths, language, and rituals takes the form of *jouissance*' (248). They specifically associate women with an ecstatic energy that is deemed dangerous, anomalous, using another world, abnormal; an energy that is placed on the Other side of society and culture, belongs to an alternative order of things – one defined by 'disorder' and opposed to the 'masculine order' –, and takes the form of a liberating, 'explosive' return of the repressed. Such female ecstatic energy does not recognise the authority of the Ego but rather what 'the eye (of) consciousness refuses to recognise'. The women these thinkers write of are the embodiment of an ecstatic dis-order that challenges and attempts to undermine the established patriarchal order: by means of ecstatic disruptions, they seek liberation from oppression, freedom, autonomy. Mentioning the work of a feminist thinker closer to the Italian framework, Lonzi, 'solo attraverso un atto imprevisto, e cioè libero, la donna può sfuggire al ruolo di oggetto', becoming a 'soggetto imprevisto' (141). Ecstasy provides women with just such a sudden and liberating act, enabling them to ground their subjectivity and autonomy, to challenge the oppressive male order, opposing to its firmness, conformism, and controlling strategies, an ecstatic realm of precariousness, but also fluidity, openness to the Other.[41]

A similar conclusion can be drawn regarding individuals that challenge the order of gender binarism, individuals that are neither entirely female nor male, and occupy a queer space of fluid liminality that abolishes differences and that the ecstatic phenomenon, with its intrinsic liminality and its going beyond limits and barriers, challenging the steadiness and identity of the individual, manifests and metaphorizes. In the last chapter of my thesis, devoted to the analysis of D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre de Saint Sebastien*, I explore such space of liminality by resorting to queer theory and, in particular, the work of Leo Bersani, read through Lorenzo Bernini's lens, tackling ecstasy and rereading Freud's notion of the death drive through the lens of queer thought.[42] Bersani argues that

[41] In Irigaray's reading, femininity is precisely 'an openness and fluidity to the other that both upholds subjectivity and enables women to experience the other, […] the site of an ec-static movement out of subjectivity and into alterity' (Hollywood 203).

[42] On queer theory and death drive see also Edelman.

the tendency to ecstatic self-dissolution belongs to queer subjects, in particular to the homosexual passive subject, and 'is in conflict with the image that the white heterosexual male, the hegemonic subject throughout millennia of history, has used to represent and promote himself' (Bernini 19). The 'phallocentric and homophobic male logic' is unable to sustain, as Bernini paraphrases, 'the existence of the death drive and the consequent possibility not only of a pleasure in passivity, but of a state of enjoyment produced by this lack of control, by impotence, by humiliation' (19). Ecstasy and queerness stand in opposition to that drive to integrity, steadiness, power, and control which the patriarchal, hetero-cis-normative culture fosters. The queer subject abdicates control, embraces ecstatic dis-order, rejoicing in a self-shattering which undermines the power dynamics at work in the outer world (and the inner one of their ego), and the regulatory order the latter exerts upon them. While I specifically rely upon queer theory only in the chapter devoted to D'Annunzio, I believe that the realm of ecstatic dis-order I am addressing, precisely because of its liminal character, its constant attempt to override fixed, steady boundaries and disrupt the normative order, can be as a whole productively regarded through the lens of queer theory.

Finally, throughout the thesis references are made to the work of anthropologist Ernesto De Martino, who has notably devoted his attention to experiences of ecstatic otherness, alternative to the conventional image of the normal, steady Italian self. Resorting to a Demartinian theoretical framework, the ecstatic dis-order may be understood in terms of an historical 'crisis of presence', profoundly rooted in the material, socio-economic premises marking the predicament of post-unification Italy.[43]

As it is well known, the enthusiastic expectations of those who fought for independence were not matched by an effective improvement and renovation of the political, social, and economical apparatuses. If the transition to the liberal state was 'contentious and anxiety-laden in the extreme' (Adamson 498), its aftermath was a great disappointment for many. The patriotic ideals of the fathers of the Italian Risorgimento were crushed by a system crammed with flaws: financial crisis, social upheaval with *brigantaggio* in the South and urban riots in the North, illiteracy and lack of linguistic unity, political corruption, slow economic growth, failures in both domestic and foreign policy, the striking divide between North and South giving rise to the *questione meridionale*, industrial, agricultural, and cultural backwardness.[44] In Riall's words, underlying all problems linked to the post-Risorgimento, 'was the more long-term failure of the new state to embody national unity' (75).

[43] De Martino's ethnological investigation of Southern Italy relates to the years following the conclusion of the second world war, but, bearing in mind that for the anthropologist the crisis of presence is elicited by the material conditions of precariousness, his argument might also be applied to the post-unification frame.
[44] See Rial (74-75), A.M. Banti (279-295), Adamson (501).

What the Italian citizens experienced in such a fragmented, precarious, and uncertain scenario may be suggestively interpreted as a 'crisi della presenza', a crisis of the self, which some tried do redeem and overcome through practices of ecstasy. If by 'presenza' De Martino means the ability of the subject to uphold the unity and autonomy of the self within a specific historical context, the crisis of the presence involves a radical uncertainty of the subject's historical existence ('la possibilità di esserci', 76) resulting in a shattering of the self, who is no longer capable of action and self-determination. As revealed in his works – especially in *Morte e pianto rituale* (1958), *Sud e Magia* (1959), and *La terra del rimorso* (1961) –, the embodiments of this crisis of presence are ecstatic/trance-like states such as the phenomena of possession and dissociation seen at work in Southern Italy's 'bassa magia cerimoniale' and tarantism. Following De Martino's argument, the crisis of presence can be overcome by a 'destorificazione del negativo' (71) through the working of transcendental practices. Religious and/or magic rituals – including the experiencing of the aforesaid ecstatic phenomena –, enable the subject to root his existence within a mythical-symbolic dimension, and reintroduce and re-integrate themselves in history by means of culture,[45] a subaltern culture in tension with the hegemonic cultural order.

In particular, it could be suggested that post-unification Italy faced a collective crisis of presence, for which it was incapable of responding to the critical phase it was undergoing as a united body and emerged, on the contrary, as a fragmented, self-shattering organism, an ec-static body experiencing the lability of its existence and trying to overcome its crisis and reappropriate its historical existence through experiences and practices of ecstasy. The '"other side" of the project of making Italians' (Stewart-Steinberg 229) might also be perceived in this ecstatic strategy through which Italian citizens tried to restore the unity and steadiness of their existence in a time of national, collective, shattering crisis. A significant example of this can be sought in the 'Drama of Mezzojuso' (1890), consisting, as I will show, in a series of events unravelling in the Sicilian village of Mezzojuso. Directly related to the precarious and wretched conditions of her home village, Lucia Carnesi's trances can be interpreted as the embodiment of a crisis of presence and, together, the means through which to overcome it by the creation of an alternative, mythical-symbolic, order of existence: an ecstatic dis-order trough which Lucia reclaims her agency and reintegrates herself in history.

6. Situating the Thesis within Existing Literature

The phenomenon of ecstasy has been investigated from different temporal and geographical perspectives – in the fields of anthropology (De Martino, Eliade, Ginzburg,), cultural studies

[45] See De Martino 61-74, in particular 66.

(Torgovnik), religion (Goodman, McDaniel), psychology (Fachinelli, Laski), literature (Barnstone, Lester, Moores), philosophy (Hollywood) –, but despite being vastly present in the variety of discourses which circulated in Italy during the years from 1861 to 1915, and significantly featuring in the literary fiction of the period, it has never been studied with a focus on this precise timeframe and geographical context. The present project aims at filling this gap in academic research.

In particular, this thesis falls within a recent peak of interest in mystical, occult, irrational phenomena, and their interplay with the rational-scientific outlook, in 18th-, 19th-, and 20th- century Italian cultural history and literature, following in the footsteps of scholars like Fabio Camilletti, Annamaria Cavalli Pasini, Edwige Comoy Fusaro, Paola Cori, Morena Corradi, Laura Nay, Cristina Mazzoni, Martina Piperno, and going back to the ground-breaking scholarship of Clara Gallini. In particular, it explores the effects of the spreading of such phenomena on post-unification Italian citizens, caught between secularisation and religious tradition, disenchantment and re-enchantment, reflecting on the notion of modern Italian identity at both a collective/national and individual level. From this perspective it reads as a significant addition to the fertile area of research opened by Stewart-Steinberg's *The Pinocchio Effect* (2007), in which the author claims that 'the Italian case in particular can sharpen our understanding of the dual processes of modernization and secularization' and should, thus, be explored in relation to 'theories of modernity and nation-formation' (1-2).

The focus on the construction, development, and undermining of modern Italian identity explored through the thematic lens of ecstasy is linked to the detection of a mentally fragmented self and the discovery of an unconscious mind, significantly emerging in literature. Accordingly, the thesis fits into that fertile line of research investigating the rapport between modern Italian culture and literature, on the one hand, and the unconscious and other psychoanalytical notions, on the other hand, explored, among the others, by Michel David, Arrigo Stara, Elio Gioanola, Pierluigi Barrotta, Anna Laura Lepschy, and Emma Bond, and, more recently, by Alessandra Aloisi and Fabio Camilletti, and Fabio Camilletti and Alessandra Diazzi. Finally, because of the reading of ecstasy as a prominently female/feminine phenomenon, the thesis dialogues with questions related to gender reflecting the topical and increasing interest of Italian Studies' scholarship in the construction of the modern Italian woman, led by scholars like Katharine Mitchell, Gabriella Romani, and Helena Sanson, as well as with queer perspectives, echoing the attention devoted by researchers to queer aspects of Italian modernity, such as Maya de Leo, Derek Duncan, and Charlotte Ross.

7. Structure of the Thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts. Part 1 offers an historical-cultural investigation of ecstasy in the domains of religion, 'occulture', and science, providing four case-studies of ecstatic dis-order. Part 2 addresses literary representations of ecstasy, analysing texts by Serao, Fogazzaro, Capuana, and D'Annunzio.

Part 1 comprises six chapters. The opening chapter situates the investigation of ecstatic phenomena in post-unification Italy within the wider secularised, disenchanted, and re-enchanted frame of Western modernity. The following three chapters, constituting the bulk of Part 1, explore religious, occult, and scientific approaches of ecstasy in Italian culture between 1861 and 1915, providing definitions, descriptions, embodied examples of the ecstatic phenomenon, and revealing in each domain analysed a dialectical tension between static order and ecstatic dis-order, a tension which frequently takes on a highly gendered connotation. Chapter 2, 'Religion', offers an account of mystical ecstasy, exploring the ambivalent way it was perceived by the religious establishment in the years under study, providing the cases of Gemma Galgani and Palma Mattarelli as examples of such ambivalence. Chapter 3, 'Occulture', focuses on magnetic ecstasies and mediumistic trances, retracing the spreading of magnetic culture and Spiritualism in post-unification Italy and revealing how certain ecstatic subjectivities (e.g., Eusapia Palladino) refused to be controlled, reclaiming a disruptive space of power. Chapter 4, 'Science', addresses the way Italian positivist science medicalised ecstatic phenomena by exerting its imposing, clinical gaze, by resorting to hysteria and hypnotism, and/or relating it to unconscious mechanisms of the mind. The three chapters are followed by a brief section, Chapter 5, explicitly accounting for the *querelle* that came to juxtapose different interpretations of the ecstatic phenomenon in the years under study, involving positions advocating for a middle ground between the extremisms of the scientific and religious standpoints. While examples of ecstatic dis-order are provided throughout Part 1, the latter ends with a more punctual analysis of four cases of ecstatic dis-order (Chapter 6): the occult ecstasies of Beppina Sansone, the mystical/psychotic ones of David Lazzaretti, the collective ecstasies of the possessed women of Verzegnis, the ecstasies of Lucia Carnesi relating to the previously mentioned 'Drama of Mezzojuso'.

Part 2 addresses four cases of ecstatic dis-order in the following literary works: Matilde Serao's *Cuore infermo* (1881), Antonio Fogazzaro's *Piccolo mondo moderno* (1901) and *Il santo* (1905), Luigi Capana's 'Forze Occulte' (1902), 'Un vampiro' (1904), and 'Fatale influsso' (1906), and Gabriele D'Annunzio's *Le martyre de Saint Sebastien* (1911). Each work analysed focuses on a different form of ecstatic dis-order involving the alteration/infraction of a certain normative order – revealing a conflict which usually echoes tensions the authors themselves were confronted with – and disclosing the troubling drives of each protagonist's inner, unconscious world. Serao's *Cuore infermo* (Chapter 7) addresses the dis-order unfolding from a woman's encounter with passion, exploring the

conflicts arising from the clash between the normative obligations imposed by society upon women, systematically engrained in their everyday life, and their unrestricted desires, and eventually unveiling the woman's disquieting self-shattering drive manifested in erotic ecstasy. Fogazzaro's *Piccolo mondo moderno* and *Il santo* (Chapter 8) tackle the ecstatic dis-order of a passionate man who sublimates his drives towards God and becomes a sort of saint. Such ecstatic dis-order unearths an opposition between the normativity embodied by the religious establishment and the a-normativity, or abnormality, represented by the ecstatic religion of the individual, an intimate form of religion in which the ecstatic encounter with God emanates directly from the believer's unconscious. Capuana's short stories (Chapter 9) deal with the ecstatic dis-orders stemming from the occult world and challenging the materialist normative order. The characters of these short stories find themselves facing occult dis-orders pointing to an ecstatic Otherness which is inextricably linked to the *other* within the self, i.e., their unconscious other. Closing the circle, D'Annunzio's mystery play (Chapter 10) engages with the queer dis-order conveyed by saint Sebastian's experiences of ecstasy, pointing to the infraction of the gender normative order and unleashing the self's drive to ecstatic laceration.

Part 1. Ecstasy in Religion, 'Occulture', and Science

1. Secularisation, Disenchantment and Re-enchantment

Opposing the views of those who uphold that the great moment of secularisation in Europe was the Enlightenment, in his seminal study *The Secularization of European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (1975) Chadwick maintains that it was during the second half of the nineteenth century that the grounds of religion and overall spirituality were significantly undermined. In laying out his argument, he decides to choose as the start and end dates of this secularising apogee the years 1859, when Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* was published, and 1914, the outbreak of the First World War. Though arbitrary, these dates symbolise in Chadwick's view 'an age admitted by every historical observer to be central to any consideration of the theme' (18). Reviewing the main ideas informing secularisation, according to which the latter is inextricably linked to modernisation, and results in a decline of religion and a loss of its social significance, Partridge acknowledges that the general process of the phenomenon is more complex than these ideas tend to suggest – in his words, 'deceptively complex' (2004: 11). Exposing this deceptiveness, scholars have gradually challenged Max Weber's theory of 'disenchantment' (*Entzauberung*), by which in modern societies 'magic and spiritual mystery are driven from the world' and 'nature is managed rather than enchanted' (Partridge 2004: 11). It is now a well-ascertained fact that the second half of the nineteenth century was not a moment of utter erasure of religious and magic beliefs. Branding the disenchantment theory as a myth, Josephson Storm goes back to Max Nordau's assessment of a re-enchantment of the world – in the Zionist leader's view, a flight towards magic and mysticism understood in terms of a worrying degeneration (*Entartung*) – and introduces 'an alternate model' to disenchantment, 'one that described modernity not as the death of magic or the despiritualization of nature, but as the rise of mysticism and the occult' (182).[46]

The modern period has undoubtedly striven towards secularisation, applying a 'rationalist-scientific frameset' (Granholm 726) to the modes of living. This process, however, has been flanked by an overflow of spiritual and occult trends which ultimately brought about a 'dialectical tension between disenchantment and re-enchantment' (Main 742), with science, religion and 'occulture' taking up the roles of protagonists of this tension. While in the second half of the nineteenth century the Western world was dominated by positivism, with the dissemination of a scientific outlook in all domains of knowledge, it was also significantly shaped by religion, with the revival of mysticism,[47]

[46] The scholar goes as far as claiming that 'we have never been disenchanted' (Josephson Storm 3).
[47] 'The rich, mystical character of the second half of the nineteenth century is now well established' (Lachapelle 79).

and the occult, with the spreading of alternative practices of medicine like animal magnetism, Spiritualism and mediumship, and diverse forms of paranormal phenomena. As Mazzoni points out, the 'golden age of positivistic psychiatry' coincided with the 'golden age of mysticism' (1995: 372) and, it may be added, a golden resurgence of the occult. The phenomenon of ecstasy playing a prominent role in all these experiences, it is no wonder that the end of the nineteenth century, as remarked by Castel, was also the 'âge d'or' of the 'extatiques' (211).

Going back to Chadwick's time frame and adjusting it for contextual reasons, between 1861 and 1915 newly unified Italy was plunged into this secularising, and at the same time re-enchanting world, giving rise to tensions which were emphasised by the presence of the Catholic Church. Ecstasy, with its multifarious expressions, became a significant focus of attention within the domains of some of the country's old and new protagonists – science, religion, and 'occulture' –, to some extent reflecting Italy's laborious process of modernisation.

2. Religion

2.1 The Italian Case: In the Church's Shadow

Because of its relationship with the Catholic Church, Italian post-unification history provides a fundamental case-study in the exploration of the Western processes of modernisation and secularisation.[48] The home of the Vatican, Italy had to struggle to appropriate a power which, after the conquest of Rome on the 20th of September 1870 and the resultant State's emancipation from the Church, still exerted an enormous cultural and social impact. There is no doubt that the dominance of the Catholic Church limited the process of secularisation in Italy, allowing commentators to hold that 'such a process never reached full completion' (Del Donno and Gilson 4).[49] If we bear in mind, as Partridge suggests, 'that secularization is only possible in societies in which there is a clear distinction between the religious and the non-religious' (2004: 9), we can easily understand why this process was so troubled in a country that, though officially independent from the Church, still had to deal with the latter's burdensome presence, whose pervasiveness obstructed and prevented for many decades the laicisation of the State's apparatuses.[50] With regards to the healthcare domain, for instance, Frascani observes that until the end of the nineteenth century Italian hospitals remained under the influence of religious institutions,[51] with Italian patients being 'contes[i] […] come "anima da salvare" o *clinic entity*' (110). It was not easy to find an equilibrium between the claims of the State and those of the Vatican, but eventually an agreement was reached, an understanding grounded upon what these forces had in common: authority. If until the death of Pius IX in 1878 the Church and the liberal State faced 'a period of […] intransigence', from that moment onwards the climate slowly evolved into a more peaceful relationship based on 'mutually beneficial accords' striving to maintaining the status quo (Bell 5-6).

As is known, Pope Pius IX fiercely opposed the finalisation of the unification process. This battle was part of the greater war the Church was waging against the modern world. Published in 1864, the encyclical *Quanta cura* epitomized this conflict, condemning in its 'Syllabus of Errors' progress, liberalism, and secularism. Hales claims that it was the Italian situation which prompted the

[48] See Stewart-Steinberg 1-2.
[49] Del Donno and Gilson here reference Pollard.
[50] Resorting to Karel Dobbelaere's thesis of secularisation, strongly centred on laicisation, Partridge describes the latter as the process through which '[i]n modern societies, health, welfare, and education are no longer the concern of ecclesiastical authorities' but the responsibility of the State and its secular institutions, with the clergy's field of action being limited to 'spiritual matters' (2004: 14).
[51] Only with Giolitti's government did healthcare wholly enter the State's public jurisdiction (Frascani 126).

encyclical.[52] Backing his thesis, Pollard maintains that 'Italy was the battleground' of the Church's war against modernity and even wonders 'whether the Syllabus would have been published at this point or at all, had it not been for the Italian situation' (26) – a testimony to the relevance and importance of the Italian case in the wider process of Western secularisation. The war the Church took up against modernisation was accompanied by a fierce battle against beliefs which stood in opposition to the new secularised, rationalist worldview, but from a different standpoint than the one embodied by religion. As Gallini points out, '[t]orna sulla scena l'antico dilemma religione-magia', the Church being '[m]inacciata sul suo proprio territorio nella gestione della liminarità del meraviglioso, dell'eccezionale e della malattia' (168). As soon as the practices of animal magnetism and the doctrines of Spiritualism begun to spread within Italy, the Church opposed phenomena which it regarded as new devilish forms of heresy threatening to undermine its authority. In 1856 the encyclical *Ad magnetism abusus compescendos* had denounced the rise of a new kind of superstition which entailed a desire to explore 'le cose occulte' (quoted in Gallini 166) and included 'the practice of mesmerism, clairvoyance, and dead evocation' (M. Biondi 2013: 41). Less than a decade later, in 1864, all books on Spiritualism, starting with Allan Kardec's renowned ones, were included in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, while priests who devoted their attention to such doctrines were threatened with suspension. Like liberalism, socialism, or freemasonry, this 'new necromancy', as Spiritualism was dubbed, represented a 'serious danger' (M. Biondi 2013: 39) for the Church. A symptomatic episode of the opposition between the clerical religious authorities on the one hand and both the secularising and occult forces on the other occurred when Pius IX called the First Vatican Council in 1869: on the day when the Council officially began, an 'Anti-council' was organised by a follower of Mazzini, involving 'free-masons, free-thinkers, reformers, antipapal rebels, and a limited number of Spiritists' (M. Biondi 2013: 42).[53]

The war against occult re-enchantment and secularisation did not end with Pius IX's death. Not only did the papacy of Leo III officially forbid soul evocation during mediumistic séances by a decree published in 1898, but – taking advantage of a veritable 'Catholic revival' – it also fought 'the culture war' by 'mobilising the Catholic masses in great celebrations of traditional religious identity' (Pollard 34). The intensification of devotional practices was part of 'a conscious intent to reassert and reinvigorate Catholic identity' (Pollard 29),[54] a process which was parallel to the lay nation-building

[52] In his words, 'it was the Piedmontese government's idea of what constituted progress and civilisation with which the Pope was declining to come to terms' (Hales in Pollard 26).
[53] 'Fantasie su evoluzionismo, spiritismo, massoneria, liberismo e socialismo – De Ceglia and Leporiere point out – si mescolavano difatti confusamente nella percezione dell'essere umano che, non più immobile in una posizione data, si giudicava utopicamente destinato ad aspirare a più elevati livelli fisici, spirituali e politico-sociali' (54).
[54] 'The Catholic cults […] and, more specifically, the mystic-prophetic model, were utilized in a political counterrevolutionary manner, leading historians to speak of the "politicization of religion" in late modernity' (Rossi 91).

strategies promoted by the State in order to, employing again the famous words attributed to D'Azeglio, 'make Italians'. Though opposed to one another, these two processes were specular in their commitment and attempt to build up a solid, steady, thus manageable, community, and to counteract what Stewart-Steinberg has called 'the "other side" of the project of making Italians', one based on the discovery of 'an uncanny double of Italy' (229). In this respect, the Italian State and the Church can both be regarded as agents of a normative, static order opposed to an ecstatic dis-order, embodied, among other things, by the uncanny and occult forces which were operating within the newly unified country. The Church and State's underlying unity of purpose eventually became overt during the so-called 'end of century crisis', when the severe economic conditions and the birth of the first working-class organisations led to 'outbursts of spontaneous agitation and violence'; it was then that Catholic and Liberal Italy understood 'that they had more in common than that which divided them: combating their common enemies' (Pollard 43). Accordingly, when Pius X replaced Leo III in 1902, the new Pope ratified the appeasement of the Church's relation with the Italian State by supporting the cleric-moderate alliances and relaxing the *non expedit.* The 'common enemies' shared by the two agents of order were not only socialism and anarchy, but, beyond political ideologies, all forms of disorder which might upset and disturb the status quo. The phenomenon of ecstasy, no longer under the exclusive control of religious powers, was deemed to create such a disturbance.

2.2 Mystical Ecstasy: A Disorderly Religious State

According to Troeltsch, mystical religion occurs as a reaction to 'the pragmatism, ethical laxity and internal secularization of church religion', compensating for its 'dry formalism and increasingly disenchanted nature' (Partridge 2004: 64). Unlike Church religion, which relies on community, mysticism is a profoundly individualistic religious attitude in which '[i]nterior personal experience replaces exterior doctrine and ethics' (Partridge 2004: 21).[55] The mystic's freedom and independence from the church religion, its rituals, and traditional practices make mysticism a modern experience of faith.[56] Moreover, precisely because of its 'lack of centralized structure', mystical religion tends to be 'eclectic', 'incorporating new ideas' (Partridge 2004: 21) which are out of the Church's sphere of influence and control. It can, thus, be included among the 'radical, often countercultural trends of religiosity' (Szönyi 54). In *La Fable Mystique* (1982), de Certeau stresses the autonomy and detachment of mystical experiences from the world of dogma embodied by institutional church. If

[55] However, Partridge remarks that 'whilst mystical religionists are individualistic, they are aware that they belong to a wider community of like-minded religious individualists, the mystic collectivity' (2004: 65).
[56] In Troeltsch's opinion, 'the view of individuality which finds expression in the mystical type has a parallel to or comes close to modern thought' (quoted in Partridge 2004: 21 quoting from Drescher 233-234).

Bataille turned to mysticism as a desirable approach to life it is precisely because it meets 'man's need to be independent' and offers the possibility of reaching 'a state that can be called sovereign' (1986: 249). Such a state is epitomised by 'the spectacular kernel of grand mysticism' (Leuba 162), i.e., ecstasy. If mysticism entailed an 'internalization of religion' (Partridge 2004: 21), it was also defined by extraordinary outer expressions of this internalised faith, the prominent one being ecstasy. Intellectuals who directed their attention towards mysticism in the years under investigation[57] remarked the liberating, unstable, and unconscious nature of ecstasy. In *Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902), William James described ecstasy as the condition in which '[i]ntellect and senses both swoon away' (319), and the 'great mystic achievement' as the 'overcoming of all the usual barriers between the individual and the Absolute' (324), with the opening out to 'the possibility of *other orders* of truth' (327).[58] In her study on mysticism, Underhill depicted the mystic in ecstasy as 'experiencing the highest and most joyous of those contemporary and unstable states in which his consciousness escapes the limitations of the senses, rises to freedom, and is united for an instant with the "Great life of the All"' (438).

The eclectic, individualistic, independent and, in many ways, modern attitude towards the divine embodied by ecstatic mysticism was particularly popular between the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Following a veritable renaissance of mysticism, along with stigmatised and miraculous mystics, ecstatics overflowed during the entire nineteenth century. Conceiving the latter as linked to a 'new mystic era', Rossi acknowledges, in particular, 'a new mystic epiphany between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries' (90-91),[59] a period which saw the 'consolidation of a theological outlook in the Catholic Church typically characterized as conservative' (Lloyd 569).[60] Against the backdrop of the Church's conservativism, a 'new "democratic trend" of "living saints" and religious celebrities' emerged (Rossi 93). No longer members of the high nobility or clergy, as in the past, the latter belonged to the working class or to the world of peasants, a social factor that contributed to bringing the experiences of mystic figures closer to the community. This movement from below, sometimes leading to a 'deviant devotion', allowed people to choose 'which "living saints" to worship' – living saints to whom believers attributed 'paranormal graces' – 'independently of the official response of the Holy See' and their 'rigid rules of canonization' (Rossi 91; 102). In such a scenario, the Church's pivotal role in directing and controlling the community of the faithful was threatened.

[57] Gallini highlights the 'enorme interesse culturale di quegli anni per il misticismo cristiano e le manifestazioni dell'estasi' (316), promoted by both Catholic thinkers and psychologists.
[58] Italics mine.
[59] On the revival of mysticism in the early twentieth century see also Billanovich.
[60] The crusade against the modernist doctrine, which I will address in the analysis of Fogazzaro's works in Part 2, provides a substantial example of the Church's conservative positions.

The Catholic Church had been dealing for ever with extraordinary religious states. Ever since the 4th century, when St Augustine of Hippo had defined ecstasy as the moment when 'the soul's intention is completely turned away, or snatched away, from the body's senses', Catholic mystical theology has understood ecstasy as an 'alienation of the sensible faculties', a phenomenon elicited by the 'intense attention to some religious subject' (McDaniel 31-32) that led the believers to be out of their, and the Church's, control. Perceiving the unsettling and troubling condition of such a state of estrangement, the Catholic Church had always been vigilant over ecstatic phenomena. As Pelaja and Scaraffia point out, the distrust and suspicion of the ecclesiastical hierarchies towards these extreme religious experiences were precisely linked to the fact that they were always accompanied by 'forme di invasamento ambigue, a sfondo mistico e libero' (81),[61] which could bring confusion and disorder within the community, which was keen to see God but also the Devil everywhere. Already in the thirteenth century, Thomas Aquinas, as Hollywood notes, viewed demonic possession as 'another possibility almost completely indistinguishable physically from divine rapture or ecstasy' (246). As James remarks, '[t]hat region – the subliminal region eliciting altered state of consciousness – contains every kind of matter: "seraph and snake" abide there side by side' (330). In Huysmans' capturing words, '[f]rom the exalted mysticism to exasperated satanism there is but one step. In the beyond, all things touch' (*Là-bas*).[62] Generally, ecstasy directly called into question the role of the Church. As remarked by Bidaud, what characterises the project of mysticism and, along with it, ecstatic states, is a modality of relation to the world which is given as 'dépourvu de médiation' (158),[63] not needing the intermediary role, for instance, of a priest. Additionally, ecstasy could prevent the subjects undergoing it from carrying out their normal duties to the advantage of the ecclesiastical institutions. Quoting from Émile Bougaud's *Histoire de la bienheureuse Marguerite Marie* (1894), James mentions the example of Margaret Mary Alacoque, whose 'sufferings and prayers and absences of mind and swoons and ecstasies' made her 'increasingly useless about the convent, her absorption in Christ's love […] "rendering her more and more incapable of attending to external duties"' (268). The Church did not wish to have a community of independent and useless believers, but one who had to strictly depend on its authority and could offer its service to it. A state related to freedom, instability, idleness, and the possibility of leading to 'other orders of truth' – possibly deviating from those indicated by the Church –, ecstasy posed a threat to clerical authority.

In the nineteenth century things got even more troublesome as ecstatic states could be confused not only with demonic possession but also with nervous pathological (usually hysterical)

[61] The Church was especially suspicious of the mystic epidemics which periodically took place in female monasteries (Pelaja and Scaraffia 81).
[62] Quoted in Mazzoni 1996: 12.
[63] The mystic state, Bidau remarks, is 'hors dialectique' (158).

symptoms[64] as well as phenomena pertaining to the magnetic, Spiritualist, and paranormal culture. Addressing bodily phenomena 'such as inedia, stigmata, ecstasy, levitation, visions', Osselaer observes that while, at a popular level, people's belief in the divine nature of such portents was promoted and supported, 'the Catholic Church's official stance on these corporeal phenomena was far more critical', the Vatican wanting 'to encourage a more sceptical stance towards these exceptional bodies' (14-15). The Church's suspiciousness towards supernatural religious states grew to the point that even the Marian apparitions which took place at Lourdes in 1858 raised 'particular concerns' within the clergy, who was 'ever watchful' of Bernadette's behaviour (Harris 1999: 151).[65] The innocent, angelic child was continuously 'watched, questioned and disciplined' in order to ascertain whether 'her trance-states and gestures indicate[d] hysteria, possession or ecstasy' (Harris 1999: 161, 55), or something related to an even more occult world.[66]

Finally, there was the problem of the lasciviousness that might characterise ecstasies. This was utterly at odds with an institution based on the downright condemnation of the evils of the flesh,[67] and brought back the spectre of demonic sexual possession, with *incubus* and *succubus* seeking to have intercourse with their chosen victims. Once again, the Church was stuck in its 'plurisecolare problematica' (Gallini 319) of distinguishing between saintly and devilish ecstasies,[68] where the former associated with a pure, platonic union, the latter with diabolic sexual intercourses. As Pelaja and Scaraffia point out: 'Se il rapporto erotico con Dio è possibile, allora lo è anche quello con lo spirito ribelle, cioè con il signore delle tenebre' (83). The erotic character of religious ecstasies emerged and stood out in many mystical writings. From Saint Catherine of Genoa to Saint Teresa and to Gemma Galgani, mystics, mainly female mystics, portrayed their ecstasies in terms which are utterly equivocal with regards to the boundaries between the erotic and the religious spheres. As Janet notes, '[l]e langage des mystiques laisse entendre bien souvent que dans leurs jouissances extatiques il s'agit de véritables phénomènes sexuels' (93). In such writings, Jesus is often regarded as a spouse (in case of male mystics the Virgin Mary as a bride) whose presence is felt as both extremely pleasant

[64] With the advent of modern medicine, French physician Philippe Pinel (1745-1826) defined the 'identità tra possessione, estasi e isteria', an identity which in the second half of the nineteenth century was turned into 'a tematica di primo piano' by neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot and the school of the Salpêtrière (Gallini 321-322).

[65] Harris' reconstruction of Lourdes' apparitions provides a relevant instance of the conjunction of secularising, spiritual, and re-enchanting drives before ecstatic phenomena within the modern Catholic World.

[66] Lourdes' visions were 'embroiled in arguments about the role of suggestion, the 'subliminal unconscious' and mediumic power', and Bernadette was seen 'as a powerful medium with heightened psychic powers' (Harris, 1999: 19, 59). In an article translated by Niceforo Filalete, the occultist and mystic philosopher Carl du Prel held her as 'una sonnambula sensitiva per l'acqua, il drammatico svolgimento delle cui facoltà condusse alla nota *mariofania*', putting her 'quasi di continuo in estasi' (322).

[67] 'Ecstasy and physical sexuality could not be easily harmonized in a tradition that emphasized sin and the evils of the flesh' (Mc June 168).

[68] Gallini remarks that Ludovico Antonio Muratori addresses this plurisecular problem 'circa i criteri da adottarsi per distinguere le estasi autentiche (di origine divina) da quelle inautentiche (di origine diabolica o naturale)' (319) in the ninth chapter of *Della forza della fantasia umana* (1745), titled *Delle estasi e delle visioni*.

and painful. One of the greatest advocates of the erotic interpretation of mystical ecstasies, Leuba argues that this 'mixture of exquisite pain with incomparable delight' probably points to a 'participation of sex organs tormented by an insufficient stimulation' in ecstatic states (144-145). He relates the ecstasies of the great mystics to the 'induction of auto-erotic phenomena', claiming that they 'were sexually excited by their "spiritual" love for Jesus or the Virgin Mary', who 'were not to them simply ideas', but 'acquired at times, in particular during the ecstasy, the concreteness of a bodily presence' (143). Addressing the 'supremely delightful pains' mystics claimed to be experiencing in ecstasy, Leuba recognises 'the share taken by the sexual organism in the divine union' (149). Looking at these pains – he concludes – one has 'little trouble in recognising their source in an insufficient, tantalising, sexual excitement that does not come to a head, does not reach the *"point final,"*' (Leuba 150). Another intellectual who famously explored the link between eroticism and mysticism, in *L'Érotisme* (1957), Bataille maintains that eroticism cannot be studied without addressing religion and, more specifically, that 'flights of Christian religious experience and bursts of erotic impulses are seen to be part and parcel of the same movement' (9). Mystical experiences entail an abandonment of normal sensibility and rationality, 'a complete detachment from material conditions' (Bataille 249) sought in the encounter with the divine, which is ultimately related to the same quest for 'continuance beyond the self" (Bataille 17) at work with eroticism. 'The longed-for swoon – Bataille claims – is thus the salient feature not only of man's sensuality but also of the experience of the mystics' (240). Erotic and religious states of ecstasy involve a crushing and shattering of both the individual and their normal, routinary patterns of existence due to an overwhelming excess which undermines the self's stability and established order, opening up to an alternative, ecstatic dis-order.

For all these reasons the Church regarded ecstasy as a state which ought to be monitored. The Church's monitoring attempts are related to what in his lectures on the 'Abnormal' Foucault considers to be, from the middle of the seventeenth century onwards, 'the great problem for the Church': 'how to govern the flesh without being caught in the trap of convulsions' (2003b: 217). In order to avoid 'at any cost its withdrawal, evasion, flight, and counterpower of possession', the Church had to submit the body to 'permanent examination' and 'to an exclusive power'; it had to 'maintain the precise direction of the flesh' and 'master it' (Foucault 2003b: 217). But to control an ungovernable mind-body system is no easy task, and when the ecclesiastical authorities did not manage to govern ecstatic phenomena, they preferred to keep their distance from them as something too uncomfortable to deal with. The dismissal of ecstatic states by the Church due to their uncontrollable status corresponded to a general hardening of the Vatican's stances, coming to prefer dogmatic firmness to religious enthusiasm – a shift echoing a dynamic which has been highlighted by Lewis, according to whom

religions lose over time their original 'ecstatic effervescence' and establish their authority on dogma and ritual rather than ecstasy, so as to favour social stability (174).

During the period under investigation the disorderly traits associated with ecstatic mystical phenomena led the Church to take on an ambivalent attitude toward them. Either it supported and promoted them as a means to contrast secularisation and rationalisation, i.e., it was able to control the ecstatic dis-order to its advantage – but even in this case, the interested parties 'were not merely "pawns"' and 'managed to create personal spaces and roles of authority' (Rossi 103). Or, when this was not possible, it broke away from them, too afraid of the possibility of exploiting not the signs and manifestations of God, but of the Devil or of nervous pathologies such as hysteria, treated by the Church as parts of a (dis-ordered) whole. Such ambivalence was particularly at work in Italy, where the transition to the liberal state with the dismantling of the Church's authority, urged the latter to re-shape or mould from afresh a strong religious identity as opposed, and parallel, to the new secularising one brought about by Unification. In Stella's opinion the several mystic experiences which dot nineteenth-century Italy must be understood in relation to the 'sforzo che il ceto ecclesiastico compie per mantenere il proprio potere su una società che gli sfugge' (139). This 'sforzo' emerges in the many vindications of the divine nature of ecstasy, and the dismissal of occult and medical interpretations of the phenomenon. provided by clerical authorities in the years under study. The writings of Giuseppe Maria Berardinelli, Andrea Gigli, Francesco Salis Seewis, and Jules Pacheu (published in translation) offer significant instances of the religious establishment's attempts to maintain control over ecstatic states and their understanding, distinguishing between a divine, orderly, and Church-approved ecstasy and disorderly states of the phenomenon.

A strenuous enemy of magnetic practices,[69] in *Riflessioni e giudizii sul magnetismo animale* (1873), the canon and theologian Giuseppe Maria Berardinelli distinguishes religious ecstasy, miraculous and divine, from both 'estasi morbosa' and 'estasi magnetica', which he places on the same level. Interestingly, he resorts to a scientific source, i.e., Doctor Vincenzo Lanza's *Nosologia positiva* (1845), to corroborate his arguments,[70] in a way testifying to the intermittent alliance of certain scientific and clerical establishments in the face of ecstatic disorders:

> il chiarissimo medico Lanza […] scriveva: 'L'estasi religiosa e la miracolosa può essere accompagnata da portenti conceduti da Dio: ma l'estasi morbosa (uno de' gradi di astrazione onde

[69] He condemned the 'teoriche mesmeriche' as a 'scienza di sogni e di sbagli, di diavolerie e di catafore' (Berardinelli 54).
[70] Bovolo remarks how '[s]cience and medicine became significant and effective instruments at the service of the Catholic propaganda' (120).

> l'infermo nell'accesso si mostra fuori di sè) non ha nulla di portentoso. – Ne avrà forse l'estasi magnetica?' (Berardinelli 54-55)

After relating hypnotic suggestion to demonic possession and classifying the phenomena of magnetic ecstasy as 'pericolosi ed immorali', Berardinelli indulges in a vigorous defence of the saintly essence of the term 'ecstasy', which in his opinion has been 'contraffatta e sfigurata dai nemici di Dio': 'Estasi! Parola sacrosanta, fatta propriamente a significare il rapimento dell'anima alle superne cose pe' divini carismi, è profanata dagli aderenti a Satanasso ne' prestigi loro' (95). The clerical exponent remarks how not only the 'plebe ignara' but 'fin i dotti' confound 'i prestigi coi prodigi, le forze della natura con quelle di Satana, l'estasi magnetica con la mistica, le Crescenze e gli Alessi con le Terese e col da Cupertino', while in that 'estasi demonìaca, la castità dei costumi, la sanità del corpo, pericolano' (95-96).

Vicar capitular of Ugento, in *Magnetismo animale e spiritismo, matrimonio cristiano e dogma dell'immacolato concepimento di Maria santissima* (1876), Andrea Gigli goes back to the work of Pope Benedict XIV and divides ecstasy in 'naturale, diabolica, e divina':

> La prima nasce da cause naturali, come, per esempio, da morbo, che i professori in medicina chiamano con vocabolo greco *Cotochen* o *Catalepsin* […]. L'estasi diabolica avviene quando il demonio, permettendolo Iddio, lega i sensi, ed eccita nella fantasia e nella facoltà pensante un pensiero veemente di qualche oggetto […]. L'estasi divina finalmente accade quando Iddio, o per sè o per mezzo di un angelo buono rapisce l'uomo, e lo aliena dai sensi […]. (21-22)

Aware of the danger of mixing the three kinds of ecstasy, Gigli goes on scrutinising the peculiar marks allowing to identify and discern between them:

> I segni intanto, coi quali si distingue l'estasi naturale, sono […] una stanchezza ed una pigrizia nelle membra, un oscuramento nell'intelletto, la dimenticanza delle cose passate, il pallore nella faccia, e la tristezza nell'animo. I segni, coi quali si discerne l'estasi diabolica, sono il cattivo costume e la vita perduta dell'estatico, il massimo contorcimento delle membra, e i moti incomposti del corpo […]. I segni finalmente, coi quali si distingue l'estasi divina, sono la buona vita dell'estatico, i moti composti del suo corpo, e la tranquillità dello spirito […]. (21-23)

Divine ecstasy is associated by Gigli with the composure and steadiness of the mind and the body, whereas natural (i.e., morbid) and diabolical ecstasy are linked to diverse forms of mental and bodily dis-order, from the 'oscuramento nell'intelletto' to the 'moti incomposti del corpo'. Addressing

animal magnetism, he explains magnetic ecstasy as the result of diabolic activity but, unlike Berardinelli, maintains that it is legitimate to employ the (religious) term of ecstasy to define the 'alienazione dei sensi prodotta […] dai processi magnetici' (20). He also urges the Clergy to look at animal magnetism 'con attenzione seria' but only in order to regard it as 'un errore funesto' and fight it 'come tale' (Gigli 40).

Perhaps the most significant evidence of the vindication of the divine nature of ecstasy by a member of the clerical establishment is provided by an article written by baron and Jesuit Francesco Salis Seewis, published in 1888 on *La Civiltà Cattolica* with the title 'Le estasi, la medicina e la chiesa'.[71] Divided in two parts, the article begins with the recognition of the attention that hysteria has elicited among the non-professional audience, an interest that, in Salis Seewis' opinion, presents an anticlerical and antireligious foundation:

> Tutto il rumore […] levatosi a proposito delle osservazioni isterologiche, procede dal vanto che si danno gl'increduli di avere trovato in quella affezione morbosa la spiegazione naturale di fenomeni attribuiti già o ad ossessione diabolica o a grazia soprannaturale, come le estasi […]. Quindi il rappresentare la Chiesa come convinta, dai progressi scientifici, di vergognoso abbaglio […]. (267-268)

Focusing on ecstasies and other extraordinary phenomena like visions and stigmata, Salis Seewis refers to their many entries in modern medical books, mentioning the *Dictionnaire de médecine et de chirurgie* and Claude-François Michéa's 'dogmatica e gratuita asserzione' according to which ecstasy is a 'stato morboso' (268) that excludes all supernatural intervention. Denouncing the 'meschinità scientifica' of approaches like Michéa's, unreservedly pathologising and hystericising ecstatic phenomena – 'al presente l'andazzo è per l'isteria' – (Salis Seewis 270, 272), he claims that ecstasy does not exclusively belong to the world of medicine.[72] Condemning the 'diagnosi […] sbrigativa' the 'medicina incredula' provided of ecstatic states, he claims:

> finchè essa si limita a schierarci innanzi una serie di estasi morbose, attenentisi più specialmente coll'isteria, vuole ogni ragione che noi accettiamo da lei quelle notizie colla fiducia dovuta a chi parla di cose della sua professione: e le accoglieranno così anche i teologi […]. Ma quando poi la medicina moderna […] si avventura ad asserire che non si danno nè si diedero mai nella storia altre estasi o visioni che non fossero isteriche […], chiaro è che i seguaci d'Esculapio passano dall'analisi positiva dei fatti ad un'asserzione generale ed esclusiva […]. (273)

[71] On Salis Seewis' article see also Bovolo.
[72] The 'argomento […] non è tutto di sua appartenza' (Salis Seewis 273).

Granting the existence of morbid ecstasies along with supernatural ones, in the second part of his article, Salis Seewis provides the examples of a mystical and hysterical ecstasy, showing his awareness of the difference between 'fenomeni soprannaturali e sintomi isterici, fra le Sante estatiche e le maniache degli spedali' (274). Drawing on Jean-Martin Charcot and Paul Richer's work on hysteria, and Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Régnard's *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière* (1876-1880), which I will later extensively address, he depicts the four stages of grand hysteria. Designating the violent, possessed-like convulsions of the first and second period, the sudden alternation of states of desperate fears, ravings, and edifying prayers of the third, ecstatic period, and the final contractures of the fourth period, Salis Seewis invites the reader to perceive the clear distinction between the orderly ecstasies of Christian saints and the ecstatic disorder of the hysterics:

> C'è egli il senso comune a paragonare comechessia colle estasi delle Vite dei Santi questo diavoleto di convulsioni, di scontorcimenti, di allucinazioni frenetiche e di scompigliati deliria […]? […] Ma quando mai si vide alcun che di simile nelle estasi dell'agiografia cristiana? (536-337)

The Jesuit concludes his article by insisting on the dogmatic attitude displayed by most doctors and revealing how theologians are more open-minded and cautious than physicians when addressing phenomena, like ecstasy, which possess an ambiguous status.

In 1910, the *Rivista di Filosofia Neo-Scolastica* published the translation of the soon-to-be released French study *L'Expérience mystique et l'activité subcosciente* by the Jesuit and theologian Jules Pacheu. In the chapter entitled 'I fatti mistici e la patologia mentale', Pacheu inquires if ecstasy is 'un meccanismo psicologico o psico-fisiologico, che accompagna, o prepara, od esprime l'azione divina, ovvero è un fatto naturale, nient'altro che un meccanismo patologico, uno stato morboso' (618). He answers by implicitly calling into question the pathologising positivist approach to allegedly supernatural phenomena, reaching the core of this research's theoretical framework: 'Riconosco, è vero, che allorché si hanno questi fenomeni non siamo più nello stato normale; ma diviene forse, per questo, lecito identificare ciò che è extranormale con ciò che è morboso?' (Pacheu 619). Can all ecstatic states – including 'l'attenzione concentrata di un genio o di un santo, di Newton fisso nella contemplazione della sua idea, di Santa Teresa in estasi' (Pacheu 619) – be regarded as morbid, thus a dis-orderly threat to the orderly function of society?[73]

[73] In his following statements, Pacheu suggests that pathological conditions like hysteria are seen to be at work in deranged and violent individuals that represent a menacing alterity to the olderly conditions of society.

In a similar fashion to Gigli, he also claims that what distinguishes saintly ecstasies from hysterical attacks is the former's 'decenza delle attitudini, la loro nobiltà, l'assenza di atti violenti e disordinati', as well as the absence of the 'debolezza psichica […] quale si osserva nelle isteriche' (Pacheu 624). He concedes that ecstatic states might be in some cases the product of a pathological condition of the mind, but remarks that this is by no means a general rule. Based on these classifications, he distinguishes between 'mistici inferiori, degenerati, senza genio, neuropatici' and 'grandi mistici' who '[b]en lungi dall'appartenere alla coorte degli squilibrati, di coloro che presentano la "miseria psichica", […] sono invece un singolare esempio di equilibrio mentale' (629) and possess 'una meravigliosa padronanza di sé' (631). Despite undergoing an ecstatic experience, Pacheu implies, mystics are in control of themselves, their mental faculties, their ecstatic state, once again pointing to the existence of two alternative ecstatic orders: the disorderly one of inferior mystics, degenerates, and neuropaths, and the orderly one of great mystics. A look at the ecstasies of Italian mystics in the years under study demonstrate that the clear definitions and reassuring distinctions offered by Berardinelli, Gigli, Salis Seewis, and Pacheu conceal a far more nuanced and troubling scenario.

If, as Leuba points out, the overall Latin tradition is 'by far the most spectacular' and produced 'Grand Mysticism' (54), mystics from the Italian territories enjoyed a distinctive, quantitatively relevant, fame. In terms of popularity, the mystical experiences of Angela of Foligno, Catherine of Siena, and Saint Francis of Assisi have little to envy Saint Teresa's – and Saint Teresa herself, though Spanish, is somewhat regarded as a symbol of Italian mysticism because of Bernini's *Transverberation* (1647-1652), for ever immortalising in marble and bronze the saint's ecstasy. It was not by chance that, when in the second half of the nineteenth century interest in mysticism rekindled, scholars looked at the Italian tradition as an emblematic reservoir of mystical phenomena. Émile Gebhart's *L'Italie mystique* (1890) ratifies the international recognition of an Italian mystical primacy, both on a religious and, more generally, cultural level. In an article written in 1895 on Italian mystic literature, the poet and literary critic Enrico Nencioni detects the existence of a mark of distinction characterising Italian mysticism as compared to other countries. According to Nencioni, 'il genio mistico italiano' distinguishes itself from the French, German, or Belgian one in that it always retains [i]l senso pratico della vita', passing 'dalla vita contemplativa all'attiva, senza sforzo, senza pena, senza intervallo' (231). A 'natura essenzialmente italiana', Saint Catherine of Siena perfectly embodies this 'doppio carattere […] di contemplante e di operante' for which 'nel suo più ardente ed etereo misticismo […] non perdè mai di vista le cose della terra':

> Oggi, annichila sensi e volontà in una estasi di acquiescenza e di abnegazione completa in Dio – domani, visita spedali, riforma conventi, conforta carcerati, assiste condannati a morte, minaccia cardinali, rimprovera papi […]. (231-233)

Interestingly, her operative activity includes reforms, threats, and reprimands directed towards the religious established order. Despite the weakness of the claim itself, Nencioni's considerations are noteworthy because of their implication of a specificity pertaining to Italian mysticism.

Among the several Italian mystics who lived in the period under study – such as Maria Domenica Barbagli, Veronica Barone, Edvige Carboni, Daniele Comboni, Giacomo Cusmano, Innocenzo da Berzo, Maria Pierina De Micheli, Benigna Consolata Ferrero, Elena Guerra, Donato Manduzio, Luisa Piccarreta, Anna Eugenia Picco, Maria Valtorta – I will address the ecstasies of Gemma Galgani (1878-1903) and Palma Mattarelli d'Oria (1825-1888) as emblematic cases displaying the Church's previously outlined ambivalent attitude towards mysticism and ecstatic phenomena, revealing the latter's troubling, uncontrollable nature.

2.3 The Cases of Gemma Galgani and Palma Mattarelli

Born in a hamlet of Capannori (near Lucca) into a bourgeois, secular family endorsing a conventional religiosity, Gemma Galgani attended secular school before entering the sphere of the nuns' religious education. Far from being a virtuous pupil, according to one of her teachers she 'answered back, behaved spitefully, and was disobedient' (Bell 10). Ridiculed by her family because of her spiritual vocation, she started confessing with Monsignor Giovanni Volpi, the Auxiliary Bishop of Lucca. At the beginning of 1899 Galgani fell gravel ill: that was when Saint Gabriel manifested himself to her and miraculously healed her from her malady. In June 1899 she received her first stigmata, which was met with apprehension by the 'eminently practical' Monsignor Volpi, who was 'deeply suspicious about such manifestations of supernatural favor' (Bell 17). It was Volpi who questioned the divine origin of Galgani's stigmata and asked Doctor Pietro Pfanner to examine her 'against [her] wishes' (Mazzoni 1996: 162). On that occasion the Monsignor also encouraged her 'to be *"maschia,"* "male," to give up her excessive femininity manifested in silliness and hysteria' (Mazzoni 1996: 163). Unsurprisingly, Doctor Pfanner diagnosed Galgani with hysteria, 'revealing his Charcot-like tendencies by pointing to the visibility of Galgani's hysteria as the best proof of its diagnosis' (Mazzoni 1996: 163).[74]

[74] After being examined by the doctor, Galgani herself conceded the possibility of being a hysteric: 'Let it be as that doctor said, that it's hysteria: precisely because it is so, Jesus loves me more' (quoted in Mazzoni 1996: 164).

Though Monsignor Volpi continued to guide her, from 1900 onwards Galgani passed into the hands of the younger Father Germano Ruoppolo di San Stanislao, i.e., 'the Passionist priest who took it upon himself to make her a saint' (Bell 9). To achieve his goal, Father Germano constantly monitored Galgani. Before meeting her, he asked priest Don Lorenzo Agrimonti to furtively gather information on her through the daughters of Cecilia Giannini – whose house Galgani moved into once she was no longer welcomed by her family –, and afterwards he continued to ask the Gianninis for reports on her daily life. The monitoring gaze he exerted upon her was soon accompanied by the imposition of orders and commands. Asserting an authoritative control upon her, he forbade Galgani to do external penances, to talk of him to other people, and to be touched by other people: 'No, don't touch me, because my Dad wants no one to touch me…', she said during an ecstasy she experienced on Tuesday, August 12 (Galgani 2003a:148).[75] Most importantly, he compelled her to write her confessions in the manner of an autobiography. Acting 'out of obedience', Galgani took on the task and was 'influenced in the telling by what she thought her new director wanted to hear' (Bell and Mazzoni 22).

As emerges from her autobiography, her apparently docile and obedient nature was frequently replaced by a transgressive attitude. Among the sins she acknowledged committing, those related to disobedience figure extensively. Galgani expressed her impatience towards the controlling gazes of Monsignor Volpi, Father Germano, and the members of the Giannini family: 'these people I don't know what else they want' (2003b: 23). Furthermore, she did not always agree with her spiritual fathers, engaging in 'fierce battles' (Bell and Mazzoni 119), both against Monsignor Volpi and the beloved Father Germano. As Bell and Mazzoni remark, her 'arduous, lengthy, careful, halting process of spiritual maturation' was 'sometimes nurtured by Father Germano and other times seemingly despite his guidance' (118-119). Galgani's attitude of non-compliance and insubordination towards those surrounding her, first and foremost her spiritual fathers, is showed by a list of promises on 'what she must try harder to do', unveiling, in fact, 'what she did not do, not as a child and not now':

1. No longer hide anything from my Spiritual Father…
2. No longer do anything by my own head…
3. Tell everything with sincerity, without being begged.
4. Reveal everything that happens internally.
5. Obey in everything, without laments.
6. Always be content with whatever my Father does, because I know with certainty that he is guided and illuminated by God.

[75] I quote from Bell and Mazzoni's translation of the ecstasies Galgani experienced during the summer of 1902.

7. Tell about every temptation, however embarrassing it may be; and in my way of behaving in those ugly moments, I will obey what has been ordered for me; I will no longer do as in the past.
8. To tie all this together, I resolve before God to no longer have a will of my own.
9. Whatever temptation comes over me, especially about my Father, I will no longer put faith in it and I will no longer believe it, because the devil cannot do other than tell lies. (Galgani 2003a: 119)

While Galgani's promises of obedience and submission were directed to her earthly confessors, they were also addressed to the real interlocutor and source of her religious contentment: Jesus Christ. Galgani's 'wilfulness', her 'triumph of subversion over subservience' emerges precisely in her submission to Jesus as opposed to those surrounding her. As Mazzoni remarks, 'she tells Jesus that she will obey him at any cost and risk, regardless of the opposition of Church and society' (1995: 383). Revealing her contentious relation with the Church, during the Pentecost of May 1902 she tellingly claims that 'Jesus had accepted her offer to take onto her own body an expiation for sins committed by the Church's priests' (Bell and Mazzoni 118). Refusing to unreservedly obey her spiritual superiors, she wholly submits to the primary source of her ecstasies.

Galgani's ecstasies were recorded by members of the Giannini family, in particular by Eufemia Giannini.[76] The reading of the accounts allows for a few observations. Firstly, Galgani's love towards Jesus strongly emerges in terms of bodily involvement. In the ecstasy dated Tuesday 10th of June 1902, Galgani addresses Jesus as her 'love', opening her breast to him, and inviting him to 'enter', 'burn', and 'consume' her with his 'divine fire' (Galgani 2003a: 120). She further claims to 'thirst' for Jesus (Tuesday, June 17; 121) and desires to 'feel' his flesh:

Lord my Jesus, when my lips near yours to kiss you, let me feel your gall. When my shoulders rest on yours, let me feel your scourges. When your flesh communicates with mine, let me feel your Passion. (Monday, June 30; Galgani 2003a: 129)

She even asks to 'embrace' Jesus, albeit recognizing her boldness: 'Let me embrace you, celestial bridegroom, source of all my consolations. Who am I, to speak so boldly with you?' (June-July; Galgani 2003a: 129).

[76] Eufemia became a Passionist nun with the name of Gemma Maddalena di Gesù, founded the congregation *Sorelle di Santa Gemma Galgani*, and was beatified by the Church.

Secondly, the potency of Galgani's ecstasies is kindled by a divine love which 'consumes' her and 'penetrates' her body with 'too much fury', bringing her to ask Jesus to permanently 'strip' her of her flesh and grant her to die out of ecstatic love:

> Your love, oh God, has truly passed all limits. Yes, toward me it passes all limits. (Tuesday, June 26; Galgani 2003a: 124)

> Oh love, oh infinite love!... Strip me of this flesh; either tear me out of this body or stop, because I cannot go on… My body, oh Lord, can no longer stand being continually consumed, so, either remove me from this earth or stop… […] See: your love, oh Lord, your love penetrates even to my body, with too much fury. […] What a beautiful death, oh Lord, to die a victim of love… a victim for you! (Monday, August 11; Galgani 2003a: 147)

Lastly, what appears from Galgani's ecstasies, and is related to her request to be torn out of her body, is her wish to reach her celestial spouse in the highest heavens and be freed from the earthly world. In voicing this urge, Galgani significantly depicts her body as chained: 'Release this body, oh Jesus… break these chains… I shall not be happy until my soul is free and flies to you alone. When can I rejoice completely in you?'; 'break these chains that prevent me from flying to you' (Saturday-Sunday, June 28-29; Galgani 2003a: 128). The depiction of Galgani's chained body aptly matches its constant – intrusive, if not downright invasive – exposure to the other people's gaze, that of her spiritual fathers, of the doctors diagnosing her with hysteria, of overall society. It was perhaps for this reason that in February 1901 she had asked Jesus 'to remove her external signs of stigmata while increasing her internal suffering' (Bell and Mazzoni 118): this way, she could divert attention from her body, not attracting, as much as she did, those scrutinising eyes. It is important to observe that the religious and clinical gazes had much in common. As in the case of Charcot's hysterics, Galgani was photographed by Beppe Giannini at the request of Father Germano (Figure 1). One of the photos portrays her with 'her hands joined and her eyes upturned in a "pose" of ecstasy' (Mazzoni 1996: 165). As Mazzoni shrewdly points out, Father Germano's desire to take these pictures 'testifies to the analogous response to the hysteric and the mystic at the turn of the century, both closely observed and immortalized because of their eminent as well as titillating bodily visibility' (1996: 165).[77]

On the one hand, Galgani's ecstatic experiences were subject to the monitoring gaze of her spiritual fathers and doctors, equally aiming at turning 'the mystic's opaque body into the transparent

[77] The description of Galgani's ecstasies, as Mazzoni notes, 'conforms in some ways to the ecstasy Charcot describes in his chapter *Les démoniaques dans l'art* titled 'Les extatiques' (1996: 164).

site of a strategy of control' (Mazzoni 1995: 374),[78] with the result of chaining Galgani's body. On the other hand, they enabled her to react against the authority of those surrounding her, partially eschew their controlling eyes, by transporting her into an altered state of consciousness where she could be no longer gazed upon but could herself gaze upon her celestial lover, Jesus, the only one whom she truly wished to obey. It was through her ecstatic mystical experiences that Galgani finally 'established that hers was indeed an offering she controlled and enjoyed' (Mazzoni 1995: 384). Despite her unruly, in fact, disorderly, mystical path, Galgani was beatified and then canonised by the Church, becoming, as Mazzoni points out, 'the only twentieth-century stigmatic to have been canonized' (1996: 161). If we turn to Palma Mattarelli's case, moving from Tuscany to the south of Italy, and the territories which were part of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies before 1860, we are faced with the example of the Church's ultimate condemnation of mystical phenomena.

[78] Whereby 'the effective collusion between medical and religious interpretations of Galgani in spite of the apparent irreconcilability of their paradigms' (Mazzoni: 1995: 374).

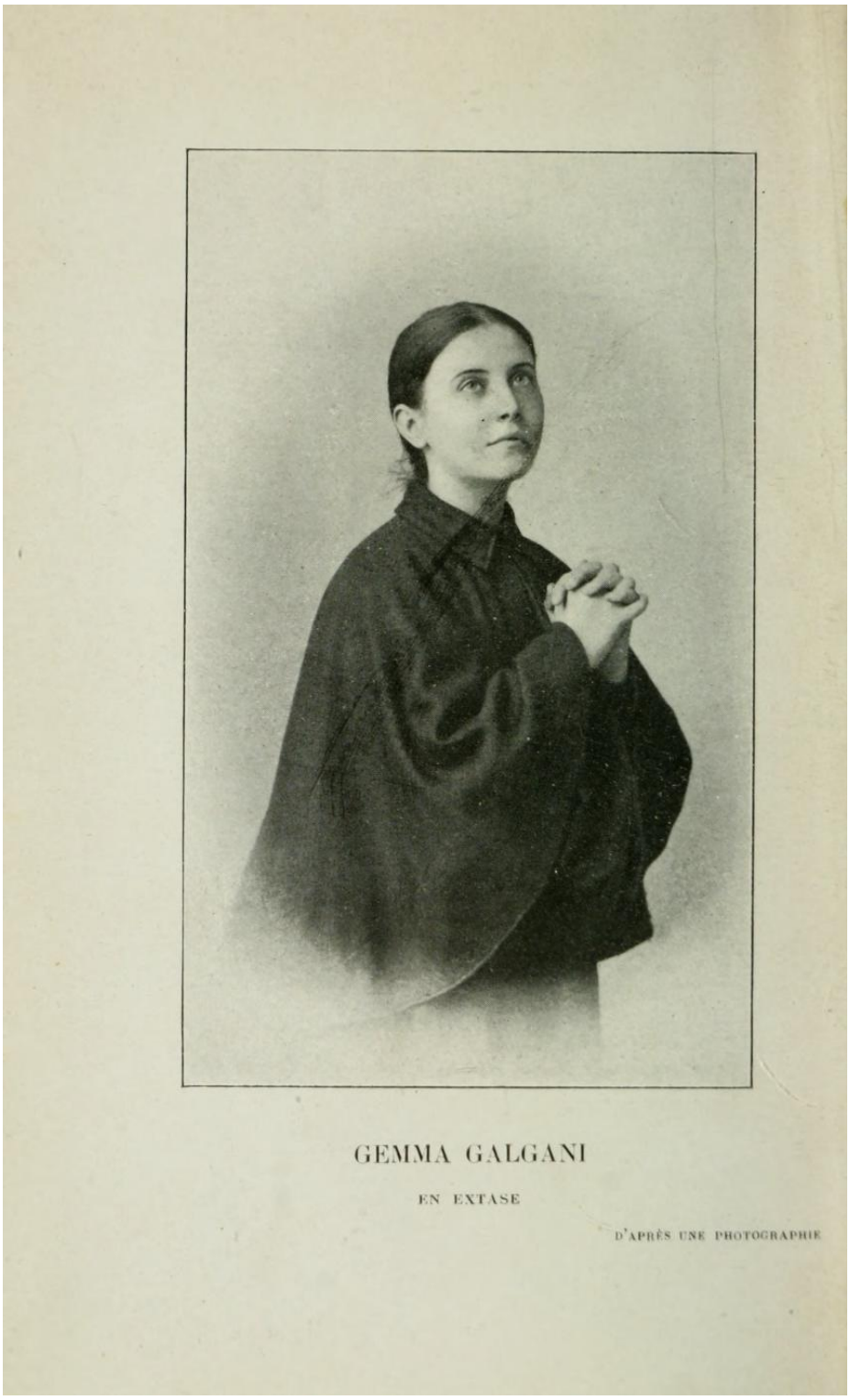


Figure 1

Palma Mattarelli was born in the rural town of Oria (Apulia) in 1825. When she was seventeen years old, she married Domenico Zito and bore him three children, who all died prematurely. Sometime later, in 1848, Zito too died. A widow and a childless mother, Mattarelli was left with no one and turned to religion, under the spiritual direction of Canon Vincenzo De Angelis. Ten years after the death of her husband, stigmata began to appear on Mattarelli's body, which were soon

followed by ecstasies, visions, and prophecies. Word spread and Mattarelli gradually rose to fame. She came under the protection of a second spiritual father, Brother Francesco de Pace, who in 1866 wrote a treatise on her, titled *Origine de liquore che presentamente rovescia Palma Addolorata Mattarelli non che dell'incendio del costato dell'istessa*. If on the one hand Mattarelli's reputation was growing significantly, attracting waves of visitors wishing to witness the extraordinary phenomena happening to her, on the other scepticism and concern on behalf of both the Church and the civic authorities were also increasing. Her prophecies were particularly troubling for the religious and government establishments as they allegedly predicted the political fates of the Church and the new Italian State.[79] In 1860, before Unification, she had declared that '[r]evolution' and 'great turmoil' would be visiting Italy 'for fifteen years', provoking 'grave damages to the Church' with 'suppression of the monks' and the momentary emigration of the Pope from Rome to London or Constantinople (quoted in Klaniczay 112-113).

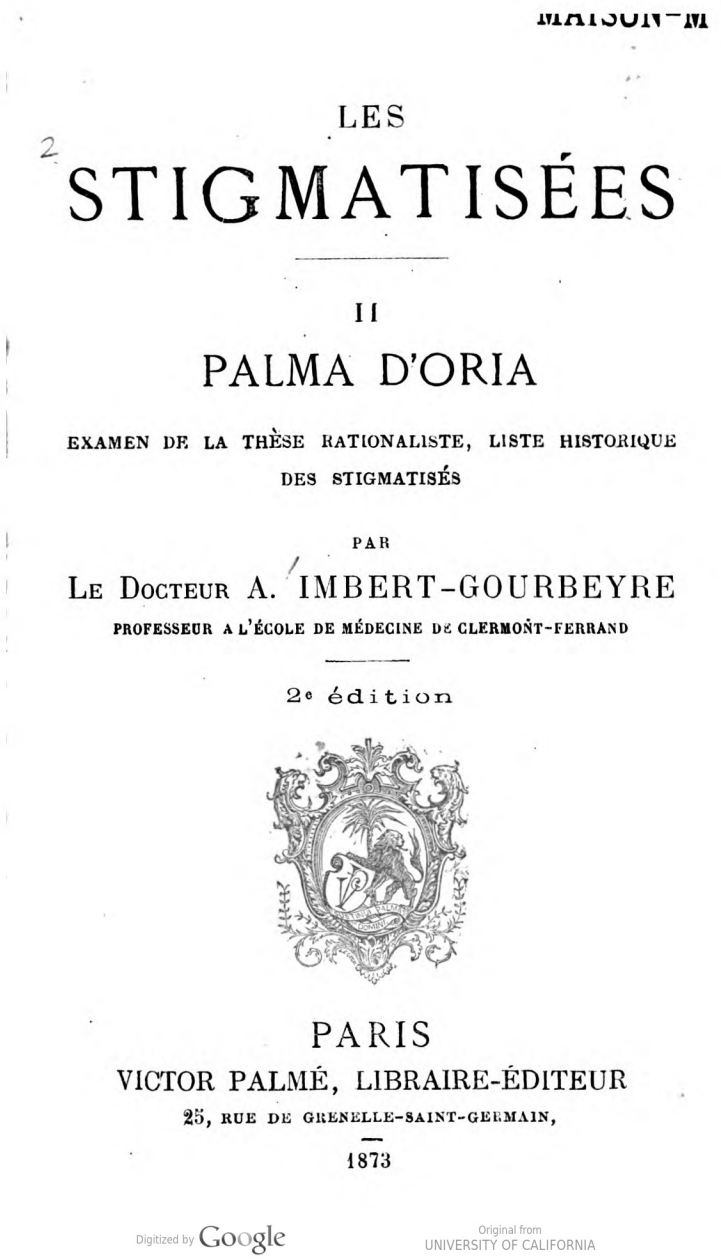
In 1866, the mayor of Oria, Pasquale Attanasi, decided to put Mattarelli under house-arrest to prevent the unstoppable flow of pilgrims: she was to move into an orphanage with her mother, where she would be completely secluded and would only occasionally talk with her confessor. As the order was not fully observed, the civic authorities continued to make complaints until in 1869 the Holy Office finally decided to initiate an inquisitorial process, accusing her of *affettata santità*, that is, of faking the purportedly holy phenomena she was experiencing.[80] The 'triggering incident' was the submission to the Congregation of the manuscript *Unione dell'anima con Dio spiegata nella vita, miracoli e meraviglie di Palma Mattarelli*, written by Canon Vincenzo De Angelis and submitted to the Congregation 'for approval' (Klaniczay 114). Along with visions and ecstasies, the manuscript presented accounts of the devil's sexual temptations and impositions, including that of making Mattarelli eat excrement. The volume was examined by Father Giacinto De Ferrari who claimed it was filled with 'eresie, errori e falsità di ogni genere' (quoted in Castelli 33). In the meanwhile, Mattarelli's fame had crossed national borders. In England, in *The Month: A Magazine and Review*, the Jesuit writer and preacher Henry James Coleridge referred to both Palma Mattarelli and Louise Lateau as '[t]he most remarkable of […] *stigmatisées* or *ecstaticas*', accusing the establishment of 'torturing' Mattarelli to assess the truthfulness of her ecstasies:

> Louise Lateau we had all heard of in England. The name of the other was new to most of us, but the facts of her case seemed to be very remarkable indeed. […] the state of affairs in Italy […] have not […] prevented the officials of the Piedmontese Government from torturing the poor lady

[79] Sondani stresses the 'massive supernatural and prophetic "invasion"' (22) characterising the second half of the nineteenth century.
[80] The process has been documented by Castelli.

> by the application of painful tests of many kinds, with the view of discovering whether her state is one of real ecstacy [sic]. (20)

Most importantly, Mattarelli caught the attention of French doctor Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre, who was at the time studying Louise Lateau's case. To each of them he would devote one of the two volumes constituting *Les Stigmatisées*, to be published in 1873 (Figure 2). Imbert-Gourbeyre was extremely fascinated by the two women who, something which greatly struck him, claimed to know and see each other during their ecstatic supernatural phenomena. The French doctor was also keen to take advantage of Mattarelli – a 'consummate prophetess', who was 'much more available than Louise' (Sandoni 29) – to learn about the future of his country in a moment when the conflict with the Church was at its apex in France. Imbert-Gourbeyre called on Mattarelli in 1871 and stayed with her, in the house of Federico Marzella, for four consecutive days. In his book he acknowledges that, compared to Bois-d'Haine, where he had visited Louise Lateau, Oria presented to him a greater 'ensemble de faits réellement étranges' (1873: 7). In his 1894 work, *La stigmatization, l'extase divine et les miracles de Lourdes: réponse aux libres-penseurs*, he would confess that of all the stigmatics he had seen, 'c'est elle [Mattarelli] qui m'a rendu témoin des faits les plus extraordinaires', dubbing her as 'la femme la plus extraordinaire de notre époque' (Imbert-Gourbeyre 1894a: 567, 1873: 3).



MAISON-M

LES

2

STIGMATISÉES

II

PALMA D'ORIA

EXAMEN DE LA THÈSE RATIONALISTE, LISTE HISTORIQUE DES STIGMATISÉS

PAR

LE DOCTEUR A. IMBERT-GOURBEYRE

PROFESSEUR A L'ÉCOLE DE MÉDECINE DE CLERMONT-FERRAND

2e édition

PARIS

VICTOR PALMÉ, LIBRAIRE-ÉDITEUR

25, RUE DE GRENELLE-SAINT-GERMAIN,

1873

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Figure 2

On the last day of the doctor's stay in Oria, Mattarelli underwent an extraordinary ecstatic phenomenon: 'J'ai vu […] l'extase et l'incendie divin dans toute sa magnificence', Imbert-Gourbeyre writes (1873: 59). The ecstatic episode is reported as follows:

> Elle venait d'entrer en extase. Je la trouvai assise sur son fauteil, le tronc un peu renversé en arrière, les bras étendus et écartés, les yeux fermés et enfoncées. Elle paraissait souffrir beaucoup. […] Antonietta qui se tenait près de Palma, se met à découvrir un peu la poitrine de la voyante, en s'écriant avec enthousiasme: – Elle brûle. *E bruciata*! […] Tout à coup, au milieu de son extase, Palma se met à chanter à demi-voix un *Laudetur* italien […]. – A ce moment des sourires célestes irradient sur toute sa figure.

> Quelques instants après, Palma se met à dire qu'elle voit le demon et qu'elle lui crache à la figure. On la voit en effet crachoter du bout des lèvres.
>
> […] puis elle ouvre les yeux et sort de son extase. Le ravissement avait duré près d'une demi-heure. (Imbert-Gourbeyre 1873: 50-53)

The description of Mattarelli's ecstasy perfectly fits Charcot and Richer's outline of the third ecstatic period of grand hysteria for female hysterics, including, as I will show, the alternation between an 'ordre gai' made of music and laughter, and an order 'triste', marked by 'incendies' and the vision of 'un être imaginaire' whom the hysterical 'crache[…] au visage' (105). Imbert-Gourbeyre welcomed Mattarelli's passionate ecstasy as a veritable case of supernatural phenomenon. Unlike most contemporary doctors involved in the examination of supernatural phenomena, he had intended 'to be fully sensitive to the possibility of supernatural manifestations' (Klaniczay 117) and felt, consequently, at ease when he ended up acknowledging their truth. In fact, he embarked on a veritable crusade against those who stubbornly interpreted ecstasies and other supernatural phenomena as either the product of imagination or symptoms of hysteria. In the second volume of *La stigmatization, l'extase divine et les miracles de Lourdes*, Imbert-Gourbeyre refuted the thesis of the Salpétriens, i.e., the doctors of the Parisian hospital Salpêtrière, of which I will extensively talk, contesting Doctor Désiré-Magloire Bourneville's interpretation of Lateau's stigmata. Unveiling the difference between divine ecstasies and the 'extases salpétriennes' (1894b: 433), Imbert-Gourbeyre maintained that '[l]es Salpétriens 'n'ont rient démontré' (1894b: 457) when they claim that '[l]es extatiques […] ne sont que des hystériques' (1894b: 459).[81] Not only did Imbert-Gourbeyre fiercely oppose those who saw hysteria in ecstasy, he even confessed to feeling unworthy ('je n'étais pas digne') of the 'monde supernaturel' (1873: 59) he was having access to through Palma Mattarelli.

Remarkably, in Mattarelli's case it was the doctor who regarded her ecstatic states as truly related to God, whereas the Church, including some of the religious figures who were close to Mattarelli, continued to look at her with suspicion and defiance. Imbert-Gourbeyre noted this 'circonstance toute partiulière' in relation to the mother superior who attended his visits in Oria:

> Palma savait fort bien que la Mère Becaud ne croyait pas tout ce qu'on disait d'elle. Dès ma première visite à la mère supérieure, j'avais parfaitement compris sa reserve et même sa defiance à l'endroit des faits miraculeux de l'extatique. (1873: 60-61)[82]

[81] The doctor is specifically referring to the contentions made by the psychiatrist Henri Le Grand du Saulle, a chief physician at the Salpêtrière.

[82] According to the doctor's reports, when Mattarelli showed him her stigmata, she would address the mother superior attempting to convince her of the divine nature of her signs, asking her 'avec instance': 'Regarde, tu vois bien la cicatrice?' (Imbert-Gourbeyre 1873: 61).

The suspicion of Mère Becaud matched that of the Church. Pius XI himself followed the story closely and with diffidence. The French author Louis Veuillot, a radical supporter of Catholicism and papal infallibility, wrote in a letter to Imbert dated 10th of June 1872: 'Le pape n'est point *palmaïste*' (quoted in Sandoni 29). The investigation opened by the Holy Office ultimately established Mattarelli's condemnation with the decision to marginalise her and place her under the control of the clerical authorities:

> Palma Mattarelli sia isolata proibendo a chicchessia, specialmente agli ammiratori, di avvicinarla; che gli si deputi un direttore [...] coll'ingiunzione che di quando in quando [il vescovo] informi esattamente di tutto quello che troverà degno di rimarco e di straordinario in quella donna […]. (quoted in Castelli 34)

After the conviction, Pius IX decided to send one of his men, Don Luigi Ferrari, to check on Mattarelli. Following his stay in Oria, Ferrari claimed that 'in tutto quello che si dice di Palma vi è illusione, fanatismo, inganno, forse per parte del demonio' (Castelli 36). The Church continued to restrict Mattarelli's social encounters, eventually deciding to seclude her in a cloister convent in Martina Franca. Although she seemingly managed to eschew most restrictions, her 'fame was ruined' (Klaniczay 115) by the process. As for Imbert-Gourbeyre, he was contacted by the Inquisition during the investigations and was made to stop any reprint of *Les stigmatisées.*[83]

Caught in the crucible of religious, political, medical, and popular interest, the case of Palma Mattarelli not only provides an interesting example displaying, as noted by Klaniczay, 'the struggles between a secularized scientific worldview and the persistent popularity of religious manifestations and apocalyptic expectations' (119). It also offers a most curious instance of ecstatic phenomena converting a doctor into believing in the divine nature of ecstasies whilst warding off the religious authorities. While in Gemma Galgani's case the Church supports and re-appropriates ecstatic disorders to its advantage by controlling them – thus displaying an attitude of endorsement, promotion, and exploitation –, Palma Mattarelli's story, which elicited a veritable *vexata quaestio* among the Catholic authorities, emblematically provides a case in which the Church distances itself from and even actively rejects ecstatic phenomena. Subsuming the ambivalence displayed by the Church towards the state of ecstasy, the endings of their cases are self-explanatory: *post-mortem* beatification for Galgani, forced seclusion for Mattarelli.

[83] As Sandoni remarks, he underwent an 'informal censure' (32), the bishop of Clermond-Ferrand 'dissuad[ing]' him to reprint the work following 'an admonition from the Sant'Uffizio' (Klaniczay 119).

Going back to Lewis' work, the anthropologist believed ecstasy to be a 'trance state' involving a number of symptoms – including the 'dissociation', 'involuntary and automatic acts' – which were the same to be found in 'hypnotic and mediumistic states' (Mc Daniel 70). Most scholars addressing mystical ecstasies have highlighted both the analogies and the differences existing between religious ecstasies and states of trance pertaining to a world which is as transcendental but perhaps more obscure than the mystical world. It is now time to introduce the other significant protagonist of this ecstatic investigation: 'occulture'.

3. 'Occulture'

As Partridge notes with reference to its etymology, the term *occult* 'concerns that which is hidden or concealed' (2004: 68). Ever since its first appearance, dating back to 'significant individuals' like Zoroaster, Hermes Trismegistus, and the Sibyls, the word has enriched its meaning and come to denote 'a broad, multi-faceted concept referring to arcane and restricted knowledge' (Partridge 2004: 69). Particularly crucial to its Western evolution were the rationalisation brought about by Enlightenment and the subsequent process of secularisation, under which, as Granholm points out, '[n]ew expressions of the occult were crafted' (727). While in the pre-Enlightenment period, followers of occult doctrines still saw the world as 'imbued by divine forces', the post-Enlightenment occultists 'actively engaged with, and often adapted to, the new rationalist-scientific worldview', starting to conceive the world in terms of pseudo-mechanistic laws and 'to describe mystical experience and encounters with spiritual beings as occurring in the psyche rather than on objectively existing astral planes' (Granholm 727). Hanegraaff fittingly defines occultism as 'all attempts by esotericists to come to terms with a disenchanted world or, alternatively, by people in general to make sense of esotericism from the perspective of a disenchanted world' (1996: 422).[84] On 'the complex relationship between the surge of interest in occultism and the allegedly positivist, secularist, Enlightenment-inspired qualities of modernity', Giudice observes that there is now almost unanimous consent among scholars on viewing occultism 'as a progressive, integral aspect of the modern world' and 'a forum in which new social conquests (emancipation of woman and democratization of access to knowledge, to name but two key factors) would make their first appearance' (2). It is precisely by adapting to the modern, disenchanted world that occultism managed not to disappear under the pressures of secularism but, taking on new forms, as Granholm suggests, to flourish.

Neither belonging to the world of science as it came to be understood after the Enlightenment,[85] nor to that of official religion, which regarded it as dangerous superstition, from the nineteenth century onwards 'occulture' occupied a middle position[86] that enabled the creation of a 'subculture' (Partridge 2004: 69). The latter gathered people who rejected downright materialistic interpretations of reality, felt '[t]he lure of that which is beyond the ordinary' (Partridge 2018: 3), and yet did not wish to align with the positions of the official religion. It is important to note that this

[84] Quoted in Granholm 727.
[85] Asprem dates the 'strict *separation* between science and the occult' to 'the Enlightenment period [and] onwards', especially 'the nineteenth century, with the professionalisation of the natural sciences, and the sociological differentiation of "scientists" as a separate social class' (712).
[86] Replacing occultism with magic, Josephson Storm points out that 'in the binary operation between religion and science, superstition/magic functions as the third term in a Derridean sense. "Magic" is the point where the system does not close' (16). On magnetism as a third middle ground between the positions of religion and science see Armando.

alternative cultural order was not reserved to the elites. Following 'an increased visibility and massive popularization of the occult in the post-Enlightenment West', occult doctrines and practices – in a similar way to the democratic experiences of the mystics I have referred to – 'became available for the larger masses' (Asprem 727). As I will show, this is particularly true within the Italian context, where magnetic culture was spectacularised through popular performances. As for the beliefs and practices that could be labelled as occult during the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries, these include those pertaining to Mesmerism, Spiritualism, and other forms of the paranormal,[87] involving a variety of phenomena which 'transgress the seemingly inviolable borders between the scientific-secular and the religious' (Granholm 727). As stressed by Camilletti, the 'paranormale' is 'letteralmente, ciò che eccede la *norma*' (2018: 119).

The ecstatic phenomenon encompassed and epitomised these occult discourses. The histories of animal magnetism, hypnotism, and Spiritualism are brought together by the singular state of rapture:

> in ciascuno di questi casi vi era sempre un soggetto che veniva 'rapito' in una condizione speciale, in seno alla quale sembrava potessero verificarsi fatti meravigliosi. Per quale causa ciò avvenisse, ossia quale fosse l'etichetta da attribuire a quanto accadeva, era solo una questione di interpreti, di scuole, di culture, di religioni, di lingue e di contesti. […] un termine valeva l'altro: sonnambuli, ipnotizzati, medium – e volendo, pure 'assistiti', santoni, guaritori, estatici e mistici […]. (De Ceglia and Leporiere 145-146)

Manifesting itself in different forms, occult ecstasy displays a transgressive body, 'the occult body', that challenges normativity and 'normative ideas of what a body is, what it is capable of doing and what it should be allowed to do' (Johnston 669). Like mystical raptures, the multifarious ecstatic states belonging to the world of the occult are characterised by an experience of excess which overcomes limits and eschews control, and which is mostly connoted as female. The 'occult body' usually corresponds to a female body. By undermining the borders between religion and science, and their established orders, occult ecstasies give voice to an ecstatic dis-order which not only the secular and religious orthodox forces, but sometimes the very people promoting it, attempted to control.

As in other countries of the Western world, during the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth,[88] occultism spread through Italy in its new secularising forms, igniting '[l]a sete per il "meraviglioso" soprannaturale, l'attenzione per gli stati alterati della coscienza e per le relative fenomenologie – in tutto l'arco che va dalle manifestazioni del sonno

[87] See Partridge 2004: 69-70 and Asprem 713.
[88] '[U]n'epoca sedicente materialistica eppure assetata di supernaturale' (Cigliana 1995: 13).

magnetico a quelle della trance medianica' (Cigliana 1995: 10). Though differing on the cause and origin of those phenomena, Catholics and materialists both agreed 'that the practices of mesmerism, hypnotic sleep and mediumistic table-rapping appeared to come from a world of psychic irregularities which exerted an attraction as fearful as it was undeniable' (Guarnieri 1988: 122). The irregular, unstable, dis-ordered occult phenomena frightened and at the same enticed the minds of Italian people. The latter felt the desire and need 'to delve into those "troubles of the soul"' (Corradi 2019: 141) which animal magnetism and Spiritualism brought to the forefront, to explore and liberate them. As Camilletti observes, 'l'"occultura" non è solo una risposta a buon mercato a bisogni di trascendenza o di consolazione: è anche un modo di liberare energie, prendere la parola, esplorare possibilità inedite di incidere sul reale' (2018: 13). Highlighting 'the peculiar dynamics between the dominant cultural discourse and the underlying counter-discourse' which defined post-unification Italy – with orthodox scientists and theologians on one side, and magnetisers and Spiritualists on the other –,[89] Corradi notes how they 'directly relate to the liminal space between the conscious and the unconscious' (2019: 142).[90] Giving voice to the 'enorme bacino della psichicità inconscia individuale e collettiva' (Clerici 84), these extraordinary phenomena kindled a questioning of the cohesion and steadiness of the self. A questioning which was not only experienced at the level of single individuals, but bore a wider, collective anxiety within a country that had just attained its unification and was in the delicate process of securing it.

3.1 Magnetic Ecstasies: from Somnambulists to Fascinators

As Gallini argues, '[n]on riusciremmo a comprendere l'enorme interesse culturale di quegli anni per il misticismo cristiano e le manifestazioni dell'estasi, se non tenessimo conto di quanto contemporaneamente avveniva sulle diverse scene del teatro magnetico e della clinica charcotiana' (316). I will return to the latter issue shortly; for now, let me address what Gallini has aptly defined as a 'controcultura magnetica' (8) and how it developed in Italy.

The story is well known. Back in the eighteenth century, the Austrian doctor Franz Anton Mesmer (1734-1815) believed to have discovered a 'medical panacea' (Gutierrez 199) through which one could cure all illnesses. His theory, which he called animal magnetism,[91] rested on the opinion that everything – from the planets of the universe to the living creatures – was permeated by invisible

[89] Though 'atteggiamenti antispiritistici' were taken on by some Italian magnetisers who felt their 'razionalità' was being 'compromessa' by the new Spiritualist trend (Gallini 106), magnetism and Spiritualism were 'deeply intertwined' in post-unification Italy (Corradi 2019: 152).
[90] On the momentous impact of animal magnetism and Spiritualism on the history of psychology and the 'discovery' of the unconscious mind see Ellenberger and Crabtree 1993.
[91] Where 'animal' stands as animate in opposition to what is inanimate.

magnetic fluids whose presence and correct flow assured the functioning of the entities and organisms they inhabited. In the case of human beings, if the fluids came to be obstructed within the body, they could cause disease. The Austrian doctor found out that illnesses could be cured by restoring the correct flow of the fluids through the use of magnets or magnetic passes, i.e., by passing one's hands over the ill body. One of Mesmer's students, the Marquis de Puységur (1751-1825), later noticed that during magnetic healings patients would fall into a trance state similar to a somnambulist's sleep and of which they recalled nothing once returned to their waking state. This artificial somnambulistic state, pointing to an alternative state of consciousness,[92] 'somiglia – Comoy Fusaro points out – all'isterismo, all'estasi, alla possessione diabolica e alla trance creatrice' (189). The Marquis regarded it as preferable to the normal waking state in that it could endow the patient with extraordinary powers like clairvoyance and telepathy. These exceptional abilities could turn the patient into a healer, that is, into the valuable collaborator of the magnetiser, thus engendering a new form of medical practice called somnambulist medicine, performed by the couple somnambulist-magnetiser: the somnambulist (a woman) was to be mesmerised by the magnetiser (a man) and put into a state of trance in which she could identify and cure illnesses through her alleged '"veggenza" magica' (Gallini 151).[93]

As Partridge points out, animal magnetism and the various practices related to it were quickly ascribed to the occult world[94] and, thus, received as a '[s]candaloso "passo indietro" rispetto all'evoluzione delle scienze mediche, che lo accusarono di essere ritornato agli oscurantismi medievali' (Gallini 17). Born as 'a controcanto a una scientificità disumanizzante' and based on a 'modo del tutto nuovo e moderno di avvicinarsi al paziente, per scoprirne le dinamiche inconsce e creare inedite forme di relazione terapeutica' (Gallini 17; 11), this innovative and yet, to many people, anti-modern form of therapy was condemned by the medical and the clerical establishments. The latter were wary of those intentionally induced alternate states of consciousness which involved a troubling 'momentary handover of identity' (Cori 115) and revealed 'un aspetto della psiche umana, che era sempre stato considerato con sospetto' (Gallini 18). On the one hand, the Church viewed magnetic states with suspicion because they resembled religious ecstasies and diabolical possessions, threatening their 'exclusive power to induce escape from the ordinary occupations of the spirit' (Cori

[92] Crabtree refers to the 'two distinct states of consciousness' defining 'magnetic sleep' and the 'waking states', arguing that 'Puységur's discoveries' produced 'a new paradigm […] that can fittingly be called the alternate consciousness paradigm' in its relation to 'a hidden region of mental activity that can affect our thoughts, our feelings, and our actions in ways that can go contrary to our conscious intentions' (2015: 189-90). For an investigation of the role of somnambulism in the understanding of the notion of the unconscious in Italy between the late eighteenth and the eartly nineteenth centuries see Aloisi.

[93] Aloisi remarks that the figure of the somnambulist 'would soon be typically seen as female, in the belief that women, possesed of a natural passivity, were more predisposed to this state' (39). Tomatis writes about the 'condizione tipicamente femminile' of somnambulism and its standing as 'una via d'accesso privilegiata alla condizione primitiva dell'umanità' (84).

[94] See Partridge 130. As I will point out later, Charcot will clear the field of the occult interpretation of magnetic phenomena.

127). On the other hand, the world of science was apprehensive about them as it related them to pathological conditions and generally disregarded a medical practice based on what could now be termed a psychotherapeutic approach.[95] Most importantly, particularly troublesome was the renewed attention to the body magnetism prompted: an exceptional body that claimed, albeit in a trance state induced and allegedly controlled by the magnetiser, 'un protagonismo esplicito, liberato' (Gallini 29). This disquieting bodily situation, merging control and emancipation, was exacerbated by the possible onset of the so-called magnetic crises, during which the mesmerised bodies would engage in a parade of 'movenze straordinarie di fenomeni morbosi, di grida e convellimenti, di sopori e morti apparenti' (Coddè 82 quoted in Gallini 19). Finally, the troubling nature of animal magnetism was also motivated by its association with sexual transgression. While the process of inducing somnambulism implied a new attention to the female body – 'una provocazione difficile da accettare' (Gallini 79) –, the physical proximity between the magnetiser and the magnetised subject was deemed as inappropriate and defying norms of decorum. Magnetic practices even raised concerns about the possibility that the magnetiser might awake the female somnambulist's sexual instincts and lead her to act on them. In Gallini's suggestive words, the 'magnetizzatore libertino' could lead 'alla depravazione morale la sonnambula', compelling her to carry out 'le azioni più abiette' (80).[96] More broadly, and concomitantly to the first emancipation movements for women, magnetic culture triggered 'in modo pericolosissimo' 'inquietanti fantasmi del sesso' (Gallini 333).

The state of magnetic ecstasy experienced by somnambulists elicited particular apprehension. An essential reason accounting for the medical and clerical distrust toward magnetism, this 'vertice sommo' (Gallini 44) coincided with the utter displacement out of the magnetised person's senses and a 'rottura degli schemi spazio-temporali' (Gallini 120), during which

> il ritmo fisiologico del corpo sembra del tutto sospeso, il polso cessa di battere, la respirazione è lentissima e impercettibile, mentre il sonnambulo, immobile, mostra negli occhi, nel viso e in tutto l'atteggiarsi delle membra i segni di una beatitudine profonda. (Gallini 44)

A moment of 'negazione del corpo' and 'liberazione dell'anima' (Gallini 44), magnetic ecstasy displayed a body that undermined both the rational and the social orders. Allowing to explore 'un mondo di antiragione' (Gallini 53), it was frequently characterised by an 'indecente […] gestualità', 'distante da un modello di compostezza borghese' (Gallini 79). In particular, the display of the female

[95] As Gallini remarks, the magnetiser was a forerunnerl of the modern psychotherapist, a model which was ignored by official medicine, proving to be 'nei fatti' a 'contropotere medico' (63).
[96] The risk of sexual violation became an issue concerning both animal magnetism and its scientific systematisation, i.e., hypnotism.

body expressing an ecstatic languor resembling that experienced in sexual bliss was perceived as an outrageous exposure. While challenging normative views on what was considered legitimate in terms of bodily expression, magnetic ecstasy acted as catalyst for a more essential disruption. It unsettled the power dynamics underlining the somnambulist's relationship with the magnetiser. Though presenting itself as a counterculture based on philanthropy, magnetism undoubtedly involved a power relation based on the dependence of the female somnambulist upon her male partner, the latter exerting on the former a controlling power of suggestion. Remarking on the 'gender-based connotation of the somnambulist', Aloisi points to the 'clear power relationship […] established between the active subject (the doctor or mesmerist) and the passive subject (the mesmerised patient)' (48, note 28).

While, as Gallini maintains, the magnetised women willingly accepted becoming the 'schiava o soggetto' of their magnetiser since this paradoxically allowed them to 'assumere un ruolo attivo' (112) in society, during magnetic ecstasy, they temporarily overthrew the magnetiser's authority, eschewing his control and establishing their own alternative ecstatic dis-order. Detecting the existence of an 'originale femminismo psichico' (11) by exploring the magnetic phenomena of female somnambulist Jeanne Rochette, Tomatis claims:

> Solo i passi magnetici di un maschio le consentono di liberare il proprio potenziale, sdoppiarsi e raggiungere la quarta dimensione, ma quando ciò avviene, giocoforza, le relazioni di potere si capovolgono. (82)

He tellingly mentions Allie Kruk's article 'My Orgasm is Not Your Property (So Stop Saying You Made Me Come)', pointing to a relation between magnetic and sexual ecstasy in that both, 'nell'ottica dell'eteropatriarcato', are seen as conditions requiring 'l'attivo intervento di un maschio' (95). To question the need and power of such 'intervento' in ecstatic phenomena means to question, and challenge, the role of man (and patriarchy) in the overall map of relations, opening to a restructuring of the latter.[97] As Tomatis remarks by quoting Antonia Ferrante, Jean Rochette's 'scandalosi "sonni"' must be regarded as a 'possibilità di cambiare la mappa delle relazioni" (98).[98]

Compared to other countries, the spreading of magnetism in Italy took place at a later stage. Starting in the 1840s, its dissemination peaked in the decades following Unification – when the 'studi magnetici' 'enjoy[ed] great popularity' (Corradi 2019: 142), as did magnetic-themed press, led by

[97] 'Che si tratti dell'estasi mesmerica o della *petite mort* di un orgasmo, l'idea che si producano solo grazie a un intervento maschile è un mito patriarcale': 'Affermando di poter gestire da sé il proprio interruttore, Jeanne Rochette rivendica qualcosa che ancora oggi suona sconvolgente alle orecchie di molti maschi: io appartengo a me stessa.' (Tomatis 96)
[98] See Ferrante 113.

journals such as *Il Mesmerista. Giornale di magnetismo*, *La Gazzetta Magnetico-Scientifica*, *Magnetismo e Ipnotismo* –, gradually coming to a halt with the beginning of the First World War.[99] Italian intellectuals generally looked at animal magnetism with scepticism and sarcasm. Scientists, in particular, initially – that is, as I will later show, before the Charcotian shift establishing the definite transition from animal magnetism to scientific hypnotism –, considered magnetic phenomena to be unworthy of their attention. In *La suggestione e le facoltà psichiche occulte in rapporto alla pratica legale e medico-forense* (1900), Salvatore Ottolenghi strictly opposed magic operators involved in magnetic and Spiritualistic practices, labelling them as downright criminal. While he was probably the fiercest, Ottolenghi was not the only detractor of magnetism in Italy. His views expressed what was a widespread feeling among the intellectual and upper-social classes in the first years following the country's unification. Corradi quotes an article by Antonio Ghislanzoni which reflects this feeling. In the article, titled 'Dove si parla di magnetismo e d'altre scienze occulte', the writer dismissed magnetism by asserting that it had no real healing power and by sarcastically blaming it for having disclosed human imbecility ('le imbecillità umane').[100]

As highlighted by Gallini, deprived 'di precisi referenti teorici e dell'appoggio di gruppi intellettuali consolidati', Italian magnetism took on 'versioni sempre più popolari' (137). The widespread practice of somnambulist consultation, where the somnambulist served as a prophetess or oracle bestowing her clairvoyant knowledge on her anxious clients,[101] and the successful phenomenon of theatrical magnetism, where the magnetiser-somnambulist couple performed a demonstration of the various magnetic phenomena culminating in ecstasy, exemplify the popular leaning of magnetism in Italy. An ex-Barnabite priest sent into exile for his unorthodox ideas, who then became a doctor interested in both animal magnetism and Spiritualism, Enrico del Pozzo di Mombello exposed such popularising trend, writing:

> Trent'anni sono in Italia si studiava di più e si credeva più il fatto magnetico che non oggidì: ma oggi il magnetismo è più diffuso, pullula in ogni luogo, ed ovunque vi sono magnetizzatori e sonnamboli: allora era più in credito e si esperimentava meno, ora ci si diverte di più ed è in maggiore discredito. (V-VI)

[99] In Milan, the last traces of the 'indovine miracoliste preditrici' date back to an inquiry made by Paolo Valera in 1923 addressing situations which occurred a few years earlier (see Gallini 140).
[100] See Corradi 2019: 145.
[101] Gallini relates the popularity of this practice to the growing 'bisogno di dipendenze, di certezze, di parole oracolari' felt 'una volta tramontate le illusioni risorgimentali e messesi in moto tutte le contraddizioni di classe che il nuovo assetto sociale e politico ha per così dire scatenato' (153).

The kind of magnetic culture which took hold in Italy did not relate so much to an alternative medical practice as to fortune tellers and marvellous spectacles.[102] Against the backdrop of a culture 'drasticamente segnata dal distacco tra intellettuali e popolo', it acquired a 'statuto marginale' (Gallini 100, 129), becoming a significant cultural expression of the new lower-class subjectivities the country's urbanization process was bringing forth.

Another distinctive mark of magnetic culture in Italy extensively pointed out by Cori was the strong relationship it entertained with religion. Though 'becoming more and more detached from theological logics', Italian magnetism was 'still haunted by its constraints' (Cori 137). Despite the Church's condemnation of magnetism,[103] Catholic magnetism was 'widely received' in Italy and 'religious models subtly shaped the way the discourse on animal magnetism was formulated' – the magnetiser Francesco Guidi, for instance, insisted 'that mesmeric psychological processes must be considered as a divine gift' (Cori 114, 124-125). Finally, Italian magnetic culture was influenced by the country's deep-rooted patriarchal structure. Unlike their international predecessors for whom the 'desiderio del paziente' (Cogevina and Orioli 30 quoted in Gallini 65) (i.e., of the magnetised subject) played an important role, Italian magnetisers tended to 'marginalizzare tale aspetto, se non addirittura a dimenticarlo' (Gallini 65). Gallini suggests that this might be related to the fact that in Italy magnetism had to 'misurarsi sulla presenza […] di forti strutture sociali di tipo tradizionale', whose 'gerarchie' and 'autoritarismi' 'finivano per rendere impensabile la possibilità di autodeterminazione di qualsiasi soggetto, specie se donna' (65). Hence the socially and culturally legitimated incidence of power dynamics at work within magnetic couples.

The founder of the *Società Filomagnetica* (1855), Francesco Guidi was among the main proponents of magnetism in Italy. As Corradi upholds, he sought in magnetism 'the answer to metaphysical questions that the ever more dominant positivistic culture [could not] address, and that even religion [was] not able to keep at bay' (2019: 143). Along with being a theorist of animal magnetism, he also performed magnetic spectacles with his collaborator and future wife Luisa, giving prominence to the phenomenon of ecstasy in both his theoretical and performative work. In his treatise *Il magnetismo animale considerato secondo le leggi della natura e principalmente diretto alla cura delle malattie* (1863), he defines ecstasy as '[i]l più alto grado del sonnambulismo lucido', 'una specie di rapimento dello spirito' (Guidi 1863: 533). Retracing magnetic and somnambulistic ecstatic phenomena in the experiences of 'i profeti, i sacerdoti egiziani, le sibille, i druidi, i taumaturgi, gli estatici e i convulsionarii' (1863: 72), Guidi maintains:

[102] Something which, in Guarnieri's opinion, 'renders the "Italian case" all the more interesting' (125).
[103] Expressed in the views of the Jesuit Giovanni Giuseppe Franco, for which 'all parallels between Christ and a magnetizer should be considered as blasphemies' (Cori 125).

> Sia che i sonnambuli, dotati di squisitissima sensibilità, saliscano al grado superiore di estasi per propria concentrazione o per religioso raccoglimento, sia che a quel grado siano innalzati dalla volontà del magnetizzatore con sovracaricare di magnetico fluido la testa, con religiosi ragionamenti, o colla ispirazione della musica e della poesia, essi trovansi allora in un ineffabile rapimento, per cui l'anima loro sorvola e spazia nell'infinito, e allora in essi si manifesta una vita novella, che presenta al fisiologo ed al filosofo soggetto di profonda meditazione, agli artisti i più bei tipi di studio, a tutti sublime argomento di meraviglia. (1863: 144)

Showing that he is aware of the dangers involved in such extraordinary state, Guidi concludes that a wise magnetiser should be very careful in leading 'il suo sensibil soggetto' to ecstasy and prevent this 'stato di esaltazione' from lasting too long, promptly guiding the magnetised subject back to the simple stage of somnambulism (1863: 145). He also provides an account of his 'magnetici esperimenti' (Guidi 1863: 372) and performances with Luisa which, together with Gallini's reconstruction of one of the shows staged by the couple at the Teatro Valle in Rome in 1872,[104] allow us to gain a clear picture of how Luisa's ecstasies unfolded.

Accompanied by the sound of music, Luisa reproduced in her ecstatic states 'pose *eccentriche*' or 'plastiche' which, according to Guidi, would have been impossible to sustain in a normal state of consciousness and during which she would exhibit phenomena of anaesthesia – pierced by a hatpin, the 'ispirata sonnambula' would show no pain at all (1863: 394-395). As remarked by Gallini, her ecstatic poses pointed to a 'trasfigurazione', a 'rapimento celeste' (119), revealing

> le esterne manifestazioni delle plastiche impressioni che l'anima le dà, quasi celeste prigioniera, che richiamata fuor del suo carcere dal suono conosciuto della voce degli angeli nel linguaggio indefinito che parla ad essa la musica, tenta con ogni sforzo d'infrangere i suoi lacci e sollevarsi infino al cielo con essi. (Guidi 1854: 462 quoted in Gallini 119-120)

[104] The poster of the performance advertised: 'Teatro Valle – Martedì 30 Aprile 1872 a ore 8 1/2 di sera 1° Esperimento di magnetologia dato dal Professor Francesco Guidi […] col concorso della chiarissima veggente-estatica SIGNORA LUISA' (quoted in Gallini 115).



Madamigella **LUISA** nell'estasi di contemplazione.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

Figure 3

This religious-like feeling of rapture is displayed in the portrait depicting her 'nell'estasi di contemplazione' (Figure 3): 'le mani incrociate sul petto, il capo leggermente reclinato, gli occhi fissi verso l'alto, in una lontana direzione', '[i]l suo atteggiamento riproduce inconsapevolmente modelli iconografici di immagini sacre' (Gallini 116). In praising her ecstatic performance, a French spectator tellingly compared her to Saint Teresa: 'Specialmente nell'estasi essa è stata oltre ogni dire sorprendente ed incantatrice. La sua fisionomia si è in qualche modo trasfigurata […]; nel rapimento

religioso sembrava santa Teresa assorta nell'amore divino' (quoted in Guidi 1863: 411).[105] '[D]avanti a lei – Gallini comments –, un pubblico avvinto e commosso ritrova forse gli incanti di un'esperienza religiosa perduta, che lo mette in contatto con il mondo del sublime e dell'ineffabile':[106] 'Lo scenario del meraviglioso non è più la Chiesa, ma il teatro' (115-116).

Remarking on the enormous success Luisa elicited through her ecstasies, Gallini points out that '[i]l potere del magnetizzatore cede sempre più spazio al protagonismo della diva' (115). If we go back to the scholar's description of Luisa's entry into ecstasy as a 'celeste prigioniera, che […] tenta con ogni sforzo d'infrangere i suoi lacci', we can interpret them through the lens of Tomatis' notion of 'femminismo psichico' (11). By entering the state of magnetic ecstasy, Madamigella Luisa frees herself from the 'lacci' of her magnetiser/husband; no longer a 'prigioniera', she reclaims, through ecstasy, an autonomous agency. 'La signora Luisa – Gallini concludes – è ormai padrona del suo sonnambulismo' (115).

The image of ecstasy as a liberating state in which the magnetised subjects free themselves from a condition of imprisonment and restraint returns in dal Pozzo di Mombello's *Trattato pratico di magnetismo animale* (1869). Describing ecstasy as a 'stato […] infinitamente pericoloso' (149) in which 'il sonnambolo non è più dipendente dal magnetizzatore', dal Pozzo di Mombello maintains that it 'sfugge ad ogni influenza volontaria', is developed 'secondo leggi e condizioni interne […] di cui non abbiano il controllo', and 'non è dato ad alcun magnetizzatore di calmarlo e scioglierlo' (149-150). The impossibility of controlling magnetic ecstasy is concomitant to the magnetised subject's desire to enter and protract it. 'I sonnamboli prendono molto amore a questo nuovo stato', dal Pozzo di Mombello points out, which acquires for them 'quell'inesplicabile attrattiva che ha l'ebbrezza per i bevitori, l'opio, l'atschish [sic] per i fumatori, il gas protossido d'azoto per qualche scienziato' (152). If they had the possibility to reach ecstasy by their own means, 'vorrebbero ritornarvi assai spesso, nè vorrebbero mai farlo cessare' (Del Pozzo da Mombello 152). As an example, Del Pozzo da Mombello cites the case of a somnambulist named T.D. who was 'assai inclinato a cadere nell'*estasi* magnetica' (417-418). When the ex-Barnabite priest confessed to T.D. his fear that one day he might not be able to wake him up from his ecstatic state, the somnambulist replied: '*se la tua volontà non mi tenesse legato, volerei via io*' (418).

'Legati' were also the 'fascinated' spectators of Belgian performer and hypnotist Alfred D'Hont, known with the stage name of Donato, who toured in Italy in 1886. Donato's public performances provide a notable case in which hypnosis-induced states of trance taking place in Italy

[105] According to Cori, like other magnetisers of the period, Guidi 'assert[s] the conformity of animal magnetism with the Christian message' (120-121).
[106] Another French witness to her magnetic sessions, named Charles Delinotte, dedicated a poem to her ecstasies titled 'L'estasi. A Madamigella Luisa' (see Guidi 1863: 453-454).

amid the 1880s, that is, before Charcot's turn, still retained a significant occult trace. In his popular shows Donato resorted to 'fascination', i.e., 'a self-devised technique based on visual fixation and suggestion", to make volunteers from his audience fall into trance and perform "a range of bizarre actions' (Brancaccio 2017: 163) (Figure 4). The innovative character of his method rested upon the ability to instantly induce the trances through his glance. After a first stage in which the hypnotised subject 'pur ancora sveglio e cosciente, era privo del controllo sul proprio corpo', Donato led his 'victim' into a state of somnambulism, characterised by 'incoscienza e amnesia' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 153-154). As the 'fascinatore' kindled among his entranced audience 'manifestazioni agitate', loud and sometimes even violent, the 'garanti dell'ordine e della ragione' soon reacted 'in modo altrettanto violento' (Comoy Fusaro 192). Concerned about the 'high risk of physical and moral damage' (Brancaccio 2017: 163) the performances might cause, exponents of the scientific establishment such as Cesare Lombroso and Augusto Tebaldi initiated a campaign against Donato, which was promptly supported by the Church. It was argued that the fascinator performed 'pratiche che degradano la gioventù a livelli di intossicazione generalizzata e che nelle donne possono scatenare forme di una sessualità patologica e incontrollata'; 'pratiche' representing 'un'immagine di ordine sociale che si vede seriamente minacciato', 'il caos, il disordine, una liminarità che attenta allo stato delle cose' (Gallini 152, 252-253).



Figure 4

The need to react to and neutralise this hypnotic ecstatic dis-order became more urgent as Donato's performances produced a trend of self-taught magnetism, with the publication of manuals on how to become magnetisers and induce hypnotic states. The fact that everyone could learn to hypnotise and/or could be induced into a trance, as Guarnieri points out, 'put human virtue and free will at risk', unveiling the uncanny idea that the latter 'were not as firm as would have been wished' (1988: 121). What was more, the privileged subjects of the hypnotic manoeuvres were not women, as was the case with the magnetiser-somnambulist couple, but men. In the eyes of society and the establishment, this was a 'fatto […] doppiamente inquietante' (Gallini 228) for it was now the stronger sex to be turned into an automaton; in the words of father Franco, a 'mancipio, possesso, preda, automa, meccanismo in mano a un altro' (178 quoted in Gallini 232). During his tour in Turin, Donato hypnotised almost 300 young male Italians. The latter eagerly gave themselves to stage hypnotism and acted as if they were taking part to 'un'esperienza collettiva di droga' (Gallini 228).[107]

[107] As del Pozzo di Mombello infers, commentators associated hypnotic trance with the intake of drugs like hashish. French Mesmerist and Spiritualist Louis Alphonse Cahagnet claimed to have resorted to hashish 'to induce somnambulic ecstasy' (Partridge 2018: 130). Mosso, instead, related hypnotism to alcoholic intoxication, describing the former as 'the onanism of drunkenness' (Guarnieri 1990: 1).

Those public exhibitions were 'an embarrassment to the deterministic model of positivism that scientists were in the process of affirming' (Guarnieri 1988: 123), an attack to the integrity of the Catholic world, which related them to diabolical possessions, and, broadly, a menace to the moral and social order. Something had to be done about this new ecstatic danger that was threatening to overthrow the established order.

The issue eventually fell into the hands of the Consiglio superiore di Sanità, who immediately assembled in Rome, reuniting experts like Lombroso and Mosso, who 'feared the risk of a "nervous epidemic" if hypnotism continued to be practised on the public instead of on the mentally ill in asylums or laboratories' (Guarnieri 1990: 13). What follows is the final report submitted by Doctor Francesco Vizioli on Donato's case:

> […] Do you advise that in the name of public morality these performances should be continued so as to allow our ladies to transform themselves into Malayan women affected by *'latah'...?* Do you advise, finally, that these performances continue in the name of civilisation, of liberty, and progress, so as to observe young Italians unconscious of their state... momentarily behaving like Indian *'moschitos',* Malayans, those affected by 'jumping' sickness, or degenerate tribes and races? The answer depends on your wisdom and conscience. (quoted in Guarnieri 1988: 130-131)

As can be expected, the Italian government reacted to the report by issuing an immediate ban on stage hypnotism, eliciting the praise of Charcot. It must be pointed out that not all champions of reason fought against Donato's ecstatic performances. The psychiatrist Enrico Morselli, for instance, defended the fascinator and commended him 'for having shaken cultivated Turin society from its soporific tranquillity' (Guarnieri 1988: 130). Against those who accused him of lack of respect to science, first and foremost Lombroso, Morselli replied by criticising 'the authoritarian spirit and alarmist rhetoric' taken on against Donato (Brancaccio 2017: 164) and by suggesting that doctors 'would do better' 'if instead of locking themselves in their laboratories and displaying an olympic disdain for the "profane public", they tried to understand what was really happening in the outside world' and 'to respond to the needs of people, even to their need for "marvels"' (Guarnieri 1988: 128).

According to Talamonti's gloss, '[l]a cultura magnetico-ipnotista rappresentò un tentativo di dare espressione a quella parte più oscura e meno razionale dell'uomo', proposing 'una visione laica e olistica dell'uomo' (XVI) that could be free from the rigid views and constraints of both the religious and scientific establishments. While it certainly displayed as a counterculture, the magnetic world frequently unveiled dynamics of power and control which were not so different from those informing the relation between the Church and the world of science, on the one hand, and ecstatic states and

subjects, on the other. In order to induce magnetic ecstasy and hypnotic trances, the magnetiser-hypnotiser overpowered the magnetised-hypnotised subjects, exerting control upon them and leaving little space for their autonomy. As Gallini shrewdly remarks, the main theme of magnetic-hypnotic culture ended up being: 'l'esercizio del potere sotto le forme del condizionamento psicologico', with the reading of 'ogni forma di rapporto interpersonale e sociale in termini di un dominio e una dipendenza che attraversano i segreti percorsi dell'anima e dei corpi individuali e collettivi' (361). Yet, in their unreachable, and, thus, protected state of ecstasy, the entranced subjects were capable of momentarily eschewing the magnetiser's control, overthrowing the power dynamics informing their relationship, and establishing a form of ecstatic dis-order that became inaccessible to the very counterculture, the magnetic-hypnotic culture, that engendered it. Eventually, neither the Church, nor science, nor the very promoters of magnetism, could claim to exert a permanent control over the alternate states of consciousness which are the subject of this thesis.

The impossibility to govern ecstatic phenomena also concerned the other great representative of 'occulture' in the period under study: Spiritualism.

3.2 Mediumistic Trance

Founded on the belief in the existence of the spirits of the dead and the possibility to communicate with them, Spiritualism first appeared in Hydesville (New York) in 1848, when the soon-to-be famous Fox sisters, Kate and Margaret, claimed to be communicating with the spirit of a murdered peddler through rapping noises. From then onwards, Spiritualism begun to spread all over the Western World, giving birth to different trends like the doctrine initiated by Allan Kardec in France, characterised by the belief in reincarnation, and the non-reincarnationist one led by Andrew Jackson Davis in the USA. The spreading of Spiritualist movements was accompanied by that of the marvellous phenomena they involved, from telekinesis to levitation, and to materialization. One of the many offspring of animal magnetism,[108] Spiritualism proposed itself as a new kind of religion featuring both 'a certain secularization and reproducibility of the irrational experience' (Cori 115), and a 'democratizzazione del dialogo con l'aldilà' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 25). Not only did it engage with science, thus establishing 'un inedito dialogo tra fede e ragione' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 25),[109] but it also created a more democratic spirituality for which every living human being, regardless of gender or status, was allowed access to the world of the dead. As largely outlined by Owen, this had important

[108] In Gallini's words, '[i]pnotismo, spiritismo, ricerca psichica, psicoanalisi saranno esiti diversi, nel bene e nel male, razionali o irrazionali, di costruzione o di fuga, del nuovo territorio plasmato dalla cultura magnetica' (44).
[109] Portraying the contaminated nature of the cultural *milieu* of the time, De Ceglia and Leporiere state that 'gli occultisti presero a fare gli scienziati. E gli scienziati gli occultisti. E, per di più, tutti incominciarono a credersi un po' sacerdoti' (25).

implications for women who 'held a revered and privileged place' in the Spiritualist world (III). 'Spiritualism – Owen claims – validated the female authoritative voice and permitted women an active professional and spiritual role largely denied them elsewhere', occasionally providing 'a means of circumventing rigid nineteenth-century class and gender norms' (4-6). As I will soon elucidate, however, such validation was not unproblematic and, in fact, 'riddled with social and sexual tensions' (Owen 6).

Essential to Spiritualism was mediumship, i.e., the practice of mediating between the world of the living and that of the dead through the agency of so-called mediums. The way in which these privileged beings acted as intermediaries between this world and the other was by entering a liminal state of trance during which the spirits of the dead would manifest themselves. It was phenomena such as mediumistic trances that motivated the enormous appeal Spiritualism elicited, displaying as the 'evident practical demonstrations of the power and worth of the human spirit, existing beyond the repressive limitations of objectified material life, even beyond death' (Williams 232). By attending the séances and witnessing the trances of the medium, people felt themselves displaced and transported to the borders of another world, a liminal, occult world standing in between life and death. As with magnetic ecstasies, women were the favourite subjects of mediumistic trances.[110] The passivity and inexperience which allegedly characterised the female condition would enable women to slide into trance and submit themselves to the spirits of the departed more easily than men, who were supposedly endowed with a stronger and more experienced will. According to Owen, 'spiritual or mystical powers were the special prerogative of the weak' (233). That is to say, 'the very quality which supposedly made women such excellent mediums was equally construed as undermining their ability to function in the outside world', positioning them 'as individuals without social power' (Owen 10).[111] In an analogous way to female somnambulists and magnetic phenomena, however, it was precisely by entering ecstatic states that female mediums were able to eschew the everyday patriarchal order, challenge and counteract normative notions of femininity, and experience a momentarily semblance of freedom. A continuous and common thread spanning from ancient necromancy to animal magnetism, and to Spiritualism, the history of the occult grants women a 'spazio dove indagare i confini del possibile e compiere un confronto critico con il reale', and 'uno strumento per ridisegnare e ripensare l'identità femminile' (Tomatis 90).[112] In Owen words, 'séance behaviour signified a transgression of normative femininity' (203), disclosing 'the obscure

[110] Male mediums were 'outnumbered' by women and their séances 'did not involve the dramatic and theatrical representations for which the women became famous' (Owen II, 11).
[111] 'The ultimate irony of spirit mediumship' lay in the fact 'that it operated around a fundamental power/powerlessness duality' (Owen 11).
[112] Spiritualism generally questioned gender binaries, allowing, for instance, female mediums to assume a male role during the trance. On the queer implications of Spiritualism see McGarry 154-176.

relationship between an acceptable model of femininity and the darker terrain of unconscious resistance to it' (11).

Described by Williams as a 'glorious and uplifted state' (232), mediumistic trance was understood as an 'aperture onto higher modes of consciousness' giving rise to a 'multiple' and 'more-than-second self' (Gutierrez 201). Dèttore defines it as 'una sorta di sonno ipnotico […], per lo più autoindotto, nel quale la zona cosciente dell'Io […] appare quasi totalmente cancellata e sostituita da un'altra personalità' (309). In Nay's incisive words, '[e]ssere spiritisti significa […] credere nella possibilità che la psiche umana possa disintegrarsi, perdere […] unità' (63). Accompanied by several physiological phenomena such as the acceleration or slowing of the breath and heart rate, forms of anaesthesia or hyperesthesia, and lack of reflexes, mediumistic trance manifested itself in different degrees, from light to profound trance. In cases of outright possessions, the entranced subject would take on the personality of the departed spirit and behave accordingly. Vincenzo Cavalli, one of the prominent scholars of Spiritualism in Italy, wrote about the correspondence between mediumship, mysticism, and other supernatural experiences:

> Se un medio si eleva in alto, lo Spirito dirà per sua bocca: Ecco che levo il *mio* medio in alto (Esempio di ciò è l'Eusapia). Quando un santo in estasi si eleva (esempio S. Francesco d'Assisi […]), egli crede, e gli altri credono che sia stato già elevato dagli angeli, onde si dice: *essere rapito* in estasi, e non già *rapirsi* in estasi.
>
> E così crede il fachiro indiano, che siano i Pitris (o Mani) che lo elevano […]. (240)

Informative of the many ecstatic trends coming from the East in the years under scrutiny,[113] of which the Theosophical Society represents a 'significant and concrete example' (Partridge 2004: 90),[114] the reference to the Indian fakir was frequently employed to describe mediumistic trances. The trances of Italian medium Eusapia Palladino, for instance, were compared to the fakirs' ones and she was even referred to as a 'fakiro in gonnella'.[115]

[113] On the correspondence of Western and eastern trances, Leuba writes that '[t]he Buddhistic and the Islamic mystical trances and also hypnosis are essentially similar in their form to the Christian mystical trance' (171), quoting an article titled 'L'extase dans le Mysticisme Musulman', written in 1906 by one Probst-Biraben, which testifies the fascination exerted by the theme of ecstasy in the fin-de-siècle Western world, not only within the frame of local cultures but also of non-Western traditions.

[114] Founded in 1875 by the medium and sensitive Elena Petrovska Blavatsky and colonel Henry Steel Olcott, Theosophy denoted a doctrine which combined eastern and Western occultism, and mysticism, in which ecstatic trances played an important role in the acquisition of enlightened knowledge. The doctrine reached Italy where, in 1902, a *Sezione Italiana della Società Teosofica* was established.

[115] See Morselli 1908: 82 and Ercole Chiaia's open letter to Lombroso, 'Una sfida per la scienza. Lettera al Prof. Lombroso', where, anticipating Lombroso's objections and prejudices, Chiaia writes: 'Dirà Lei: caso classico d'ipnosi: è un fakiro in gonnella che vi ciurla nel manico' (312).

The denigrating, sexist epithet attributed to the Italian medium underlies the frustration of a certain manmade, materialist order which could not bear the possibility of having its normative, rational schemes questioned and, what is more, by a woman.[116] De Ceglia and Leporiere remark that the séances gifted women with 'uno spazio discorsivo attraverso il quale accedere alla sfera pubblica da cui erano normalmente escluse. E questo non era per tutti facile da mandar giù' (112). By all means, the séance stood out as 'a direct contravention of the female role', i.e., 'that of the dutiful woman whose required 'stillness' ensured strictly controlled conduct and limited and contained access to speech' (Owen 210). On the contrary, the female medium spoke and moved beyond the limitations society imposed upon her sex. The transgression of such restrictive borders inevitably acquired sexual connotations. Generally, sexuality played a significant role in Spiritualism. As Tromp claims, 'spiritualism was sexy' (67). Breaking 'all rules of decency and decorum', creating a space where '[f]aces and knees were caressed while the lights were out', Spiritualistic séances fostered a 'disruptive sexuality' (Trump 67, 72) that was opposed by enemies of Spiritualism and whose 'most titillating' disruption was to be found in 'the receptive bodies of mediums – often young and feminine – which provided the primary channel for intercourse with the spirits' (Trump 68). In 'direct contrast' to the 'safely de-eroticed', '[d]ecent, bourgeois female sexuality' (Owen 218), female mediums, often accused of seducing those taking part in their séances, experienced a state of ecstasy infused with tangible erotic charges. They could be possessed by an Other and manifestly express such possession outside of the spheres of marriage and procreation.[117]

It was the visit of the famous Scottish medium Daniel Dunglas Home to Italy in 1855 that aroused the interest of Italian people in Spiritualism. After a first unsuccessful experiment in Turin in 1856, Spiritualist societies began to spread all over the country; by 1870 there were more than one hundred societies active on the peninsula. As Giudice notes, the movement elicited 'great interest' 'among the higher social, as well as the lowest, classes' (37), equally attracting members of the working class, the Risorgimento elite, and King Umberto I himself. Italian Spiritualism was inspired by Kardec's ideas and influenced by Christian doctrine. Camilletti stresses the 'sincretismo' characterising 'la turbolenta storia dello spiritismo italiano', its being marked by a 'tensione' attempting 'una sofferta conciliazione fra religione e medianità' and bringing about a scenario in which 'l'evocazione degli spiriti alla sera non era in contraddizione con la messa alla mattina' (2018:

[116] Elsewhere in Chiaia's letter the medium is referred to as 'donnicciuola d'infima classe sociale' (311) and 'donnetta' (313).
[117] In Owen's words, the séance 'bore witness […] to the disclosure of the polymorphous, 'paradoxical, deviant, erratic, eccentric, even scandalous' nature of desire – and its enactment"' (222).

92-93).[118] The Italian press contributed to the promotion of Spiritualist belief and the popularisation of mediums through journals like the *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia*, founded in 1863 by Enrico Dalmazzo (whose pen name was Teofilo Coreni) and endorsed by Italian medium Vincenzo Scarpa (who went by the name of Niceforo Filalete).

Generally, as Nay points out (63), in Italy discussion over Spiritualistic deeds firstly came through the words and thoughts of literates. Italian writers were instrumental to the spreading of knowledge around Spiritualist beliefs and practices. Luigi Capuana, for instance, extensively addressed Spiritualism and the world of the occult. In 1879, reviewing a book by Terenzo Mamiani (*Della religione positiva e perpetua del genere umano*) on the *Corriere della Sera*, he defined Spiritualism as a 'religione dell'avvenire' which 'ha le sue vittime che vanno a popolare gli ospedali di teste sconvolte da esaltamenti nervosi', 'non può fare a meno del soprannaturale', and 'è religione come può esserla nel secolo XIX, cioè senza rito, senza prete, e con una certa apparenza scientifica' (1995a: 221-222). In *Mondo occulto* (1896) he also humorously described the positions of both the Catholic spheres and the scientific world towards Spiritualism:

> I cattolici dicono: Bella novità voi studiate! […] i Padri della Chiesa, i dottori in teologia se ne occupano da quasi due mila anni. Soltanto voialtri vi turavate gli orecchi, voialtri increduli, materialisti o liberi pensatori; ed ora […] stirate, fino a strapparla, la vostra moderna fisiologia, la vostra nuova patologia, la vostra novissima fisica, mentre noi già sappiamo da un pezzo di che cosa si tratti; si tratta del diavolo! (1995b: 185-186)

Spiritualism was fiercely condemned by the Church. Ever since its appearance, the religious establishment, particularly active in the press through journals such as *La Civiltà Cattolica*, tried to prevent the spreading of Spiritualism, arguing that what made the tables turn and the mediums entranced was not the intervention of the spirits of the dead but that of the devil. Father Franco, who had already criticised magnetic beliefs and practices, undertook a veritable crusade against Spiritualism. By presenting itself as a new religion and, thus, directly questioning the authority and the role of the Church, Spiritualism had gone even further than animal magnetism in earning the Church's enmity by challenging her role of 'esclusiva e rigida intermediaria tra il mondo dei vivi e quello dei morti' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 24-25).

On the part of the scientific establishment, the positions varied. Many scientific authorities 'increasingly permeated by positivist and evolutionary thought' saw Spiritualistic belief and practices

[118] As examples of this 'sincretismo', Camilletti mentions the writer Antonio Fogazzaro and the editors of the journal *Luce e Ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualiste*, who addressed 'tematiche paranormali […] secondo un'ottica esplicitamente cristiana' (2018: 92).

'as a sign of mental disorder, as relics of ancient superstitions or as a sign of cultural backwardness among the Italian population' (Brancaccio 2014: 77). Suspicious of 'any kind of suspension of everyday consciousness', they linked 'mediumistic and mesmeric trance, hysteria, and epilepsy' as the producers of 'distinct physical and psychological symptoms, uncontrollable convulsions, and aberrant behaviour' (Owen 143).[119] As Eusapia Palladino's case will show, the privileged role played by women in Spiritualism prompted the association of female mediumship with hysteria and abnormal sexuality.[120] While their views underlay the same gendered codification subscribed by doctors pathologising mediumship, other Italian scientists investigated Spiritualist phenomena more open-mindedly, viewing them as a privileged state through which to explore the passage from the conscious to unconscious mental frame, sometimes ending up believing in their reality.[121] As a result, a new pseudo-science was born with the aim to prove the existence of supernatural (namely psychic) phenomena, presenting itself as 'a *via media* between orthodox science and orthodox religion' (Partridge 2018: 75). In 1899 the *Circolo Scientifico Minerva* was established in Genova with the purpose to study the strange phenomena pertaining to Spiritualism. Following the example of the English *Society for Psychical Research* founded in 1882,[122] a *Società di Studi Psichici* was created in Milan in 1901. The scientific investigation of spiritualist phenomena was also addressed by specific journals like the *Rivista di Studi Psichici*, founded in 1895, and *Luce e Ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualiste*, founded in 1900.

3.3 Eusapia Palladino's Unruly and Erotic(ised) Disorder

As M. Biondi points out, Italian Spiritualism was rather 'quiet' and 'occasional' until it was 'shaken in the middle of the 1880s by the appearance of a prominent and controversial figure' (44), destined to become one of the most important mediums of all time: Eusapia Palladino (1854-1918). An unruly medium, who 'displayed a fiery temper both during and outside of the trance state' (Downey 219), Palladino offers an emblematic instance of a woman who found in mediumship a way to claim a space of autonomy in an otherwise restrictive world. At the same time her trances provide a powerful example of the séance as a site of transgression that challenges normative assumptions. That is, the Italian medium is an exemplary embodiment of ecstatic dis-order in post-unification Italy.

[119] Owen's reference is to British doctors, but it can be extented to Italian scientists too.
[120] Mediomania, the term with which medicine pathologised Spiritualism resorting to the hysterical model, 'united social, sexual, and religious deviancy', making 'its female sufferers' contravene 'every rule in the book' (Owen 149).
[121] 'Le seduzioni dell'occultismo contaminano persino i medici' (Comoy Fusaro 191).
[122] Its aim being 'to bring the torch of science to the dim region of the occult' (Asprem 266).

Throughout her life Palladino was surrounded by male figures who, from different perspectives, gazed upon and tried to take and claim control of her female ecstatic dis-orders.[123] Her first patron, Giovanni Damiani, submitted her to a consistent 'allevamento medianico' (Lombroso quoted in De Ceglia and Leporiere 52) in order to reform her wildly inappropriate, capricious, and undisciplined behaviour.[124] Unable to educate his unruly pupil and direct her ecstatic disorders, Damiani eventually decided to part from that 'luciferina creatura' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 61). Fifteen years later, a new guardian adopted Palladino: Ercole Chiaia. A sceptic positivist who then turned into a convinced promoter of mediumship, Chiaia succeeded in drawing to her séances a wide public, whom he gradually converted into believing in communication with the beyond. His triumph was sealed when he persuaded Lombroso to attend one of Palladino's sessions and get him to admit the authenticity of the spiritualist deeds.[125] His conversion had a huge impact on the spreading of scientific research on mediumship as well as on the popularity of Palladino, who suddenly became 'oggetto di un'attenzione spasmodica da parte della scienza' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 101). Scientists all over Europe, from Paris to Cambridge, started to investigate her marvels from a clinical and physiological standpoint, bringing her ecstatic, occult body under the scrutiny of their medical gaze. Filippo Bottazzi was among the Italian doctors who explored Palladino's ecstatic dis-order during 'eight experimental séances' (Leporiere 111) taking place in the physiology laboratory of the University of Naples.[126] After Chiaia's death, Hereward Carrington succeed him in being Palladino's new manager and brought her to the States. There she was welcomed as a marvel, but saw her credibility gradually compromised and soon had to return home to Italy. Carrington was the last of a number of patrons and doctors wanting to exploit, monetizing or experimenting upon, Palladino's occult powers.

The pervasiveness of their gazes emerges in the emblematic association of the agitation Palladino manifested in trance during one of the séances hosted by Richet in Paris with that of an animal trapped in a garment.[127] Notwithstanding the power dynamics at work in her relationship with such figures, it was precisely by consenting to powerlessly expose her body and mind to their gaze

[123] It is important to note that Palladino's ecstatic dis-order bears not only a gender but also a social and geographical mark. Born in the small Southern village of Minervino Murge (Apulia), Palladino came, 'like most mediums', 'from the lower social order' (Stewart-Steinberg 273), eventually managing to 'sopravvivere […] in una società assai difficile per una fanciulla sola, come lo era il Sud ai tempi dell'annessione al Regno d'Italia' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 46-47).
[124] One of the many problems Damiani had to deal with was the fact that Palladino – possibly a 'mezza mariola' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 53) – made the wallets and watches of her audience disappear, attributing their disappearance to the agency of evil spirits.
[125] 'Un successo niente male – De Ceglia and Leporiere comment – per lei che – donna, isterica, manolesta, meridionale e con un prognatismo accentuato – avrebbe dovuto rappresentare uno dei gradini evolutivamente inferiori di quel piccolo mondo antico a cui don Cesare era stato così affezionato' (188).
[126] See Bottazzi's 'Nelle regioni inesplorate della Biologia umana. Osservazioni ed esperimenti su Eusapia Paladino' (1907).
[127] The séance is reported in De Ceglia and Leporiere 108-109.

that Palladino managed to gain and assert power, affirming herself as a medium, a (Southern) woman, a person. Applying Owen's theoretical framework, the 'power' Palladino attained 'because of qualities which were associated with powerlessness' and which made her an object/subject to be gazed upon, 'allowed her to move beyond the confines of the ordained female role' (233). 'At one level' this 'could mean escape from a dull or rigidly circumscribed existence',[128] '[a]t another' it pointed to 'a manifestation of unconscious resistance to an order which sought to define women and contain them' (234). As with other female mediums, for Palladino too this resistance powerfully manifested itself in the trance state, through the staging of a liberating and transgressive ecstatic dis-order.

In order to communicate with the spirits of the dead, Palladino fell into mediumistic trance or, as it was referred to by Italian speakers, 'estasi medianica' (Morselli 1908: 292) (Figures 5-6). Both Morselli and Lombroso described what they regarded as a 'stato psichico abnorme' (Morselli 1908: 292). The former devoted a privileged attention to Palladino's trances as he believed they constituted the only moment during which 'l'impostura non può più concepirsi' (Morselli 1908: 265). Linking it to somnambulism, Morselli describes her ecstasy as follows:

> la Eusapia in 'trance' dice frasi sconnesse, ha dei sussulti muscolari; cambia il tono della voce; ha lo sguardo fiso, vitreo, di un ipnotizzato; e tutto ciò arriva, preceduto da sbadigli, da singhiozzi, da eruttazioni dallo stomaco, da moti di deglutizione come si scorgono nell'ipnosi vera.
> Il fenomeno psicologico più interessante di tale stato di 'estasi', è la personificazione […] della Paladino in 'John'. (1908: 272)

Echoing Morselli's observations and stressing the association trance-somnambulism-hysteria, Lombroso too outlines Palladino's mediumistic trance, remarking its being preceded by what seems to be now 'una collera violenta', now 'un'estasi voluttuosa-erotica':

> Nello stato di *trance* sulle prime impallidisce, volge le pupille all'alto e all'interno, e agita il capo ai lati, poi diventa estatica […] e ha molti di quei gesti frequenti nell'accesso isterico […].
> Verso la fine del *trance*, quando accadono i fenomeni più importanti, prova una grande sete […], è agitata da vere convulsioni e grida come una donna sopra parto. Infine cade in sonno profondo e dal suo foro del parietale evapora un fluido caldo, sensibile al tatto. (1909: 83)

[128] Palladino was among those female mediums who '[p]ur "controllate" dagli spiriti, spesso maschili, e gestite da imprenditori e agenti, ovviamente uomini, […] potevano essere in qualche misura indipendenti' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 110-111).

lamente la posizione dei piedi sotto di essa. Durante il sollevamento la mano destra del medio lascia spesso la tavola con quella del suo vicino e sta di sopra. Durante l'esperienza, il viso del medio si sconvolge, le mani si contraggono, esso geme e sembra soffrire, come in generale, quando qualche fenomeno sta per prodursi (fig. 22) (1).



Fig. 22. — Eusapia a Genova (Gellona).

Per osservare meglio il fatto in questione, abbiamo eliminato a poco a poco delle persone dalla tavola, avendo riconosciuto che la catena di più persone non era punto necessaria, nè in questo, nè in altri fenomeni, e infine non ve ne lasciammo che una sola oltre il medio. Posta alla sua sinistra, questa persona poggiava i piedi sui

(1) Diamo qui le figure 22 e 23 analoghe con sollevamenti meno spiccati da esperienze fotografate da Gellona a Genova; e quella con sollevamento completo col medio Carancini (fig. 24). Altre in cui il tavolo fu sollevato da Eusapia a 60 cm. furono fotografate a Parigi da Arsonval, Courtier, Richet (*Bull. de l'Institut Générale de Psychol.*, 1908).

Figure 5

due piedi dell'Eusapia, ed una delle mani sulle ginocchia di lei; con l'altra mano teneva la mano sinistra del medio, la cui destra stava



Fig. 23. — Eusapia a Genova (Gellona).

sulla tavola in vista di tutti, e anche si alzava in aria durante il sollevamento. Siccome la tavola stava in aria per parecchi secondi, fu possibile ottenere parecchie fotografie del fenomeno (fig. 22 e 23).

Figure 6

The descriptions provided by the two Italian scientists reveal the considerable range of emotions and bodily movements experienced by Palladino in trance. The medium swiftly passes from laughter to cries, from stillness to great agitation. Agitation stands out as the typical trait of her ecstasies: a female agitation likened to that characterising hysteria, childbirth, and sexual climaxing. Her trance is at the same time an 'accesso isterico', a set of convulsions and screams of a 'donna sopra parto', an 'estasi voluttuosa-erotica'.[129] Above all, those who witnessed her trance perceived the erotic character of her mediumistic activity. Palladino took on 'una espressione definita "diabolica"' and 'degli atteggiamenti che i partecipanti non esitavano ad assimilare a quelli del godimento sessuale' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 108). The director of the *Annals of Psychical Science*, Laura Finch, claimed that those taking part in her séances were bewitched and enthralled by her downright erotic nature.[130] Audience and commentators did not hesitate to read the erotic connotation of her trances through the lens of the moralistic, normative principles of the time. Palladino was an unhinged, subversive character that threatened the image of women as docile, orderly creatures. As De Ceglia and Leporiere observe, 'la scarmigliata Eusapia' 'gemeva, gridava e imprecava in stanze buie […] dando l'impressione di far qualcosa che poco si addicesse a una signora perbene' (108). M. Biondi writes of her 'habit of making sexual advances to one or more of the males during the séances, thereby outraging those in attendance' (45). There were even allegations on behalf of her flatmate Léonce Gilbert that the séances she organized were actual orgies. No 'signora perbene', Palladino was repeatedly accused of lewdness, and commentators questioned her disorderly ecstatic conduct.[131] An 'Eva capace di prendere la rivincita sul serpe, e sedurlo', as Chiaia had portrayed her to Lombroso, the Italian medium 'non aveva altra colpa che di esser donna', falling 'di conseguenza, nello stereotipo della femmina inferiore e ammaliatrice' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 110).

While Palladino claimed that 'no indecorous acts ever occurred' during her séances, she appeared to be aware of her disorderly manners and 'justified her behavior by asserting that she could not get control of herself during the trance' (M. Biondi 2013: 45). The medium's acknowledgement of the impossibility of upholding control while entranced is a pivotal clue in the understanding of her trances. Entranced, Palladino unleashed her body and mind from the inhibitions and constrictions she was restrained to during her normal, waking state, experiencing a momentary emancipation from all control being exerted upon her – by agents, guests, doctors, and even herself. Her unbridling,

[129] As noted by Alvarado and Biondi, Palladino 'often showed hysterical laughter, a red face and an expression of ecstasy of erotic appearance' (235, note 21).
[130] See De Ceglia and Leporiere 106.
[131] 'Perché si agitava così languidamente? Perché gonfiava così oscenamente la tenda? Per alcuni, era semplicemente una donnetta del popolo dai modi licenziosi e volgari. Per altri il suo comportamento era dettato da una forma di "isteria con tendenze erotiche"' (De Ceglia and Leporiere 109).

liberating act perfectly matches Morselli's idea that '[p]orsi in istato di medianità ("trance") è togliere l'inibizione dei centri superiori sugli inferiori, i quali allora scaricano più liberamente, ossia in modo automatico, la loro energia latente' (1908: 322). As in his previous studies on magnetic phenomena, in his investigation of mediumistic trances Morselli was again exploring that unconscious territory to which Freud was already devoting his unreserved attention.[132] According to Owen, '[i]t can be argued that through the development of mediumistic trance techniques, in what Freud later designated as 'the return of the repressed', the unconscious mind found expression' (203-204). Morselli realised that. What, for temporal-historical reasons, he could not possibly understand was the extent to which history, society, and culture played a part in the unleashing of unconscious energies experienced by female mediums like Palladino. Once again, I resort to Owen.

As the scholar remarks, 'whilst the unconscious seems to be structurally implicated in the process of subjectivity, its expressions both mediate and are mediated by the social order' (Owen 205). With regards to Spiritualism, '[i]t can be argued that mediumship, particularly full-trance mediumship, effected the brief disclosure of psychic (psychological) aspects of gendered identity such as fantasy and desire' (Owen 206). Accordingly, 'nineteenth-century spiritualist mediumship can be read as a language of ambivalence and resistance', a 'resistance which had not yet reached political (as it is generally understood) or collective articulation but which spoke instead of the fractured and contradictory nature of feminine subjectivity' (Owen 206).[133] Such fractured and contradictory nature fully emerges in Palladino's trances. Her ecstatic performances and their reception were fraught with discourses on female sexuality and the role of women in society because of their tangible uninhibited character. Liberating and expressing her unconscious self as well as the historically repressed unconscious of her sex, entranced Palladino stripped herself and her gender of social and moral impositions, creating what Lowry defines 'counter publics that sheltered alternative identities' (230), 'a ritual space in which to break existing social prohibitions' (233). Through the creation of this alternative, counter space-discourse – this ecstatic dis-order –, she managed to attain a powerful agency at a time in which women had little or none, making space for an unorthodox, disrupting, and subversive image of woman.

[132] The Italian doctor can be counted among those turn-of-the-century scientists who, according to Harris, by 'investigating religious, magical and spiritualist experiences were central to developing notions of the unconscious and the discipline of psychoanalysis' (1999: 362).

[133] In concluding her argument, Owen tellingly quotes Cixous' 'The Laugh of Medusa' (1975): 'the unconscious, that other limitless country, is the place where the repressed manage to survive: women, or as Hoffman would say, fairies' (quoted in Owen 234).

4. Science

4.1 The Birth of Italian Psychiatry: Medicalising Ecstatic States

In the second half of the nineteenth century, all around the Western world, science was being defined and shaped by positivism. Italy was no exception. The beginning of the spreading of positivism within Italian culture was marked by the publication in 1866 of Pasquale Villari's essay *La filosofia positiva e il metodo storico*. Influenced by positivist thought, Italian science fostered a rationalization of facts and data, aiming at stripping popular beliefs of their 'alone di "mistero" o di inesplicabilità' (Cavalli Pasini 94). At the same time, scientists tried to find an explanation to, and a fixed label for, phenomena that appeared to be linked to the mind-body system but eschewed the existent classifications, remaining, in fact, mysterious. In the rising field of psychiatry,[134] clinicians were hit by a veritable 'febbre nosografica' (Comoy Fusaro 31) in their persistent attempt, almost obsession, to isolate and categorise still unidentified pathologies, taking on rather conservative, backward positions (Comoy Fusaro 45).[135] Such 'nosographic fever' was sustained by an ever-increasing need to distinguish between health and illness, and, more essentially, between normality and abnormality. As Guarnieri observes, 'scientists-anthropologists, physicians, psychiatrists, criminologists, sociologists, moral statisticians' started attacking 'from the front of normality' anything 'characterized by otherness, irregular at least in the sense of not yet being fully reduced to the already known, the familiar or the customary' (1990: 3).

The shift from a deterministic model differentiating between the healthy and sick body to one distinguishing between 'the mind working properly' and 'the disordered one', 'regular behaviour' and 'anomalous behaviour' (Guarnieri 1990: 4), has been extensively examined by Foucault. Foucault states that nineteenth-century medicine became 'regulated more in accordance with normality than with health', bringing to the forefront of its issues the '*bipolarity of the normal and the pathological*' (2003a: 40-41). According to him, around 1850-1870 a new psychiatry was born which 'dispenses with illness', focusing on 'behavior with its deviations and abnormalities' (2003b: 308): a 'technology of the abnormal' that 'no longer seeks to cure' and can only 'claim for itself the simple function of

[134] The year of Italian Unification significantly coincided with the foundation of the *Società Frenopatica Italiana*, with Italian alienists working to draw up 'una nosografia generica delle *frenopatie*', i.e., 'le malattie mentali e nervose' (Comoy Fusaro 36-37). During what Tagliavini calls the 'golden age' (176) of alienism in Italy, specialised journals were founded – from the *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose e più particolarmente per le malattie mentali* to *Psiche, Rivista di studi Psicologici* –, the psychiatric career was established, with the foundation in 1873 of the first professional association of psychiatrists, the *Società Freniatrica Italiana*.

[135] Their resistance to some of the modern ideas of the period emerges in Emilio Praga's *Memorie del presbiterio* (1881): 'Mentre in Italia la medicina […] cominciava ma appena ad abbandonar l'antico spirito di sistema per un illuminato eclettismo […], le scoperte e le indagini di Jenner, di Corvisart, di Avenbrugger, di Loenner e di Pinel, il redentore degli alienati, avevano rivoltata come un guanto la scienza' (1963: 241).

protection and order', becoming 'the discipline of the scientific protection of society' (2003b: 316). In Italy too, pathology, especially mental illnesses, was often associated with a deviation from the (rational, orderly) norm, and, thus, regarded as a threat to society.[136] As Comoy Fusaro writes, 'il mondo scientifico stava progressivamente cedendo alla paura del folle' and to the 'spettro della contaminazione nevrotica' (30, 56). In Mantegazza's words, this was a '*secolo nevrosico*' (1887).

Science and State worked together to defend society from the spectre of madness and degeneration.[137] The 'sicurezza sociale' – Lombroso claimed – 'è lo scopo supremo a cui tutti miriamo' (1884: XXIII). Italian psychiatrists were to find a scientific solution to the nation's 'great curses' – including 'poverty, illiteracy, alcoholism, and endemic illnesses' – by putting in place 'vast programs of social hygiene and sanitary and moral education' (Tagliavini 180). The pedagogical care implied in such programmes, however, was matched by the authoritarian power often at work in asylums. The years under study saw a comeback of the psychiatric hospital as a site of confinement for ab-normal individuals. As Foucault shows, through such institutes modern medical positivism engendered a new mode of social control, turning the clinical gaze into 'a gaze that dominates', exerting a sovereignty for which the eye 'knows', 'decides' and 'governs' (2003a: 203, 108). In Italy, the use of asylums to confront the danger represented by the insane, pathological, abnormal individuals became a parliamentary issue from the 1870s, reaching prominence with Crispi's cabinet, when asylums featured as a regular instrument of repression,[138] bringing about the overt concurrence of the clinical gaze and the State's gaze in the control of the abnormal subject. The number of people those institutions hosted peaked in the later nineteenth century, passing between 1874 and 1907 from 12.000 to 40.000.[139] On the 14th of February 1904, a new legislation was issued, establishing 'the concept of the danger to society of madness and its juridical and psychiatric control' (Tagliavini 180). The law, titled 'Disposizioni sui manicomî e sugli alienati. Custodia e cura degli alienati' (Figure 7) and published on the *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*, comprised 10 articles prescribing, among other things: the institutionalisation of 'persone affette per qualunque causa da alienazione mentale, quando siano pericolose a sé o agli altri e riescano di pubblico scandalo' (art. 1), the request of such institutionalisation on behalf of 'parenti, tutori o protutori' and 'chiunque altro nell'interesse degli infermi e della società (art. 2), the right of the 'direttore' to exercise, together with the administrative, economic, and legislative authority, the 'potere disciplinare' (art. 4) (818-819).

[136] For Italian scientists 'tutto ciò che sembra eccessivo è qualificato come patologico' (Comoy Fusaro 72).
[137] '[A]l medico spettava il diritto-dovere della diagnosi e allo Stato quello della difesa' (Gallini 259).
[138] An example of a more progressive approach is offered by the female asylum of San Clemente in Venice, inaugurated in 1873. The report provided by director Cesare Vigna in 1875 suggests that the asylum sincerely aimed at improving the patients' wellbeing and rehabilitating them in society, as testified by the fact that they were encouraged to take on jobs and be retributed for their hard work.
[139] See Tagliavini 178, 183.

La proclamazione dei consiglieri provinciali è fatta dall'adunanza dei Presidenti delle varie sezioni riunite nell'ufficio della 1ª sezione del mandamento.

Nei mandamenti costituiti da più Comuni la proclamazione avrà luogo nell'ufficio della prima sezione del capoluogo di mandamento.

Ove la circoscrizione elettorale per l'elezione dei consiglieri provinciali comprenda più mandamenti, la proclamazione si farà nell'ufficio della 1ª sezione del capoluogo del mandamento che abbia il maggior numero di elettori iscritti e verrà indicato dal Prefetto d'accordo col presidente della Corte d'appello ed annunziato col manifesto da pubblicarsi a norma dell'articolo 60 della legge comunale e provinciale.

La proclamazione avrà luogo nei modi stabiliti per le elezioni dei consiglieri comunali dall'articolo 81 della legge comunale e provinciale (testo unico 4 maggio 1898, n. 164).

I consiglieri proclamati entrano subito in carica.

Art. 5.

I ricorsi contro le operazioni elettorali provinciali si presentano al Consiglio provinciale.

Art. 6.

La prima rinnovazione dei Consigli comunali e provinciali in conformità della presente legge avrà luogo nell'anno in cui dovrebbe seguire quella triennale, mediante sorteggio fra i consiglieri che uscirebbero d'ufficio a norma della precedente legge.

I non sorteggiati usciranno di carica nel successivo biennio e per completare il terzo richiesto si procederà al sorteggio fra i consiglieri appartenenti all'altra metà del Consiglio.

Art. 7.

Dalla prima rinnovazione dei Consigli provinciali, la durata delle funzioni dei commissari, di cui nell'articolo 249 della legge comunale e provinciale, è ridotta ad un biennio.

Ordiniamo che la presente, munita del sigillo dello Stato, sia inserta nella Raccolta ufficiale delle leggi e dei decreti del Regno d'Italia, mandando a chiunque spetti di osservarla e di farla osservare come legge dello Stato.

Dato a Roma, addì 11 febbraio 1904.

VITTORIO EMANUELE

GIOLITTI.

Visto, *Il Guardasigilli:* RONCHETTI.

Il Numero 36 dalla raccolta ufficiale delle leggi e dei decreti del Regno contiene la seguente legge:

VITTORIO EMANUELE III

per grazia di Dio e per volontà della Nazione

RE D'ITALIA

Il Senato e la Camera dei Deputati hanno approvato;

Noi abbiamo sanzionato e promulghiamo quanto segue:

Disposizioni sui manicomî e sugli alienati.
Custodia e cura degli alienati

Art. 1.

Debbono essere custodite e curate nei manicomî le persone affette per qualunque causa da alienazione mentale, quando siano pericolose a sé o agli altri o riescano di pubblico scandalo o non siano e non possano essere convenientemente custodite e curate fuorchè nei manicomî. Sono compresi sotto questa denominazione, agli effetti della presente legge, tutti quegli istituti, comunque denominati, nei quali vengono ricoverati alienati di qualunque genere.

Può essere consentita dal Tribunale, sulla richiesta del Procuratore del Re, la cura in una casa privata, e in tal caso la persona che le riceve ed il medico che le cura assumono tutti gli obblighi imposti dal Regolamento.

Il direttore di un manicomio può, sotto la sua responsabilità, autorizzare la cura di un alienato in una casa privata, ma deve darne immediatamente notizia al procuratore del Re e all'Autorità di pubblica sicurezza.

Art. 2.

L'ammissione degli alienati nei manicomî deve essere chiesta dai parenti, tutori o protutori, e può esserlo da chiunque altro nello interesse degli infermi e della società.

Essa è autorizzata, in via provvisoria, dal pretore sulla presentazione di un certificato medico e di un atto di notorietà, redatti in conformità delle norme stabilite dal Regolamento, ed in via definitiva dal tribunale in Camera di Consiglio sulla istanza del pubblico ministero, in base alla relazione del Direttore del manicomio e dopo un periodo di osservazione che non potrà eccedere in complesso un mese. Ogni manicomio dovrà avere un locale distinto e separato per accogliere i ricoverati in via provvisoria.

L'Autorità locale di Pubblica Sicurezza può, in caso d'urgenza, ordinare il ricorso in via provvisoria, in base a certificato medico, ma è obbligata a riferirne entro tre giorni al Procuratore del Re, trasmettendogli il cennato documento.

Tanto il pretore, quanto l'Autorità locale di Pubblica Sicurezza, nei casi suindicati, debbono provvedere alla custodia provvisoria dei beni dell'alienato.

Colla stessa deliberazione dell'ammissione definitiva il Tribunale, ove ne sia il caso, nomina un amministratore provvisorio che abbia la rappresentanza legale degli alienati, secondo le norme dell'articolo 330 del codice civile, sino a che l'Autorità giudiziaria abbia pronunziato sull' interdizione.

È loro applicabile l'articolo 2120 del codice civile.

Il Procuratore del Re deve proporre al Tribunale, per ciascun alienato, di cui sia autorizzata l'ammissione in un manicomio o la cura in una casa privata, i provvedimenti che convenisse adottare in conformità delle

Figure 7

The country's turn-of-the-century crisis strengthened the alliance between the scientific and State apparatuses as defenders of the *status quo*. Faced with the 'intensification of social struggles and

disorder', Italian psychiatrists increased the conservativism of their views labelling political trends like anarchy 'as forms of mental illness' (Tagliavini 180), thus sustaining, at a scientific level, the State's attempts to repress any form of insurgence, and preserve the political and social order.

To give an idea of what was regarded as pathological, abnormal, hence a threat to society, I would like to quote an extract from Ferdinando Fontana's poem 'La senavra' (1877), describing what took place in the Senavra asylum in Milan:

> […]
> Vociatori allucinati
> Dagli spettri torturati;
>
> Barcollanti paralitici
> Avviati alla demenza;
> Infelici, cui sovreccita
> L'epilettica Potenza;
>
> […]
>
> Chi combatte cogli spiriti
> Grida, impreca e il braccio ruota;
> Altri, al suol cadendo supplice,
> Resta in estasi devota
> […]. (75-79)

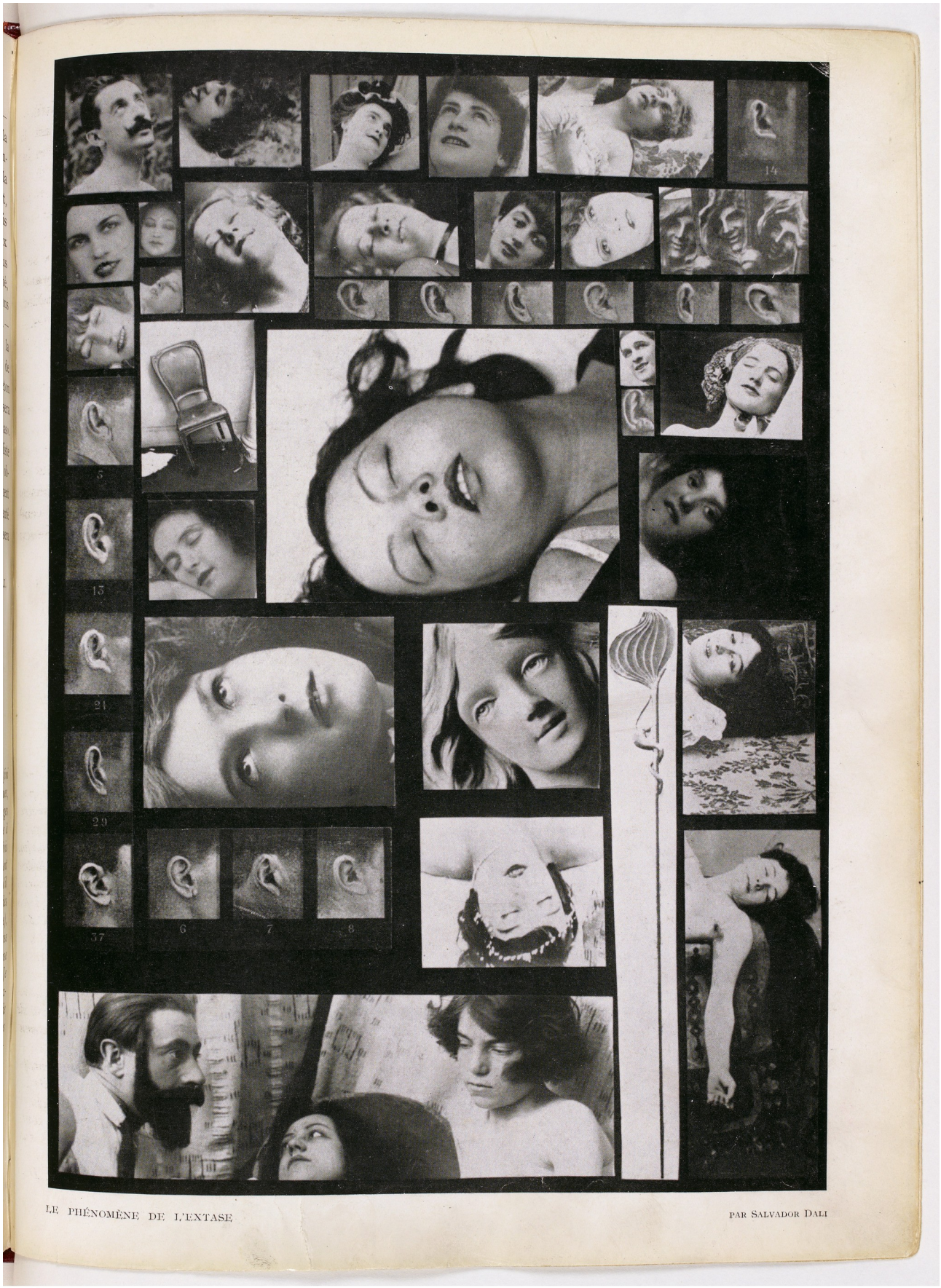
As the last lines of the extract suggests, ecstasy – a privileged field of study in the rising psychology – was mostly considered as a manifestation of mental and bodily disorder, thus figuring as a target of the operation of medicalisation, neutralisation, and normalisation implemented by Italian scientific and political authorities. Gallini highlights the 'medicalizzazione della fenomenologia estatica' (318) which occurred in post-unification Italy. The scholar observes that, on the one hand, it was part of the 'campagna, laica e materialista, che la cultura positivistica andava conducendo contro l'apparato ecclesiastico e le ideologie religiose', and, on the other hand, it was driven by the antagonism directed against those 'marginali campi in cui si andavano esercitando nel sociale le più eterodosse tecniche del corpo: il magnetismo, appunto, e lo spiritismo' (Gallini 318). That is, in its witch-hunt of ecstatic phenomena and ecstatic subjectivities, the scientific establishment regarded religious and occult ecstasies as expressions of ecstatic dis-orders which were to be subjected to the pathologising, controlling gaze of the medical order. And yet, despite all its attempts, this control ultimately proved

to be untenable. As Carroy-Thirard points out, 'les phénomènes extatiques débordent à plus d'un titre le cadre de la psychologie où on voudrait les inscrire. […] car l'extase, expérience des limites, marque aussi les limites de la psychologie […] et de ses lois' (1980: 511).

4.1 Hysterical *Extase* and 'Scientific' Hypnotic Trance: Charcot's Turn

The pathologisation of ecstatic phenomena by scientists in the second half of the nineteenth century and, particularly, from the 1870s, was occasioned by Jean Martin Charcot's re-discovery of hysteria. If neurosis was at the forefront of scientific attention during the 'secolo nevrosico', hysteria, also called the great neurosis, was unquestionably the most studied morbid form of the period. Though it had been present for over a millennium,[140] it was Charcot who 'invented' hysteria, to use Didi-Hubermann words, isolated it '*as a pure nosological object*' (Didi-Hubermann 19),[141] and built an empire (of suffering bodies) on it. The paternity of this re-invention was acknowledged by the Surrealists who, being fascinated by hysteria and regarding it as 'the greatest poetic discovery of the late nineteenth century' and 'a supreme means of expression' (Aragon and Breton 20, 22), celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1928, thus placing the malady's date of birth in 1878, when Charcot was carrying out his studies. While Breton pointed to a hysterical aesthetics by claiming in his manifesto-novel, *Nadja* (1928), that 'beauty will be convulsive or will not be at all' (160),[142] Dalí directly engaged with one of the stages of great hysteria, that of the ecstatic *attitudes passionelles*, by devoting to them his famous photo-collage *Le Phénomène de l'extase* (1933) (Figure 8). The photo-collage, influenced by Charcot's formulations of hysterical *extases*, is dominated by the expressions of hysterical women caught in a moment of ecstasy, but, deviating from the French neurologist's convictions, 'disorder' here emerges 'as an ultimate form of expression, rather than a pathological occurrence' (Bottinelli and Laxton 25).

[140] Egyptian medical papyri dating back to the XX century B.C. referred to the malady, which was later given its current name by Greek medicine, appearing for the first time in the *Corpus Hippocraticum* (IV century B.C.).
[141] As Goldstein writes, he 'took the old, amorphous "wastepaper basket" of symptoms and replaced it with a coherent and conceptually elegant array' (1982: 214).
[142] Breton's novel is presumably inspired by his interactions with a patient of Charcot's pupil Pierre Janet.



Source gallica.bnf.fr / Bibliothèque nationale de France

Figure 8

Producing a 'systematic break' with Pierre Briquet's *Traité Clinique et Thérapeutique de l'Hystérie* (1859), Charcot defined hysteria as "'une *névrose* de l'encéphale' which occurred in both sexes" (Harris 1991: XXI). Working in the hospital Salpêtrière, described by him as a 'great asylum of human miseries', 'a sort of *living pathological museum*' (Charcot 1991: 1, 3), he isolated hysteria by distinguishing it from epilepsy and formulated the theory of *grande hystérie*. He claimed that '[f]our periods succeed each other in the complete attack with mechanical regularity – 1st, epileptoid; 2nd, great movements (struggling, purposeless); 3rd, passionate attitudes (purposive); 4th, terminal delirium' (Charcot 1991:14). He further addressed the four periods of great hysteria in *Les démoniaques dans l'Art* (1887), co-authored with colleague Paul Richer.[143] The two doctors observed that each period, when taking place alone, produced a different variety of the attack: 'la première période donnera naissance à la variété épileptoïde, la deuxième à la variété démoniaque, la troisième à la variété extatique et la quatrième à la variété délirante' (Charcot and Richer 102-103). They described the third ecstatic period, the 'attaque d'extase' (Charcot and Richer 106), as the moment in which the hysterics are subject to hallucinations that lead them to experience and perform a drama characterised by animated facial expressions, faltering utterances, muscular contractures which immobilise their body in various configurations. In the case of female hysterics, the tableaux produced by the ecstatic attack are twofold, relating to two alternative 'ordres': a 'gai ordre', amorous and harmonious, filled with music; a second (dis-)order, insurgent and agitational, displaying 'des incendies, la guerre, les revolutions' (Charcot and Richer 102), revealing, going back to Didi-Hubermann words, a veritable 'feminine inferno' (XI). After outlining the *period de l'extase*, Charcot and Richer ended their study with a paragraph titled 'Les extatiques', in which they not only claimed that hysterical ecstasy is almost indistinguishable from other forms of ecstasy, but also that the mystical ecstasies of figures like Beatrice of Nazarett and Catherine of Siena could be found in hysteria, its rigidities and contractures being 'éminemment hystérique' (108).

If in formulating his theory of the *grand hystérie*, the French professor already 'constantly reiterated the opinion that the visions and ecstasies of saints in past ages were nothing more than undiagnosed hysteria' (Harris 1991: XIX), the understanding of mysticism as a manifestation of hysteria was explicitly asserted in the article 'La foi qui guérit' (1892), published on the *La Revue Hebdomadaire*. There, Charcot upheld that Saint Teresa and Saint Francis were 'des hystériques indéniables' (1892b: 117).[144] Dwelling upon such 'retrospective medicine',[145] Goldstein remarks that

[143] Richet reprised Charcot's formulation of grand hysteria in his *Etudes Cliniques sur l'Hystéro-Epilepsie ou la Grande Hystérie* (1881).
[144] Following in Charcot's footsteps, Janet contributed to the understanding of supernatural, religious phenomena as manifestations of a nervous malady with his 'Une extatique', published in 1901 on the *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique International*.
[145] An expression coined by the French positivist Émile Littré.

the privileged 'past phenomena […] reinterpreted as hysterical' 'were invariably those […] originally construed as religious in nature: on the one hand, demonic possession […]; on the other, […] most notably, mystical ecstasies' (1982: 235). To be sure, in *Les démoniaques dans l'Art*, Charcot and Richer also pointed out that in certain instances the 'extatiques' 'méritent à plus d'un titre d'être rapprochés des "possédés du démon'" (XII), thus bringing together the convulsive agitation of those possessed by the devil to the equally convulsive, as we have seen in the second ecstatic 'ordre' drawn above, agitation of the ecstatics. A pathological, disorderly agitation furtherly motivated by the sexual characterisation of hysterical states of ecstasy.

One has only to read Charcot's accounts of his preferred patient Augustine's *attitudes passionelles* or look at the ecstatic portraits in Désiré-Magloire Bourneville and Paul Régnard's *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* to grasp the extent to which sexuality, hysteria, and hysterical reading of religious states of ecstasy were intertwined.[146] Published in three volumes between 1876 and 1880, standing as the visual support to Charcot's studies on hysteria, the *Iconographie* included several 'planches' portraying the ineffable attitudes of *extase*, from the saintly-like ecstasy of *planche* XXIV, in the 1876-1877 edition (Figure 9), conveying an attitude which 'est celle que l'on attribue aux *illuminées* comme sainte Thérèse' (Bourneville and Régnard 1876-1877: 70), to the alluring *extases* displayed by Augustine in *planches* XXI ('erotisme), XXII ('extase'), XXIII ('extase'; Figure 10) in the 1878 edition. Bourneville and Régnard signal the rapid passage from the ideal 'douceur' of spiritual elation to the 'lubricité extreme' of eroticising ecstasies (1876-1877: 70). Mazzoni points to the 'clear iconographical and onomastic fusion of religious and erotic codes' (1996: 39) displayed in the *Iconographie*. If hysteria, especially female hysteria, was often related to a sexual repression, with ecstatic passionate attitudes being understood as a manifestation, and a performance, of the unleashing of the sexual want, then mystics were hysterics whose repressed sexuality came forth in their encounters with the divine.[147]

[146] Lacan's claim that Charcot and his school wanted to reduce mysticism to 'affaires de foutre' (71) is well known. Quoting the French psychanalist's remark, Camilletti observes that 'per la transizione dalla mistica al letto, dall'estasi all'orgasmo, era passato l'ingresso dell'Occidente nel moderno' (2016b: 233).

[147] Charcot and his school 'explained religious ecstasy […] as the hysterical manifestations of pure erotic deliria' (Didi-Huberman 148).



Planche XXIV.

PÉRIODE TERMINALE : EXTASE

Figure 9



Planche XXIII

ATTITUDES PASSIONNELLES

EXTASE 1878).

Figure 10

The sexualised reading of hysterical states of ecstasy was validated by sexology, one of the scientific disciplines rising in the last decades of the nineteenth century which held 'il proposito di regolare le condotte individuali a partire dalla definizione di normale e di anormale' (Pelaja and Scaraffia 202-203).[148] The new studies in sexology postulated a direct correlation of hysteria with deviant forms of sexuality. Gallini points to the birth of the typecast of the 'isterica dalla sessualità sbagliata – talora caratterizzata come frigida, più spesso come ninfomane' (335). In *Psychopathia sexualis* (1886), a landmark of studies on sexuality, the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing isolates and classifies sexual hyperesthesia as a psychopathology, describing it as an 'Abnormally Increased Sexual Desire' (48) and noting that '[t]he central origin of sexual excitement is of frequent occurrence in persons having neurotic taint or hysteria' (50). He also refers to religious and sexual states of ecstasy, talking of 'abnormal sexual-religious feeling', and significantly providing the example of Bernini's sculpture of Saint Teresa – an example, he stresses, retrieved from

[148] There were even those claiming that 'orgasm in the wrong social situation caused epilepsy, insanity, and crime […], and that masturbation caused weakness' (Mc June 168).

'the sculpture of degenerate eras' (10, note 1). Quoting Lübke's comment on the sculpture, Krafft-Ebing reports that the saint 'sinks in an hysterical faint on a marble cloud, with an amorous angel plunging the arrow (of divine love) into her heart' (10, note 1).[149] Doctors sought the cure to such abnormal, hyperaesthetic sexualities in a moderation (repression) of human conducts. Muchembled claims that nineteenth-century medicine 'imposed a form of laicized sublimation [...] insisting on the absolute necessity of moderating the instincts', likening 'sexual excess' to fatal 'sickness' (5).

Alongside his theory of *grande hystérie* and deeply intertwined with it, Charcot formulated the theory of *grand hypnotisme*. The latter allowed him to interpret not only religious ecstasy but also magnetic and mediumistic trances as symptoms of hysteria. Although the Scottish doctor James Braid had already popularised hypnotism, it was only with Charcot that it attained true scientific dignity, his studies occasioning the official transition from magnetism to hypnotism, as 'scientific magnetism' was to be known from then onwards. Going back to Braid's discovery of 'le magnétisme scientifique' – occasioning the passage from fluid-related magnetic trance to altered states of consciousness engendered by a 'fixité prolongée du regard et de l'attention' (Bourneville and Régnard 1879-1880: 156) –, as well as to 'an older, and less scientifically-respected, tradition' represented by the studies of neo-mesmerist Victor Jean-Marie Burq (Harris 1991: XLII), Charcot began to devote his attention to hypnotism and resort to it with his hysterical patients. What he noticed was that this 'singulière névrose provoquée' (Bourneville and Régnard 1879-1880: 154) caused Augustine to be 'dazzled, engulfed in a state of vertigo' and be led 'into raptures in her "double" conscience', engendering, as Didi-Huberman remarks, a 'naïve and original madness –, an ecstasy of gold' (203, 237). For Charcot, the nature of this golden ecstasy was, again, pathological. The French neurologist eventually classified hypnosis as a pathological state of nervous excitation, strictly related to hysteria: a sort of 'experimental hysteria' (Didi-Huberman 185) capable of reproducing all hysterical symptoms while at the same time being therapeutically induced in hysterical patients to improve their conditions. Presenting hypnotic phenomena as '*objects of science*', he reinstated 'the title of nobility to this technique of charlatans' by turning it 'into a regulated, well-defined technique' (Didi-Huberman 184).[150] Charcot took disorder into his hands and imposed his (scientific) order upon it. This he did by devising a meticulous scheme involving three different stages of hypnotism, each characterised

[149] As I will point out in Part 2 when addressing D'Annunzio's *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*, cruelty, understood in terms of sadism or masochism, is strictly related to ecstasy, a relation which in Krafft-Ebing's opinion is held as pathological.

[150] Though he dissociated himself from those who had previously dealt with ecstatic phenomena through scientifically unorthodox approaches, e.g., Mesmer, as Goldstein points out, Charcot's scientific rehabilitation of hypnosis provides an example of the 'dialectical process by which the most committed and hardheaded positivism eventually led to a legitimation of the realm of unreason' (1982: 215).

by a distinct state of unconsciousness: catalepsy,[151] lethargy, and somnambulism. These stages enabled him not only to bring magnetic phenomena under the scrutiny and monopoly of the official science – positing himself on the line of a scientisation of occult phenomena which, inaugurated by Braid, ended up by taking trance-like states 'out of the hands of supernatural and divine intervention' (Cori 115), and of those of magnetisers and mediums –, but also to link mediumistic trances, along with religious contemplative ecstasies, to hypnotic-hysterical conditions. Ecstatic states, Charcot had decided, belonged to a pathological dis-order and as such ought to be examined, contained, regulated, or, when the latter option was not viable, suppressed.

As earlier mentioned, Charcot condemned magnetic shows and came to express his views on the measures introduced by the Italian government to restrict the activity of magnetic spectacles following the disorders provoked by Donato's performances. He did so in a letter to Doctor Giulio Melotti, one of the leading promoters of Charcot's work in Italy, dated the 9th of January 1887. Claiming science's recent and definitive conquest of the 'possession' of and control over hypnotic states,[152] the French doctor invokes and commends the 'suppression' (Charcot 1890: 479) of the disorderly, neurotic performances in Turin, auspicating that his country might follow the leading example set by Italy. An important thing to note, the father of hysteria regards Italy as a role-model because of its ability to function as an agent of order capable of managing ecstatic disorders. Additionally, in signalling the contagious nature of neurosis, its potential to engender hysterical epidemics, he refers to the 'communications de M. le docteur Lombroso' (1890: 480) as a scientific *auctoritas* that validates his own contentions. Testifying to the extent to which science aimed at pursuing an exclusive control over ab-normal, ecstatic conditions and on the ongoing dialogue between French and Italian science, the letter allows us to move back to Italy and see the consequences of the dissemination of Charcot's studies, and the pathologisation of hysterical-hypnotic states of ecstasy, within Italian science.[153]

[151] In a paragraph devoted to the 'production de la catalepsie', Bourneville and Régnard write: 'Nos planches XVII, XXII [Figure 11] et XXXVII représentent des sujets placés devant une lumière oxydrique très brillante, ils tombent presque instantanément en extase' (1879-1880: 176).
[152] A 'Maîtresse absolue et jalouse de ses droits', Science 'repousse formellement toute intrusion' (Charcot 1890: 480).
[153] Together with Charcot's studies, two other key sources had a significant impact on Italian studies on ecstasy: Jean Baptiste Félix Descuret's *Médecine des passions, ou les passions considérées dans leurs rapports avec les maladies, les lois et la religion* (1841) and Théodule-Armand Ribot's *Les maladies de la volonté* (1883), *La psychologie de l'attention* (1889), and *La psychologie des sentiments* (1896).



Planche XXII.

CATALEPSIE

PROVOQUÉE PAR UNE LUMIÈRE VIVE

Figure 11

4.3 Ecstasy According to Italian Scientists

Brigo et al. stress that Charcot's theories exerted a great influence in Italy.[154] Several Italian scientists, including Melotti, paid visits to the Salpêtrière to attend the French neurologist's lessons, transcribing

[154] They mention the impact his theories had on both Italian science and literature, referring to the 'literary representation of hysteria' found in novels by Serao and Capuana (Brigo et al. 6).

them and often translating them once home.[155] Under the influence of Charcot's neurotic interpretation of ecstasy, 'la patologia dell'estasi', Gallini observes, was 'collocata anche dalla nostra trattatistica nei quadri nosografici della grande isteria o del monoideismo paranoico' (323).[156] The 'immagine dell'estatica isterica' was born and associated with a '[g]rumo vischioso ed equivoco' (Gallini 323) that demanded the cure (and control) of the scientific establishment. Following Charcot's lead, Italian scientists explored ecstatic phenomena through the lens of hysteria and, especially, hypnotism,[157] attempting to inscribe the latter 'in the strict positivist and experimentalist framework' (Brancaccio 2017: 167) and apply to it an 'utterly organicistic' approach (Corradi 2019: 150).[158] '[U]omini di scienza e d'ordine', they detected in it the 'sfida di una "forza" oscura potenzialmente trasgressiva, che può farsi minaccia se non viene studiata e frenata' (Gallini 246). Gallini's reading of the interest Italian alienists took in hypnotism as an 'appropriazione' on behalf of a group who 'mira sì a estendere le proprie conoscenze, ma ancor più a rafforzare i suoi strumenti di dominazione culturale' (245) can be extended to their way of approaching all ecstatic phenomena.

The rising Italian psychiatric power had to counteract the new waves of occultism and mysticism, to which such phenomena historically belonged. Claiming a fundamental piece of clerical power – i.e., the management and control of the bodies of Italian citizens, the ordinary and extra-ordinary phenomena they displayed –,[159] Italian scientists provided 'una certezza di lettura materialistica di fatti sino ad allora attribuiti all'ordine soprannaturale' (Gallini 244): religious ecstasies and the occult trances induced by magnetisers or experienced by mediums were classified as manifestations of a nervous condition. What the studies on hysteria and hypnosis did was to bring to light the entire 'storia del meraviglioso antico, medievale e moderno' – including 'epidemie convulsive', 'indemoniati', 'ossessi', 'stregonerie', 'estasi', and 'balli della tarantola' (Morselli 1886: 28 quoted in Gallini 316) – and find a reassuring identity for all its expressions in the hysterical-hypnotic model. That is, reassuring for the scientific establishment. In no way reassured were the ecstatic subjects who fell under the gaze of the doctors. The power relation that was at work in the priest-mystic, magnetiser-somnambulist, and agent-medium relationships was reproduced between doctor and patient. As Gallini remarks, the latter were linked by a '[r]apporto di "schiavitù"' (247) in

[155] The first Italian translation of the *Œuvres complètes de J.M. Charcot* was published in Naples in 1877 by Angelo Scambelluri and Scipione Giordano.
[156] While already after Pinel 'anche in Italia sapevano bene che ormai il luogo dell'estasi non era più la chiesa o il convento, ma l'ospizio' (Gallini 322), this knowledge came to the forefront with Charcot's studies.
[157] Augusto Tamburini and Giuseppe Seppilli were among the first Italian doctors to experiment with hypnosis. In 1882 their contributions merged into a single volume titled *Contribuzione allo studio sperimentale dell'ipnotismo nelle isteriche*.
[158] Wary of the possibility of being associated with unorthodox medical practices, scientists undertook a 'monitoring of the danger of certain induced conditions which seemed to trespass the natural boundary and invade spheres traditionally associated with the religious and the occult' (Cori 117).
[159] As pointed out by Mazzoni, the 'pathologizing definition of mysticism – and particularly of women's mysticism – constitutes another move in medicine's colonization of the body' (1995: 379).

which the doctor was legitimised in his practice of power by the scientific institutionalisation of hypnotism and the pathologisation of ecstatic states.

As in other parts of the Western world, so too in Italy the latter was frequently accompanied by a diagnosis of sexual abnormality. Following Krafft-Ebing's classification of sexual hyperesthesia, Italian positivists regarded great sexual excitability as an element of disorder and related it to a mental condition.[160] Such diagnoses were mostly related to women as they were believed to be predisposed to excitability.[161] Hysteria and erotomania came to be assimilated to one another. In *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale*, Lombroso analysed female hysterics, stating that '[s]piccato loro carattere è l'erotismo' and that 'tutta la criminalità dell'isterica si svolge intorno alle funzioni sessuali' (1893: 613). According to Comoy Fusaro, '[o]gni espressione della sessualità femminile che non sia finalizzata alla procreazione viene criminalizzata, "patologizzata"' (215). When not directly linked to matrimony and reproduction, sexual pleasure, the attainment of orgasm, i.e., ecstasy, epitomised female sexual hyperesthesia through the display of a body which performed excess and disorder. Putting an end to 'il monopolio che gli uomini di Chiesa avevano esercitato sulle regole e sul discorso relativi al comportamento sessuale' (Pelaja and Scaraffia 203), scientists aimed at containing that disorder. In doing so, they reproduced the same regulatory measures applied by the clerical establishment, trying to regulate (and repress) sexuality through hygienic and eugenic policies. Mantegazza, for instance, proposed a hygienic model of sexuality inextricably linked to the institution of the family and, thus, based on healthy procreation, birth control, the conviction that the aim of women was to procreate, and the condemnation of all non-hetero-cis sexualities.[162]

Often pathologising it, occasionally regarding it as a physio-psychological state,[163] Italian scientists explored the phenomenon of ecstasy by placing it under their scientific gaze and taking it out of the hands of both the clerical authorities and the agents of the occult supernatural. Mantegazza's *Estasi Umane* is but one of several studies that addressed the ecstatic phenomenon in the years under investigation.[164] A brief assessment of such works will allow the reader to apprehend how post-unification Italian scientists understood the phenomenon – i.e., resorting to hysteria, hypnotism, relating it to unconscious mechanisms of the mind –, and to grasp the power dynamic frequently

[160] See, for instance, Silvio Venturi's *Le degenerazioni psico-sessuali* (1892).
[161] Mantegazza regarded women as 'superseding their voluptuos male counterpart' (Sigusch 218).
[162] Believing that 'il ventre nevrosico genera all'infinito uomini sempre più nevrosici' (Mantegazza 1995: 60), he held that only the healthier man and woman should reproduce, and obviously dubbed 'tribadismo' and 'sodomia' as 'pervertimenti dell'amore' (129: 1886). On Mantegazza and sexuality see Sigusch and Ross 2017.
[163] Even for the promoters of psychological interpretation, the hypnotic state, though not neccesarily pathological, was nonetheless 'uno stato psichico pericoloso, e che può trascinare alla follia, se mal controllato' (Gallini 262).
[164] His work, however, stands out as it probably constitutes the most extensive scientific study on ecstasy written between the second half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth within the overall Western framework. It is likely not until Janet's *De l'angoisse à l'extase. Études sur les croyances et les sentiments* in 1926 that a study devoted to ecstasy of a similar breadth, albeit different approach, was published.

informing ecstatic phenomena and the fundamental impossibility of governing, through science, ecstatic dis-orders.

A scientist who played a pioneer role in the birth of Italian psychiatry, founding in 1852 the first specialist supplement of psychiatry, the 'Appendice psichiatrica' (published in the *Gazzetta medica*), Andrea Verga was among the first Italian researchers to investigate ecstatic states and relate them to a neurotic condition. Thanks to the *Archivio storico della psicologia italiana (Aspi)* we know that during the academic year 1866-1867 he delivered a series of conferences at the Ospedale Maggiore in Milan, including one devoted to ecstasy – 'Dell'estasi o rapimento o ratto degli italiani – ravissement, extase dei francesi – ecstasy, rapture, trance degli inglesi, Verzückung dei Tedeschi' (Verga 1867: f. 243).[165] Verga explored the phenomenon's physiognomy, linking ecstasy to hallucination and defining it as 'una neurosi per la quale concentrandosi il nostro intelletto nella contemplazione d'una cosa fa che i sensi e le facoltà rimangano dunque inaccessibili a tutto il resto' (1867: f. 243). He returned to ecstasy in 1879 when he inaugurated a new series of psychiatric conferences, addressing the case of the Tuscan preacher Davide Lazzaretti, whom I will extensively focus on, and contending that ecstasy was a 'strana nevrosi' that could be elicited by 'digiuni', 'preghiere', 'veglie protratte', and a 'vita ascetica e contemplativa' (Verga 1880: 195). Scorning excessive forms of spiritual practices and interweaving mystical and sexual bliss, he observed that '[a] tanto infatti arrivano colle loro pratiche eccessive alcuni divoti del catolicismo al pari dei bigotti dell'Indostan e della Persia' and mentioned the case of a patient of the Salpêtrière who, through prayers and ejaculations, obtained to see God face-to-face and enjoy a 'felicità non mai provata prima' (Verga 1880: 195).

Verga also reported the case of Maria von Mörl (1812-1868), known as the 'Estatica di Caldaro' (South Tyrol), whom he had the opportunity to visit. While he was able to unmask some of her stigmata – verifying that 'il presunto sangue non usciva da ferita, ma vi era come applicato con una spugnetta' –, he rejected the idea that her convulsive ecstasies were the product of simulation, providing the diagnose of 'una nevrosi cerebro-spinale che, ora attaccava di preferenza la spina producendo l'alterna convulsione toracico-abdominale, ora il cervello producendo l'estasi' (Verga 1880: 200-201).[166] Informatively, he also detected a direct link between her crises and the priestly figures surrounding her, admitting that her 'accessi di estasi', 'un tempo […] spontanei', later obeyed to her confessor's will (Verga 1880: 199). He, thus, advised that the 'estatica' should remove herself from the subjugating control of her confessor but also remarked the unviability of such an operation:

[165] The conference took place on the 12th of April 1867. I was able to consult online the original autographs of the notes on which Verga based his talk through the *Archivio storico della psicologica italiana*, Archivio Andrea Verga. This and the following quotations have been transcribed by me.

[166] In a similar fashion to Charcot's reading, he also noted that the woman's ecstasy could be either 'gaudiosa' or 'dolorosa' depending on whether she saw 'angeli o demonj, oggetti di gaudio o di dolore' (Verga 1880: 199).

'ma chi avrebbe osato dividere il pastore dalla sua pecorella, il ministro di Dio dalla sua penitente?' (Verga 1880: 201).

Tackling the ecstasies of those who, like Lazzaretti, were affected by 'teomania' – a variety of 'pazzia sensoria' in which hallucinations and ecstatic fits convince the individual of being in communication with God –,Verga continued to stress the uselessness, if not damage, caused by the intervention of faith and exponents of the religious order in physiological matters: 'Il far intervenire lo spiritualismo, la fede, il sentimento nelle questioni di fisiologia, stona quanto il mischiar fiori retorici e frasi poetiche nelle dimostrazioni d'algebra e di geometria' (Verga 1880: 201, 207). In a way marking the territory, Verga cautioned that religious authorities should not intrude upon ecstatic dis-orders as that was a scientist's undertaking.

An interlocutor and colleague of Verga, Antonio Tarchini Bonfanti was one of the leading psychiatrists in Lombardy. He focused extensively on hysteria, hypnotism, and forensic psychopathology, eventually coming across ecstatic phenomena, which he addressed in an article titled 'Estasi ed ipnosi', published in 1883 in the *Archivio italiano per le malatie nervose e più particolarmente per le alienazioni mentali*. Tarchini Bonfanti begins the article by praising the 'risveglio sì vigoroso' of animal magnetism, which, after years of 'scaramuccie' and 'battaglie campali', has come forth 'col nuovo nome d'ipnotismo nel tempo della scienza per la porta maggiore' (299-300). Initially distrustful of the wonders of magnetism, he recalls that what stirred his conversion, among other things, was 'un caso di estasi spontanea ed ipnotica' experienced by a seventeen years old 'signorina' referred to as 'L.C.' (Tarchini Bonfanti 302).

In his account, the girl is presented as a 'povera semi-imbecille' affected by epilepsy who, on one of her father's last days of life, suffers from what her relatives believes to be 'uno dei suoi accessi epilettici, diverso però dai consueti' (Tarchini Bonfanti 303-304). Tarchini Bonfanti, who was a friend of the girl's father and happened to be at his bedside that day, witnesses L.C.'s attack and, discounting the relative's epileptic diagnose, interprets the crisis as a case of ecstasy. To remove her from the ecstatic state and restore her normal state of consciousness, he decides to resort to animal magnetism, putting her into magnetic sleep and, then, waking her up from the artificially induced slumber.[167] Following the death of L.C.'s father, the girl's relatives ask the doctor to keep performing magnetism upon her, hoping she would heal from epilepsy. As a result, L.C.'s ecstasy loses its element of spontaneity and is now activated by Tarchini Bonfanti's manoeuvres: 'Dopo quella prima volta l'estasi non si manifestò più spontaneamente, ma sempre sotto le mie *passate* magnetiche, ed

[167] 'Tentai coi mezzi ordinarj di destarla, e toglierla a quell'estasi: ma indarno. Mi balenò allora il pensiero di magnetizzarla per vedere che cosa sarebbe per accadere, e (se vi riescissi) cercare di destarla poi' (Tarchini Bonfanti 304).

ogni qualvolta io gliele facessi' (Tarchini Bonfanti 305). The doctor reclaims his role of magnetiser, now essential to the setting off of the girl's ecstatic phenomena.

Despite the doctor's scientific-magnetic power, purportedly driving and governing the young girl's body and mind, during her altered stated of consciousness L.C. somehow manages to preserve her autonomy and sovereignty. At first composed and serene, L.C.'s ecstasies take on increasingly violent forms that eschew the doctor's directions and control. Longing to reach her father in heaven, for instance, she 'cominciò a buttarsi boccone in terra, a fare la pantomima, e mostrare l'ansia di chi nell'acqua è in procinto di affogare' (Tarchini Bonfanti 305). Performing ecstatic disorder, L.C. is on the point of drowning, her airways being occluded. '[N]on contenta della pantomima', one day she almost throws herself into the canal, 'quasi che colla pronta morte volesse attuare la agognata riunione al padre' (Tarchini Bonfanti 306) and, it might be added, free herself from the curbs pressing against her body and mind. The suicidal attempt persuades Tarchini Bonfanti to stop practising magnetism upon L.C., but the girl soon learns how to entrance herself, falling 'in quello stato nel quale tanto amava trovarsi': 'ella di nascosto si conduceva in una camera appartata, e si abbandonava al suo prediletto maneggio, sempre facendosi ipnotica ed estatica' (Tarchini Bonfanti 306). Completely eluding the doctor's medical authority and power, she is now capable of engendering her own ecstatic dis-order. It is only by enforcing a strict operation of surveillance that the girl's relatives succeed in deterring her from her ecstatic practices. Disciplinary order eventually manages to neutralise L.C.'s ecstatic disorder. After giving her powers up, the young girl dies of pulmonary tuberculosis a few years later. Following the narration of L.C.'s case, Tarchini Bonfanti presents his interpretations of ecstatic phenomena, postulating that there are 'stati morbosi nei quali i sensi acquistano una acuizione altissima' together with an increase of the intellectual faculties, including among such states the 'fenomeni sensorj molto strani che si avverano nelle estatiche, nelle isteriche, ecc' (310). He concludes his article by noting the lack of studies on the phenomena he has addressed, hoping that other 'ingegni' might 'mettere in piena luce' what he could only 'abbozzare', 'studiando fino a qual punto possano sublimarsi sensi ed intelletto' (Tarchini Bonfanti 315).

Destined to become one of the first promoters and commentators of Freud and psychoanalysis in Italy, the psychiatrist Enrico Morselli addressed ecstatic states in *Il magnetismo animale: la fascinazione e gli stati ipnotici* (1886). Convinced of the importance of studying open-mindedly and unbiasedly all trance-like states,[168] he investigated their mechanisms and found out that they presented contents which differed from those of ordinary waking states. Such states were 'peculiar to each individual', were not necessarily of a pathological nature, and could emerge 'in forms of madness and in hypnosis, as well as in suggestive states in daily life, and in dreams, or wherever self-

[168] He was the first Italian scientific authority to write a treatise on the theme of magnetism.

control was weakened' (Guarnieri 1988: 129). Focusing on various, Western and non-Western, ecstatic states of consciousness, Morselli suggested that they could all be explained in terms of a mechanism of autohypnotism:

> Il *nirvaña* dei buddisti, la *vista interna dell'anima* attraverso il foro ombellicale dei famosi monaci del monte Athos […], lo stato profetico delle sibille e quello descritto da Sant'Agostino nella sua *Città di Dio*, le danze sfrenate e l'analgesia degli Arabi Beni-Aïaussa d'Algeria, fors'anco l'estasi religiosa che or ora descriverò, più ancora la condizione incosciente in cui cadono in buona fede i medium dello spiritismo e i pseudo-chiaroveggenti, non possono spiegarsi altrimenti che come fenomeni più o meno spiccati di auto-ipnosi. (1886: 316-317)

He further elaborated his hypothesis by equating religious ecstatics to hypnotised subjects and pointing to their physical and mental proximity:

> nell'estasi, come nell'ipnotismo, le membra sono immobili, ora rigide ora catalettiche, lo sguardo fisso con le palpebre ora chiuse e frementi, ora semichiuse ed aperte, la sensibilità generale abolita, i sensi chiusi alle impressioni esterne, la percezione limitata […], la coscienza ristretta al cerchio di idee fisse spontanee suggerite dal vivo affetto religioso. (1886: 318-319)

Another scientist who took up a more inclusive attitude, in his *Estasi Umane* Paolo Mantegazza rejected the downright pathologisation of ecstasies and their relegation outside the realm of normality (and society). Acknowledging the limits of positions engrained in materialistic certainties, he sought to grasp the spiritual essence of ecstasy, embracing a less dogmatic psychological approach to its understanding than that promoted by several of his colleagues. Mantegazza defined ecstasy as the 'forma più rara e alta' (1887a: 9) of hypnotism – the moment in which 'la nostra coscienza isolata dal mondo si concentra tutta quanta ad assorbire l'energia intensa, indefinita e indefinibile di un affetto o di un pensiero, che si trova in condizioni di esaltatissima attività' (1887a: 8) –, providing a thorough taxonomy of ecstatic phenomena, including 'estasi negli animali' and 'estasi prodotte dai fiori' (1887a: 48, 1887b: 167).

According to Pireddu, he can be 'considered somewhat anti-Lombrosian, unlike his rival not ready to make his physiological approach encroach upon the pathological mechanisms of insanity and criminality' (30).[169] In chapter IX of *Estasi umane*, devoted to religious ecstasies, Mantegazza recounts:

[169] Unlike Lombroso, however, he wholly disregarded the occult world and failed to include in his treatise occult states of unconsciousness.

> Non dimenticherò mai l'aria di dispetto con cui un ottimo amico mio abbandonava la sala delle mie conferenze, quando discorrendo dell'estasi religiosa, io mi sforzava di studiarla senza fanatismo e senza dileggio. In quel momento per lui io era un bigotto, mentre per qualche sacerdote che mi stava ascoltando, io era forse un eretico! (1887a: 234)

The anecdote is important for several reasons. First, because it shows that Verga's lectures on ecstasy were not an isolated case and that the interest in ecstatic phenomena during the second half of the nineteenth century was widespread and occasioned lectures and conferences on the subject. Secondly, because it shows that Mantegazza recognised the ambiguous status of ecstasy, which he places between the worlds of science and religion. Lastly, because, it reveals the extent to which he firmly avoids taking sides, despite being a prominent exponent of the former of those two worlds. Neither a heretic, nor a sanctimonious, he wishes to explore ecstasy 'senza fanatismo e senza dileggio', 'non per deriderla, non per portarla a cielo, ma soltanto colla modesta pretensione di collocarla nel suo posto naturale fra gli altri rapimenti, dei quali l'uomo è capace' (Mantegazza 1887a: 235). While detecting the *conditio sine qua non* for ecstasy to take place in 'uno stato di grande esaltamento, di somma eccitabilità, in condizione di nervosismo o, come si suol dire in linguaggio volgare, di isterismo', he stresses the non-intrinsically pathological origin of the phenomenon:

> Il sonnambulismo, il delirio, le convulsioni, le emorragie capillari della pelle (stigmate), la catalessi ed altri fenomeni, che appartengono alla patologia, possono complicare l'estasi religiosa, ma non sono necessarie condizioni del rapimento. (1887a: 263)[170]

Presenting his convictions as alternative to those of Lombroso and teasing his friend's rather dogmatic views, Mantegazza again remarks on the ambiguous, liminal status of ecstasy:

> L'estatico non è pazzo, ma è sulla frontiera mal definita, dove le cose alte e bassissime si toccano, dove la fantasia può toccare la follia ragionante, dove il genio e la follia si toccano davvero, non come vorrebbe trovar sempre e dapertutto il mio amico Lombroso. (1887a: 264)

A more open-minded approach than Lombroso's also emerges in Mantegazza's 'perspective on women's right to sexual pleasure' and his implying 'that the female body should not be read merely

[170] That is, not 'hysteria complicated by ecstasy', as in the case of Nanette Laroux explored by Goldstein, but ecstasy complicated by hysteria.

as a vessel for reproduction but also as a source of individual non-reproductive sensual satisfaction and self-realization' (Ross 2014a: 52).

References to Mantegazza's study on ecstasy appear in the work of another Italian scientist who devoted his attention to ecstatic phenomena: Giulio Belfiore. A doctor of the municipal hospital in Naples, with *L'ipnotismo e gli stati affini* (1887) Belfiore delivered the first 'completo studio sull'ipnotismo' (Lombroso 1888: 3) in Italy.[171] Positioning his study at a scientific distance from the 'ciarlataneria' characterising previous theorisations and applications of animal magnetism, understanding ecstasy as a manifestation of hypnotism, he describes it as 'una sortita fuori dai sensi, una specie di alienazione dello spirito', in which the body rests while 'l'animo è tutto in azione' (Belfiore 13). Citing the ecstasies of Saint Catherine of Siena as an example of this state in line with the retrospective medicalisation of religious ecstasies from the past, Belfiore writes: 'Non v'ha dubbio che queste estasi, di cui troviamo numerosi esempi in tutte le epoche, siano un fatto morboso che si avvera in persone deboli, isteriche, sovreccitate' (16). Who these 'deboli, isteriche, sovreccitate' people are is explained further in the book when Belfiore claims that women fall more easily than men in the state of hypnotic (that is, ecstatic) trance: 'Il *sesso* è uno dei fattori predisponenti; quindi il *sesso femminino,* molto sensibile e facilmente eccitabile, subisce a preferenza l'influenza dei processi ipnogeni' (48). Belfiore maintains that all forms of trance-like states – 'le forme letargiche, catalettiche, estatiche dei tempi andati, e dei tempi presenti' (16), from Saint Teresa's to Luisa Lateau's ones, including those linked to non-Western cultures like Indian Veda philosophy –,[172] can be explained through hypnotic phenomenology. The latter, according to Belfiore, is characterised by two main features: 'l'incoscienza più o meno completa e l'indebolimento fino all'assoluta abolizione della volontà' (216), with will being substituted by automatism.[173] Ultimately, Belfiore postulates the equivalence of hypnotic and hysterical symptoms (in his opinion, 'anomalie delle funzioni psichiche'), pointing out that all states accompanying the *grande hystérie* – including the third period of the great hysterical crisis, 'quello degli atteggiamenti passionali, delle pose plastiche', in which the subjects might enter the state of 'estasi, che per lo più è religiosa' – are 'interamente identici a quelli che si provocano artificialmente nell'ipnosi' (225).

In his studies Belfiore cites the work of another Campanian doctor who engaged with hypnotism and ecstatic *attitudes passionnelles*: Gaetano Rummo. A prominent figure in the

[171] The book was prefaced by Lombroso, who deemed the subject of the study an 'argomento' which 'si fa ogni giorno sempre più vitale e curioso' (1888: 3).
[172] 'Presso i popoli orientali, come in altra epoca presso di noi, – Belfiore generally points out – l'estasi volontaria è comune a provocarsi' (25).
[173] Belfiore provides examples of the hypnotic state by including in his book portraits of somnambulist Emma Zanardelli in trance and mentioning, dismissing them, 'le rappresentazioni ad uso Donato, che sfibrano ed inducono uno squilibrio nel sistema nervoso del paziente' (194).

dissemination of Charcot's studies, his stay in Paris prompted him to edit an Italian translation of the French neurologist's clinical lectures.[174] Along with publishing an article describing a case of great hypnotism which was quoted by Charcot, he produced a photographic catalogue of great hysteria, significantly dedicated to the French master. An explicit reference to Bourneville and Régnard's work from its title, the *Iconografia fotografica del grande isterismo* (1890) emulates the *Iconographie*'s display of the different periods of great hysteria or hystero-epilepsy, offering precious instances of hysterical states of *extases*.[175] The 70 photographs included in the book are preceded by a description of the illness portrayed, which wholly reproduces Charcot's formulation of *grand hystérie* and its four periods. Acknowledging his sources, Rummo claims to have authored the first Italian publication fully devoted to cases of great hysteria. The *Iconografia* was occasioned by his direct observation of 'cinque casi di grande isterismo' in the Clinica medica propedeutica in Siena, which he directed in 1889.[176] The names of the patients mentioned are Tommassina T., Sofia R., Emma R., and Annita B.

The catalogue presents 13 photos portraying one of the patients in the third period of the hysterical attack, coinciding with the '*Fase degli atteggiamenti appassionati o delle pose plastiche*' (Rummo 9). In these pictures, '[l]a fisionomia e le diverse attitudini del corpo esprimono le diverse pagine di un dramma intimo' (Rummo 9), conveying the tireless alternation of different and opposite states, from joyful to sad, from angry to pleased. While the pictures reproducing the second period are remarkable with regards to the body's spectacular contortions (Figure 12), those depicting the third period provide an extraordinary instance of bodily and facial conditions during *attitudes passionelles* (Figures 13-14). Postures of prayer, crucifixion, possession, entrancement, sexual orgasm, stupor, elation follow one another, exhibiting the main features of the ecstatic attitude: the rigidity of the body, the face and the neck faced upwards, the eyes turned backwards. A manifesto of ecstatic dis-order, the portraits manage to capture the bodily displacement and even dilaceration involved in ecstatic states. Just like Charcot's Augustine, the women of the Clinica in Siena display an '*acting-out*', 'an act beside one's self', a 'misfortune of identity' (Didi-Huberman 170). It is worth pointing out that the group of photos depicting the third period of hysteria is the only one including partial nudity – in most other pictures, the models are wearing a noticeable striped vestment. Another thing to notice is that, unlike the Salpêtrière's *planches*, Rummo's photos 'show the patients surrounded by cushions and mattresses, as precautions are taken to prevent injuries' (Brigo et al. 3).

[174] Charcot, Jean-Martin, *Differenti forme d'afasia. Lezioni fatte nella Salpêtrière nel semestre d'estate dell'anno 1883, redatte col consenso dell'autore dal dottore G. Rummo* (1884). The translation was prefaced by Charcot himself, who praised Rummo's efforts at promoting the lectures within the Italian audience.
[175] Before Rummo, Augusto Tebaldi had reprised the *tableaux* of the Salpêtrière in *Fisonomia ed espressione studiate nelle loro deviazioni, con una appendice sulla espressione del delirio nell'arte. Opera corredata di un atlante* (1884).
[176] Rummo feels the need to specify that the cases were 'degenti nell'ospedale da lunga pezza, onde non si può da alcuno insinuare che siavi stata la benchè menoma suggestione (cosa di cui la Germania accusava Charcot!)' (6).

Notwithstanding this precaution – an evidence, perhaps, of the Italian doctor's greater care for his patients –, Harris' claim that Régnard's photos 'are unselfconsciously invasive and even by the standards of the day stretched to the limit the ethical proprieties seen to govern professional relations between doctor and patient' (Harris 1991: XLVIII) can be extended to the photos included in Rummo's *Iconografia*. In beholding the subject of the pictures, i.e., the woman's ecstatic poses, it is hard not to perceive the staring subject behind the camera, i.e., the gaze of the doctor scrutinising, overseeing, attempting to seize ecstatic dis-order.



Figure 12

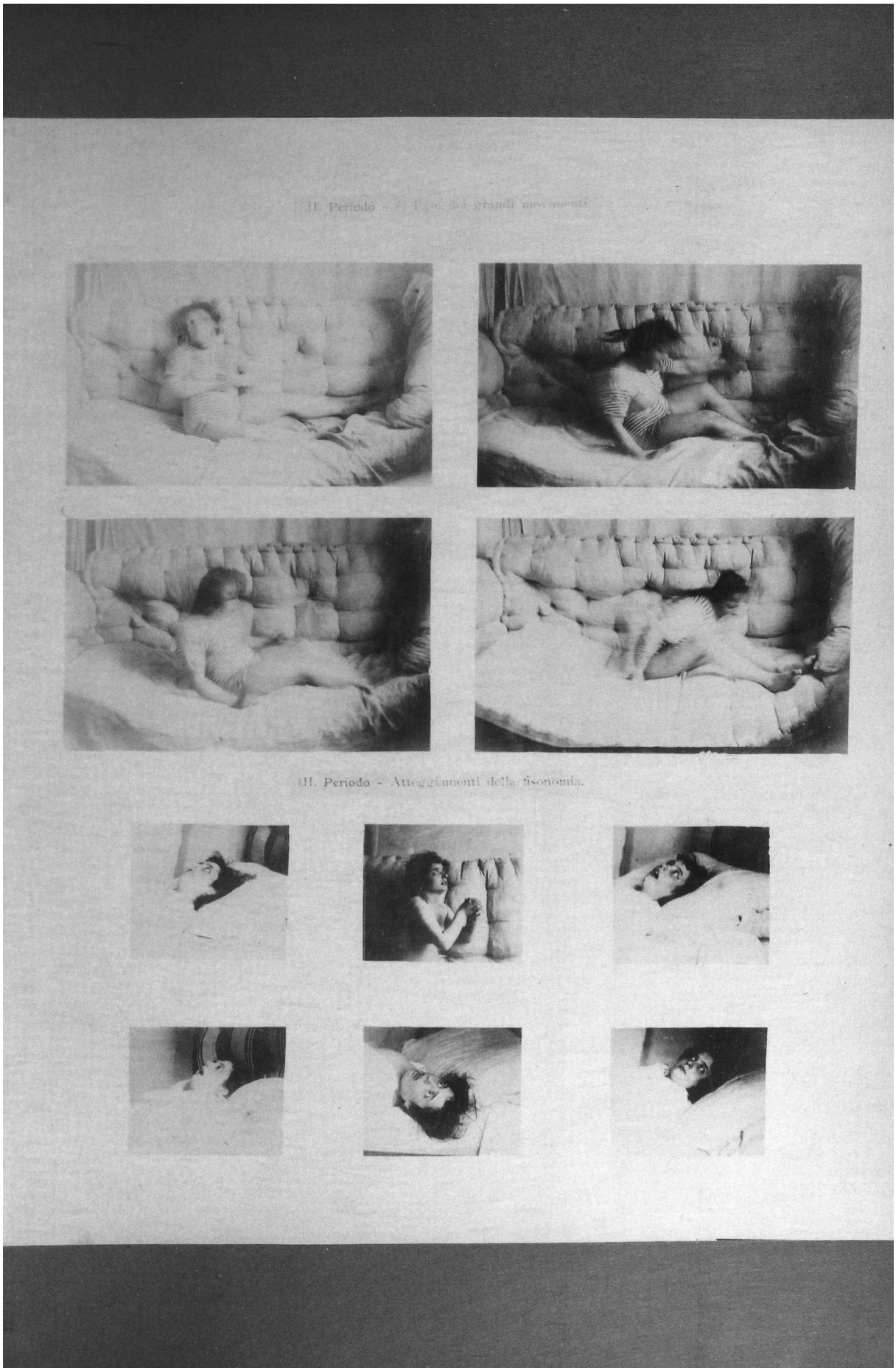

II. Periodo - I grandi movimenti
III. Periodo - Atteggiamenti della fisonomia.

Figure 13

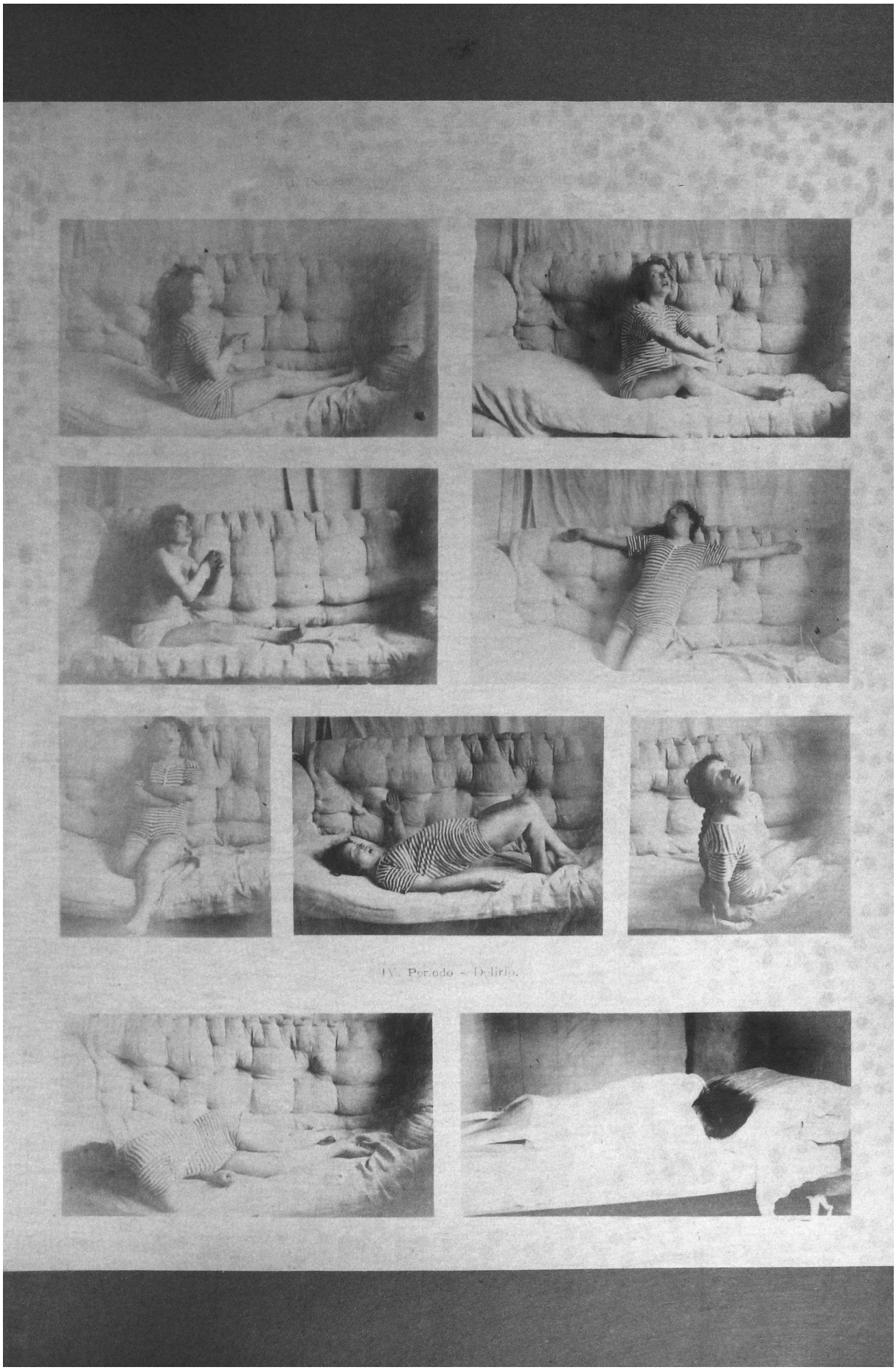


Figure 14

Going back to Saint Catherine of Siena, the sociologist Alfonso Asturaro delivered a hystericised reading of the saint's mystical experiences in *Santa Caterina da Siena: osservazioni psico-patologiche* (1881).[177] As pointed out by Cori, Asturaro provided a major instance of the 'recurrent motif in the positivist school' of 'the re-visitation of religious ecstasies through the lens of hysteria' and, more specifically, 'the most extreme attempt, in the Italian context, to merge hagiography with psychiatric science and Spiritualism' (126).[178] Praised by Lombroso as a 'memoria degna di sopravvivere all'effimera vita dei libelli' (1882: 161), the study provides a psychiatric diagnosis of the saint's hysteria, reviewing her different symptoms, including faints, spasms, contractures, hyperesthesia and anaesthesia, visions, and, finally, ecstasies. Rejecting all supernatural interpretations, Asturaro firmly asserts Caterina's hysteria and identifies its origin in a repression of a natural impulse, suggesting that her 'irresistibile impulso, represso in ogni forma' has taken on a different direction (a divine one) and that her 'deliquio' conceals more than just the 'estasi di una santa':

> 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 […]. (18)

> […] non si deve dire piuttosto che [l'irresistibile impulso della donna] s'è trasformato ed ha preso un'altra direzione? che in quell'amore ebbro, affocato per Cristo c'è, sebbene Caterina non ne abbia coscienza, qualcosa dippiù che il semplice sentimento religioso? che in quel deliquio nell'atto di ricevere la comunione dalle mani del sacerdote, c'è qualcosa dippiù che l'estasi di una santa? (31)[179]

Commenting on the 'erotismo' inherent in Asturaro's reading of Caterina's ecstatic phenomena – 'così esplicito sia nelle mistiche dichiarazioni d'amore della estatica per il suo sposo ideale, sia nelle plateali convulsioni dell'isterica' –, Gallini remarks that the sociologist presents it in the Freudian

[177] A favourite subject of the pathologisation of ecstatic states by Italian scientists, Saint Catherine is also mentioned in Mosso's *La fatica* (1891). In the paragraph 'Ipnotismo ed estasi', Mosso associates ecstasy with an intensification of the attention that 'travalica i confini della natura comune' (196-197), providing artistic instances of ecstatic/hypnotic states with Sodoma's fresco portraits of Saint Catherine in the church of San Domenico in Siena.

[178] In addressing her divine raptures, Asturaro likens them to the trances of mediums on the ground of their shared element of unconsciousness: 'Caterina, che detta in astrazione […] lunghe lettere e trattati, di cui, desta, non ricorda più nulla, ti fa pensare al *medium,* la cui penna corre veloce sulla carta e la riempie senza che egli, riavutosi, abbia coscienza di quel che ha fatto' (15).

[179] The questions are all rhetorical as Asturaro concludes that the answer to them 'non possa essere dubitativa' (31).

terms of 'repressione, rimozione e spostamento di sintomo' (323). In Asturaro's reading, ecstasy is the result of a mental process that eschews the subject's awareness ('sebbene Caterina non ne abbia coscienza', Gallini 323), taking places in the territory of the unconscious.

Another exponent of Italian positivism who linked ecstasy to unconscious mechanisms of the mind, Giuseppe Scipione Vinaj addressed ecstatic states in *La psiche nell'isterismo e nella neurastenia: osservazioni cliniche* (1893). Combining Charcot's school of thought with the studies of his fellow countryman Mantegazza, Vinaj situates ecstasy within the frame of the *grande hystèrie* associating it with hypnotising hallucinatory images.[180] In the second chapter of his work, he tackles 'Delirio isterico', matching it with the third and fourth periods of great hysteria: that of the passionate attitudes, which he calls 'periodo di delirio muto' (Vinaj 54), and that of the final delirium. He, then, provides an example of what takes place during the third period, pointing to the rapid alternation of different attitudes (i.e., immobility followed by sudden animation), in line with Charcot's formulation of the period of the *poses plastiques*:

> L'ammalata in quei momenti vive una vita a sé, tutto quanto la circonda è scomparso per lei […]. Essa è là, cogli occhi aperti, immobile prima, poi animata. L'ammalata assiste ad una scena, e, secondo le vicende di questa, prova delle emozioni, che esprime con atteggiamenti diversi. (Vinaj 54)

Noticeably, Vinaj links the scene beheld by the hysterical patients to a significant event in their lives: 'Ordinariamente questi ammalati ricordano con questa scena muta qualche avvenimento importante della loro vita, che ritorna sotto forma di allucinazione alla loro mente' (54). His observation is of great significance for two reasons: firstly because it aligns with Freud's definition of hysteria as a reminiscence of a past event[181] and secondly because it is specifically related to the third period of hysteria, that of ecstatic poses. That is, the doctor is suggesting that the unconscious reminiscences arise in states of hysterical *extase*.

Vinaj's remark is immediately followed by the direct reference to 'un'altra forma psichica-isterica, che può prendere parte in questo capitolo' and which he cannot 'tralasciare': 'intendo dire l'estasi, uno stato psichico speciale nel quale l'attenzione dell'ammalato pare forzatamente rivolta ad imagini allucinatorie obbiettivate' (135). Making his previous observations more explicit, passing from ecstatic *attitudes passionelles* to downright ecstasy, Vinaj claims that the latter is prompted by

[180] He explicitly recalls Charcot's pioneering studies together with the work of other scientists who devoted their attention to neurosis, including (the only Italian to be mentioned) Mantegazza's *Estasi umane* (Vinaj 164-165).
[181] As famously maintained in *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), '*[h]ysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*' (Breuer and Freud 7).

'imagini allucinatorie' (135) (mostly religious and exhibiting erotic or frightening connotations) which hypnotise the hysterics and can both abolish their senses and/or bring about their intensification (hyperesthesia). He notes that the phenomenon frequently occurs in the life of Italian saints and mentions the ecstasies of Saint Catherine of Siena and Blessed Catherine Mattei. He also refers to other cases of ecstasy nonrelated to saintliness: that of 'un giovanetto isterico certo *C.* di Tunisi', '[u]na signorina *J.P.*, istero epilettica', and '[u]na ragazzina, certa *F*… di anni 11, isterica' (Vinaj 137-138). The latter case, recounted by Spanish doctor Juan Giné, is worth citing as it postulates a connection between the girl's hysteria and her 'educazione un po' strana', for which 'alla sua età frequentava balli, divertimenti, alternando queste eccitazioni con pratiche religiose esagerate' (Vinaj 138).[182] The girl's hysterical and disorderly 'eccitazioni' acquire a sentimental-erotic connotation when, at the age of 11, she falls in love with her cousin. That is what sets off her ecstatic crisis:

> Nello stesso suo anno undicesimo s'era innamorata di un suo cuginetto della stessa età […]. Dopo d'allora andava soggetta ad attacchi frequentissimi di estasi. In questi teneva gli occhi aperti e fissi, mormorava qualche parola, agitava le braccia come se volesse stringere qualche oggetto […]. (Vinaj 138)

The sentimental-erotic undertone of her convulsive ecstasy turns out to be unequivocally sexual:

> Aveva fuori dell'accesso un punto isterogeno alla regione epigastrica. Se durante l'accesso si faceva una pressione su quel punto, l'ammalata dimostrava un senso di vivo godimento da paragonarsi colle più voluttuose estasi del senso venereo. (Vinaj 138)

The acknowledgment of the sexual nature of *F.*'s ecstatic crisis feels somewhat disquieting when thinking of her age. But there is something far more troubling in this medical report: what kind of clinical gaze (and hand) is being directed upon the young girl?

The leader of the Italian organicist trend, Cesare Lombroso was one of the fiercest advocates of the hysterical-pathological interpretation of ecstatic phenomena. Sharing 'Charcot's lifelong fascination with hypnosis and its relation to hysteria' (Mazzoni 1996: 30), Lombroso fostered a culture which reduced sanctity to hysteria, with the entire 'fenomenologia del misticismo' – '[a]pparizioni mariane, piaghe cristiche, estasi femminili, levitazioni maschili' – being 'rubricata come patologia psicosomatica' (Lizzatto 69). In *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna*

[182] As I will show in the chapters devoted to Serao and, especially, D'Annunzio, dancing plays an important part within the economy of ecstatic dis-orders.

normale, Lombroso devoted a chapter to the 'Delinquenti isteriche',[183] among whom he included 'le sante, le estatiche e digiunatrici, come la Koerl,[184] la Luigia Lateau' (1893: 624). Echoing Charcot's school's association of the *attitude de la possession* with that of *érotisme*,[185] Lombroso intertwined demonomania with nymphomania, pointing to the 'estasi erotiche' with which 'la demonomania più o meno mista di ninfomanìa, di convulsioni, ecc.' manifested itself (1890: 119).

When he began exploring hypnotism and mediumistic phenomena, courageously challenging his consolidated materialist-rationalist convictions, he nonetheless resorted to the same old pathologising theories, reaching the conclusion that 'il *trance* medianico è un vero equivalente isterico' (Lombroso 1909: 86) and that '[l]a causa, dunque, dei fenomeni medianici deve cercarsi, lo ripeto, nelle condizioni patologiche del medium stesso, appunto come ho dimostrato per i fenomeni ipnotici' (Lombroso 1995: 199).[186] Lombroso linked mystical phenomena to occult ones – for instance, detecting cases of mediumistic automatic writing in the ecstatic revelations of the mystics –, understanding both as symptoms of a nervous-pathological condition. He believed that one could 'facilmente ricondurre all'"invasamento", allo sconvolgimento epilettico sia l'estasi mistica sia la trance del medium' (Castelnuovo Frigessi 340). Consequently, he regarded Eusapia Palladino as a 'neuropatica' who was hit in the head when she was little and had since then been 'soggetta ad accessi epilettici, catalettici, isterici' which would manifest during the séances giving rise to mediumistic phenomena (Lombroso 1995: 197). Tellingly, Lombroso believed that an essential proof of her pathological condition was to be found in her abnormal body, especially her 'fronte prospiciente' and 'mascella regale': these distinctive marks enabled him to isolate her body as 'un corpo anomalo', '[i]l corpo di quanti non si inscrivevano perfettamente nella normalità e rispettabilità sociali', and whose 'stigmi di diversità' were to be interpreted as the expressions of malady (De Ceglia and Leporiere 97).

Notwithstanding his pathologising stances, Lombroso discerned the working of the unconscious in clairvoyant and hypnotic trances, religious ecstasies, and genial inspirations. Following his conversion to Spiritualistic belief, in an article published in 1906, he drew the following conclusions:

> ci appare questa ipotesi spiritica come un continente, emerso incompletamente dall'oceano… a questa credenza mi conforta soprattutto la scoperta che venne fatta negli ultimi tempi da Myers, Aksakov, Sergi, Hartmann di una seconda coscienza (la *subliminale*, *l'inconscio*), che percepisce

[183] As previously suggested, criminology went hand in hands with pathology.
[184] Koerl is probably a typo for Moerl and might refer to the ecstatic Maria von Mörl.
[185] See Bourneville and Régnard 1878: 63.
[186] As pointed out by M. Biondi, he passed from a 'materialistic positivism, to a spiritistic positivism' (1988: 136-137).

> ed agisce indipendentemente dai sensi e dagli organi, giungendo nella chiaroveggenza, nel sonno ipnotico, nell'estasi, nell'ispirazione geniale, spesso a risultati assai più grandi di quelli a cui approda la coscienza normale legata agli organi, ai sensi. (1906: 986)

Finally, one last mention must go to Salvatore Ottolenghi, whose work *La suggestione e le facoltà psichiche occulte in rapporto alla pratica legale e medico-forense* (1900) I have previously mentioned as an example of the contemporary condemnation of occult phenomena. A devoted pupil of Lombroso and the inventor of scientific criminology, Ottolenghi fiercely rejected the supernatural essence of both mystical and demoniac, and somnambulistic phenomena, tracing them back to the action of 'suggestioni o autosuggestioni' (41).[187] According to him, the latter determine 'istati di sdoppiamento della personalità' capable of producing 'tutti i gradi di esaltamento psichico, dal semplice eccitamento al rapimento, all'estasi' (86-87). Ecstatic saints, mediums, clairvoyant somnambulists, neuropathics, and psychopaths are all the same: 'Quasi tutti sono soggetti a veri accessi isterici o epilettici e le loro rivelazioni sono altrettante crisi isteriche di estasi, ecc., provocate per autosuggestione' (437-438).

From Andrea Verga's pioneering conferences in the 1860s, the interest of Italian scientists around ecstatic states thrived throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and into the new century,[188] so that when in 1914 the *Rivista italiana di neuropatologia, psichiatria ed elettroterapia* presented to the Italian audience Paul Ferdinand Schilder's newly released study *Selbstbewusstsein und Persönlichkeitsbewusstsein. Eine psychopathologische Studie*, with the entire third chapter dedicated to ecstasy, the splitting of the ego, and obsessions – ecstasy being openly linked to the exploration of the conscious-unconscious mind system –, Giosuè Biondi introduced it as a monograph dealing with the 'più interessanti argomenti della psicologia' (509).

[187] 'Nelle visioni più sublimi delle ispirate in istato di estasi, come nelle stupefacenti resistenze di certe indemoniate, o ispirate […] come negli effetti benefici o malefici delle rivelazioni di qualche pitonessa in veste da sonnambula, ovunque verificasi […] l'equivalenza delle sensazioni prodotte da suggestione, alle sensazioni reali, anzi la prevalenza di quelle su queste' (Ottolenghi 40).

[188] Along with general findings and formulations, Italian scientists produced single case-studies of ecstasy. See, for instance, Giovanni Pesce's 'Storia di un caso di estasi' (1869), and Filippo Pennavaria's *Sopra un caso d'isterismo acuto con estasi e sognazione spontanea accaduto in persona della insigne poetessa Mariannina Coffa Caruso* (1878).

5. The *querelle* around ecstasy

So far, I have provided an outline of the importance and presence of ecstasy in the first sixty years of Italian post-unification history. I did so by placing it within the framework of its three main cultural sites of manifestation, i.e., the religious, occult, and scientific domains, devoting different paragraphs to each variety of ecstasy while, at the same time, conveying the extent to which they were constantly interacting the one with the other. As I have tried to show, the notion of ecstasy was, in fact, at the centre of an ongoing, lively debate contending different interpretations of the phenomenon.[189] Gradually dismissing the occult element, this debate eminently opposed science and religion fighting for the appropriation of bodily and mental states which the former held to be explicable in medical/scientific terms and the latter believed to be linked to the non-questionable world of the divine or, reversely, to the Devil's work.[190] Both standpoints, however conflicting, increasingly dismissed occult trances as superstition, seeking to 'close the system'[191] and detain the absolute, albeit shared, monopoly over human bodies and minds, and the extraordinary phenomena they could engender. Secularisation had weakened the influence of systems of thought which did not rely on a scientific, rational outlook on the world, i.e., those pertaining to religion and 'occulture'. Church religion, despite seeing its power critically reduced, was able to survive the modern waves of secularisation and scientisation thanks to the stability secured through its centuries-long history of institutionalisation. The occult world, on the other hand, which had manifested itself throughout history intermittently and in the form of a subaltern culture opposed to other more established ontological-gnoseological systems, was significantly undermined by the secularisation and rationalisation processes. The progressive prevailing of religion and science over 'occulture' in the post-Enlightenment age transpires from the late-nineteenth century *querelle* around ecstasy, revealing the historical and cultural proximity of religion and science as the dominant, officially established, orthodox (and orderly) institutions, in opposition to the subaltern (disorderly) heterodoxy embodied by the occult world.[192] Both religion and science dismissed occult ecstatic phenomena either by investing them of their new scientific guise – somnambulism or magnetism being appropriated by the

[189] Mc Daniel discerns the conditions for the nineteenth-century *querelle* around ecstasy in the Enlightenment period, when '[s]uspicion of ecstatic states was a major theme' and philosophers begun associating such states with insanity, superstition, and the 'corruption of reason' (60).

[190] Bovolo identifies 'one of the major controversies that opposed Catholics and positivist in the second half of the century' in 'the debates on the origin and authenticity of miracles, wonders, relics, and divine signs (such as apparitions, ecstasies, stigmata, and healings)' (120).

[191] Going back to Josephson Storm's remark (see note 44), the occult represents the Derridean third term of the equation which prevents the religious-scientific system to close.

[192] If we look at today's Western world, we can see that science and religion still compete for the possession of knowledge and the interpretation of extraordinary bodily and mental phenomena, while the occult has been left in the hands of subaltern advocates. This said, I want to clarify that what took place was a prevailing over, not a disappearing of 'occulture' which, indeed, continued (and continues) to operate subterraneously.

scientific discourse on hypnotism – or by employing them as terms of comparisons with which to clearly identify the essence of the allegedly divine or nervous states of ecstasy, occult experiences being considered as manifestations of either demonic or nervous disorders. Though differing in opinions and approaches, they often resorted – coming back to Harris' case-study on Lourdes – to the same 'imposing, even authoritarian attitude' (1999: 342). The debate around ecstasy is indeed conceivable in terms of a battle for control: what was often at stake was not establishing the nature of ecstatic states but who was entitled to gaze and exert control upon them, as well as on those who experienced them. Within this framework, unsurprisingly, the State chose to endorse the religious and scientific order against the disorder of 'occulture'. When in fin-de-siècle Italy magnetisers, somnambulists, and spiritualists started to be ostracised, becoming the victim of a 'vera e propria caccia alle streghe e agli stregoni' (Gallini 277), the State aligned with the positions of religious and scientific authorities condemning occultism and formalised the 'campagna antimagnetica e antispiritistica' (Gallini 278) by outlawing occult operators. Instances of the marginalisation-criminalisation of the occult world by the Italian establishment are offered by the famous 'processo delle somnambule' held in Turin in 1890, which saw 'il fior fiore del magnetismo cittadino' (Gallini 282) on trial with the valuable assistance of experts led by Lombroso, and the proposal of a new article in the 1889 penal code relating to the 'abuso dell'altrui credulità', for which

> [n]on deve, infatti, in una società seria e civile, andare impunita quest'arte d'ingannare gli uomini e permettersi che falsi indovini, interpreti di sogni, scopritori di pretesi tesori nascosti, finti estatici o spacciatori di miracoli […] e altri simili impostori facciano un mestiere della menzogna e così traggano danaro dalla credulità del volgo ignorante. (quoted in Gallini 276)

There is no place in a serious and civilised society for 'finti', that is, occult, 'estatici'. There is, however, space for true ecstatics, that is, Church-approved ecstatics which the State should refrain from dismissing if it wants to preserve its alliance with the religious establishment, i.e., an enemy but also a precious interlocutor and collaborator in the governance of Italian citizens.

With reference to the 'question des mystiques' which crystallised 'd'interminables querelles dans la seconde moitié du siècle', Carroy-Thirard observes that two 'camps' were established: 'cléricaux d'un côté, "naturalistes" de l'autre', each 'camp' having 'ses extrémistes et ses modérés' (1980: 501). As I have showed, the Italian debate around ecstatic phenomena was characterised by such a dichotomy, opposing the bastions of science to those of religion, with each "camp" presenting fierce defenders of the positivist or religious interpretation as well as more inclusive and open-minded

figures.[193] A testimony to the great attention the *querelle* elicited in the years under study, the dispute around ecstatic states was not the exclusive concern of people of science or theologians. Individuals with different backgrounds, who were not strictly related to either party, took part in the *querelle*, revealing the extremisms of the scientific and religious standpoints and making space for a middle ground. It is their mediating position that I wish to present through the works of Filippo Linati and Baldassarre Labanca.

A writer, politician, and senator of the Italian Kingdom, Linati was interested in transcendentalism and wrote a book on the subject: *Introduzione allo studio della fisiologia trascendentale* (1874). In the study he argues that ecstasy originates from a 'pensiero appassionato' capable of 'superare gli atti consueti di natura, e […] fare del corpo uno strumento passivo della volontà' (Linati 574). He traces all supernatural phenomena – from the 'prodigi della santità' to the 'gran numero di prodigi' belonging to fields of demonology, magic, and animal magnetism (587) – back to an excitation of the mind demanding extraordinary fulfilment:

> I fatti degli estatici tutti […] si compiono nello stesso modo, sono sempre il risultato complesso di un'idea e d'un sentimento o passione che vuole la propria soddisfazione, e dell'inefficacia delle forze organiche ordinarie a resistere. (662)

Putting saintly and diabolic ecstatics, and magnetic somnambulists on the same level,[194] he concludes that all ecstatic experiences are linked to a 'grave perturbazione della vita nervosa' (661) and are the 'prodotto di forze naturali' (666). That is, they are not related to unnatural, abnormal conditions. It is important to point out that Linati explicitly defends his broad-minded, non-biased attitude towards ecstasy. Anticipating the objections of scientists keen to dismiss his arguments as 'fatti […] inammissibili', he urges them to reflect on the fact that 'lo stato d'estasi conferisce all'affetto interno una potenza sovrumana' and to accept such 'fenomeni in discorso, per quanto straordinari possano parere […] come una di quelle verità che ponno giovare alla conoscenza delle forze organiche ed al progresso della scienza' (Linati 579). Furthermore, even though he presents a natural explanation of ecstatic states, for which God and the devil function as nothing more than 'idee eccitatrici della passione e della volontà', he does not simplistically dismiss their spiritual significance and divine interpretation, and leaves to the Church and the community of the believers the right to link them to God or, reversely, Satan:

[193] According to Osselaer, the conflictual nature of the *querelle* did not prevent the possibility for more 'productive debates' (21) fostering an exchange of knowledge and reciprocal influence.
[194] 'Il magnetismo è quindi capace di quegli effetti che abbiamo veduto prodursi, per l'energia del sentimento interno, negli estatici divini e demoniaci' (Linati 654).

> I fatti maravigliosi che hanno luogo nell'estasi […] si attribuiscono a Dio se l'estatico è tratto dall'affetto verso il medesimo, e si attribuiscono al demonio allorchè gli effetti procedono da altra cagione. Non è mio compito il ricercare se sia o no vero […]. Se la chiesa cattolica lo afferma, avrà all'uopo le sue buone ragioni ed io le accetto. (Linati 662-663)

Baldassarre Labanca was another advocate of the middle way, synthetizing the strict outlooks of the scientific and religious spheres. Initially a priest, following a spiritual crisis triggered by his aversion to the Church's management of the temporal power,[195] he became a scholar and a teacher in philosophy and history of religions. He sought to bring together the history of Christianity and the secular culture of the newly unified nation but was harshly opposed by both Catholic and lay intellectuals. His position of mediator between secular and religious instances emerges in the article 'La bancarotta né della scienza né della religione. Lettera aperta ad Enrico Morselli', published in 1895 on *Il pensiero italiano. Repertorio mensile di studi applicati alla prosperità e coltura sociale*. Labanca's piece was written in the form of an open letter to Morselli in response to his 'Pretesa bancarotta della scienza', published on the *Rivista di sociologia* and itself a reply to the allegation of a bankruptcy of science moved by Ferdinand Brunetière in the *Revue des deux mondes*.[196]

Despite praising Morselli for his decision to respond to Brunetière's accusation, considered by Labanca himself unjust, unfair, and prejudiced, Labanca claims that the article written by the Italian scientist displayed the same inflexible and biased mindset:

> a voi è toccato, che avete ucciso l'aggressore, per difendervi dall'ingiusta aggressione. […] desiderando opporvi ai cattolici che proclamano la bancarotta della scienza, avete annunziata la prossima bancarotta della religione, per opera degli scienziati. (3)

In particular, Labanca accuses Morselli of taking on a biased attitude in his opinions on mystics and mysticism, and of confusing mysticism with Spiritualism. According to the Italian doctor, the latter are both linked to an anomaly of the nervous system which takes the form of a hypno-pathological condition. Morselli extends the 'indiscutibili' 'somiglianze tra l'estasi medianica o trance e le note sindromi accessuali delle nevrosi' (1908: 93) to the mystic world. How can one deny, he infers,

[195] See his *Contraddizioni tra le due potestà spirituale e temporale dei papi* (1860).
[196] Brunetière's article, titled 'Après une visite au Vatican' (1895), had already received a reply from Richer.

> le analogie sorprendenti fra la medianità e le estasi del misticismo, quali ne ebbero i gnostici e i santi, e i rapimenti concentrativi dei monaci omfalo-psichici del Monte Athos, e i dolorosissimi noviziati dei fakiri e bonzi, e le prove delle iniziazioni e dei misteri? (Morselli 1908: 109)

Opposing Morselli's contentions, Labanca suggests that mysticism is not always, nor has it always been, a pathological state of madness or degeneration, claiming the specificity of the Italian case as one that has produced a beneficial mysticism:

> Sì, è vero, mistici e misticismi degenerati si sono visti a quando a quando, arrivati fino alla follia, alla immoralità. Ma […] [i]l misticismo, di regola, è stato in ogni tempo benefico, soprattutto nella chiesa occidentale […]. In Italia – cosa degna di nota – ha giovato alla vita civile e morale […]. (16)

'Se la religione ha, spesso, ecceduto – Labanca points out –, anche la scienza è incorsa nella stessa colpa': 'È necessario – he concludes – che nessuna delle due parti ecceda nella resistenza' (16).

6. Four Cases of Ecstatic Dis-Order

To conclude my historical-cultural investigation of ecstasy in post-unification Italy, I will now uncover four case-studies which in my opinion provide emblematic examples of ecstatic dis-order. Their analysis will enable me to draw some provisional, concluding remarks to Part 1 and, thus, lead the way into the second part of my research.

6.1 Beppina and Capuana

The events I am about to relate took place in the summer of 1864 and were recounted by Capuana himself twenty years later in *Spiritismo?*, where the writer admittedly wore 'i panni dello scienziato e quelli dell'apprendista stregone, le vesti del magnetizzatore provetto e quelle del medium in attesa di "comunicazioni" dal "di là"' (Cigliana 1995: 27). '[S]ensibilmente attratto dall'occulto' (Foni 2007: 400) ever since he was a child,[197] 26-years old Capuana decided to test his occult knowledge and experiment upon the young daughter of Messrs Poggi, Beppina, with whom he stayed during the years of his Tuscan novitiate. Identifying his experiments with the 'lavorio disordinato della mente d'un dilettante', he, nonetheless, suggests that such amatorial work might be able to offer 'un'intuizione divinatrice da far qualche comodo al vero scienziato' (Capuana 1995c: 64).[198] After declaring that he is 'certo di non aver osservato male, di non esser caduto in preda di illusioni ottiche, o di allucinazioni di esaltato' (1995c: 69), Capuana starts narrating the 'assoggettamento magnetico', 'da manuale' (Cigliana 1995: 30), he exerted upon Beppina P., revealing his recklessness: 'Se dovessi ricominciare i miei esperimenti di sonnambulismo provocato, non sarei oggi così imprudente come nell'estate del 1864 in Firenze' (1995c: 70).

A 'sperimentatore senza scrupoli', by his own admission, Capuana begins to play with the girl's 'facoltà di sonnambula',[199] described as 'eccezionali' and 'docili' (1995c: 70). He initiates his 'gioco pericoloso' (Gallini 113) by leading her into somnambulistic trance and triggering 'una crisi quasi identica alla *gran nevrosi* dell'isterismo' (Capuana 1995a: 70). Despite the awareness of having elicited a crisis similar to an attack of grand hysteria and asking himself whether '[q]uel corpo non diventava, sotto la mia influenza, una specie di automa', Capuana claims:

[197] When he ran 'dietro l'ignoto […] pel gusto di correrglì dietro' (Capuana 1995c: 68).
[198] Capuana combined in his work references to the studies of scientists resorting to hypnotism, like Tamburini and Seppilli, and to the work of popular magnetisers like Guidi. His essay *Spiritismo?* was well-received by both the Spiritualistic circles and established scientists like Richet and Lombroso but not Mantegazza, who manifested skepticism towards the text.
[199] Foni has pointed out the essential game-dimension the entire operation revolved around (2007: 401).

> [n]on sospettavo neppure che, a forza di condurre quell'organismo all'estremo limite dell'allucinazione provocata, lo mettevo a repentaglio di cadere, forse irrimediabilmente, nella vera pazzia. (1995c: 70-71)

He thus decides to carry on with his experiments and hallucinate Beppina during her waking state. Throwing himself 'nel mare magno delle allucinazioni con un piacere fanciullesco' (Capuana 1995c: 73), he eventually makes the girl believe that Garibaldi is her father. By dint of 'esperimenti ripetuti, variati, intrecciati insieme con tanta inconsideratezza e tanta prodigalità', Capuana retrospectively admits having 'siffattamente sconvolto il sistema nervoso di quella brava ragazza' (1995c: 77). In recounting the experiments, he subscribes to an eminently scientific view according to which 'fenomeni così fuor del comune' like Beppina's trances find an explanation in the 'estrema sensibilità della sonnambula' and not in the 'capacità del fluido magnetico' (Capuana 1995c: 77). At the same time, he refrains from providing clearcut scientific explanations and does not wholly rule out the existence and action of supernatural forces. The borders that make it possible to distinguish between different ecstatic states – is it somnambulism, hysteria, Spiritualism? – are blurred, Capuana declares, and covered up with darkness:

> Con questi benedetti fenomeni magnetici e spiritici (già siamo sulla soglia dello Spiritismo) si brancica tuttavia nell'oscurità, passando di sorpresa in sorpresa. […] chi potrebbe dirci in questo momento dove il sonnambulismo finisca e la gran nevrosi incominci? Dove il sonnambulismo finisca e incominci lo Spiritismo? (1995c: 78)

Following his magnetic experiments, Capuana resolves to try out Spiritualism, intending to use Beppina as a medium and make her summon the spirit of Ugo Foscolo. The decision is related to the fact that Capuana was drawing up a biography on Foscolo and hoped to be enlightened on certain episodes of his life. Once again, the Sicilian writer successfully carries out his occult experiments as Beppina is possessed by Foscolo's spirit. When this happens, however, the young girl eschews and releases herself from her magnetiser's (i.e., Capuana's) will, becoming the pray of another, dead but equally authoritative and controlling, male figure. Every evening at nine o' clock the spirit of Foscolo takes hold of Beppina for two hours, draining her organism by making her perform all sorts of disorderly deeds: 'smarrirsi per burroni', 'arrampicarsi su per le ghiacciaie', 'dibattersi fra li spasimi dell'agonia' as if she was being attacked by a killer, and even getting drunk (1995c: 85). The 'strazio della povera Beppina' in obeying the spirit's commands is unspeakable: 'non è possibile se ne formi neppure una debole idea chi non ne fu spettatore' (Capuana 1995c: 85). 'Un giorno, a mezzo desinare, – Capuana recounts – lo spettacolo divenne, subitamente, meraviglioso davvero':

> La Beppina cadde in una specie di estasi che la rapiva in alto e la facea tenere così equilibratamente sulla estrema punta dei piedi, che per un momento dubitai non stesse proprio elevata a qualche distanza dal suolo. Il suo volto era trasfigurato. I lineamenti, irregolari e poco aggradevoli, avevano assunto una bellezza sorprendente […].
> Questa volta *Egli* voleva darle il suo anello, voleva sposarla. […]
> E, nel godimento di un'ineffabile felicità, prorompeva in esclamazioni interrotte, da cui non potevasi ben rilevare che cosa lei sentisse e vedesse durante quel mistico rapimento. (1995c: 85)

From entranced somnambulist to medium possessed by a spirit, Beppina has turned into an enraptured mystic. She reproduces the typical physiognomy and attitude of the mystic in ecstasy: her face is transfigured and enlightened, her irregular and unpleasant features are replaced by an astonishing beauty, she gives rise to a levitation phenomenon, and ultimately expresses the ineffable happiness the 'mistico rapimento' elicits in her. She is to Foscolo what female mystics are to Christ: a spiritual bride.



Figure 15



Figure 16



Figure 17



Figure 18

But Beppina's ecstatic journey has yet to come to an end. After months of suffering from symptoms of anaesthesia, catalepsy, and all sorts of hallucinations, Beppina is struck by a terrible, three-hours long convulsive crisis: 'in preda a terribili convulsioni', '[u]rlava, si agitava violentemente, avea la schiuma alla bocca, e dei suoi occhi stravolti si vedeva il bianco soltanto' (Capuana 1995c: 88). As Cigliana comments, 'sembrava preda di una possessione diabolica' (1995: 30-31). Mimicking the passage from the 'gai ordre' to the convulsive, incendiary order of hysterical *extase* outlined by Charcot and Richer in *Les démoniaques dans l'Art*, Beppina has become a hysteric *démoniaque*. Beppina's substantial ecstatic repertoire – including magnetic trance, mediumistic possession, mystical ecstasy, hysterical *extase*, diabolical possession – is immortalised in the photographs Pietro Semplicini, commissioned by Capuana, took of her. Attesting to 'la componente spettacolare del fenomeno psichico' (Carta 116), the pictures depict Beppina in different poses of trance in a way that resembles the portraits of Charcot's hysterical patients captured in the various stages of the *attitudes passionelles* (Figures 15-18).[200] Just like Charcot, Capuana attempts to put an end to Beppina's hysterical fits which he has himself provoked. If throughout her unfortunate ecstatic journey Beppina goes from being a somnambulist to a medium, from a mystic to a hysteric, Capuana alternatively appears as her magnetiser, her mediumistic manager, and her Charcotian doctor, taking over Beppina's consciousness and body. The only time she appears to be free from the writer's control is when she falls under the governance of another male agent, i.e., Foscolo's spirit, becoming a subject of contention, 'combattimento' (1995c: 86), between the two writers: a battle for control to establish who is the holder of the authoritative power that is being exerted upon Beppina and her ecstatic states.[201] But the young woman does not always passively endure the commands imposed upon her. Capuana reports that he occasionally noticed in her demeanour 'i sintomi della sua graduale emancipazione dalla influenza del magnetizzatore' (1995a: 78). 'Anzi, una volta, – he discloses – questa emancipazione interiore mutossi in una parziale ribellione del sistema nervoso':

> Quella sera le palpebre della Beppina rimasero ermeticamente chiuse e a nulla valsero i ripetuti soffii e i *passaggi*, né i violenti spruzzi d'acqua fresca al viso e gli altri mezzi da me adoperati per fargliele aprire. (Capuana 1995c: 79)

[200] I would like to thank the Casa Museo Luigi Capuana of Mineo for having provided these pictures.
[201] Commenting on his fellow writer's extravagant experiments, Giovanni Verga provides an hystericised, sexual, and sexist, reading of the contention: 'Con quella tua Beppina che aveva urgente bisogno di andare in letto con lo spirito di Ugo Foscolo – he writes to Capuana on the 31st of July, 1884 – avresti fatto molto meglio ad andare a dormire tu stesso in carne e in ossa per calmare gli isterismi del suo utero' (quoted in Cigliana 1995: 32).

As the passage shows, Beppina sporadically but firmly resists the writer's attempts to force himself upon her, trying to neutralise his authority and rebelliously emancipate herself from him. While he is mostly in control of Beppina's ecstatic dis-order, her occasional outbursts of resistance and rebellion as well as the unpredictable and uncontrollable results of some of his reckless manoeuvres, lead Capuana to conclude his report by remarking the 'tanta angoscia' that 'quella crisi, magnetica, isterica o spiritica, della Beppina' elicited in him and those surrounding Beppina (1995c: 88-89), an 'angoscia' which will haunt him for many years.

6.2 Davide Lazzaretti

The next case of ecstatic dis-order takes place around Mount Amiata (Grosseto), i.e., a place 'propizio alle superstizioni, e in particolare a quelle d'indole religiosa', which throughout the centuries had been home to '*allucinati*' and '*visionarj*' (Verga 1880: 304). There, in the small town of Arcidosso, a man called Davide Lazzaretti (1834-1878) was born (Figures 19), destined to become 'il Santo' to the people of Tuscany and an 'allucinato', 'pazzo', 'monomaniaco' to doctors like Verga, Lombroso, and Morselli.[202]

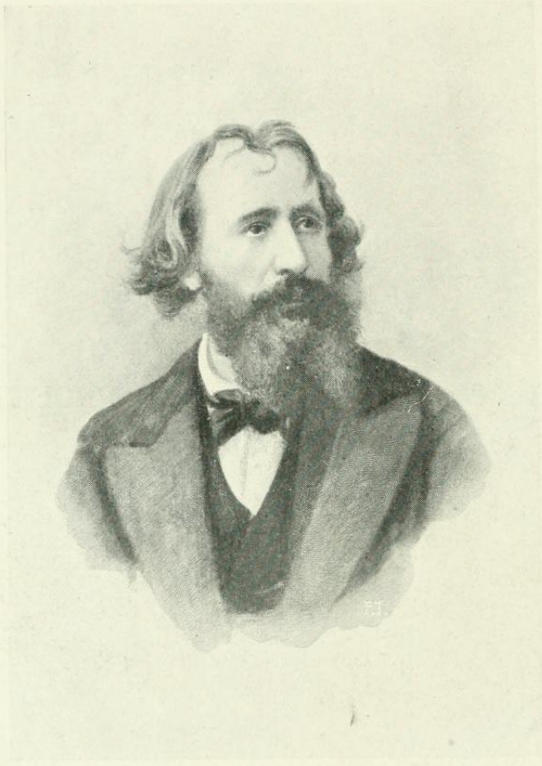
The inheritor of a troubled genetic pool, as Verga observes in his extensive case-study on him,[203] with 'suicidi' and 'alienati' on both his parents' side, 'ancora adolescente' Lazzaretti 'mostrava già stoffa da allucinato': 'molto impressionabile facilmente si fanatizzava', sermons, explanations of the Gospel, and theatrical representations producing a 'strano effetto' upon him (1880: 305-306). After joining Garibaldi's troupes in 1859, and entering the regular army to fight in the Battle of Castelfidardo in September 1860, when the Kingdom of Sardinia fought against the Papal States,[204] he suddenly disappeared from Arcidosso. He travelled to Rome to speak to the Pope about some 'straordinarie visioni' he dreamt of and retreated in a grotto near Montorio Romano, where 'si trattenne in mezzo a continue visioni' (Verga 1880: 308) from August 1868 to January 1869. At the significant age of 33 he converted to God. When he returned to Arcidosso, with stigmata on his body,[205] he was welcomed as a saint and a prophet, and built a tower, a church, and a chapel on the

[202] See Musumeci's recent contribution on Lazzaretti (published after the present paragraph was written) in relation to the social-political-geographical frame of post-unification Italy. In Musumeci's reading, Lazzaretti is an 'elusive prism' through which 'each observer can grasp only single aspect (mysticism, heresy, revolutionary violence, fraud, mental illness...)' (69) of his story.
[203] 'Davide Lazzaretti e la pazzia sensoria' (1880).
[204] Verga mentions 'il di lui orgasmo nel giorno della prima festa nazionale' (1880: 307), an 'orgasmo' which Mantegazza would have classified as a manifestation of the 'estasi dell'amore di patria' (1887b: 87).
[205] The marks on his body composed the symbol of his religious creed and movement: two overlapping 'C's, one of which turned upside down, and a cross. Verga's explanation is that given 'che nell'estasi mistica vi è anestesia od insensibilità', 'qualche adepto […] o qualche burlone' must have 'così segnato il Lazzaretti, durante un rapimento' (1880: 310), thus rejecting the reality of his stigmata but not of his ecstasies.

summits of Mount Labbro with the initial endorsement of the clergy. Lazzaretti momentarily disappeared again and moved to the Island of Montecristo, where he 'sbalordì e fanatizzò talmente' the 'creduli pescatori' 'col racconto delle sue visioni' that the local authority was concerned he could 'turba[re] l'ordine pubblico' (Verga 1880: 312). Back to Mount Labbro, he began to preach, founded associations of mutual aid (from which he gained economic benefits) and continued to have visions and ecstasies, gathering more and more devotees around him.[206] Repeatedly accused of fraud, he was acquitted each time. In 1870 he wrote his first religious pamphlet, *Il risveglio dei popoli, preghiere, profezie, sentenze*, in which he claimed to be a 'strumento di straordinaria e misteriosa missione' acting through the medium of a 'Spirito' working within him through 'ispirazioni istantanee', 'visioni', 'udito di viva parola', 'colloqui di Personaggi spiritali e divini' (Lazzaretti 2008: 282). 'Se questo non è il parlare d'un visionario, d'un allucinato, d'un uomo soggetto ad estasi mistiche – Verga comments – qual sarà mai?' (1880: 331).

Lazzaretti started making predictions concerning the future misfortunes of the Church, the Italian Kingdom, and other foreign nations, alerting them to their upcoming troubles. For instance, he addressed the Italian King by warning him that those surrounding his crown were his 'nemici dichiarati' committed to 'rovesciare il [s]uo Trono e quello della Chiesa' (Lazzaretti 2016: 50-51). At the same time he sung 'Evviva la Repubblica | Iddio e la libertà' (Lazzaretti 2008: 30), 'called for the establishment of a community based on socialist ideals' (Musumeci 53) and even disclosed in some of his writings 'certa tendenza al comunismo' (Verga 1880: 319). Regarding his relationship with the Church, he expressed his wishes to reform the Catholic dogma, preaching against 'li abusi e i vizj dei preti', talking of the 'abominevole setta dell'idolatria papale', dubbing the Church as a 'mostro infernale da sette teste, le quali sono il simbolo dei sette vizj capitali', and claiming that 'la confessione auricolare è un tranello dei preti, che basta accusarsi publicamente d'aver offeso Dio, il prossimo e sé stessi' (Verga 1880: 316).

[206] As remarked by Musumeci, given the predicaments of post-unification Italy, 'it does not surprise that Lazzaretti's apocalyptic visions, challenges to established political power, calls for social rebellion and celebration of rural religiosity hit on fertile ground' (49).



David Lazzaretti, detto il Santo.

Figure 19

All of this made him in the eyes of both the civic and religious authorities an agent of disorder. While the governmental forces feared the outbursts of popular uprising, the Church was concerned it would lose its devotees or, worse, that they would turn against the Church to follow Lazzaretti's preaching. Something had to be done to prevent the disorders this ecstatic preacher might provoke. When on the 18th of August 1878, Lazzaretti led a religious procession from Mount Labbro to Arcidosso, a patrol of *carabinieri* and a soldier were waiting for him, ready to shoot on the innocent people who followed the procession. Three people died, around forty were injured, and Lazzaretti was shot dead.

Soon after the repression, Italian doctors began to study Lazzaretti's case, delivering their diagnoses. Lombroso, who devoted a chapter of his *Pazzi ed anormali* (1886) to Lazzaretti (Figure 20) and even measured, as was his custom, his cranium *post-mortem*, regarded his illness as 'una forma intermedia tra il mattoide e il monomaniaco, allucinato, ambizioso' (1890: 112). He opposed the verdicts of the Public Prosecutor, denouncing the 'danno' caused by the 'periti' who examined Lazzaretti and rejected the hypothesis of mental malady since they saw 'una missione politica nelle parole sue' and concluded he had a 'scopo politico', i.e., 'vendicare il Santo Padre della sconfitta del 1870' (Lombroso 1890: 126). He also remarked that, 'mancando i manicomii criminali […] un alienato della specie del Lazzaretti difficilmente si sarebbe potuto far entrare, ed entrato, far rimanere in un manicomio comune' (Lombroso 1890: 127)

Like Lombroso, Verga did not believe in the political mission the civic authorities attached to Lazzaretti:

> È probabilissimo che qualche clericale, qualche republicano, qualche communista abbia procurato di profittare del di lui ardore religioso e dell'ascendente da lui acquistato sulla moltitudine […]. Ma il Lazzaretti in fondo non obediva che alla volontà di Dio, o, per essere più esatto, obediva alle proprie allucinazioni e fissazioni deliranti, che è come dire a sè stesso. (1880: 319)

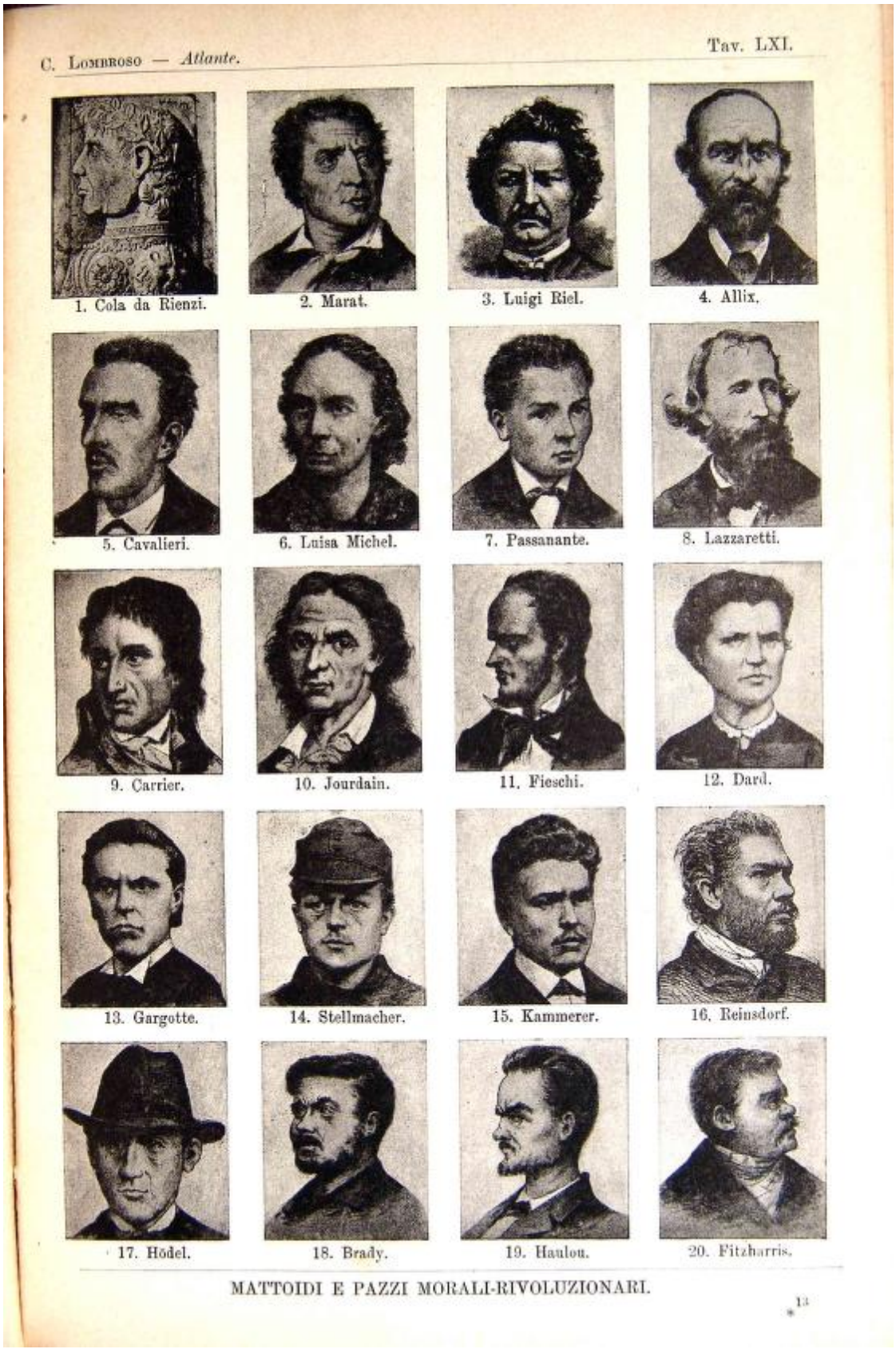


Figure 20

With regard to Lazzaretti's fatal procession, he firmly discarded the possibility of 'un tentativo di sommossa e di ribellione':

> perché bisognava aver la mente ancor più disordinata di quella che noi abbiamo riconosciuto al Lazzaretti per tentare un colpo di mano con una processione affatto inerme, incapace non che di combattere di fugire, con una processione preceduta da donne e fanciulli cantanti inni sacri […]. (Verga 1880: 345)

In Verga's opinion, Lazzaretti was no rebel but a *teomane*, a prey to hallucinations, visions, and ecstasies that convinced him he had been appointed by God as humanity's saviour:

> È probabile anzi che […] per l'avverarsi accidentale di cose che avea viste o udite nei sogni o sotto le allucinazioni, e più ancora per l'aggiungersi di ispirazioni passive e di estasi mistiche, il Lazzaretti […] abbia finito per persuadersi che Dio si era degnato nell'immensa sua bontà di sceglier lui […] a salvare il genere umano da grandi disastri e a mutar la faccia della terra. (1880: 351-352)[207]

Finally, he shared Lombroso's opinion that he should have been put in a criminal asylum. This 'benefico provedimento' not being possible, he believed that Lazzaretti's best chance would be to be placed in a separate section of a normal mental hospital, i.e., 'il domicilio coatto più gentile' for individuals like him, 'troppo ragionanti per rinchiuderli fra i pazzi e troppo poco colpevoli per rinchiuderli fra i delinquenti' (Verga 1880: 354).

The 'pur democratico Morselli' (Gallini 350) addressed Lazzaretti's parable by pointing to the dangerous psychological influence he exerted on those gathering around him. In *Il magnetismo animale* he presented his case as one of mass suggestion. After claiming that the 'suggestione della veglia può essere prodotta da chiunque', that is, without 'the autorità speciale del magnetizzatore', Morselli proposed that it could be even elicited by figures like Lazzaretti:

> […] non avviene forse il medesimo nelle masse che si lasciano entusiasmare, guidare, o, come si dice, affascinare senza freno e senza resistenza dall'uomo di genio, dal generale valoroso, dall'artista drammatico, dall'apostolo religioso, e spesso anche dal pazzo allucinato come Davide Lazzaretti? (1886: 261)

Morselli's insights foreshadow those of the scientific authority on mass suggestion: Scipio Sighele.

[207] Lazzaretti's conversion to religion following 'allucinazioni visive ed acustiche' (1880: 350) prompted Verga to compare him to philosopher, mystic, clairvoyant, and medium Emanuel Swedenborg (1688-1772).

A pioneer in studies on collective psychology, Sighele described the crowd as 'un aggregato eterogeneo e inorganico', unable to display as a well-ordered 'classe' (Gallini 355), and characterised, 'come la donna', by a 'psicologia estrema' which made it 'capace di tutti gli eccessi, forse capace solo di eccessi' (Sighele 1903: 134 quoted in Gallini 357). In *La delinquenza settaria: appunti di sociologia* (1897), Sighele explored the phenomenon of leadership in relation to masses, talking of the leader as a *meneur* exerting a psychopathological power and who is himself, primarily, a '*mené*', that is, an 'ipnotizzato – per autosuggestione – da un'idea fissa che lo domina' (Gallini 359). 'Creare la fede' – be it religious, political, or social –, is in Sighele's opinion the main task of the 'grandi agitatori', who 'sono sempre degli anormali se non dei pazzi' and whose 'influenza' is 'sempre immensa' (1897: 94 quoted in Gallini 359). The description fits Lazzaretti, who Sighele refers to in *I delitti della superstizione. (Il dramma di Mezzoiuso)* (1894) by coupling him with another figure of ecstatic dis-order I will soon talk of, i.e., Lucia Carnesi.

Along with the diagnoses provided by Italian positivists and the conclusions drawn by the civic authorities – which, though differing, shared the same focus on Lazzaretti's irregular, abnormal, and, thus, threatening behaviour –, the preacher from Amiata has produced a wave of readings analysing his experience from a social and political standpoint. Antonio Gramsci provided such a reading in *Quaderni del carcere*.[208] Quoting a brief bibliography on the case, including Verga's *David Lazzaretti e la pazzia sensoria* and Lombroso's *Pazzi e anormali*, Gramsci remarks with reference to the latter that 'questo era il costume del tempo: invece di studiare le origini di un fatto storico, si trovava che il protagonista era un pazzo' (297). Moving to Giacomo Barzellotti's *David Lazzaretti di Arcidosso (detto il santo)* (1884),[209] which according to Gramsci 'ha formato l'opinione pubblica sul Lazzaretti', the *Quaderni* claims it to be

> nient'altro che una manifestazione della tendenza patriottica (per amor di patria!) e che portava a cercare di nascondere le cause di malessere generale che esistevano in Italia, dando dei singoli episodi di esplosione di questo malessere spiegazioni restrittive, individuali, patologiche, ecc. (297)

Furthering his political analysis, he denounces the 'volontà del governo di sterminarlo [Lazzaretti]', writing:

[208] Especially in *Quaderno 3* (XX), note 12, which bears the title 'David Lazzaretti'. On Gramsci's reading of Lazzaretti see Mattone.
[209] Republished with the title *Monte Amiata e il suo profeta* (1909).

> Ciò che è avvenuto per il brigantaggio meridionale e siciliano è avvenuto per Davide Lazzaretti. I politici non si sono occupati | del fatto che la sua uccisione è stata di una crudeltà feroce e freddamente premeditata (sarebbe interessante conoscere le istruzioni mandate dal governo alle autorità locali) […]. (Gramsci 297-298)

Gramsci even relates Lazzaretti's movement to the Banda del Matese, i.e., a group of republicans led by the anarchist Errico Malatesta who in 1877 planned an uprising in the Matese mountains, near Benevento.[210] What is noteworthy is the focus Gramsci directs on two aspects of Lazzaretti's experience. First, the ways with which Lazzaretti's movement was stopped, stressing the pre-meditated and cold-blooded ferocity of the officers sent to quell him – Gramsci employs the word 'sterminare'. Secondly, the attempt to interpret Lazzaretti's story as one in which the establishment (the Church, the government, the political opposition) must be held accountable not only for his violent repression but also for its popularity: if Lazzaretti managed to gather together so many followers among the popular classes, especially the peasants, it is because they felt forgotten or, worse, oppressed by the State and its economic-fiscal measures, giving rise to a discontent which the Church, in turn, was unable to control or channel in a different way. Gramsci ultimately placed the events connected to Lazzaretti's movement in the wider frame of the attempts made by the lower classes to counteract the controlling and repressive power the hegemonic institutions exerted upon them, seeking to establish their own alternative (dis-)order.

Going back to Verga's report, the doctor expressed his concern that Lazzaretti's 'morte violenta' could elicit 'nuovi disordini':

> Io desidero d'ingannarmi, ma temo che la morte violenta del Lazzaretti abbia conseguenze. […] Io non vorrei che ora uomini e donne nel bel centro d'Italia si agitassero in nome di Dio e suscitassero nuovi disordini. (1880: 356-357)

Verga's apprehension acquires an explicit political connotation when he refers to the 'pericolo' an 'epidemia *teomaniaca*' would bring:

> perché se la fede nel sopranaturale è oggidì molto indebolita, le idee communiste sono sempre lì pronte a far divampare quei delirj che lusingano le nostre naturali aspirazioni verso un miglior ordinamento della società. (1880: 357)

[210] According to Musumeci, Lazzaretti calls for resistance placed him 'firmly in the corner of […] rural rebels', i.e., brigands (49).

In a way, Verga matches Gramsci's views albeit from the opposite perspective: while the doctor fears the 'delirj' produced by the aspirations towards a better social order, Gramsci defends and justifies them.

Passing from 'epidemia *teomaniaca*' to 'epidemia *demonopatica*', I move to Friuli and the little town of Verzegnis, the scene of another repression of ecstatic, this time collective, disorder.

6.3 The Possessed of Verzegnis

In her case-study on Lourdes, Harris addresses the 'flurry of visions, apparitions and strange happenings' (1999: 107) which followed Bernadette's experience and spread around Lourdes, stating that the Episcopal Commission responded to such a flurry by reducing the many supernatural candidates to solely Bernadette. The English scholar observes that 'had the Church lost its grip, or responded in a less certain fashion, then events could well have turned out differently' (1999: 107). 'To demonstrate how differently – she continues –, it is only necessary to look at a remarkably similar situation at almost the same moment on the other side of the country', i.e., that unfolding in the town of Morzine: 'Both had an outbreak of visions that began with reported sightings of the Virgin. The difference was that Lourdes became an established Marian shrine, while Morzine fell victim to a twenty-year epidemic of demonic possession' (Harris 1999: 107).[211] The case of Morzine, considered by doctors to be an epidemic of *hystéro-démonopathie* – i.e., a form hysteria characterised by religious delirium and the belief of being possessed by the devil – has mainly been studied by scholars from the perspective of French history. The town of Morzine, however, was part of the Savoy region which, at the time when the epidemics broke out in 1857, still belonged to the Kingdom of Sardinia, governed by prime minister Cavour. Only in 1860, with the treaty of Turin, was Savoy, along with Nice, officially ceded to France. That is, the 'mal de Morzine', which appears to be inextricably linked to French history, took place both in Italy, where it first appeared, and in France, where it died. In 1879 Verga would appropriately refer to Morzine's epidemic as pertaining to Italian territory and history, matching it with another epidemic, taking place in the Friuli region:

> L'Italia […] ebbe recentemente a non grande distanza due epidemie morali, l'una a Morzine in Savoja e l'altra a Verzegnis nel Friuli. Furono particolarmente le donne che in quelle due località si agitarono in nome del diavolo. (1880: 356)

[211] With regards to the epidemics in Morzine, Carroy-Thirard observes that 'ce qui est ou doit être caché en Savoie est montré à Paris…' (1980: 506), claiming that the 'Salpêtrière est peut-être le dernier théâtre de possession en France' (1980: 501).

Echoing Verga, in an article published in 1881 on *La rassegna settimanale di politica, scienze, lettere ed arti* and entitled 'Le ultime pazzie epidemiche in Italia', Morselli acknowledges the 'insorgere non infrequente' in his allegedly civilised century of 'vere follie epidemiche, per lo più di carattere religioso o demonopatiaco' hardly distinguishable from the 'strane aberrazioni dello spirito umano' which took place in the medieval period, and during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (1881: 138). After mentioning 'tutti gli estatici e gli stigmatizzati' of his time, Morselli states that 'vi hanno regioni che sembrano predisposte allo sviluppo dei delirii estatici religiosi: […] in Italia il Veneto e la Sicilia: in generale poi le regioni Alpine, così ricche in cretini, idioti e gozzuti' (1881: 138).[212] For geographical, moral, economic, and social reasons, these regions are inclined to give origin to 'curiose epidemie isteropatiche, convulsive, demonomaniache, o anche semplici fanatismi ascetici che degenerano presto in delirii allucinatori generali' (Morselli 1881: 139). Morselli reports that in the last three years, i.e., 1878-1880, Italy hosted 'tre distinte follie epidemiche' (1881: 139), the more well-known and studied of them being the one also mentioned by Verga which took place in the geographically isolated town of Verzegnis, located in the municipality of Carnia (Friuli).

According to doctor Fernando Franzolini's account (Figure 21),[213] the epidemic broke out in January 1878 and first manifested itself in the person of Margherita Vidusson of Chiaicis. A 26 year-old young woman, for eight years Vidusson had been suffering from hysterical symptoms, including violent fits of convulsions, regarded as 'incomodi da ragazze, semplice e trascurabile male di nervi' (Franzolini 95). As rumours spread throughout the town that she was a 'stregata' and 'ossessa' (Franzolini 95), the local priests began to assist her with exorcisms. The latter further exacerbated her convulsive attacks. Seven months later, in July 1878, another girl was caught by Vidusson's 'forma convulsiva e clamorosa' (Franzolini 96), followed by another one, and another one, and another one. Rapidly, 'la cosa divenne pubblica, se ne fece chiasso, se ne fece spettacolo', with 'frotte di curiosi' coming from surrounding areas to 'visitare le spiritate' and 'farne baccano' (Franzolini 96). In an appalling spectacle, the 'spiritate' abandoned themselves to awful cries, violent contortions, sudden blackouts, erupting in blasphemies and curses against priests. The religious authorities were warned, and a special commission was sent on site. Alarmed by the situation, the Bishop prescribed more exorcisms but also advised the local priests to persuade the mayor of the town to arrange a medical examination. The concern of the religious authorities was soon accompanied by that of the civic

[212] Morselli refers to 'sei estatiche convulsionarie' living in Sicily, including the 'ben nota Ninfa Filiberto studiata dal prof. Cervello' (1881: 138). See Cervello.
[213] 'L'epidemia di ossesse (istero-demonopatie) in Verzegnis studiata dai dottori Giuseppe Chiap e Fernando Franzolini. Relazione del Dott. Fernando Franzolini' (1879). The case is presented by Franzolini as one revealing 'certe malefiche abitudini, certi nidi sconcì e sinistri di viete pratiche superstiziose', representing a 'sfregio della civiltà nostra' (91-92).

authorities: ‘Non è più solo questione di salute: ci si comincia a preoccupare per l’ordine pubblico’ (Cozza 89).

On the 11th of December 1878, the district authority of Tolmezzo reported the situation to the prefecture as follows:

> Per debito d’Ufficio, riferisco a codesta R.ª carica che nel Comune di Verzegnis, e precisamente delle frazioni di Chiaicis e Villa, da circa tre mesi a questa parte, in N.° 40 persone di sesso femminile, di diversa età, ebbe a manifestarsi la così detta mania religiosa. (quoted in Franzolini 92)

L' EPIDEMIA DI OSSESSE (ISTERO-DEMONOPATIE) IN VERZEGNIS

STUDIATA DAI DOTTORI

GIUSEPPE CHIAP E FERNANDO FRANZOLINI

Membri ordinarii del Consiglio Sanitario Provinciale del Friuli

RELAZIONE

del Dott. FERNANDO FRANZOLINI

Medico-Chirurgo primario dell' Ospitale Civile Provinciale di Udine

Essendo stato inviato, in unione all' egregio collega Dottore Giuseppe Chiap, a Verzegnis, colla missione di studiare il fatto epidemico manifestatosi in quel Comune della Carnia e suggerire i provvedimenti atti a farlo cessare, ho ritenuto non inutile il rendere publici i nostri studi, dopo averli estesi e - per quanto da noi si potè - completati anche dal punto di vista scientifico.

La rassomiglianza della epidemia da noi studiata, sia nella causa sua, sia nelle sue parvenze e ne' suoi effetti, colle epidemie morali che con troppa frequenza si susseguirono nell' evo medio, e che furono così maestrevolmente studiate da uomini celebri e competenti come il Calmeil, toglie alla stessa ogni vanto di novità, ma punto ne scema della sua importanza scientifica. Questa anzi vieppiù si accentua per la rarità attuale di cotali epidemie; rarità che se non è di fatto tanto assoluta quanto appare, lo è certamente in modo cospicuo per la scienza, cui rimangono ignorate — perchè non rese publiche e non istudiate —; piccole epidemie che oggidì ancora, forse, nascono, muoiono e rimangono sepolte negli oscuri recinti di povere ed inospiti borgate.

Certo è che alla scienza ed alla società non vennero a conoscenza in questo secolo se non quattro epidemie di malattie nervose in tutta quanta l' Europa: quella delle carceri del Buon Pastore di Amiens, nel 1848; quelle di poco posteriori, di Josselin in Bretagna e dei fanciulli di Svezia; finalmente quella di Morzine nell' Alta Savoia. Nessuna se ne ebbe a presentare in Italia; questa di Verzegnis sarebbe la prima.

Digitized by Google Original from UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Figure 21

The 'mania' took the form of hysterical attacks during which the women believed to be 'dannate ed invasate dagli spiriti infernali' (quoted in Franzolini 93). According to the report, they were also endowed with 'una specie di chiaroveggenza' ascribable to 'un esaltamento della loro intelligenza e dei loro organi sensori affine a quello che si ottiene nelle magnetizzate' (quoted in Franzolini 93). The prefect immediately sent an official on site, who assessed the 'mania religiosa', observing that the local priests were ready to 'secondare i pregiudizi e le superstizioni dei poveri ed ignoranti villani';

by proceeding 'coi riti del loro ministero ad esorcizzare le affette onde espellerne i voluti maligni spiriti' (quoted in Franzolini 94). Following the official's report, the prefect urgently summoned the Consiglio Sanitario Provinciale, which resolved to send a medical expedition to Verzegnis constituted by doctors Fernando Franzolini and Giuseppe Chiap.

The two doctors arrived on the scene on the 26th of December 1878 and immediately noted the clergy's negative influence on the population of Verzegnis, which appeared to be 'patentemente credula, superstiziosa, immaginosa, nel senso meno lusinghiero della espressione' (Franzolini 100). According to Franzolini, the locals' 'stazionarietà nello sviluppo mentale e sociale' depended not only upon the geographic isolation of the town but also on the 'influenza del Clero che tiene vive, od almeno non cerca correggere, le religiose superstizioni' (100). In fact, the doctors argued that 'la malattia nei suoi caratteri completi esplose, o preesistendo si aggravò, in seguito a qualche atto solenne di religione cui assistettero' (Franzolini 105). Morselli too, commenting on the case, insisted on the connivence of the priests: 'Rincresce di dover dire che a Verzegnis l'esaltamento degli animi era mantenuto e favorito dalla poca prudenza e dalla ignoranza dei sacerdoti' (1881: 139). After carrying out several medical analyses, Franzolini and Chiap indulged in further observations ('spingendo un po' più avanti l'occhio medico scrutatore'), suggesting that the 'eretismo nervoso' characterising 'il sistema nervoso della popolazione specialmente femminile di Verzegnis' was also linked to the early and lengthy manifestation of 'attività sessuale' corresponding 'quasi per uno sforzo naturale di opposizione, ad una limitata fecondità' (Franzolini 109). According to the doctors, '[q]uesti ultimi fatti ed i risultati craniometrici' were 'in un certo nesso genetico con una incipiente degenerazione di razza, che dà per risultato l'eretismo nervoso, e che sarebbe dovuta a soverchiante affinità, per frequente consanguineità nei matrimoni' (Franzolini 109). The doctors' conclusion was: 'Breve, il paese di Verzegnis è un paese di isteriche e superstiziosi, e su questi due elementi si impernia e muove tutta quanta la presente epidemia' (Franzolini 109).[214]

The cure for this epidemic of hystero-demonopathy[215] was twofold, divided into 'vera terapia, ed in provvedimenti di polizia' (Franzolini 149). The former included regular medical examinations, administration of drugs, and persuading the sick on the 'indole affatto naturale del morbo'; the latter consisted in 'vietare assolutamente le esorcizzazioni di ogni foggia e grado', 'vietare efficacemente i pellegrinaggi a Clauzetto',[216] permitting 'che l'autorità opponga mano forte all'intervento dei preti nell'attuale epidemia', 'imporre l'isolamento delle malate e la loro dispersione nei paesi vicini',

[214] Enthusiastically met by doctors like Lombroso and Tamburini, these conclusions reflected 'con esemplare evidenza sia gli orientamenti del positivismo italiano che i suoi metodi di studio' (Cozza 92), i.e., craniometric analysis, theories of racial degeneration, and a penchant for sex.
[215] Franzolini establishes a 'parallelo' between Verzegnis and Morzine (91).
[216] The Friulian sanctuary that traditionally welcomed those who believed to be invaded by evil spirits in order to free them, defined by Franzolini as a 'vergognoso avanzo di medio-evo, vitupero dell'odierna civiltà dell'Italia' (151).

'imporre che verun spettacolo si faccia del loro male', and, finally, 'se sembra necessario ottenere ciò con la forza', that, 'come a Morzine, si ponga un carabiniere ad ogni porta' (Franzolini 150-151). The prefect ordered the implementation of all measures prescribed by the doctors with the endorsement of the clergy, arranging the Carabinieri's constant invigilation of the women. The measures seemed to bear fruit until in September 1879, as doctor Gaetano Pini recalls in his account of the epidemic, a little 'disgrazia minacciò di interrompere e forse distruggere i grandissimi miglioramenti ottenuti sulla epidemia': 'la visita a Verzegnis di certo signor Barone D…., colonnello in pensione, spiritista appassionato' (554). 'È ben certo – Pini points out– che que' di Verzegnis non avrebbero saputo trovar differenza fra le loro idee di influenza diabolica, e le interpretazioni spiritistiche del D……', which rekindled the epidemics 'a tutto vapore' (554). To prevent new disorders connected to the spreading of Spiritualistic ideas and practices, the Prefect of Udine ordered the police commissioner to keep a watchful eye on that 'visitatore pericoloso'. As a result, the Baron decided to leave Verzegnis just a few hours after his arrival.

While the Spiritualist crisis was averted, it was soon understood that, although the public spectacles were over, the epidemics carried on in the privacy of the homes. A second visit of Franzolini and Chiap confirmed that 'l'epidemia non è punto spenta', requesting the arrival in Verzegnis of a doctor 'energico di carattere […] e che sia autorizzato ad usare della publica forza onde far tradurre all'ospedale di Udine, una per una le malate che andrà riscontrando soggette agli accessi caratteristici' (Franzolini 159-160). Demonstrating the failure of such measures, the 'spiritate' and the locals gathered in a procession directed to the sanctuary of Clauzetto. The event was read in terms of a 'psicosi epidemica', the phenomenon which 'per suggestione di veglia si propaga da individuo a individuo per generare un gruppo di follia' (Gallini 351), thus bringing us back to the theme, and spectre, of mass suggestion. The scientific concern matched that of the public authorities. Authorised by the Minister, the prefect of Udine decided to resort to 'misure di coazione': 'Non era più questione di medici, ma di pubblica sicurezza, la quale poteva da un momento all'altro venir fortemente compromessa da questa turba in fermento' (Franzolini 169).[217] On the 27th of April 1879 a patrol of infantry soldiers was sent to occupy the town, moving seventeen allegedly possessed women to the Hospital in Udine. 'L'intervento repressivo, unito al controllo in paese e sui preti, sortì il suo effetto' (Cozza 90), bringing the epidemic to an end.[218] The seventeen 'indemoniate' transferred to the hospital, Franzolini concludes, 'formeranno oggetto di nuovi e più ampi studii da parte

[217] The situation got to the point that 'i più accaniti avevano sparsa la voce che si sarebbero lasciati piuttosto ammazzare che lasciar portare all'Ospedale le altre malate' (Franzolini 169).
[218] According to *The British Medical Journal*, which reported the case in 1879 ('it appears that the devil has again been busy in Friuli'), 'the whole district would have become affected by this hysterical religious mania but for the intervention of the Government' (746).

dell'egregio Dott. Franzolini e dei suoi colleghi' – a conclusion which Clara Gallini significantly and ironically comments on with a: 'E bravo l'egregio dottor Franzolini!' (331).

The epidemic of Verzegnis provides an exemplary case of the tension I am trying to outline in my study between an ecstatic, irrational dis-order and a uniting, rational order attempting to repress the former. The embodiment of ecstatic dis-order, the possessed women of Verzegnis express 'una catena di equivalenze simboliche – arcaicità-religione-superstizione-isteria-donna' (Gallini 325) that clashes with the 'potere istituzionalizzato, con tutti i suoi apparati repressivi' represented by the medical and civic authorities,[219] exerting upon the women a violence 'diretta e sistematica' (Gallini 326). It is important to note that these symbolic equivalencies are set in the frame of an 'immaginario maschile dominante, il quale si autorappresenta come razionale-laico-sano-virile' (Gallini 325-326). Indeed, in Verzegnis's case women are the bearers of disorder, men the deliverers of order. Cozza tellingly associates the epidemic with other 'episodi di dissenso che l'Italia Unita si trova a fronteggiare' onto the backdrop of the 'chiassosa polemica tra l'ancora forte capacità egemonica della Chiesa e l'anticlericalismo delle forze liberali di quegli anni, sullo sfondo di una recente annessione al Regno d'Italia': 'non da ultimo, quello di Davide Lazzaretti, il profeta dell'Amiata' (91). Against such frame of dissent and disorder, Verzegnis displays a scene in which, Cozza remarks:

> diventa essenziale mostrare i muscoli, attraverso un dispositivo repressivo – l'occupazione militare e l'allontanamento con la forza delle colpite – secondo un copione che si ripeterà più volte nella storia italiana, volto a sopprimere le diversità culturali, percepite come pericolose, ad emarginare l'arretratezza economica, a reprimere, senza rieducare, le espressioni leggibili come potenzialmente criminali. (91)

The epidemic of Verzegnis was not the only case of collective ecstatic dis-order that occurred in Italy in the years under investigation. Along with Verzegnis, Morselli recounts the other 'ultime pazzie epidemiche in Italia', mentioning those which took place in Genzano (Rome) and Alia (Palermo). In Genzano's case, the hysteric-epileptic attacks, involving symptoms such as 'mialgie, amiostenie, iperestesie, anestesie, allucinazioni, catalessi, estasi' (Morselli 1881: 139), were quickly cured thanks to the help of the priests who, unlike Verzegnis' priests, immediately called in the doctors instead of practicing exorcisms. In Alia, where the epidemics took on 'l'aspetto di un fanatismo religioso spinto all'eccesso, con allucinazioni, illusioni, violenze, contagio morale, pervertimenti, impulsi morbosi e criminosi', turning many people into 'estatiche, convulsionarie,

[219] The Church refrains from intervening and the local priests act autonomously by enhancing the epidemic's disorder. On this last point, Cozza notes that 'la frazione di Chiaicis, dalla quale si diffonde il fenomeno, è in conflitto con la chiesa madre, situata a Villa, e rivendica la propria autonomia, contro la secolare unità della pieve' (90).

allucinate' (Morselli 1881: 140),[220] it was necessary, as in Verzegnis' case, to request the intervention of the police, which, it goes without saying, brought on greater turmoil.

6.4 Lucia Carnesi and the 'dramma di Mezzojuso'

As recounted by Sighele, a 'scena atrocemente selvaggia' (1894: 13) took place in 1890 in the small Sicilian town of Mezzojuso (Palermo) (Figure 22). The 'fatale esito di un nodo di elementi affini: la classe sociale, il Mezzogiorno, la religione, la donna, l'isteria' (Gallini 338),[221] such scene provides a most powerful instance of ecstatic dis-order.

[220] Delivering 'uno spettacolo così poco lusinghiero per la civiltà del nostro paese' (Morselli 140).
[221] The events reported by Sighele have been analysed by Gallini and Stewart-Steinberg.

IL DRAMMA DI MEZZOJUSO.

È veramente accaduta ora in Italia la scena atrocemente selvaggia che sto per narrare, o non è forse un triste sogno rievocato dalle cronache medioevali?

Certo, gli attori di questo dramma, l'ambiente in cui esso si è svolto, non appartengono al nostro secolo: sono sopravvivenze di un'altra epoca, fenomeni strani di un atavismo collettivo di persone e di fatti, simboli morali che rimasero a ricordarci da dove è sorta lentamente la civiltà.

Un dramma infatti in cui quasi non sai dove la superstizione finisca e dove cominci la vera pazzia, — un delitto che se è materialmente dovuto al delirio di pochi, ha però la sua origine nella psicosi epidemica che ha fulmineamente pervaso tutta una famiglia e tutto un paese, — è tale fenomeno che solo per eccezione può riscon-

Figure 22

Sighele presents the 'dramma' as 'l'ultimo avanzo di delitti proprii di tempi lontani e ormai quasi dimenticati', a 'triste sogno rievocato dalle cronache medioevali' that had found 'nelle attuali

condizioni di Mezzojuso il suo *momento storico*' (1894: 13-14, 42). Remarking the deep-rooted 'misticismo' and lack of 'coltura intellettuale' pervading the town, he notes that '[d]alla religiosità alla superstizione e alla tendenza al soprannaturale, – sue sorelle carnali, – è breve il passo' (Sighele 1894: 37-38). The precariousness brought about by the agricultural and economic crisis has in fact resulted in a 'fede […] più fervente e più viva', a 'mistero dell'ignoto' and 'incertezza dell'avvenire', which 'riscaldan le menti, […] eccitano i sensi, fino a spingerli alla credenza al soprannaturale, alle allucinazioni dei miracoli' (Sighele 1894: 41-42). This, in his reconstruction, is the backdrop against which 'il fatto' (1894: 15) revolving around the Carnesi Family – i.e., Lucia's murdering of her brother, her tearing out his genital organ, and exposing it to the crowd in a rapturous folly – occurred.

A perfectly respectable family living in Mezzojuso, the Carnesi were made up of nine members, 'tutti casa e chiesa, senza alcuna malizia, aborrenti ogni vizio' (Sighele 1894: 15): the father Rosario, the mother Vita La Gattuta, and their seven children, Biagio, Tommaso, Giuseppe, Salvatore, Lucia, Giacomo, and Caterina. On the 8th of December 1890, following an exalting sermon, Biagio, who has inherited his mother's 'religiosità eccessiva e morbosa' marked by 'una forte tinta nevropatica' and is the most 'scrupoloso esecutore di digiuni e di esercizî spirituali' (Sighele 1894: 16), begins praying insistently, alternating fasting to voracious eating, with the purpose of purifying his soul.[222] He is soon possessed by 'idee deliranti e allucinazioni mistiche' which take hold of his brothers Salvatore and Tommaso too: 'La predisposizione ereditaria aveva reso possible il contagio dell'alienazione mentale' (Sighele 1894: 17-18). Hoping to release Biagio from his spiritual and mental disorder, Lucia, who is particularly devoted to him,[223] calls on an old man from the near town of Cutrano known for having exorcised and miraculously healed people invaded by evil spirits. His services, however, do not produce the hoped-for results, increasing both the concern and curiosity of Mezzojuso's inhabitants, while the mental alienation has now spread to Giacomo and Caterina too. Unlike her siblings, possessed by a 'delirio melanconico con timori di dannazioni, pianti e preghiera', a 'semplice esaltamento religioso' takes hold of Lucia, leaving her intellectual faculties intact and multiplying her moral energies and physical strength (Sighele 1894: 21). In fact, she gradually begins to exert 'un grande ascendente, una vera suggestione' on her parents and neighbours (Sighele 1894: 22), eliciting both their fear and marvel.

On the 23rd of January a terrible event occurs, which aggravates the 'manifestazioni psicopatiche' of the Carnesi's members and brings into town 'il terrore sacro che ispira sempre un creduto miracolo' raising 'al massimo grado il livello del misticismo negli animi esaltati ed indeboliti'

[222] The Carnesi's religious faith, like that of the whole Mezzojuso, combines the Greek Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic faith.
[223] Sighele mentions the rumours being spread about an incestuous relationship between the two, dubbing them as the 'insinuazioni maligne' but observing that 'il misticismo può talvolta trascendere all'oscenità': 'per molte isteriche la devozione non è che uno sfogo platonico ed onanistico di tendenze libidose' (1894: 16-17).

(Sighele 1894: 23): a dreadful storm hits Mezzojuso causing an oak tree to almost destroy the Carnesi's house. Excited by what appears to be a supernatural event, Biagio, Tommaso, Salvatore, and Giacomo start running towards the town's Church 'scalzi, seminudi, con il viso scomposto e stralunato da metter paura' (Sighele 1894: 24): Salvatore and Giacomo manage to reach the sacred place while Biagio and Tommaso are stopped by the police and brought back home. Lucia, Giacomo, and Caterina find shelter in the house of the two cousins, Biagio e Giuseppe Nuccio. There, Giacomo is caught by a 'grande smania ed ansietà: *Gli spiriti* – three, to be exact – *lo avevano preso*' (Sighele 1894: 26). Lucia frees Giacomo from the spirits by making him drink the water of the Madonna of Tagliavia and that of the Madonna of San Nicola of Bari, and is hailed as his saviour. Praying on her knees 'estatica' and becoming increasingly aware of her miraculous power, 'raggiante in viso, imperiosa ed irresistibile nei suoi comandi', Lucia determines to put an end to the ailments of her brothers, starting with Biagio's 'lotta con gli spiriti' (Sighele 1894: 27).

Heading towards her house, where her siblings have now returned to, she is followed by a strange procession – 'una folla di illusi e di fanatici, cui l'ora, l'oscurità ed il tempo accrescevano l'aspetto lugubre e sinistro' (Sighele 1894: 28) –, ecstatically echoing Lucia's inspired and inarticulate cries. Stepping into the house, the 'giovane teomane' orders everyone to kneel and pray, giving birth to a disorderly, disquieting scene described by Sighele as follows:

> Le donne imploravan la grazia con gemiti e con singhiozzi mettendo nella preghiera il furore selvaggio proprio del loro sesso quando è invaso dal misticismo; e gli uomini, per contagio e per l'ignoto legame che v'ha fra il trasporto verso Dio e verso la femmina, le imitavano, formando un insieme confuso, clamoroso, diabolico. (1894: 29)

Amid this ecstatic disorder, a 'turba di pazzi e di esaltati' 'suggestionati' by Lucia and, thus, 'stromenti ciechi della sua volontà' is ready to commit 'i più orribili eccessi' (Sighele 1894: 29-30). Lucia commands her devotees to open the windows to let the evil spirits out and, placing Biagio on the floor near the open balcony, starts exorcising him. Initially pacific, her operations turn more aggressive. She asks for a plank of Saint Antonio's wood – a Saint particularly venerated in Mezzojuso – and, once she obtains it, begins to hit Biagio with it with the help of her two cousins, 'inconsci aguzzini' (Sighele 1894: 31-32). The more Biagio screams, the more fiercely Lucia tortures and butchers his body. The violence unleashed by Lucia increases to the point that

> sempre più esaltata in quel selvaggio connubio di sangue e di misticismo, dopo avere spezzato il legno sul capo del fratello, gliene mise in bocca un grosso pezzo, lacerandogli orribilmente le

> labbra, rompendogli i denti, soffocandolo, se per caso gli fosse rimasto ancora un alito di vita. (Sighele 1894: 32).

Passing from a 'misticismo semplicemente selvaggio e sanguinario' to a 'misticismo sensuale', as recounted by Sighele, Lucia undergoes one of those 'ribellioni della carne' that suggest the 'intimi rapporti fra l'istinto sessuale e l'affetto per la divinità' (1894: 33). Acting 'inconsciamente', in the thrall of a ferocious and ecstatic madness (a 'ferocia mistica'), Lucia commits the most horrible sacrilege:

> un po' con le unghie, un po' con una scheggia di legno (trovata poi tra le coscie del cadavere), un po' con i denti – è veramente orribile a scriversi! – riuscì a strappare in parte l'asta virile del fratello, lacerando la cute, i corpi cavernosi e strappandone il prepuzio… (Sighele 1894: 33-34).

When the following morning the police arrives at the Carnesi's house, alerted by a peasant who has seen a trail of blood dripping from its balcony, an appalling scene lies before them:

> Rosario e Salvatore Carnesi giacevano supini a terra: Vita la Gattuta, in ginocchio, figgeva nel vuoto vagamente lo sguardo; i due Fratelli Nuccio tenevano ancora per le braccia il povero Biagio; e sopra di questo, con le vesti insozzate di sangue, con il volto scomposto e i neri capelli disciolti, si ergeva terribile e diabolicamente bella la vergine teomane, tenendo nella mano destra il legno di S. Antonio, e nella sinistra – con aria inconscia di trionfo osceno – un brandello di carne molle, vellutata e sanguinante, la virilità morta del fratello, suo amore e sua vittima. (Sighele 1894: 34-35).

The seven 'attori o spettatori di quel dramma orrendo' are arrested and the coroner's office commissions the professors Silvio Tonnini and Annibale Montalti to report on their mental state.

Basing himself on such reports, Sighele offers his comments on the events, starting with an analysis of the 'ambiente in cui il drama è avvenuto' (1984: 36). As anticipated, Mezzojuso is described as a mystical, superstitious town whose singular, peasantry-rooted, religiosity *dal basso*[224] is 'favori[t]a ed alimenta[t]a' by the 'condizione economica del paese' (Sighele 1984: 40). The 'crisi agraria che affligge ormai tutte le regioni d'Italia' has reached in Mezzojuso its 'stadio acuto', producing a massive wave of emigration for which the town 'va spopolandosi di continuo e perde ogni giorno i suoi migliori abitanti' (Sighele 1984: 40). This has led to a condition of 'instabilità' to

[224] Unlike 'certe regioni d'Italia' where the inhabitants wholly rely on the clerical *auctoritas* for religious matters (where '*[t]occa ai preti a pensarci*'), '[a] Mezzojuso invece i contadini ne sanno di liturgia per lo meno quanto certi parroci di campagna' (Sighele 1984: 37)

which the remaining people of Mezzojuso react with a 'fede […] più fervente e più viva', giving rise to a 'credenza al soprannaturale, alle allucinazioni dei miracoli' (Sighele 1984: 41-42). The morbid mysticism characterising Mezzojuso's drama, Sighele concludes, is 'fecondato dalla miseria che va trasformando tutti gli antichi piccoli proprietarî in semplici braccia per le integrate terre d'America' (Sighele 1984: 42). The analysis of the religious, social, economic conditions of Mezzojuso are followed by a physical and moral assessment of the Carnesi family. Finding in all members 'esagerate patologicamente tutte le note fondamentali che costituivano la psicologia collettiva di quel disgraziato villaggio', the doctors' report presents each as 'un anomalo o un degenerato, i cui germi ereditarî fanno di lui un candidato alla pazzia o per lo meno alla psicosi epidemica' (Sighele 1894: 42). As Gallini comments, the 'stigma antropologico-criminale' turns the entire Carnesi Family into a 'museo di orrori' (344): a mix of irregular bodies, hysteric-epileptic disorders, and degenerative anomalies.

Focusing on Lucia, the 'vergine teomane' is said to have inherited her mother's hysteria – a hysteria which manifests 'con gli apparati scenici più opposti', echoing 'così l'oscenità delle prostitute come l'ascetismo delle sante' (Sighele 1894: 44). A combination of sexual instincts and ascetic fervour – an 'orgasmo divino' (Sighele 1984: 51) – is precisely what characterises Lucia's demeanour, provoking the transformation of Biagio's pre-determined exorcism in the 'sacrificio involontario' (Sighele 1984: 50). Lucia claims to have no memory of such sacrifice and relates it the work of the devil. Sighele traces back the 'monstruosità psichica' displayed by Lucia's butchering act to an unsatisfied 'manifestazione pervertita della sfera sessuale, una di quelle manifestazioni bestiali di affetto che trovano nel sangue il loro precipuo ristoro' (1894: 53-54). Stewart-Steinberg accuses Sighele of providing an analysis which reduces Lucia to the cliché of the *femme fatale* and of being haunted by 'Biagio's dead, emasculated body, his destroyed virility' (89).[225] Sighele's 'biological reductionism' (91-92), Stewart-Steinberg continues, is evident in the doctor's remark that during the terrible night Lucia 'era altresì nel periodo dei corsi mestruali', a condition which placed her in the 'momento psicologico più propizio per lo sviluppo della teomania' (Sighele 1984: 50).

A mystical-hysterical, theomaniac, man-eater, Lucia is also a magnetiser, a fascinator – this time it is a woman who exerts the fascination –, manifesting her folly in the form of charm. She holds 'il potere irresistibile di trascinare le masse nella sua fede' by her 'volto ispirato', exerting a 'fascino imperativo' on a group of 'ammalati e degenerati' particularly susceptible to her power (Sighele 1894: 47-48; 54). Lucia abolishes their will and freedom, turning them into 'strumenti inconsci' (Sighele 1894: 54): 'a true incubus to succubal other' (Stewart-Steinberg 88),[226] she is also the 'leader folle di un gruppo gregario di folli' (Gallini 345). That, according to Gallini, is the 'questione più

[225] As Gallini notes, Lucia embodies 'la "donna fatale", dal fascino potente ma mortifero', who 'trascina alla rovina l'amante, con cui è spesso legata da un rapporto incestuoso, e gode a straziarne le carni' (342).
[226] In her analysis Stewart-Steinberg resorts to Sighele's theory of the incubus-succubus.

problematica' (345): the influence she exerts on her followers. The theme of waking suggestion, which brings Lucia close to Davide Lazzaretti,[227] in Gallini's opinion points to the existence 'nel sociale' of 'nuove forme di esercizio del potere, che non passano solo attraverso il puro e semplice impiego della coercizione fisica': the scholar is referring to 'il grande problema dei condizionamenti di massa' (348), which she believes is being tackled here, in Sighele's account of the 'dramma' of Mezzojuso, for the first time. To be sure, only a few decades after the 'dramma', the Italian Kingdom would see Lucia Carnesi and Davide Lazzaretti being replaced by a far more dangerous, magnetic leader.

Subsuming the diverse ecstatic figures I have explored, Lucia figures as the ultimate embodiment of ecstatic dis-order. If Eve is 'The Mother of Ecstasy' (Barnstone 1), Lucia is one of her most significant descendants. A prey to ecstatic trance, she is also able to elicit ecstatic states of consciousness (a *menée* and a *meneuse* like Lazzaretti), giving voice to an ecstatic dis-order which is epitomised by the drama I have described. This ecstatic drama stages a dis-order which presents itself as alternative to the hegemonic order oppressing Mezzojuso's inhabitants, whose only fruits, bore by the Church and the State, have been superstitious fervour and socio-economic crisis. 'Nella famiglia Carnesi – Gallini remarks – si condensa, come estrema degenerazione, l'intera questione meridionale, la sua miseria economica, la sua cultura retrograda' (344). From this perspective, the event might be read through Demartinian lens. Directly related to the precarious and wretched conditions of her home village, Lucia's trances can be interpreted as the embodiment of a crisis of presence and at the same time as the means through which to overcome it by the creation of an alternative, mythical-symbolic, order of existence: an ecstatic dis-order through which Lucia reclaims her agency and reintegrates herself in history. However, while Mezzojuso's material conditions play a significant role in the drama, allowing for a socio-political reading of the events,[228] they do not fully account for Lucia's dis-order, involving the emergence of incontrollable and far less rational drives, 'energie' in Sighele's words (1894: 54).

The scientific experts reporting on Mezzojuso's drama, with Sighele acting as their spokesman, serve as the authorities who are able to identify the anomalous dis-order embodied by the Carnesi and help marginalising it, repressing it: the 'perizia' of professors Tonnini and Montalti[229] order Lucia, Salvatore, and Tommaso to be hospitalised in a mental facility. Yet not even the scientific establishment can fully comprehend the essence of the ecstatic dis-order they are analysing since, by Sighele's own admission, in the events under investigation 'non entrano soltanto le energie palesi e

[227] One of the differences between the two 'teomani' being that Lazzaretti is pray to '*teomania cronica*', Lucia to '*teomania acuta*' (Sighele 1894: 56).
[228] Sighele ambiguously refers to the drama as a 'rivoluzione' (1984: 39).
[229] The 'splendido lavoro che onora la scienza psichiatrica italiana' (Sighele 1894: 15, 35).

a noi note, ma ancora ha gran parte la vita ignota dell'incosciente': Lucia's final act is determined by instincts and feelings 'fino allora ignoti a chi lo compiva', which emerge 'dalle profondità dell'incosciente' (Sighele 1894: 54; 50). As Stewart-Steinberg aptly remarks, Mezzojuso's drama 'points to an unconscious that cannot be controlled by even the most astute analyst' (93); more broadly, to an alternative order, an ecstatic dis-order, that eschews all attempts of classification and control, and finds in the realm of the unconscious its ungraspable essence.

The four cases of ecstatic dis-order I have recounted exemplify the dynamic of ecstatic dis-order vs static order underlying this thesis, presenting ecstasy as a phenomenon of subversion that challenges certain established powers attempting to control and order. At the same time, however, they reveal a climactic *crescendo* for which the events narrated increasingly eschew rational explanations. From Beppina's case, rooted in a specific, rather objective, power dynamic in which Capuana plays the part of the master, to Lazzaretti's ecstasies, presenting a frame that is widened and complicated by the spiritual discourse, and Verzegnis' possessed women, unveiling an even more multifaceted, less rational, and, what's more, collective situation, with Mezzojuso's drama things have evolved into a collective, ecstatic scenario explicitly entailing the action of uncontrollable and unaccountable forces, stirring, as suggested by Sighele, 'dalle profondità dell'inconsciente' (Sighele 1894: 50).

Wholly manifesting themselves, at last, in the events of Mezzojuso, such 'profondità' have emerged sporadically throughout Part 1, amid description, definitions, classifications that attempt to analyse and frame the ecstatic phenomenon in the three domains of religion, 'occulture', and science, an attempt of which the present thesis is, undeniably, a further instance. Faced with the unconscious forces moving the events of Mezzojuso, however, such analytical efforts encounter something of a failure. Historical, cultural, political, ideological explanations appear to be unable to exhaustively account for that ungraspable phenomenon which is the subject of this study. To carry on, and out, this investigation of ecstasy in post-unification Italy, we must, then, turn inward, to that other ecstatic dis-order I have referred to in the introduction: an inner ecstatic dis-order whose unconscious dynamics literature, with its un-systematic, un-orderly means strives to explore.

Part 2. Literary Representations of Ecstasy

7. From Constrained Order to Uninhibited, Deadly Dis-Order: Erotic Ecstasy in Serao's *Cuore infermo*:

> In quale donna europea si trova l'equilibrio morale, su cui è innestata la vita della donna nostra? […] In nessuna altra donna come in quella italiana vi è il tesoro di equilibrio, misura e armonia: equilibrio delle forze mentali, misura dei sentimenti, armonia del cuore e dello spirito. (Serao quoted in De Nunzio Schilardi 94)[230]

The 'scrittrice paladina dell'ordine costituito' (Scappatticci 139), an '[a]mante dell'ordine' (A. Banti 281), Matilde Serao perfectly embodied the catholic-moderate stances of the *età umbertina*, embracing the ideology of the *petite bourgeoisie*, aligning with right-wing positions, and trusting the Savoy monarchy to be the necessary guarantor of the established order. She also directed her 'pessimistic conservatism' (Salsini 149) towards the *questione della donna*, in a climate where Italian women enjoyed few rights and suffered a condition of legal and moral repression. Though one can undoubtedly consider her as an emancipated woman who managed to find a room of her own in a patriarchal and male-shaped house, Serao opposed women's emancipation. Sharing 'the task of creating a new, morally upright nation' (Fanning 23), she sponsored the kind of ideal woman she described in the article in *Il Giorno*, finding herself to be a sort of antifeminist advocate. According to her, Italian women ought to be docile, loving creatures, devoted 'al sacrificio, alla dedizione, al dovere', 'in grado di lasciarsi guidare dalla ragione' (De Nunzio Schilardi 61), and, it goes without saying, loving wives and mothers. Only thus, could they carry out the instrumental, positive role that was assigned to them in the reorganisation of the unified nation, only thus, moreover, could they keep at bay the dangers of neurosis.[231] Like her friend Lombroso, Serao seemed to believe that the married woman was 'to be the angel of the household, not of the streets and certainly not of the unattainable and forbidden "place" of ecstasy' (Mazzoni 34). Where legal rights were concerned, she unwaveringly refused to support 'qualsiasi proposta tendente ad alterare lo stato giuridico della donna' (De Nunzio Schilardi 72). Though she took great interest in the conditions of women workers, publicly denouncing the difficulties they had to face, just as she did when addressing other social injustices, she never advocated a transformation of the system that allowed those injustices, careful to 'evitare scosse' (Scappaticci 52), i.e., disorders, in the *status quo*. It is no surprise to learn of

[230] From Serao's article 'Si prega di non confondere', *Il Giorno*, 18-19 April 1926.
[231] See De Nunzio Schilardi 77.

Serao's 'silence […] délibéré' (Martin Gistucci 140) on the popular upheavals that swept Naples in 1898 and on one of its extraordinary protagonists, the *Pazzariella*. A 'monstre sanguinaire' (Martin Gistucci 140), as the press portrayed her, who tried to challenge the political and social order, inciting chaos on the streets instead of staying at home carrying out her household duties, could not possibly find space in Serao's conservative pen. A defender of order, a combatant of disorder, in her articles Serao must refer to Queen Margherita, model of virtue, equilibrium, and integrity,[232] not to the *Pazzariella*.

According to Romani, Serao 'fully embraced the educational mission and functional purpose of art and sought with both her journalistic and fictional production to educate, and therefore advance, the nation' (2018: 325). The kind of education she sponsored among her fellow citizens was an education based on soberness, even austerity. In 1900 she delivered a veritable manual of 'norme', *Saper vivere. Norme di buona creanza*, in favour of a behavioural code that valued the bourgeois principles of 'la retenue, la distanciation des corps, la répression des manifestations corporelles ou affectives trop évidentes' (Toppano 489). Serao's readers had to learn how to deliver 'une expression contrôlée de soi' (Toppano 490), particularly where bodily drives where concerned. Believing that her role as a woman writer was to 'moralizzare allettando la fantasia' (Serao quoted in Scappaticci 11), in her narrative work too Serao expressed the same normative principles, asserting a fictional ideal of woman that could teach real women to 'stare al proprio posto' and 'sottomettere la passione', almost always the cause of 'squilibri mentali e ambientali', the 'elemento scatenante che tende a scompaginare la salda e compatta costruzione del reale e alterare la "normalità"' (De Nunzio Schilardi 61). However, the firmness with which she conveyed her orderly, moderate views on women in her journalistic writings – a firmness which, as showed by Mitchell, already revealed hidden, 'emancipationist sympathies' (65) –[233] faltered in her narrative ones. Some of her heroines led Serao to places governed by a law of disorder at odds with the moral and social order she officially asserted. Moving away from the 'innate conservatism' of her articles (Salsini 21), Serao appeared to be granting her heroines a 'partial but ambiguous empowerment within the "safe" world of fiction' (Harrowitz 98),[234] revealing a '[s]ubtle subversion' for which she presented 'her more ambivalent and perceptive analyses of women and their situation in society' (Fanning 25). This is the case of her first novel, *Cuore infermo*, published in 1881, where the protagonist Beatrice goes from being a model

[232] On the role held by Queen Margherita in the national building process see Bollati 153-155 and Stewart-Steinberg 111-114.
[233] Mitchell argues that Serao's journalistic production, together with that of Marchesa Colombi and Neera, expressed 'a deep concern for, and sympathy with, the social and psychological pressures affecting ordinary women' (2008: 65).
[234] As Mitchell points out, 'it was through the guise of domestic fiction' that Serao, together with La Marchesa Colombi and Neera, 'were able to implicitly address and engage with the burning social and political issues of the day regarding the woman question' (2014: 55).

of order and restraint, a 'tesoro di equilibrio, misura e armonia', as the article on *Il Giorno* recites, to a model of liberating disorder, a knot of unsteady impulses, nerves, and desires, driven by a principle of self-realisation, self-fulfilment, and pleasure in conflict with the moral and social prescriptions imposed upon women at the time.

While many of the moralistic motifs that will characterise her entire narrative production are unquestionably subsumed in it,[235] I find that the importance of Serao's first novel relies on a more pivotal theme related to a woman's quest for her authentic – i.e., not socially, culturally restricted – self, her drives, and her freedom. This quest takes the shape of a conflictual tension between two existential and cultural orders: a constraining, repressive order, and a liberating, emancipating dis-order culminating in the erotic ecstasies Beatrice enjoys with her husband at the end of the novel, for which she abdicates control over her mind and body, disclosing a disquieting drive to death. While Serao-journalist and public figure was rather unwavering in sponsoring the principle of duty in opposition to the pleasure principle, Serao-storyteller not only made room for the pleasure principle and its claims,[236] but, in the case of her first novel, went beyond the pleasure principle, unveiling a need to break through the established patterns of society and culture that corresponded to a will to disrupt existence at its core. The heroine's journey through and towards ecstatic dis-order reveals the tensions post-unification Italian women had to confront (and Serao's apparently contradictory positions on them), at the same time providing unique insights into the realm of the unconscious and one of its most disquieting drives, i.e., the death drive, Serao partly forerunning Freud's findings on the subject.

Cuore infermo tells the story of Beatrice, a woman with a delicate heart who imposes upon her body and mind a restraining order until the encounter with another woman, i.e., the lover of her husband, upsets her orderly existence. The reader first meets Beatrice's 'bella figura' 'in una calma sicura, in una tranquillità riflessiva', 'senza turbarsi' (CI 6). Beatrice's immunity to the disorders and agitations of the mind is reflected in her statuesque and regular bodily features:

> Tutto il volto era chiuso, silenzioso, sereno nell'indifferenza, immobile nella correzione plastica dei lineamenti, perfetto nell'unica espressione della calma; il corpo raccolto, quieto, senza moti disordinati. (CI 7)

[235] See Ghirelli 78 and Scappaticci 35-36.
[236] I refer to De Donato's belief that in *Fantasia* (1883) Serao shows to not 'wholly accept the mood of the times' (Fanning 20) and its ideal that 'la società in tutti i suoi strati […] sacrifichi il principio del piacere a quello del dovere' (De Donato 58 quoted in Fanning 20).

If one attributes to Serao's women, as De Nunzio Schilardi does (92), Pezzini's definition of Carolina Invernizio's fictional women as 'eroine di una semiotica del decoro' (24), the extension fits most perfectly Beatrice's case. Her alleged 'armonia scevra di qualunque dissonanza', however, is shortly contradicted by an element of disorder, tellingly connoted as feminine, soft and cruel at once: 'La mano sola si dipartiva dall'ordine quasi statuario della persona: era piccola, femminea, morbida, crudele, con le unghie feline tagliate a mandorla' (CI 7). This cat-like hand suggests that there is more to Beatrice's regimented demeanour, a secret dis-order hidden behind the order she performs.

Amalia Cantelmo, one of Beatrice's closest friends, is of this opinion: 'Come sempre – disse con accento irato – come sempre, non t'intendo. Mi rimani ignota, Beatrice' (CI 7). Amalia's frustration lies in the fact that she believes Beatrice's regulated, detached conduct to be a construction disguising her friend's authentic (and ungraspable) self. The appearance of stability and order displayed by Beatrice is a falsification of reality, a mystification ('È un pezzo invece che tu mi mistifichi', CI 7). The protagonist reacts to her friend's insinuations by dismissing them as fantasy and continues to maintain her perfectly governed conduct. Only when Amalia asks her about her 'avvenire', casting something of a shadow over her friend's face, does Beatrice momentarily let go of her regulated demeanour, bending her head down and releasing the tension of her arms, while abandoning herself to a 'sentimento di debolezza' (CI 9). Not long after, she is caught by a moment of fear which puts her in a state of 'attenzione rinserrata, condensata', but it is a fleeting moment and she soon resumes her 'serenità olimpica', reassembling her face 'nella purezza della sua espressione' (CI 18). This momentary breach of Beatrice's orderly, bodily and mental, existence, a perturbation we might call it, anticipates the impending turnabout in her existence, her embracing of ecstatic dis-order.

Utterly reflexive of her tempered conduct, Beatrice's family residence mirrors her natural inclination to order, moderation, and rationality:

> Ella era dappertutto: dappertutto un lusso sobrio, squisito, senza eccessi, senza follie; un gusto ragionevole, illuminato e sereno. […] Inclinava naturalmente all'ordine, alla regolarità, fors'anche alla monotonia che le assicuravano non pertanto la tranquillità da lei ricercata. (CI 87-88)

A striking note of discord to the general atmosphere of the family residence and its landlady is represented by Beatrice's soon to be husband, Marcello Sangiorgio, and his 'natura selvaggia, brutale'

(CI 13). A prey to neurotic outbreaks,[237] a representative of hysterical dis-order, Marcello is irritated by his fiancée's 'inalterabilità pacifica' and 'serena apatìa' (CI 13), to the point that he feels the 'irresistibile desiderio' to suffocate her and, more specifically, to upset and dishevel her composed and well-ordered appearance: 'avrebbe goduto lungamente a vederla soffrire, avrebbe goduto a vedere scomposto quel volto corretto ed inanimato' (CI 12). Like Amalia, Marcello too believes that Beatrice is 'molto diversa dalla sua apparenza' and imagines 'un segreto, una storia nascosta' (CI 13) concealed beneath her sphinx-like appearance.[238] His sadistic impulse to introduce disorder in Beatrice's person is partly prompted by his desire to reach her true self and heart, which remains 'ignoto' (CI 43) to him.

The 'calma tranquillità' (CI 23) that characterises Beatrice and so upsets Marcello is maintained by the former throughout their wedding. 'La sposa pare una bambola' (CI 25), a guest notices commenting on Beatrice's imperturbable, almost inanimate conduct. The person who seems rather pleased with the bride's demeanour is the principessa Brancaccio, a woman who has converted passion into mysticism and who encourages Beatrice to let herself be guided by the memory of her late mother and be 'virtuosa e felice' (CI 28), that is, happy because virtuous. The princess's reference to virtue is soon corroborated, or better exemplified, by the reading of Article 131 of the Italian Civil Code, read out aloud by the duca di Rivera during the ceremony: 'Il marito è capo della famiglia; la moglie segue la condizione civile di lui, ne assume il cognome, ed è obbligata d'accompagnarlo ovunque egli crede opportuno di fissare la sua residenza' (CI 23-24). If the content of the article subsumes society's view of the woman-wife, Beatrice's take on her own condition on the one hand reflects social expectations, while on the other it challenges them. While she placidly accepts that Marcello makes decisions for both – 'È Marcello che decide', 'Io fo quel che vuole Marcello' –, she is rather disturbed when he thanks her for having accepted 'il mio amore ed il mio nome': 'Il nome dei Sangiorgio – Beatrice cautions him, raising her eyebrows – vale quello dei Revertera, Marcello' (CI 27, 31, 29). The rather rebellious warning, accompanied by an alteration of Beatrice's facial expressions and in contrast with her usual 'giusta misura' and 'medianità di carattere' (CI 45), suggests that she is aware of the conventions and constrictions entailed on her role as a wife, but the fact that she willingly decides to go along with them does not mean she agrees with them. Whatever the article might say, Marcello's name and hers are worth the same – i.e., *they*, a man and a woman, are worth the same.

[237] The reference to the insistent resurgence of a childhood memory (CI 11) supports the thesis of Marcello's neurosis. As previously mentioned, in their *Studies on hysteria* (1895), Freud and Breuer relate the neurotic malady to the repression of a past trauma.
[238] Beatrice is described as a 'bella sfinge' who hides an 'enigma' (CI 13, 18).

The few elements of disorder occasionally emerging from Beatrice's otherwise perfectly ordered world begin to increase as she is confronted with a perturbing representative of ecstatic dis-order, a woman valuing passion and pleasure above control and duty. The name of Lalla d'Aragona is first mentioned by Fanny Aldemoresco, another close friend of Beatrice, who presents Lalla as a singularly passionate woman who caused her first husband, Gigino, to die of love:

> Pare che Lalla abbia un singolare carattere, un cuore bizzarramente appassionato, abitudini stranissime. Ella adorava Gigino, è certo; lo faceva vivere in un ambiente artificiale di amore, di gelosia, di scene violente, di profumi forti. Troppo fuoco nei suoi occhi, troppi fiori nella sua camera. Gigino, delicato come una donna, è morto di sfinimento, di languore. (CI: 52)[239]

Subsequently, a summary profile of Lalla is offered by Beatrice's father, Mario Revertera:

> Te lo ripeto, non si resta molto tempo presso la D'Aragona, senza amarla. È proprio lei la donna moderna, la donna appassionata, strana, forse superficiale, delicata, ammalata, nervosa, capricciosa, dalle apparenze varie che tutte seducono; la donna fatta per piacere alla inquieta e raffinata gioventù moderna. (CI 116)

Salsini and Fanning aptly recognise Beatrice and Lalla as the embodiments, respectively, of the 'angel in the house' and the *femme fatale*/'monster': the former bearing the attributes of 'selfless sacrifices and purity', 'passivity, inaccessibility and rectitude', the latter, by contrast, those of 'destructive sensuality and rebellion', 'illness, passion, and irresistibility' (Salsini 100-101). While Beatrice acts as an agent for the maintenance of a *status quo* rooted in order and moderation, Lalla represents an element of disorder and unruliness that challenges that *status quo* by means of an 'excess of erotic energy' (Salsini 105) in sheer contrast with the frigidity displayed by Beatrice, who refrains from any demonstrations of emotional and bodily affect towards Marcello. Beatrice is the representative of order, Lalla of erotic dis-order. Tired of Beatrice's 'crudele indifferenza', 'apatia del cuore' (CI 70), Marcello begins an affair with Lalla, gaining from her the vitality and passion that Beatrice appears to be lacking. He soon learns, however, that Lalla's 'vitalità moltiplicata, esagerata' is one thing with the disarray of her heart and nerves.[240] Passionate vitality equates mental and bodily disorder, i.e., malady.[241]

---

[239] 'Strana questa qui, di morirsene per troppo amore' (CI 52), is Beatrice's sarcastic reaction to the story.
[240] This is suggested by the book Lalla is seen reading, i.e., Descuret's *Medicina delle passioni*, a significant reference given, as pointed out in Part 1, its focusing on ecstasy.
[241] Lalla is a 'giovane ammalata' (CI 108), almost addicted to chloral hydrate – the hypnotic sedative that at Serao's time doctors used to calm hysterical patients.

Mario Revertera warns Beatrice of Marcello and Lalla's involvement and of the 'scandalo orribile' that it could raise, making them 'ridicoli' in the eyes of society (CI 117). To prevent such a scandal, Beatrice's father encourages her to adjust her attitude towards Marcello by showing him (more) love and affection. Beatrice's reply manifests her reluctance towards the embracing of her passionate, erotic self: 'Io non posso cangiarmi da quella che sono, papà'; 'Forse, non lo posso – she adds –; certo, non lo voglio' (CI 115). This is the moment when the heroine confesses the genetic reason why she has decided to refrain from passion, love, and all the feelings and emotions that might upset her heart: her mother's 'malattia di cuore' (CI 118), provoked by an unrequited love and which Beatrice believes to be hereditary:

> Ebbene, padre mio, io non voglio avere il cuore di mia madre, non voglio morire come lei. […] Ho rivestita, da fanciulla questa parvenza che tutti dicono indifferenza, e ne ho tanto avuto bisogno, che è divenuta il mio carattere. Tanto meglio. […] io non amerò, io non sarò inquieta […]. Nè voi chiedetemi altro, né costringetemi a ripetere quanto ho detto, perchè questo mi turba. […] Per lasciarmi vivere, lasciatemi tranquilla. (CI 119)

It is with the precise aim of being surrounded by tranquillity that Beatrice departs for Sorrento (a veritable 'fuga'), eager to reach 'the dolce tranquillità che ha Sorrento, che nulla le può togliere', not even 'le strane convulsioni degli uomini' (CI 122). Yet it is precisely Sorrento that offers the background for that transformation in Beatrice's conduct which Serao has been fleetingly hinting at throughout the novel, her transition from restraining order to ecstatic dis-order.

Both the Sangiorgio-Revertera and the countess d'Aragona find themselves in Sorrento where they are spending their holidays. There, the curious interest Lalla has manifested in Beatrice during the time the adulterous lovers have spent together grows stronger. Moved by a 'desiderio, aspro, cocente, assiduo', she literally begs Marcello to let her see Beatrice ('Una volta sola; cinque minuti soltanto. Te ne supplico, Marcello...') and even asks him what her kisses are like (CI 152-153), showing a 'rapacious and nongender-specific appetite' (Salsini 101) that encompasses both Marcello and Beatrice.[242] Marcello begins to manifest impatience at Lalla's insistent requests ('– Io voglio vederla, voglio parlarle. | – Di nuovo!?', CI 153), becoming aware of the fatality of the strange 'legame in tre' (CI 221) that has come to hold together the three characters – a love triangle in which Beatrice ultimately emerges as the 'absent yet primary object of love' (Harrowitz 87). The protagonist becomes an obsessive thought, a 'spaventoso tormento' for Marcello and Lalla, who are drawn to

[242] Here Serao appears to be offering an alternative rewriting of the figure of the *femme fatale*/monster. Lalla's disruptive and destructive force is not only directed towards the male character, Marcello, as in the custom of other Italian novels like Tarchetti's *Fosca* (1869), but also the female character of Beatrice.

constantly think and speak of her. While he tries to avoid any discussion leading to Beatrice, however, Lalla embraces this 'tormentoso piacere' and is 'la prima a pronunziare il nome di Beatrice, a condurre la conversazione su lei, a interrogare minutamente, con insistenza, con un ardore implacabile, Marcello, su sua moglie' (CI 151-152). Fanning has reasonably suggested the 'possible existence of a (very) latent lesbian subtext' (157) in some of Serao's novels, including *Cuore infermo*, which has been echoed by Ross (2015a: 96).[243] Looking at Lalla's obsession with Beatrice, one is at least entitled to wonder whether her attraction might be romantic and/or erotic. Marcello himself points to this possibility when he suggests that Lalla loves Beatrice more than he does:

> – In fede mia, io credo che tu l'ami più di me – disse lui, vibrandole questa frase come un colpo di pugnale.
> – Forse.
> – Vuoi tu disfarti di me? Non prendere vie occulte, sii franca. (CI 158-159)[244]

Later, Lalla's supposed love towards Beatrice, up to now acknowledged by her only as a possibility, turns into a definite fact, as she herself reveals to her strongest admirer:

> – […] Comincio ad amarvi, Collemagno.
> – Badate, la duchessa Sangiorgio ci guarda.
> – Io amo anche la duchessa Sangiorgio. (CI 180)

While it is problematic to speculate on the existence of a lesbian subtext in an author as morally and socially conservative as Serao, I believe that the strange bond holding together Beatrice and Lalla is one of those exclusively female bonds Serao tends to construct which, according to Fanning, are part of an 'anti-patriarchal and female-centred discourse' which challenges 'the hierarchical structure of the society Serao lived in' (157). Tellingly, the male character, Marcello, reacts with 'interno tremore' (CI 151) to this bond, perceiving its being marked by a (female) Otherness that threatens his steady (manly) order. Female bonds display an alternative social order which is recognised by the established patriarchal order as inherently, potentially dangerous: they embody a dis-order capable of challenging the patriarchal patterns of society.

The menacing dis-order latent in this female-Other-relationship potently manifests itself when Lalla and Marcello, who are at Lalla's, hear a disquieting sound coming from villa Sangiorgio-

[243] On the possible articulation of female same-sex desire in Serao's overall production see Ross 2015a: 93-100.
[244] The 'vie occulte' might, then, be regarded as the homosexual ones.

Revertera: Beatrice is playing the piano and performing a piece of 'musica grave e lenta', sometimes punctuated by a 'nota acuta' acting 'come un appello, come un richiamo' (CI 157). Lalla immediately recognises Beatrice's touch, as if responding to a call: 'È lei – disse Lalla, ritrovando il suo cattivo sorriso', 'È lei – ripetette Lalla' (CI 157). The two women appear to be sharing a code of expression from which Marcello is excluded. They understand each other and can relate to one another in a way Marcello cannot. Lalla is almost prompted to answer Beatrice by means of the musical language they share ('Se le rispondessi di qua?', CI 158). In listening to Beatrice's music, Marcello and Lalla are 'dominati dalla inquietudine' (CI 158). Yet, when Marcello attempts to shut the balcony door to avoid hearing the terrible sound coming from Beatrice, Lalla fiercely prevents him from doing so: 'Non voglio che tu chiuda! Voglio ascoltare – esclamò essa energicamente, con l'espressione di una volontà indomabile' (CI 159). Beatrice, for her part, is first overcome by a 'grande tetraggine' (CI 165), subsequently becoming subject to a 'desiderio potente, insoddisfatto' (CI 169) to see whether Lalla and Marcello have left Sorrento. The choice of the adjectives 'potente' and 'insoddisfatto' are aptly in line with Beatrice's long restrained existence, an existence that has learned to tame impulses and desires and that now, releasing some of its control, meets the potency of those unfulfilled, i.e., repressed, drives. Interestingly, when she finds out that they are gone, her reaction does not involve sorrow but fear and anguish concerning the future: she is 'presa da un terrore sconfinato […] del pericolo ignoto' (CI 169). Almost suffocating under 'le precipitose pulsazioni del suo cuore', she runs home 'come un'insensata' (CI 169) and calls upon the portrait of her mother to regain control of herself. But it is too late. The health of her heart, the rigour and order of her world, have been irremediably undermined.

Beatrice rebels 'con tutta la forza della volontà contro l'idea fissa', which 'la dominava maggiormente, dopo ogni tentativo di rivolta' (CI 184). The narrator does not explain what the recurring 'idea fissa' is. Perhaps, Beatrice's desire to let go of herself, to release the control she has exerted upon her heart after years of compression? Initially, she tries to redirect the potence of her feelings relating that 'idea fissa' towards religion. The attempt can be read in terms of sublimation, i.e., that defence mechanism explored by Freud for which socially unacceptable drives, in particular those related to the libido, are converted into acceptable drives and, thus, sublimated. In Beatrice's case the sublimation takes the form of a transition from erotic to religious drive. The prayers she would earlier utter 'con un fervore mediocre', whose words 'le scendevano sull'anima senza impressionarla', 'ora la scuotevano profondamente' (CI 184). The 'fiamma della fede', however, fails to meet her satisfaction:

> La forma del misticismo non appagava il suo spirito. Si elevava in uno slancio tutto il suo essere verso il cielo, ma qualche cosa d'irresistibile lo riattaccava alla terra […]. Questo desiderio terrestre la distaccava dal cielo, la faceva rialzare scontenta, insoddisfatta, irritata dalla preghiera. (CI 185)

Mysticism, an ecstatic mysticism drawing the soul to God, might work for principessa Brancaccio, but not for Beatrice, who desires a deeper, more bitter, and, most importantly, worldly voluptuousness. A creature firmly grounded to earth, her ecstasy cannot possibly be divine but must be profane.

No longer the heroine of a 'semiotica del decoro', Beatrice has become a woman profoundly 'irrequieta', whose existence has been 'turbata da cima a fondo' (CI 186). Her transformation primarily concerns her senses, 'sin'allora equilibrati nella loro felice medianità', now inclined to the 'esagerazione della squisitezza' (CI 187). She becomes prey to 'voglie segrete ed indefinite' that can give her 'una sensazione più forte' (CI 188). Proof of the revitalisation and exacerbation of her bodily drives is found in her attempt to 'eccitarsi rosicchiando confetture aromatiche, sorbendo caffè' (CI 188) and the 'inclinazione […] morbosa' she develops towards flowers

> Sentiva quel profumo sulle labbra, sulla pelle, nei capelli; si chinava sui fiori perchè le toccassero lievemente le guance, le carezzassero la fronte, si strisciava un poco contro essi, irritata e consolata da quelle piccole punture. […] questa inclinazione si accrebbe, degenerò, divenne morbosa; quel piacere che le dava l'olezzo dei fiori diventò malsano […]. (CI 187)[245]

This profoundly erotic passage signals that Beatrice's transformation is indeed sensual. The 'obsession with the sight and smell of exotic flowers' expresses her 'sexual reawakening' (Harrowitz 88). But this fixation is not limited to sight and smell and involves a bodily relation between Beatrice and the botanic object of her attraction: she let the flowers touch her, she rubs her body against them, almost emulating a sexual intercourse.[246] What Beatrice pursues in her 'inclinazione […] morbosa' towards flowers are intoxicating sensations, worldly pleasures – violent and outrageous, the narrator suggests – that can lead her to yield to her senses.[247] Like mystical ecstasy, however, flower-provoked ecstasy[248] is but a surrogate of a more powerful source of fulfilment Beatrice is yearning for.

The moment comes when Beatrice acknowledges that her senses have wholly taken over:

[245] On the 'rôle symbolique' held by flowers in *Cuore infermo* see Martin-Gistucci 1973: 324-327.
[246] The 'piccole punture' might refer to phallic penetration.
[247] After having played with a 'profumeria violenta, quasi oltraggiosa' she 'impallidì e svenne' (CI 187).
[248] As I have mentioned in Part 1, Mantegazza devoted an entire chapter of his *Estasi umane* to the 'estasi prodotte dai fiori' (1887b: 167).

> Ad un punto ella si confessò vinta. Comprendeva istintivamente di non poter più combattere con sè stessa. […] Si lasciò andare al pericolo, chiudendo gli occhi, abbandonandovisi senza resistenza. La sua ferma volontà era morta; ella non regolava più, con la mano bianca, il corso del suo destino. Era finita la sua forza; chinava la testa e l'onda la travolgeva. […] *Quel che sarà, sarà*. Era la parola dell'impotenza. (CI 188)

Beatrice's transformation is complete. Realising she is no longer capable of controlling her drives, she finally embraces them as well as the 'disordine', the 'confusione […] tutta femminea' of which 'era stata tanto nemica' (CI 189). The turnabout in her behaviour is accompanied by a change in her appearance that makes her 'diversamente bella': 'L'espressione unica, statuaria, esterna, era scomparsa; veniva l'espressione molteplice, vitale, interna'; the 'plastica serenità' is replaced by a 'mobilità nervosa che […] la rendeva seducente' (CI 189, 204). The 'fiore eterno di una bellezza inconscia' (CI 189) has fallen: Beatrice is now fully aware of her beauty. Loosening its rigidity, releasing its tensions, meeting its sensuous femininity, she claims ownership of her body and of the pleasures that it can offer her. Underneath the 'corpo socializzato al massimo grado […] e parcellizzato tra il mostrabile e il non ostensibile per opportunità e tempestività morale', she discovers 'un altro corpo che sembra refrattariamente farsi gioco delle norme, mandare a soqquadro i rivestimenti e i distintivi a lui sovrapposti, ed affermarsi quale realtà irreprimibile: un corpo segreto ed imperioso, perturbatore' (Jeuland-Meynaud 58-59).[249] Beatrice finds herself the owner of a body that does not abide by social and moral norms, and is capable of and willing to experience pleasure, i.e., a body inscribed in ecstatic dis-order.

The peak of Beatrice's transformation coincides with the realisation of the love she feels, and has always felt, towards Marcello. At the sight of an oleography depicting a falconer and a chatelaine kissing

> D'un tratto Beatrice comprese. Tutta la sua persona ebbe un fremito […]. I suoi ricordi la facevano rabbrividire di gioia: sentiva sulle labbra, sul volto, sui capelli i baci lunghi ed innamorati di Marcello; sentiva ancora le sue braccia al collo, quell'abbraccio possente che non aveva saputo vincerla e che ora la faceva fremere di memore voluttà. Prima ancora che ella amasse, era vissuta nell'amore. Vi era vissuta senza gioie e senza dolori, ma il suo cuore, le sue fibre lo avevano respirato, assorbito, si erano impregnate di esso. […] Ora lo portava in sè, nel seno che si sollevava anelante, nel cuore deliziosamente infermo, nella mente innamorata, nei sensi lungamente aberrati,

[249] I refer to Jeuland-Meynaud's distinction between 'corpo fenomenologico' and 'corpo biologico'. The scholar ascribes it to Serao's overall production; its application to Beatrice's case is mine.

> nella singolarità dei suoi gusti, nelle sue lagrime, nei suoi fiori, nei suoi abiti. Lo sentiva in sè, invincibile, indomabile. (CI 191)

The confused memories of the past are finally clear. What had been removed, has come to surface; what had been curbed, has been freed and will soon be fulfilled.[250] Beatrice feels in her 'cuore deliziosamente infermo' the utter potency and untamedness of passion, as well as its harmfulness – her heart cannot sustain that kind of love.[251] Aware of the fatality of her awakening, she still finds herself dwelling on doubts, at times invaded by a 'senso di fiero pudore' related to her previous orderly conduct. She turns to her mother's portrait for help and answers:

> Qual era dunque la buona via? Qual è il segreto della nostra esistenza? Qual è la parola della felicità? Si vive senza amore, o la vita stessa è amore? Doveva ella cedere, doveva ella combattere? Qual era il suo dovere? (CI 208-209)

But the portrait remains silent, smilingly melancholically as if sympathising with Beatrice's situation but aware of its inexorability.[252] Consequently, Beatrice chooses to 'cedere'.

Following an evening out at the San Carlo, realising that Marcello has resolved to abandon her and go away with Lalla for good, she decides to confront him. In a haughty surge of duty, Beatrice severely reproaches Marcello for having disobeyed his marital obligations and have brought dishonour to their family name. It is a call to order that Beatrice addresses to her husband, reminding him that she is his wife ('Sono tua moglie. Non te ne ricordi più?'):

> Tu abbandoni volontariamente tua moglie, la duchessa di Sangiorgio. Tu distruggi, senza esitare, la tua famiglia, la tua casa. Tu offendi in me il tuo onore ed il tuo nome. Quanto può esser sacro ad un uomo, ad un gentiluomo, tu lo violi. (CI 221-222)

Subsequently, Beatrice urges Marcello to take her back as his wife in the name of love, finally disclosing her heart and desires, which, in a way, she imposes upon him: 'T'amo, non lo comprendi? Sei mio, non ti lascio, non ti cedo' (CI 223). Faced with her love declaration and resolution, Marcello desists from his adulterous plans and reclaims his much-loved wife.

---

[250] Resorting again to a psychoanalytic framework, Serao strikingly refers to a mechanism of removal by which Beatrice has experienced love only on an unconscious level, without perceiving it and, subsequently, removing it from her consciousness.

[251] 'Il cuore fisico ed il cuore psichico combattevano una lotta interna, in cui l'uno o l'altro doveva morire' (CI 208).

[252] Perhaps a sympathy concealing Serao's own towards the predicaments faced by many late nineteenth-century women, often torn between desires and norms?

From this moment onwards the Sangiorgio-Revertera get sucked into a vortex of love and lustfulness, experiencing the disorders of an ecstatic passion which fuels and at the same time drains their systems:

> Avevano nel medesimo tempo la sensazione di un grande rinnovellamento e di un grande struggimento, come se quella fiamma li facesse rivivere della loro consumazione. All'alba delle loro notti d'amore, all'imbrunire delle loro giornate d'amore, taciti, pallidi, col cuore sfinito, la volontà abbattuta, le labbra arse, disseccate dai baci, in un lento giro del pensiero, essi percepivano una sola idea, un sol desiderio strano, vagante, mormorante: morire... morire... (CI 225)

Beatrice and Marcello live on their consumption, taking pleasure out of their bodily and mental exhaustion to the point that they soon express a desire to die of their love, a desire which they do not fully comprehend: 'Morire, morire! Perché avevano voluto morire? Perché aver voluto condensare l'amore in un sol giorno, in una sola ora, per morirne soffocati?' (CI 226). The apparently rhetorical questions voice, in my opinion, a true bewilderment: why indeed do Beatrice and Marcello want to die? What is this desire of death they are feeling? In order to address these questions, I am bound to resort to Freud's concept of the death drive. Grounding his ideas on an intuition by Sabina Spielrein, in his essay *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud postulates the existence of an instinct to return to an inorganic state of things, i.e., death. Though this death impulse, which we know little of, appears to be in conflictual tension with the life instinct, i.e., the libidinal instincts of Eros, '[i]t is possible, indeed – Freud remarks –, that the libidinal instincts in the ego may be linked in a peculiar manner with these other ego-instincts which are still strange to us': 'The pleasure principle seems actually to serve the death instincts' (1955b: 63). This appears to be the case for Beatrice. The consuming practice of love has elicited the daunting thought of death, that 'sola idea' which is one with Beatrice's previous 'idea fissa' to let go of her restraints. A twofold, interdependent urge comes to occupy Beatrice's mind and body: a desire for liberation and satisfaction of her stimuli (Eros drive), and a desire for death (Thanatos drive). Beatrice satisfies such a twofold desire through erotic ecstasy, which provides her with both the fulfilment of her impulses and liberation from her previous constraints, and the momentary abdication of and exit from her self, a *petite mort* indeed.[253] Her ecstatic dis-order implies a pleasure principle as much as it implies a death principle,[254] the two being inextricably intertwined.

[253] The expression *petite mort* was employed at the end of the nineteenth century as a synonym of orgasm, its first attested use dating back to 1882, a year later Serao's novel was published.
[254] As pointed out by McDaniel, Freud himself 'interpreted ecstasy as part of the death drive' (87).

The liberating, self-shattering nature of Beatrice's ecstatic transformation is expressed through a volcanic simile, when the narrator writes that her passion, 'soffocata, soffocata', spurts out with great exertion wanting to 'spezzare violentemente il debole involucro delle fibre', just like the 'lava vulcanica che scuote i fianchi del monte in convulsioni orribili, fino a che possa sgorgare da tutte le parti' (CI 225).[255] By resorting to the natural simile, Serao suggests that the expression of a passion that has long been repressed can only be convulsive, even self-shattering. Indeed, human life, the narrator is soon to add, can withstand but fleetingly the apex of passion, i.e., ecstasy:

> […] alla vertigine degli altissimi pinnacoli, alla temperatura corruscante, dove tutto arde, alla nota estrema della gamma dove tutto vibra, al termine insostenibile della passione dove tutto crolla, non resiste che brevemente la natura umana. L'anima ardente, vibrante, vi s'infrangerebbe, ed allora quella parte d'amore che acuirebbe la sofferenza di un cuore sino alla morte, trabocca, si espande, torna nell'aria, nel sole, nella natura, donde era venuta. Così Beatrice e Marcello. Parve veramente ad essi di morire in uno spasimo dilettoso, in quella prima settimana del loro amore ….]. (CI 226)

Serao delivers a potent definition of ecstasy as a moment of extreme passion leading to self-dilaceration. Marcello and Beatrice undergo a death-like experience in their painfully blissful spasms. Their love becomes 'senza misura, senza regola', marked by an 'irrequietezza ardente' that extends to the palace they inhabit, once a prolongment of Beatrice's moderate, orderly conduct, now 'in disordine', upset 'da cima a fondo' (CI 251, 249). Marcello remarks on the 'confusione sovrana' hanging over his house, perceiving it as 'un ballo sfrenato, una ridda, dove tutto crepitava e moriva' (CI 251). Ecstatic disorder – a frenzied *ridda* where everything burns and dies –[256] now governs both people and places.

The disruption of Beatrice's regulated conduct and her embracing the erotic world of ecstasy exemplifies that breaking down of established patterns as well as shifting from order to disorder Bataille refers to in *L'Érotisme* (1957), where he writes that eroticism is an 'assenting to life up to the point of death' that 'always entails a breaking down of established patterns, the patterns […] of the regulated social order', its 'whole business' being 'to destroy the self-contained character of the participators as they are in their normal lives' (1986: 11, 17-18). 'The first obvious thing about eroticism – Bataille claims – is the way that an ordered, parsimonious and shuttered reality is shaken by a plethoric disorder' (1986: 104). Plunged into ecstatic, plethoric disorder, Beatrice learns to attune

[255] Close to the vehement activity of the Vesuvius, Serao could hardly resist from employing its figurative potential.
[256] The dancing metaphor could not be more effective. The term *ridda* refers to an Italian medieval folk dance where people go round in circles and is figuratively employed to describe a disordered, swirling, and convulsive movement, stunning those performing it.

to her bodily desires and emotions, and finds the freedom to express them. Her erotic ecstasies, sanctioning her transition from order to dis-order, represent the climax of a process of liberation. But such liberation does not come without side effects.

Marcello and Beatrice's disquietingly ecstatic love[257] – underlying an experience of liminality between pleasure and pain, life and death – finds delight in torment and exhaustion, just as the ardent love of the fanatic Christian saints who took pleasure in burning for their God:[258]

> Non conoscevano più il limite dove il dolore diventa un piacere ed il piacere un dolore. […]. Come i santi fanatici del cristianesimo, essi si consolavano nel vedersi consumare in un focolare ardente. Anzitutto Beatrice, che si sentiva veramente sfinire ogni giorno – e si allietava di questo sfinimento e ne rilevava ogni giorno i sintomi e sempre più cercava di aggiungervi una nuova fiamma di emozione. (CI 251-252)

Unsurprisingly, it is Beatrice (a woman) who is more exposed to this ecstatic exhaustion, which she relentlessly tries to intensify while identifying its symptoms. The employment of the latter word is not only metaphorical. Beatrice's health is increasingly deteriorating, turning her into 'una persona inferma, guasta' (CI 251). As a result of coming to terms with her unconstrained self and, thus, embracing ecstasy and the disorders it involves, Beatrice's heart starts to experience distress, pulsing and expanding 'come se volesse spezzarsi' (CI 203). The death drive previously mentioned, subsuming a need to shatter the boundaries of existence as a result of a mighty Eros, has become more than an 'idea', a desire, now threatening to find concrete fulfilment. Beatrice's transformation into a passionate creature aggravates the disorder of her heart, as well as that of her mind. The more she indulges in erotic ecstasies, the more she drains her nervous system, activating a different kind of ecstasy which leaves her 'stordita, stupefatta, con una specie di ebetismo del dolore', plunged 'in un grande annientamento, immobile, con gli occhi spalancati e senza sguardo, la faccia terrea, le mani gonfie e cadenti' (CI 243). Lalla has turned on not only 'a sense of sexual energy, but also […] a diseased corporeality' (Salsini 54). Beatrice does not only experience erotic ecstasy, but also the hysterical ecstasies that come with her nervous crises,[259] ever increasing and causing her to become 'una contraddizione, qualche cosa di sragionevole, di sconvolto, di folle' (CI 243).

---

[257] 'l'amore diventava così forte, così tenace, che li sgomentava' (CI 253).

[258] Revealingly, Beatrice can identify with religion only when it is self-shattering.

[259] See Part 1, where I outline hysterical ecstasy. See Mazzoni on Beatrice's representation as a hysteric (173), Fanning (241), Jeuland-Meynaud (74 and following), Mitchell (2014: 94-121) on hysteria in Serao's overall production. Particularly fascinating is Jeuland-Meynaud suggestion that, in her depictions of female hysteria, Serao might have put her finger 'su quello che costituisce il problema più molesto, occultato e complicato della società da lei evocata: quello della genitalità o della sessualità mortificata' (78). The repression of the libidinal drives brings us back to Freud's ideas, which, once again, seem to be partly anticipated by Serao's narrative work.

A model of order, rationality, stability, Beatrice now figures as a mentally and bodily disordered creature. She has replaced control with freedom, repression with liberation, frigidity with sensuality, duty with pleasure, composure with convulsive vitality, coldness with sensuousness, but also balance with excess, rigour with chaos, health with malady. Driven by (excessive) passion and (drained) nerves, she has become the ultimate embodiment of ecstatic dis-order. In embracing her inhibited self, in meeting her sensual drives, she has also embraced irrationality and madness ('ella udiva la follia battere alle porte del suo cervello un rullìo incessante', CI 251). A prey to her whims, Beatrice abandons herself 'ai divertimenti, ai piaceri, con una foga tutta nervosa di donna assetata' (CI 246). Her thirst is a sadistic and sadomasochistic one:

> Si copriva di merletti preziosi, che lacerava allegramente […] con le mani nervose. […] Cambiava acconciatura quattro volte al giorno. Nel suo gabinetto di toletta si soffocava fra le stoffe […]. Si era fatta fare una miniatura di suo marito, tutta circondata di perle, e la portava sotto l'abito, sul petto, col volto sulla pelle, con le borchiette d'oro che le producevano delle piccole cicatrici […]. Ella provava un piacere delizioso in quelle punture, quando qualche macchiolina di sangue compariva sulla batista. Lo chiamava il suo cilicio. (CI 246)

Led by the desire of self-laceration, Beatrice indulges in sadomasochistic practices, attempting to asphyxiate herself or harm herself with her special love-sackcloth. A crossover between Anna Karenina and Gemma Galgani, she has turned into a hysteric and a martyr,[260] Serao superimposing the religious, medical, and erotic spheres, pointing to the excess that can ruinously characterise each of them.

In a disillusioned effort to improve her health, Beatrice sees a doctor who prescribes her utter rest and some medicines.[261] The doctor's instructions are useless: nothing seems to stop Beatrice's 'vita nervosa, rabbiosa, affogata di attività' and her desire to cruelly disrupt and undo her existence:

> […] mezzo impazzita, con le sue stesse mani ella squarciava la sua esistenza, quasi volesse darle ferocemente, in una voluttà acrissima del dolore, l'ultimo crollo. Tentava tutte le vie per scomporre maggiormente il suo organismo. Esauriva tutti i mezzi per triplicare, per moltiplicare le sue sensazioni, per accrescere l'urto dei nervi per arrivare all'esagerazione, alla pazzia della vita. Si vedeva esaurire ogni giorno, assisteva al proprio disfacimento con piacere crudele. (CI 250)

[260] See Mazzoni 175 on the identification Beatrice-Gemma Galgani, Fanning 39-40 on Beatrice as a martyr.
[261] The diagnosis being that of '[m]alattia di languore... palpitazioni nervose... anemia' (CI 257).

Yet, the moment she regains her rationality and ability to think, she expresses a wish to keep at bay these dangerous, ecstatic and self-shattering, drives: 'Ma quando si fermava un momento a pensare, immancabilmente scorgeva l'avvenire prossimo. Voleva scongiurarlo' (CI 250). Beatrice is not yet done with her inner struggles as a new conflict emerges, incorporating that between sexual abstinence and erotic passion: the conflict in which self-preservation and health oppose death-drive and illness.[262]

Eventually, Beatrice does die. This is Serao's decision, likely a punishment prompted by the need to dissuade her female readers to follow the protagonist's negative example. The more superficial reading of the novel as a cautionary tale, however, does not exclude a subtler one, denoting a more complex and ambiguous understanding of Beatrice's journey. The two readings are congruent in that they reflect the contradictions underlying the conditions of post-unification Italian women, including, first and foremost, Serao herself. Her writings, Mitchell points out, 'embodied the tensions and contradictions […] which were also embedded in the fabric of the culture and society of the time' (2014: 153). Her fictional world is 'a complicated, shifting construction in which her female protagonists play out the ambivalences, contradictions, and difficulties of modern society' (Harrowitz 98). In *Cuore infermo*, such ambivalences are embodied by Beatrice and Lalla as two sides of the same coin.

As the narration proceeds, the polarisation of the two female characters – initially standing on the opposite sides of order and moderation (angel in the house-Beatrice), and disorder and excess (*femme fatale*-Lalla) – does not hold up. One fails to clearly identify the female fatal Other within the novel: is it Lalla or Beatrice? Is it both? To answer this question, I embrace Fanning's convincing argument that Serao resorts to the double-device. According to the scholar, in the depiction of the two distinct female characters the author portrayed 'a complete female character', split into two in its struggle to negotiate its 'acceptable feminine self' with its 'monstrous independent other self' (Fanning 44-45).[263] Fanning also relates the writer's use of the double to her alleged recourse to motifs of the Gothic genre, such as that of the fragmented self, mentioning a quote by Thornburg addressing the 'Sentimental/Gothic myth': 'The Gothic side of the myth represents an unconscious acknowledgement of the potency of […] rejected elements, an unconscious need within the culture to deal with reality in its entirety' (Thornburg 4 quoted in Fanning 209). Bearing in mind Thornburg's quotation, another element can be added to Fanning's account of Serao's use of the double device:

[262] See CI 261-262. I would like to refer here to the striking insight provided by Banti in her two-line summary of *Cuore infermo*, which, I believe, has not been given due attention: 'essa [Serao] inventa la storia di una Beatrice Revertera, gran dama e malata di cuore, frigida per istinto di conservazione e che lo sboccio di un frenetico amore porterà alla tomba' (29). Only Scappaticci (34) goes back to this intuition, though not overtly relating to Banti.

[263] A struggle which is always social in that the split is also 'dictated by the conflict between autonomy and femininity set up by society' (Fanning 157).

the two female types embody two split selves of a complete female character struggling to negotiate her *repressed*, rejected self and her *unconscious*, liberated self.[264] *Cuore infermo* displays such negotiation.[265] Beatrice figures as the 'classically angelic female character' who is brought to 'come to terms' with 'her other self, her passionate, potentially monstruous essence' (Fanning 48), in other words, her disorderly, ecstatic self, and ultimately embrace it. The process of integration of Beatrice's disinhibited, socially unacceptable, disorderly self, in fact, culminates in the erotic ecstasies she enjoys with Marcello: self-shattering, transgressive moments standing as the last, irreversible, leg of her journey into ecstatic dis-order.

Despite her pedagogic purposes, Serao cannot help giving voice to such transgressive experience, offering 'calde calde alle stesse fanciulle e alle signore per bene quelle stesse vicende amorose che reputa dannose alla pace delle giovani menti femminili' (Jeuland-Meynaud 151). While allegedly contributing to the maintenance of the moral, social order, Serao introduces the possibility of a perturbation to that order, a disorder which corresponds to transgression but also liberation.[266] The moment she decides to address it, willingly or unwillingly, consciously or unconsciously,[267] she provides a model of moral, social, and sexual emancipation that brings her to question 'the conventional mapping of female destiny' and 'the traditional roles of women' (Salsini 154),[268] just as it leads her to explore the shores of the unconscious, questioning the unity of the individual, and its alleged will to live and conserve life. Emerging both as a sponsor of the *status quo* and a woman writer whose fiction ends up questioning, even challenging it, in *Cuore infermo* Serao appears to be negotiating the tensions between order and ecstatic dis-order, her 'conservative' pen giving birth to a complex, disruptive, and, at several levels, innovative narrative. In conveying Beatrice's subversive experience into what I have called ecstatic dis-order, Serao not only felt the need to explore (and lead her female readers to explore with her) the condition of a woman that set herself free from inhibitions, embarking on a path that, though ruinous, led her to emancipation, but, in my opinion, also brought

[264] Italics mine.
[265] Lalla supports the hypothesis of the double motif twice in the novel: when she refers to Beatrice and her as the same person ('Siete innamorato – she tells Marcello –; ma colei che non vi ama in casa vostra, venite ad amarla qui, in casa mia', CI 102); and when she notifies Marcello that by looking for her he is actually searching for Beatrice ('Chi cercavate in me se non lei? Non vi spingeva il desiderio di ritrovarla?', CI 282).
[266] She evokes an 'ambiente ancora tradizionale sì, coi suoi silenzi, i suoi bloccaggi […] ma pure, *a contrario*, segretamente aspirante ad uno stato diverso dei corpi e a mutazioni decisive' (Jeuland-Meynaud 152).
[267] 'Dentro l'anima mia vi è un'altra anima. Dentro la mia volontà vi è un'altra volontà. Dentro la mia ragione vi è un'altra ragione', Serao wrote in 'La donna dall'abito nero e dal ramo di corallo rosso', included in *Fior di passione* (1888: 131). Francesco Orlando's use of the Freudian notion of compromise formation, postulating, above other things, that that which is repressed in the author's life can come to surface in the author's fictional work, might be productively applied to Serao's case.
[268] In Mitchell's reading, Serao's 'domestic fiction' can be regarded as an 'imaginative representation of a female-addressed unofficial women's history' (2010: 485); the place, perhaps, where to give voice to alternative female patterns of life, politically, socially, and morally problematic in their deviance from the expected norm.

some understanding to Beatrice's subversive behaviour. I believe that the novel's last pages might just refer to such a sympathetic perspective.

Following Beatrice's death, Marcello lingers around the hill of Poggioreale, where Naples' cemetery is located. Staring at his city, he contrasts Naples' vehement vitality with Poggioreale's peaceful calmness:

> Quest'ultima collina pareva fosse un'apparizione di pace sulla vita esuberante ed affannosa della città; la sua linea plastica e posata, la sua apparenza serena, il suo silenzio, la sua solitudine si ergevano in mezzo al tumulto, al fermento, alle convulsioni di Napoli, senza esserne tocchi. […] La collina col suo bel villaggio addormentato, rimaneva inviolata, con la sua grande aria giovane e verginale. Pareva posta al confine della città per frenarla nella ricchezza rovinosa della sua esistenza, per moderarne i lunghi fremiti di vita, per chetare quel palpito enorme. (CI 278)

The opposition between the city and the hill is outlined in terms of passion and sexuality. On the one hand stands Naples, with its penetrative chaos, its 'alito caldo e fecondatore' (CI 277), a Dionysian, Priapic city, we might say. On the other hand, is Poggioreale, temperate, virginal, unviolated, a place where all passion is spent because dead. In the passage Naples' vitality is tellingly associated with both health and illness: the city is said to be full of wellbeing, and yet panting, convulsive even. It is precisely Naples' convulsions and its great pulse that prompt Marcello to draw a comparison between the city and his dead wife:[269]

> La città pareva s'inebbriasse della sua salute, della sua gioventù, della sua bellezza, si esaltasse nel succhio energico che circolava nelle sue fibre, vibrasse tutta nell'estasi della sua vita, affogasse nel supremo benessere […]. Di nuovo Marcello si lasciava prendere nell'angoscia, quasi che in quell'eccesso, in quella follia egli temesse veder morire d'un tratto una persona a lui carissima, quasi che nella bianca e ardente bellezza di Napoli, nel suo palpito che saliva sino al massimo punto, egli riconoscesse Beatrice, morta nella passione del suo cuore. (CI 279)

The 'ridda sfrenata' that is Naples reminds him of the 'ridda' that seemed to possess Palazzo Sangiorgio when the passionate Beatrice inhabited it. The city's excess and folly evokes those of his wife. But most importantly it is in Naples' inebriation of life that Marcello recognises Beatrice, beholding with anguish this ecstatic identification as it incorporates both the ecstasy of living/life drive and the ecstasy of dying/death drive (the city 'vibra[…]' in its 'estasi della sua vita' but also

[269] Whereas, at the beginning of the novel, Beatrice had shown to keep a distance from the city's chaotic disorder. In her first exchange with Amalia, she had made 'un gesto vago e largo verso l'orizzonte, quasi avesse voluto includere nella sua negazione il cielo, il mare e la vicina Napoli' (CI 8-9).

'affoga[…]').[270] Naples stands as the urban embodiment of ecstatic dis-order as Beatrice the human one.

Serao relates the city's danger of dying from ecstasy to both its madness and 'supremo benessere' ('pareva s'inebriasse della sua salute'), again pointing to a contradiction in her characterisation of Naples' ecstatic vitality. Consistently, when Marcello withdraws from the city's delirium and fever, and turns to the 'calma solenne del Camposanto', where 'tutto si arrestava, si quietava, taceva, s'annullava, come in un grande spegnitoio', he also withdraws from happiness, love, enthusiasm: 'Scompariva il sorriso, scompariva l'amore, scompariva la ridda, l'esaltazione, l'entusiasmo, la febbre, il delirio' (CI 279-280). This geographical movement from chaos-life to peace-death can be applied to Beatrice's passage from ecstatic life to death: by dying, and thus entering the Camposanto, she has returned to calmness, silence, order, put an end to her bodily and mental disorders, her deliriums, but also to love and joy. This, I believe, is *also* Serao's subtle suggestion to her readers. Ecstasy, and more specifically, erotic ecstasy, causes you to fall ill but also be joyful. It leads you to abandon moral and social norms, but for the purpose of aligning with your true, instinctual self. In embracing her Other, ecstatic self (Lalla),[271] Beatrice finds death, but also joy, freedom. She gradually loses her health and, finally, her life, but she has ultimately 'grown as a character' (Fanning 48).

Salsini suggests that it is possible that some of Serao's contemporaries 'found provocative subtexts in her romance narratives' (Salsini 171, note 74). She also notes that critics 'were uncomfortable' with Serao's 'articulation of female desire' and attacked her texts 'for their alleged indecency'; a translator went as far as rewriting some of Serao's 'more suggestive passages, toning down or deleting references to the female body and female sexuality to avoid offending (or perhaps arousing) the sensibilities of impressionable readers' (Salsini 77). That is perhaps why in her later fictional work, Serao became more moralistic. Her last novels, De Nunzio Schilardi observes, 'mirano a essere pedagogici e assumono i toni di una requisitoria giudiziaria, di moralistico "rappel à l'ordre"'.[272] Distancing herself from ecstatic dis-order, Serao embraced a return to order.

With regards to *Cuore infermo*, already two years after its publication, Serao advanced 'forti riserve' on her first novel, revealing to her friend Primoli in November 1883 that she now shamefully regarded it as 'il lavoro di un'altra persona, molto puerile, molto entusiasta, che credeva vere una quantità di cose pazze, che si esaltava al contatto di cose volgari credendole nobili, pure, ideali'

[270] The choice of Naples as a term of comparison in relation to Beatrice's ecstatic experience could not be more fitting. A chaotic, vital, sensual, irrational city, Naples threatened the rational, normative order the post-unification Italian establishment was striving towards.
[271] As the Greek etymology of the term indicates, ecstasy is literally a displacement out of one's normal state/self.
[272] No wonder Queen Margherita, 'an ardent admirer of Serao', confessed 'that she preferred the author's later romance novels to her earlier realist texts' (Salsini 22).

(quoted in Scappaticci 38). This letter is of great importance as it shows that Serao felt ashamed of having addressed in her fiction what she consciously regarded as 'cose pazze', 'cose volgari'. Harrowitz claims that in her fictional work Serao 'questions the status of women, *in spite of herself*' (101-102). In the case of *Cuore infermo*, the letter to Primoli seems to suggest otherwise: Serao was fully aware of the 'cose pazze' and 'volgari' she was writing and believed in them ('credere' is the unequivocal word she employs and repeats twice). The statement to Primoli reveals that Serao was conscious of *Cuore infermo*'s emancipatory potential, a potential she immediately tried to get rid of and redress with 'La virtù di Checchina', published in November-December 1883, in which the protagonist, in Romani's words, 'will choose virtue over transgression' (2019: 306). One of her last literary endeavours seems to me an attempt to amend the mad and vulgar, emancipatory 'mess' she believed to have made in writing her first novel. With *L'ebbrezza, il servaggio e la morte*, Serao returned to the theme of ecstastic love, aiming to show, unambiguously, its devastating effect: 'ebbrezza' leads to servitude and, finally, death. The editorial project being interrupted, however, it just so happened that of the novel's three parts only the first one, devoted to the theme of 'ebbrezza', saw completion.

I would like to conclude by quoting two passages of *Cuore infermo*. The first consists in a story Marcello tells Lalla of a poet who, caught up in the frenzies of his imagination,[273] became mad and stupid:

> […] come tutte le ebbrezze, quella della sua immaginazione, spinta all'eccesso, divenne sregolata, folle, morbosa. Si distrusse da sè sola, per esaurimento. Il poeta diventò uno stupido.
>
> – La tua storiella è mesta, Marcello.
>
> – No. Non ti ho detto che egli fu felice? Non basta essere stato felice, per quanto più lungamente è possibile? (CI 155-156)

Foreshadowing the degeneration accompanying Beatrice's ecstasies, the story of the intoxicated poet points to the destructive power of ecstasy but also to the utter happiness that comes with it. Marcello's final question/suggestion– is it not enough to have been happy, even if for a moment? – reveals the possibility of a sympathetic view towards ecstatic experiences of life. The second passage I would like to mention is located right at the end of the novel. It is now the narrator speaking with, I believe, Serao's voice, in some way ultimately justifying and redeeming her heroine, and perhaps concealing in the city's essence that of her entire novel. Though ruinous, Serao insinuates, passion, in its ecstatic form, is beautiful and inevitable:

[273] Yet another kind of ecstasy Serao addresses.

> Napoli è stupenda di bellezza, è bella nelle sue notti innamorate, nelle sue giornate violente, nei suoi canti che vi seducono, nei suoi colori sempre ardenti, nelle sue dolcezze voluttuose. Laggiù corrono per l'aria sospiri infuocati, aliti d'amore, mormorii di baci, parole convulse; laggiù si è costretti ad amare, perchè il cielo vuole che amiate, perchè la natura v'impone di amare, perchè la città congiura, con le stelle, col mare, per farvi amare. (CI 283)

Under a sky like that of Naples, which is the sky Beatrice is under, one cannot but love and cannot but love convulsively, that is, ecstatically.

8. Fogazzaro's Ecstatic and Unconscious-Driven Spirituality: Counteracting Religious Dogmatisms with Spiritual Dis-Orders

In 1894 Matilde Serao wrote an open letter to Antonio Fogazzaro in *Il Mattino* entitled 'I Cavalieri dello Spirito'.[274] In the letter she praised the Northern writer for his attempt to 'aprire o […] riaprire le anime dei suoi ascoltatori e dei suoi lettori a un senso più alto e più nobile della vita interiore' (Serao in Fogazzaro 1901: 97-98). Serao dubbed Fogazzaro as the 'fedele cavaliere dello spirito', the champion of a 'tendenza spiritualista, sempre più forte', born out of a reaction to the 'aridità' and 'asprezza' of Naturalism and positivism (in Fogazzaro 1901: 107, 101, 108).[275] According to Serao, the greatest merit of this '[m]ovimento incomposto', to be led potentially by Fogazzaro, was to elicit a 'viaggio di esplorazione, di scoperta' to the very depths of inner life and a truth that is said to be found 'altrove':

> importa che nel silenzio delle profonde cogitazioni, ognuno di noi ricerchi nuovamente le sorgenti disseccate della sua vita interna e trovi modo di farle ripullulare e, non trovandole, cerchi, cerchi ancora, cerchi sempre: importa che la nostra coscienza non si appaghi, non si cheti, non si addormenti […]! *Tutta la verità* è altrove. Importa di ritrovarla. (in Fogazzaro 1901: 110-111)

In his somewhat elusive answer to the letter,[276] Fogazzaro declined Serao's invitation to act as the leader of the 'tendenza spiritualista' 'in nome del suo cattolicesimo rigido e dogmatico' (Landoni 328-329). He was afraid of being associated with anything that could 'offendere' the Church's 'dogmi' and 'precetti' (Fogazzaro 1901: 121) and be thus perceived as unorthodox. Yet, his 'far from unproblematic Catholicism' (Mazzoni 1996: 92), 'inquieto, e quindi curioso e aperto al nuovo' (Pasi 235), pointed precisely to a divergence from the established, i.e., Church-led, religious order.

His aspirations for a Catholic reform that would modernise the Church from within, making it a less dogmatic and obsolete institution, capable of taking advantage of the 'apporto positivo della scienza' and the 'ruolo del laicato […] come energia progressiva, capace di contrastare l'energia conservatrice del clero' (Migliore 112), complicated his feeling of deference towards the religious authority and his alleged respect of its dogmas. Though Fogazzaro did not officially associate with religious modernism,[277] his positions seem rather close to those of the movement and its mission of

[274] The letter was published on the 8th of July 1894.
[275] Finotti holds Fogazzaro as the 'maestro di quella rinascita spiritualista che metteva in crisi la cultura positivistica e deterministica' (2011: 59), Ghidetti as the 'campione internazionale del *bouleversement* spiritualista di fine secolo' (1993: 22).
[276] Published in *Il Mattino* on the 16th of July 1894.
[277] I am not referring to literary modernism but to the Catholic movement that spread in the last decades of the 19th century and first decade of the 20th century as a 'reaction against the increasing centralization of church authority', calling 'for

a 'ridefinizione e rielaborazione di una spiritualità lontana dal dogma, e più consona alle esigenze moderne' (Ranzato Santin 15).[278] In particular, the movement's belief that 'religious truth' is 'an inner experience not capable of being perfectly translated into concepts' (Lloyd 571), had much in common with the writer's mystical idea of spirituality.[279] Fogazzaro longed for a form of religious experience partly disentangled from the Church's authoritarian world and oriented towards the inner subjectivity of the believers and their desire to explore first-hand, ecstatically, the mystery that is God and his divine truth. Such truth is inextricably linked to the believers' unconscious world.[280] Despite his decision to publicly shake off the label of 'cavaliere dello spirito' Serao attributed to him, what Fogazzaro was keen to explore was precisely the soul's persistent spiritual quest of a truth placed 'altrove'. Given his wish to remain in harmony with the Church's authority, the place where he could wholly carry out this exploration could not possibly be a public ground, such as the one hosting an exchange of open letters in a renowned newspaper, which would expose him to the risk of compromising his public figure, but his narrative *oeuvre*, where everything bore the shielding filter of fiction.[281] That is where he partly freed himself from exerting the controlling, even censoring, attitude he displayed in public, that is where his heterodox idea of spirituality was more manifestly and unreservedly explored. *Piccolo mondo moderno* (1901) and *Il santo* (1905) – the second and third volume of Fogazzaro's tetralogy of the Maironi family, narrating Piero Maironi's ascending parable from earthly passions to divine love –[282] exemplify this dynamic very well.

Piccolo mondo moderno tells the story of Piero's inner conflict between erotic and spiritual drive.[283] Married to a 'moglie viva ma demente' (PMM 51), confined in an asylum, he barely

freedom of conscience' (*Encyclopedia Britannica*). Fogazzaro claims that the homonymous fictional thinker of *Le idee religiose di Giovanni Selva* (1907) – his alter ego as well as a character of *Il santo* – 'non è modernista. Odia la parola e la cosa. Gli basta largamente di essere moderno' (quoted in Finotti 2011: 60).

[278] Mazzoni describes Fogazzaro's faith as one which was 'constantly attempting to work around sometimes adverse dogma' (1996: 119).

[279] The connection between modernism and mysticism was pointed out at the time by Giuseppe Prezzolini in his works *Il Cattolicismo rosso. Studio sul presente movimento di riforma nel Cattolicismo* (1908) and *Cos'è il modernismo?* (1909).

[280] Branca stresses the importance and modernity of Fogazzaro's focus on the 'zone dell'anima meno controllabili, alle dimensioni dell'inconscio, anzi del subconscio' (14) in Italian literature. Finotti upholds that the 'cosiddette opere moderniste – da *Piccolo mondo moderno* a *Leila*' can be read as 'esplorazioni straordinariamente acute dei processi che si svolgono nella sfera del sogno e del subcosciente' (2011: 57), stressing the overall importance of directing the scholarly attention 'non solo verso le "ascensioni" ma anche verso le "immersioni" fogazzariane' (1999: 140).

[281] Pasi's detection of 'una certa differenza di atteggiamento tra gli scritti di Fogazzaro destinati al pubblico e quelli privati, come le lettere', 'una maggiore o minore prudenza, una maggiore o minore franchezza nell'esprimere le proprie curiosità intellettuali e le proprie simpatie per forme alternative di spiritualità' (236), can be extended by linking the 'minore prudenza' and 'franchezza' at work in his private correspondence to his fictional work too.

[282] Within the cycle, inaugurated with *Piccolo Mondo Antico* (1895) and ending with *Leila* (1910), the two middle books make a unit of their own, being 'così strettamente legati che il primo sprigiona il suo più profondo significato alla luce del secondo e viceversa' (Crupi 159).

[283] As Santovetti writes, '[t]he dilemma between *amore sacro* and *amor profano*, between spirituality and sensuality, between mysticism and eroticism is the distinguishing trait of [Fogazzaro's] novels' (147). Fogazzaro himself underwent that conflict: 'Le due correnti, la mistica e l'erotica […] segneranno per tutta la vita una lotta interiore, sdoppiando l'unità dello spirito, ora trascinato verso l'arsura dei sensi, ora elevato a contemplare le alture di perfezione' (Piggioli 16). With

manages to resist the temptation of committing adultery. The repression of his sexual, bodily drives[284] leads him to direct a 'rancore sordo contro Iddio che taceva' elicited by the 'dubbi che il suo lottare con la natura fosse inutile e stolto', doubts over which he immediately feels 'terrore e rimorso' for (PMM 31-32). Initially appeasing 'i moti incomposti dell'animo', he is reached by an oneiric 'visione voluttuosa', which he alternatively invokes and rejects with 'più molle difesa',[285] until he releases control and, though only in his semiconscious mind, lets himself go to a liberating 'amorosa estasi':

> Ebbe il senso di una liberazione, di un'ebbrezza saliente dalla terra calda, di un abbandono, di un'amorosa estasi in cui tutta la più occulta parte dell'esser suo, una magnifica potenza intatta di passione, di gioia e di follia gli sarebbe scoppiata dal cuore, dal pensiero, dai sensi. Diverse forme gli lampeggiavano nella visione interna: l'ardita cameriera bionda, la bella signora Dessalle, incontrata un giorno in ferrovia, dai grandi occhi bruni che tanto lo avevan guardato, e altre ancora, cui egli si foggiava con violenza in una forma sola, in un essere solo […], con irresistibile impero, la donna voluta da lui […]. (PMM 32-33)

The sense of liberation Piero experiences coincides with the unleashing of the 'più occulta parte dell'esser suo', i.e., his unconscious,[286] in which he has been storing up an extraordinary untouched (because repressed) amount of energy of passion, joy, and, meaningfully, madness.

When the 'signora Dessalle', i.e., the ongoing subject of the protagonist's erotic temptations and real obstacle to his path of divine elevation, suddenly reappears in Piero's life, his 'tormento esistenziale […] tra il desiderio carnale e il confuso, ma sincero bisogno di trascenderlo' (Cavalluzzi 2011: 24) exacerbates. Feeling the need to unburden his soul and disclose his troubles to someone, Piero goes to Don Giuseppe Flores. '[I]o son venuto veramente per parlarle dell'anima mia. […] E parlarle dell'anima mia – Piero confides to don Giuseppe, who looks to us less like a priest and more like a psychotherapist – mi è tanto difficile! Non riesco a comprender bene me stesso' (PMM 52). In what reads like a veritable psychoanalytic session, Piero begins to analyse himself and his past,[287]

---

specific regards to his 'temperamento mistico', Piggioli notes that during his life the writer was subject to veritable mystical experiences, undergoing 'molti degli effetti che l'estasi produce sull'anima del mistico' (Piggioli 10; 14).

[284] 'Mi contenni' (PMM 62) is the expression Piero employs. On this point, Finotti detecs the presence of 'una modernissima dialettica tra pulsione e rimozione da un lato, tra pulsione e sublimazione dall'altro' in both *Piccolo mondo moderno* and *Il santo*' (1997: 148).

[285] The adjective 'difesa' evokes the psychoanalytic defence mechanism for which the mind protects itself through different strategies from drives, usually libido-related, it is not able to cope with.

[286] In Fogazzaro the attribute 'occult' refers to the category of the unconscious. As he writes in a letter to Felicitas Buchner dated 14th of June 1894, 'Parlerò allora di quel mondo occulto dell'anima che ci mostra la esperienza comune di tutti i giorni. Quest'è l'inconscio dell'anima' (Fogazzaro 1940: 314).

[287] Crupi holds that *Piccolo mondo moderno* 'inaugura la tradizione analitica del romanzo novecentesco' (109).

locating his ambivalent tension towards purity and sensuality in his childhood, when he used to experience religious ecstasies as well as utterly unsettling sexual awakenings:[288]

> io che sognavo monasteri e vita religiosa, è incredibile come dai primi anni della fanciullezza, prima di possedere il senso morale, fossi soggetto ad accessi strani di sensualità […] particolarmente tormentosa. Quando il mio senso morale si risvegliò, siccome poi religiosissimo ero già da prima, non Le so dire i miei terrori e le penitenze segrete! Allora, molto molto presto, siccome per un certo tempo dopo ch'ero andato ai Sacramenti avevo delle estasi religiose, dei rapimenti inesprimibili, dei giorni in cui l'idea della menoma impurità mi metteva schifo, cominciai a pensare sul serio che per liberarmi dalle ossessioni dello spirito immondo avrei dovuto entrare in un Ordine religioso. […] (PMM 55-56)

Both his opposite drives are depicted as excessive, disproportionate, and strange – his 'sensualismo' is 'inquieto', his 'ascetismo' is 'morboso' (Atene 177). At the end of the conversation with Don Giuseppe, Piero discloses the violent alternation he is undergoing between the 'passione vera', which is no longer imaginary, that is entering his body and mind and obscuring his 'senso morale', and the 'reazione forte di tutte le resistenze buone, una reazione di fede, di slanci mistici' (PMM 71-72). Resorting to the theoretical frame of this thesis, he reveals that he is inhabited by two conflicting tensions: a drive towards carnal dis-order[289] and a drive towards a superior spiritual order which, as we will see, is bounded to be conversely regarded as disordered by the scientific, religious, and political establishments.

Piero's fears related to such conflict materialise when he visits the monastery of Praglia and finds Jeanne Dessalle there. No longer 'tanto padrone di sè', 'per uno sdoppiamento della sua volontà, per un maligno impulso interiore', he initiates a conversation that is 'il principio della sua disfatta', irremediably placing himself on the 'via scura dell'abbandono di sè alla passione' (PMM 98-100).[290] From the visit to the monastery onwards, the 'occulto lavoro di tante passate tentazioni contro la fede, represse con terrore e non vinte, si manifestava ora, nell'urto della passione, con improvvise rovine' (PMM 109).[291] Repression is attempted but does not work, and that which is repressed returns to the surface with greater impact and damage. Piero continues to curb his 'voglia folle' to hold Jeanne and scream 'al cielo la sua libertà e la sua gioia', to 'comprime[re] nel petto la nuova intensa vita' (PMM

[288] Maironi unpacks 'le proprie angoscie fra sensualità ed estasi mistiche' (Pullini 98). Wittman stresses the importance of Piero's 'mystical ecstasies' 'as a boy on the verge of adolescence' as the 'imaginative origin' of his overall story (140).
[289] In his analysis of Fogazzaro's mysticism, Atene tellingly describes 'concupiscenza' as a 'stato di disordine, di smarrimento spirituale, di asservimento ai sensi' (183), while Morra points out that '[l]a passione di Jeanne è fuori dell'"ordine" cristiano ch'egli [Piero] vuole sia il suo' (Morra 488).
[290] Passion, going back to Bataille's theory of eroticism, is a shattering force, bringing about a 'disfatta' of the self.
[291] Fogazzaro's employment of a proto-psychoanalytic language in this passage is striking.

109),[292] until he is no longer capable of doing so. Greedy and thirsty for Jeanne's love,[293] liberating himself from his 'ritegni religiosi' (PMM 108), he kisses her and starts an adulterous relationship with her.

The 'ebbrezza' that amorous passion, finally consumed, elicits in him[294] is inevitably veiled by a 'lievito amaro' (PMM 176). Jeanne realises this and attributes Piero's 'inquietudini strane' to a 'sentimento di rimorso' deriving from a cultural, religious super-ego Piero is uncapable of getting rid of:

> Si teneva pure sicura che tanti anni di educazione religiosa, di ardente fede cattolica, di pratiche pie avessero impresso a quell'anima una forma che, modificata dalla ragione dentro l'ambito della coscienza, le permaneva intatta nelle inconscie profondità; e attribuiva le inquietudini strane a un vago sentimento di rimorso asceso da quel Profondo, religioso ancora. (PMM 269)

Despite his decision to act on his erotic drives, Piero's religious consciousness, fostered by years of Catholic upbringing, persists 'intatta' among his 'inconscie profondità' and in contact with the latter creates guilt. Remorse and self-reproach are followed by a 'tempestoso ritorno della sua giovinezza credente' and, more specifically, 'un inenarrabile anelare dello spirito a Dio' (PMM 339) which violently strike Piero. He tries to defend himself against the 'violenza di quest'onda', i.e., his mystical impulse, which he perceives as as dangerous and wrong as his sexual impulses: 'egli si era posto in difesa contro se stesso, contro le proprie tendenze mistiche' (PMM 340). Piero senses that his constant state of overexcitement – employing a medical term from contemporary positivist science, his hyperaesthetic temperament – corresponds to a state of disorder and initially tries to keep it at bay, whether it expresses itself through his erotic or religious inclinations. Eventually, by the end of *Piccolo mondo moderno*, the religious drive takes over as a series of mystical epiphanies, partly occasioned by the death of his infirm, devout wife, persuade Piero to end his profane conduct of life and take up what he now believes to be his true fate, i.e., to give himself to God.

The 'profonda trasformazione di sè' (PMM 361) symbolically takes place at the asylum where the dying Elisa is spending the last moments of her life. During a service in her honour, Piero experiences an ecstatic vision by which the five words he longed to see materialising on his bedroom's wall 'da giovinetto, nei miei fervori mistici', now appear in the palm of his hands – 'Magister adest et vocat te' (PMM 423) –, prompting more visions about a future entirely devoted to

[292] Again, 'comprimere' stands for repress.
[293] 'il giovine, ingordo ancora, inasprito nel suo desiderio, rispondeva solamente, fra un bacio e l'altro: "Ho sete, ho sete"' (PMM 152).
[294] He feels to 'scender beato in grembo al Fiume della Vita, ardente e dolce' (PMM 170).

God. The thirst for Jeanne's love is converted into a thirst for God,[295] which the protagonist interestingly relates to his childhood religiosity, advancing the hypothesis that the dismay he feels amid his ecstatic, divine realisations is due to a 'reminiscenza involontaria' (PMM 422) – once again a word taken from the psychoanalytic language Freud was forging at the time when Fogazzaro was writing.[296] Is Piero a hysteric, then?[297] Is his decision to give himself to God prompted by ecstatic visions or nervous disorders?[298]

When Don Giuseppe learns of Piero's allegedly supernatural experiences, even he, an exponent of the religious spheres, encourages him to exercise caution in interpreting the facts of life and, thus, of God:

> tante volte certa presunzione umana trova modo di mescolarsi a movimenti pii dell'anima nostra e ci induce a scambiare per fatti di origine soprannaturale fatti che derivano invece da condizioni anomale del nostro spirito e del nostro corpo […]. (PMM 424)

If Don Giuseppe tends to 'prender le sue visioni per effetti di una sovreccitazione nervosa' (PMM 425), the director of the asylum, wearing the pathologising lens of positivist science, is utterly certain of Piero's medical condition and urges the priest to do something about it. The doctor confesses to Don Giuseppe that he has been studying Piero 'da un pezzo' and has reached the conclusion that he is a 'nervoso per eccellenza' whose 'sistema nervoso profondamente offeso' (PMM 437) derives from his condition of forced celibacy. A proto-Freudian, as Mazzoni suggests, the director attributes Maironi's excessive religious fervours to a 'sexual displacement' (1996: 98). Realising, however, that Piero' involvement with Jeanne has not borne any positive consequence on his nerves, if anything it has worsen his condition, and learning of his ecstatic visions, the doctor refines his diagnose by interpreting his hallucinating states as follow:

> Maironi è andato nella nostra chiesina […] l'inserviente gli ha veduto fare delle stranezze gravissime, gemere, guardar il Crocifisso con una faccia di allucinato. Lei mi dirà che anche i santi facevano cose simili. Io rispetto i santi, non voglio discutere nemmeno santa Teresa; ma

[295] 'ho sete di darmi tutto a Dio' (PMM 423)
[296] Although it is unlikely that Fogazzaro was aware of Freud's studies, he did read Eduard von Hartmann's works on the unconscious, namely the *Philosophy of the Unconscious* (1869) (Finotti 2001: 69, note 9), which was among the works which notably influenced Freud's theories on the unconscious mind. Generally, Mazzoni's remark that *Malombra* and *Il santo* 'entertain intertextual relations with literary and scientific texts such as […] Freud's' (1996: 93) can be applied to *Piccolo mondo moderno* too.
[297] As already mentioned, for Brueuer and Freud '*[h]ysterics suffer mainly from reminiscences*' (7).
[298] As Crupi remarks, in the last pages of *Piccolo mondo moderno* 'Fogazzaro esercita tutto il suo acume psicologico nel tracciare il confine labile che intercorre tra santità e follia, tra la chiamata di Dio e gli effetti di una sovreccitazione nervosa' (125).

> crede Lei che ve ne siano ancora, santi? Ne dubito! *Adesso vi è l'isterismo e vi è la manìa religiosa*. Per me, quelli di stamattina erano atti di manìa religiosa […]. (PMM 437-438)

Piero's diagnosis as a maniac prey to religious hallucinations, the embodiment of a model of nervous disorder,[299] is picked up and further qualified by Jeanne at the beginning of *Il santo*.

In the third volume of Fogazzaro's tetralogy the reader is faced with Piero Maironi's symbolic death and his transformation into Benedetto, a pilgrim initially living off the hospitality of the friars of the monastery of Santa Scolastica, in Subiaco. Jeanne judges severely Piero-Benedetto's decision to put an end to his profane existence and to act on his 'religiosità atavica', his 'misticismo innato' (S 8), dubbing him as a mystical hysteric.[300] In line with the popularised reading of hysteria as an eminently female malady, she connotes Piero-Benedetto's state of nervous disorder as feminine,[301] relating his incapability to exert control on himself to his inept inability to act 'manly':

> Lo giudicava severamente […]. Egli si era mostrato incapace di amare, incapace di agire, irresoluto; femmineo nella mobilità dell'animo. Ecco, lo era stato fino all'ultimo femmineo; femmineo, inetto a esercitare alcuna critica virile sul proprio isterismo mistico. (S 8, 17)[302]

Piero-Benedetto here perfectly fits Hollywood's description of gendered-mysticism, according to which '[m]ysticism tends to be gendered in one of two ways':

> Either mysticism […] is simply associated with femininity or with women and so denigrated, or a distinction is made between good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, non-pathological and pathological forms of mysticism, with the first category in each case associated with masculinity and men and the second with femininity and women (7-8).

Piero-Benedetto falls perfectly into this second class. Meaningfully, both 'inettitudine' and 'femminilità' figure among the several elements that, in the opinion of critic Arturo Colletti, make

[299] A diagnose which is foreshadowed in Fogazzaro's previous novel *Daniele Cortis* (1885), where the protagonist asks himself: 'C'è caso che ammali di misticismo miasmatico con estasi al cervello?' (Fogazzaro 1906: 174).
[300] Let us bear in mind that mysticism is considered by contemporary scientific authorities like Nordau and Lombroso to be a sign of degeneration. According to Troilo, author of *Il misticismo moderno* (1899), contemporary society is 'profondamente […] malata di misticismo' (257) and Fogazzaro is tellingly referred to as 'il perfetto esponente del misticismo moderno, cioè della degenerazione contemporanea' (Migliore 118, note 180). He himself belongs 'di pieno diritto – secondo la nosografia stabilita da Max Nordau […] – alla schiera dei "mistici"' (Ghidetti 1993: 24).
[301] The religious figures who welcome Piero-Benedetto at Santa Monastica and accompany him in his journey to sanctity share his trait of femininity. Don Clemente's eyes, for instance, are described as 'spiranti a un punto dolcezza femminea e maschio fuoco' (S 40), implying a kind of gender ambiguity attached to the figure of the priest.
[302] On Piero's characterisation as inept, Finotti observes that he is among those of Fogazzaro's characters who introduced the 'tematica dell'inettitudine che prepara la stagione novecentesca' (2011: 64). On the presence of the figure of the 'inetto', i.e., the 'topos of masculinity in crisis', in Fogazzaro's work, see also Branca 14, Caesar 109, and Santovetti 159.

Fogazzaro's *Il santo* 'un'intimazione altissima ed una minaccia sfidata alla Chiesa' (quoted in Migliore 118).

Already at the beginning of *Piccolo mondo moderno*, Piero is regarded as 'uno strambo' and someone animated by such 'fede' and 'carità' to be perceived as a 'santo davvero' (PMM 12; 27); in the final parts of the novel, he is considered to be a 'pazzo', a 'clericale' who is 'la crisalide di un anarchico' and 'farà del male' (PMM 254).[303] While in the eyes of the people surrounding him in *Piccolo mondo moderno* Piero's religious oddity makes him potentially capable of spreading evil, in *Il santo* the religious figures close to Piero-Benedetto positively welcome the traits of his singular religious conduct – his longing for purity, his embracing of poverty, his mystical sensitivity producing ecstatic contacts with God – as the attributes of sanctity. And a saint is precisely what they believe is needed for that reform of the Church they so long for. A great part of Fogazzaro's novel centres on the need for a reform of Catholicism, primarily expressed by the lay and 'mistico' (S 44) Giovanni Selva. At the first reunion of what the intransigent abate Marinier, himself among the attendants, calls a 'frammassoneria Cattolica' (S 62), Selva declares:

> siamo parecchi cattolici, in Italia e fuori d'Italia, ecclesiastici e laici, che desideriamo una riforma della Chiesa. La desideriamo senza ribellioni, operata dall'autorità legittima. Desideriamo riforme dell'insegnamento religioso, riforme del culto, riforme della disciplina del clero, riforme anche nel supremo governo della Chiesa. (S 53)

This reform to be conducted within the legitimate authority of the Church, Selva subsequently suggests, could use a Saint. Marinier's prophetic reaction to Selva's suggestion is: 'Se lo aveste, il vostro Santo sarebbe subito ammonito dalla questura o spedito in China dalla Chiesa' (S 76). His belief is that a saint would not serve for their cause of a reform and would only cause chaos and disorder, kindling something of a rebellion – precisely the rebellion Selva's group wants to avoid – and prompting both the political and religious authorities to emarginate the saint. The risk of insubordination is confirmed by padre Omobono Ravasio, another intransigent member of the clergy, who talks of Selva as a 'falso cattolico' and of the above-mentioned reunion as a 'conciliabolo di altri insetti malefici come lui', but also assures that 'c'è della brava gente che scoverà qualche eretico anche in Paradiso' (S 99). The saint and heretic predicted in Selva, Marinier, and Ravasio's words is of course Piero-Benedetto.

[303] The association of Piero with anarchy is advanced by Forbes Leith in his reception of *Il santo*, where everything, he writes, 'sort de Babel, où toutes les langues se confondent dans l'irrémédiable anarchie' (1906a: 20): 'Catholicisme ou anarchie – he upholds –, il n'y a pas de milieu' (1906b: 10).

The identification is made explicit by Don Clemente who, following Selva's idea, begins to believe in and hope for his pupil Piero-Benedetto's potential sanctity and his transformation into

> un grande operaio del Vangelo; non un operaio comune, un predicatore, un confessore, bensì un operaio straordinario; non un soldato dell'esercito regolare, impedito dall'uniforme e dalla disciplina, bensì un libero cavaliere dello Spirito Santo (S 109).[304]

Even the cautious Don Clemente seems to wish for an extra-ordinary, rather irregular, undisciplined modern saint, capable of inducing a reform of the Church and finding a remedy to its evils by shaking its established order. In *Piccolo mondo moderno* Piero Maironi himself accuses the Catholic Church of representing an obsolete and corrupted system,[305] in need of a saint:

> da tutta intera la Chiesa cattolica si va ritirando la vita, […] tutto vi è antiquato, dalla parola del Vaticano a quella dell'ultimo cappellano di campagna! Una volta ho pensato: se venisse un altro San Francesco! Se venisse un altro Sant'Agostino! (PMM 165)

As we have read, despite the many references to a reform to be carried out within the Church's authority, the potential saint-messiah is depicted as a rather anti-systemic, anti-institutional figure. A 'libero cavaliere dello Spirito Santo', he is animated by a spirituality that is free from the Church, its oppressive dogmas, and the obsolete modalities with which it expresses and spread faith, and in fact stands as opposed to the latter, seeking to challenge the religious *ancien regime* they nurture. What marks this modernising, anti-institutional renovation is mysticism.[306]

Already at the beginning of the novel, when he is living among the friars of Santa Scolastica, the protagonist, endowed with a growing 'fervore ascetico' and 'certi lumi nuovi che gli scaturivano' (S 106), is seen to become 'più smunto, più esangue del consueto', affected by a 'salute alquanto logora' which he does not seem to care for: 'Il mio corpo', he tells 'umile e ardente' to a worried don Clemente, 'è infinitamente lontano! Abbia solo paura che io non faccia il possible per conoscere la Volontà Divina!' (S 96). The path to God, Piero-Benedetto suggests, involves a gradual self-

[304] The expression echoes remarkably Serao's 'cavaliere dello Spirito' (in Fogazzaro 1901: 107).
[305] He condemns its 'comune gretto cattolicismo', 'pauroso della ragione, schiavo in tutto dell'autorità dispotica deificata, tanto aspro a chi ne sta fuori, tanto impastoiato negl'interessi terreni, antiquato nello spirito come nel linguaggio' (PMM 358)
[306] Claiming 'la volontà di lasciare al credente una zona di autogestione nel privato e nel politico', with *Il santo* Fogazzaro launches a 'programma di ammodernamento della Chiesa ponendo il misticismo al centro della prassi religiosa' (Madrignani 59).

effacement of his bodily life and drives.[307] The conflict between erotic and religious impulses that characterises *Piccolo mondo moderno* returns in *Il santo*, where it finds a theoretic assessment in the work on Christian morality which Giovanni Selva is undertaking. In the chapter devoted to 'Purità', indirectly replying to Piero's accusation of a God that allows the mortification of the flesh in contrast with Nature's laws, Selva addresses 'il principio generale che la rinuncia al piacere corporeo per una soddisfazione di ordine superiore significa sforzo della specie verso una superiore forma di esistenza':

> Avrebbe quindi esaminato il fatto straordinario di quegl'individui umani che agli stimoli del piacere corporeo […] contrappongono energie di rinuncia più forti ancora, senz'altro obbietto che di onorare la Divinità. […] Inconscii collaboratori di Colui che governa l'Universo, gli eroi della rinuncia suprema […] incarnano in fatto, giusta il Divino Disegno, la energia progressiva della specie […]; onde la purità loro è perfezione umana, è altezza in cui la natura nostra culmina e tocca i nebulosi principii d'una ignota natura sovrumana. (S 46-47)

The obliteration of bodily, erotic pleasure, described as a 'fatto straordinario', a 'rinuncia suprema', allows for an enhancement of human nature that leads us to reach and touch the superhuman nature of God. What is striking is that those succeeding in opposing the 'stimoli del piacere corporeo' by means of 'energie di rinuncia più forti ancora' are regarded as embodying the 'energia progressiva della specie'. That is, the religious perspective reverses Freud's theorisation of life drive as a force coinciding with sexual instincts by holding sexual abstinence as a life-producing force that propagates the species.[308] Purity, Selva claims, is a fundamental step in the process of divine ascent. In order to reach God, one has to transcend bodily impulses and pleasures. Only by effacing the possibility of erotic ecstasy can divine pleasure, i.e., religious ecstasy, be attained. This is exactly what happens to Piero-Benedetto during his 'dark night of the soul', i.e., the spiritual crisis the soul undergoes before rejoicing in mystical union with God.[309]

The protagonist's dark night takes place on a desert mount at the Sacro Speco. There the Devil entices Piero-Benedetto with the fictious image of Jeanne, faced with which he is one step away from abandoning himself to the devilish temptation. He strenuously tries to fight off the vision of Jeanne by repressing it and replacing it with the image of 'i chiostri, le celle, le grandi croci presso i giacigli dei monaci, il volto serafico del suo Maestro addormentato':

---

[307] The 'trasfigurato' Piero-Benedetto undertakes a 'percorso verso la perdita dell'identità fisica', for which the 'indebolimento del corpo è viatico ad una divinizzazione prossima all'incorporeo e ad un afflato panteistico' (Madrignani 63).

[308] This perspective parallels the dynamic at work in Serao's *Cuore infermo*: Beatrice imposes frigidity upon herself as a means of self-preservation.

[309] The experience has been notably recounted by Saint John of the Cross, a model which Fogazzaro clearly looks to.

> Durò nello sforzo quanto potè, reprimendosi dentro con angoscia un balenar frequente dell'obliquo cappello piumato e del viso pallido, fino a che i baleni gli si affiochirono, gli si perdettero giù nelle profondità inconscie dell'anima (S 115-116).

Once again resorting to psychoanalytic vernacular, Fogazzaro effectively describes the mechanism of repression and displacement of Piero-Benedetto's impulses and their redirection from Jeanne's 'viso pallido' to the 'volto serafico' of his spiritual maestro. With great anguish, the hero confines the images of profane love to the 'profondità inconscie dell'anima' (successfully carrying out the process of repression) and manages to cast-off Satan's lures.

The powerful rejection of Evil, i.e., of the erotic drive, provokes a loss of consciousness coinciding with what the reader soon learns to be the ecstatic contact of Piero-Benedetto's soul with God:

> Benedetto levò al cielo il viso e le mani congiunte, adorando, come poté, con l'ultimo lume della offuscata coscienza, vacillò, allargò le braccia, afferrò l'aria, piegò lentamente all'indietro, stramazzò riverso sulla china, giacque senza moto.
> […] L'anima dovette chiudersi nel contatto centrale con l'Essere senza tempo e senza spazio, perché Benedetto, al primo ritorno della coscienza, non ebbe senso né del luogo né dell'ora. (S 120)

The mystical contact of the soul with the supernatural Being is a sweet bewilderment ('smarrimento') producing an infinite and effusive pleasure, acting through 'minuti titillamenti', similar and yet so different from the titillations experienced during profane intercourse:

> Sentiva una levità strana delle membra, una spossatezza fisica piacevole, una infinita dolcezza interna; prima sul viso, poi sulle mani tanti minuti titillamenti come di animati atomi amorosi dell'aria […]. Si rizzò a sedere, guardò smarrito ma in pace; dimentico del dove e del quando, ma tanto in pace, tanto contento della quieta fonte interna di un indistinto amore che gli fluiva in tutti i vasi della vita […]. (S 120-121)

The ultimate triumph over the seductions of the flesh has led to mystical ecstasy.[310] Fogazzaro's hero has earned his divine reward and is now pervaded by God's presence, taking pleasure in a rapture that dispels all uncertainties and doubts:

[310] In *Cuore infermo* the opposite happens. Beatrice too experiences a conflict between the embracing of her instinctual drives and her will, veritable life-drive, to reject and suppress them. While she resolves this conflict by welcoming her

> Benedetto sentiva un Divino confuso alla creatura, un'ascosa essenza di paradiso. […] E così sommerso nel mare della paradisiaca dolcezza […] godeva non senza un vago desiderio che tanta soavità fosse conosciuta dalla gente che non crede, dalla gente che non ama. Nel declinare del rapimento gli ritornarono a mente i perché della presenza sua sul monte deserto nelle tenebre della notte, e le incertezze del domani, e Jeanne, e l'esilio dal monastero. Ma ora incertezze e dubbi erano indifferenti all'anima sua […]. Incertezze, dubbi, ricordi della mistica Visione gli si disciolsero nel profondo abbandono alla Divina Volontà […]. (S 121-122)

The 'abbandono all'invito di quel volto', i.e., Jeanne's face, is replaced by the 'abbandono alla Divina Volontà', following the ultimate reconversion of profane love into divine love. Ecstasy completes and confirms Piero-Benedetto's liberation from passion, his fitness to be a saint, his ultimate alignment with spiritual ecstatic dis-order.[311]

The protagonist's transfiguration in il Santo[312] is perceived as mysterious, occult. Don Clemente detects a 'spiritualità occulta' (S 143) in him, which is soon accompanied by a popularising sanctification that turns him more into a *santone* than a *santo*. Belief that he is capable of operating 'guarigioni miracolose' (S 193) starts spreading in the town of Jenne, where everyone is waiting for his arrival. The local people are transfigured by his 'fascino inesprimibile' full of 'devozione mistica', they are enraptured by him.[313] Women, especially, are 'penetrate da una suggestione vicendevole' (S 217). Ecstasy, or, as the local doctor suggests, 'psicopatia mistica' (S 201), is contagious. Significantly, Jenne's residents reveal to prefer the mystical, heterodox religiosity of this preacher-magnetiser[314] to the orthodox one embodied by the Church: 'Venga il Santo! Parli il Santo! Via il prete! Via!', 'Via voi, via!' (S 216).

The clerical authorities are increasingly alarmed by the situation. If the town's archpriest believes that Piero-Benedetto 'era veramente un pio cristiano ma che discorreva troppo di religione alla gente e che i suoi discorsi avevano qualche volta un certo sapore di quietismo[315] e di razionalismo', others more disapprovingly accuse him 'di tenere discorsi non perfettamente ortodossi, di spacciarsi per taumaturgo e di vestire senza diritto un abito religioso che rendeva gravissimo lo

instinctual self, i.e., erotic ecstasy, Piero-Benedetto opts for the other path and acts on a different kind of life-drive which leads him to mystical ecstasy.

[311] In Beatrice's case, ecstasy coincides with the liberation *of* passion. The dynamics are antithetical but specular in that they are both prompted by a reaction to an order of existence which the protagonists no longer want to identify with. Acting on their will to go beyond this obsolete order, their recreate their new and liberated ecstatic dis-order.

[312] He is 'trasfigurato' (S 143, 178) and can now be addressed as il Santo, as ratified by the first person he encounters after his dark night of the soul.

[313] The narrator recounts 'il rapimento di tante facce lagrimose volte a una sola' (S 218).

[314] In his power of suggestion, the Santo resembles a magnetiser.

[315] The term refers to a complex of mystical doctrines centring on divine contemplation and abandonment to God.

scandalo', 'di esercitare a profitto delle sue idee non tanto ortodosse un potere diabolico' (S 203). Informed of the Santo's charges of thaumaturgy, quietism, rationalism, and diabolism, the Vatican determines to address 'tale scandalo' and prevent 'quell'eretico' (S 230) from furtherly exerting his influence. The protagonist's prodigious, charismatic, occult[316] religiosity is held by the Church as scandalous, heretical, deviant from its doctrines. The kernel of il Santo's 'spiritualità occulta', to use Don Clemente's words, and main reason underlying the Church's reaction against him, is his mysticism.[317] Il Santo embodies a different order of spirituality that does not need the intermediary role of the Church's dogmatic order, solely responding to a mystical vocation directly leading the soul to the ecstatic communion with God.

The protagonist himself points to the existence of this twofold religious register in a speech which offers a crucial key to the understanding of the novel, of Fogazzaro's idea of spirituality, and of the overall theoretical framework on my thesis:

> Intendetemi bene. Io non giudico la gerarchia, io riconosco e onoro l'autorità della gerarchia, io dico unicamente che la Chiesa non è la gerarchia sola. Udite un'altra similitudine. Vi ha nei pensieri di ciascun uomo una specie di gerarchia. Prendete un uomo giusto. Certe idee, certi propositi sono in lui pensieri dominanti, governano la sua vita, e sono questi: compiere il dovere religioso, il dovere morale, il dovere civile. Egli ha dei varii doveri il concetto tradizionale che gliene fu appreso. Ma poi questa gerarchia d'idee ferme con impero non è tutto l'uomo. Sotto di essa vi è in lui una moltitudine di altre idee, una moltitudine di pensieri che continuamente si muovono e si modificano per le impressioni e l'esperienza della vita. E sotto questi pensieri vi ha un'altra regione dell'anima, vi ha l'Inconscio dove facoltà occulte lavorano un lavoro occulto, dove avvengono i contatti mistici con Dio. Le idee dominanti esercitano autorità sul volere dell'uomo giusto, ma tutto l'altro mondo del suo pensiero ha pure una importanza immensa perchè attinge continuamente alla Verità con l'esperienza del reale nell'esterno, con l'esperienza del Divino nell'interno, e quindi tende a rettificare le idee superiori, le idee dominanti in quanto il loro elemento tradizionale non è adeguato al Vero; è per esse una perenne fonte di fresca vita che le rinnova, una sorgente di autorità legittima fondata sulla natura delle cose, sul valore delle idee, più che sui decreti degli uomini. La Chiesa è tutto l'uomo, non un solo gruppo d'idee eminenti e dominanti; la Chiesa è la gerarchia con i suoi concetti tradizionali ed è il laicato con il suo continuo attingere alla realtà, con il suo continuo reagire sulla tradizione; la Chiesa è la

[316] A 'circolo magico' (S 279) is said to be surrounding il Santo and he is also approached by an English noblewoman, famous for her 'misticismo teosofico e cristiano', who asks him to help her in her mission of reforming Catholicism, telling him that 'lo spirito della contessa Blawatzky' (S 261-262) herself has encouraged her to come to him. As pointed out in Part 1, the Church strictly condemned occult beliefs and practices like Theosophy.

[317] 'La parola-chiave è "mistico"', Madrignani aptly observes (61).

> teologia ufficiale ed è il tesoro inesausto della Verità divina che reagisce sulla teologia ufficiale […]. (S 292-293)

In this striking passage Fogazzaro, speaking through the protagonist's voice,[318] resorts to a remarkable simile superimposing two levels of interpretation: one related to religiosity (in a historical-cultural perspective) and the other to the human mind (in an individual perspective). The Church's hierarchy, he suggests, resembles the mind's hierarchy. Just as the latter presents different layers of thoughts, so does the former involve different kinds of religiosity. Specifically, the human mind is headed by a stratum of 'pensieri dominanti' corresponding to religious, moral, and civil duty, and exerting a firm authority upon the individual. Under this ensemble of 'idee ferme', a class of other ideas, ever moving and changeable, is to be found, influenced by daily life's impressions. Finally, an even lower layer is occupied by a region of the soul characterised by an occult working of occult faculties, where the 'Inconscio' resides and where 'contatti mistici con Dio' take place. Anticipating the Freudian partition between superego, ego, and id, Fogazzaro makes the latter the home of a religious unconscious which fosters the ecstatic contacts with God, directly drawing on the Truth and the Divine. Finotti aptly discerns in Fogazzaro the existence of an 'inconscio soggettivo' in communication 'con una dimensione metafisica, demoniaca o divina' (1999: 147),[319] discovering 'la commistione tra le profondità mistiche della fede e quei moti segreti della psiche che Freud, negli stessi anni, si accingeva a indagare' (2011: 58). The specific dimension where these secret, unconscious drives emerge is the ecstatic one. The unconscious manifests itself in ecstasy. In il Santo's opinion, the 'altro mondo del […] pensiero' (the unconscious one) bears enormous importance since it directly draws on the Truth and the Divine, whereas the first authoritative layer of the mind is conditioned by a traditionality that is not always in line with what is True. The Church, which in the extract stands as a synecdoche for overall religiosity, corresponds to the entire human mind, that is, not only the official theology with its dominant ideas and traditional concepts, but also the 'inesausto tesoro' of divine Truth found in religious laity ever drawing on reality and shaped in reaction to the official clerical authority. The rapture of the soul in direct communication with God stands at the core of this religious laity embodied by il Santo. The experience of mystical ecstasy defines an alternative order of religious practice that resides not upon the Church's rigid dogmas but the free, floating stream of individual unconsciousness.

[318] As Crupi indicates, 'i molti discorsi di Benedetto […], costituendo i veri centri di una più o meno esplicita propaganda ideologica, assumono la funzione di veicolare le idee religiose dell'autore' (189).
[319] In Fogazzaro, Nay writes, '[l]'inconscio […] innalza l'uomo e lo mette a contatto con una realtà soprannaturale, qual'è Dio' (324).

By tackling the category of the unconscious through his hero's speech, Fogazzaro not only shows that he is well informed about the latest studies in the field of contemporary psychology,[320] but even resorts to that category in order to discuss mystical experiences in revolutionary lay terms: ecstasy does not descend from the Church, at some level not even from God, but from the self's unconscious.[321] As Scartozzi observes, '[a]ll'eterna scaturigine si può accedere per 'inconscio conoscere' […], affiancando alla via maestra un'altra più personale (rivelazione cosciente/universale e *sub*-cosciente/mistica)' (472).[322] The religiosity the writer advocates involves a modern, free, unconscious-driven spirituality, a spirituality 'sub-cosciente/mistica', which places the believer's subjectivity at the centre and undertakes the crucial task of revitalising the dry currents of Church-led religion with 'sorgenti di acqua viva'. The liquid metaphor brings us back to Serao's open letter and her proposal to appoint Fogazzaro the leader of a new movement 'spiritualista'. The Neapolitan writer resorts to the same image il Santo employs: the mission of the movement she sponsors is to encourage each of us to seek 'nuovamente le sorgenti disseccate della sua vita interna e trovi modo di farle ripullulare' (Serao in Fogazzaro 1901: 110-111). Extending this situation of stagnation from the single individual to the whole body of the Church, this is also what il Santo strives to do, but his mission is firmly rejected by the Church.

The issue of a modernising reform that can heal the 'Chiesa […] inferma' is brought up by the hero in his audience with the Pope, 'il momento più scandaloso del romanzo', 'una scena fra le più ambiziose e "tremende" per uno scrittore cattolico' (Madrignani 60). Il Santo accuses the Vatican of being pervaded by '[q]uattro spiriti maligni': 'lo spirito di menzogna', which prompts the Church to persecute all non-normative believers as heretics;[323] 'lo spirito di dominazione del clero', by which priests prevent the direct communication of the souls with God imposing their intermediary role of directors of the conscience as unreplaceable; 'lo spirito di avarizia', making the Church an institution characterised by greediness and cupidity instead of parsimony and frugality; finally, 'lo spirito

[320] In 1895 Fogazzaro even devoted an entire conference, *Per una nuova scienza*, to the exploration of depth psychology. Criticising established positivist scientists like Charcot, and addressing a series of phenomena 'taken from the field of psychology and, more specifically, from the study of hysteria and hypnosis' (Mazzoni 1996: 94), he expressed the need for a scientific investigation of 'i poteri latenti dell'uomo, gli aspetti ancora inesplorati della coscienza e i fenomeni preternaturali' (Pasi 236), i.e., all those 'esperienze delle quali il modello razionalistico non riesca a dar conto' (Finotti 1999: 143-144). The unconscious is at the centre of these experiences and Fogazzaro refers to it in the following terms: 'Vi ha dunque una parte del nostro essere di cui non abbiamo coscienza? Sì certo […]. Quanto cumulo di cose passate nelle profondità inconscie della nostra mente!' (1897: 430 272).

[321] Tellingly, for Fogazzaro, the unconscious not only leads to God and mystical ecstasy but also to creative frenzy: 'Le ispirazioni creatrici non vengono a noi artisti da profondità inesplorate della coscienza?' (Fogazzaro 1897: 430). In *Il dolore nell'arte* he upholds that Art 'attinge le proprie ispirazioni all'inconscio' (quoted in Cavalluzzi 189). On the 'profound affinity between artistic and mystical experiences' in Fogazzaro, his 'literary mysticism', see Santovetti (165, note 12).

[322] Reflecting on Benedetto's mysticism, Mazzoni holds: 'One could say […] that mysticism is postulated as the unconscious of Catholicism' (1996: 101).

[323] On this point, Marangon notes that 'il Fogazzaro sembra imputare l'involuzione culturale del clero soprattutto alla compressione della legittima libertà di coscienza e di parola' (2001: 114).

d'immobilità', which makes the representatives of the clergy stand as 'idolatri del passato' who 'tutto vorrebbero immutabile nella Chiesa' (S 336-342). The Pope shows an understanding attitude towards il Santo, but determinedly refuses to entertain the idea of a reform that might be necessary but is unfeasible.[324] Even though il Santo posits his idea of religion within the bosom of the Church, sponsoring a reform, not a rebellion, his mission cannot possibly be received with favour by the religious establishment. Placing itself 'antistoricamente, su di un piano mistico', *Il santo*, and its hero, 'postula una critica radicale e metastorica dell'elemento nozionale-istituzionale della Chiesa' (Ranchetti 128),[325] involving a 'tortuosa insubordinazione alle chiusure e al conformismo' (65) of Church-led religion. Going back to the protagonist's feminised connotations, it is not without significance that il Santo enjoys some of the traits that feminist philosophers such as de Beauvoir, Irigaray, and Cixous attribute to female mystics and their disruptive ecstatic phenomena. As I have remarked in Part 1, experiences of female mysticism hold a disruptive power that, by operating within the dominant structures of the Church, dangerously undermines them from within. Cixous, who significantly juxtaposes mysticism and hysteria, places both 'within an opposition between repressive and oppressive dominant social structures (including religion) and desire', claiming that the mystical-hysterical experience 'unleashes a liberating force that works against the conservative and rigidifying power of religious belief and practice' (Hollywood 4). So does il Santo's mystical/hysterical experience. Conscious of the disruptive, radical, and anti-institutional critique inherent in the protagonist' mission, the Church decides that 'quel diavolo di razionalista mistico' (S 412), 'quel perturbatore' (Caronti 107) intent on upsetting the Vatican's established order by means of his disordered mind,[326] must be firmly suppressed.

The arrival in Rome of this 'agitatore religioso' (S 299), this instigator of religious ecstatic dis-order so similar to David Lazzaretti,[327] occasions an alliance of the clerical and governmental authorities, the clergy seeking 'l'aiuto del braccio secolare contro Benedetto, l'aiuto dei carabinieri e dei giudici' (S 309).[328] His arrest by the police provokes the upheaval of the 'popolo […] riscaldato' (S 396) who invokes his liberation. Indicted by the 'autorità giudiziaria', il Santo should face a legal trial, but since 'il Governo non può aver piacere che si faccia un processo scandaloso […] che

[324] Interestingly, just like Don Clemente, the Pope appears to be questioning the hero's alleged ecstatic visions: 'Sai – he advises il Santo – che si possono avere, che si sono avute visioni profetiche, non dico per opera di spiriti maligni, […] ma insomma per effetto di forze occulte, forze insite alla natura umana, le quali, a ogni modo, non hanno che fare colla santità' (S 331).
[325] Quoted in Crupi 165, note 14.
[326] A mind that, going back to il Santo's speech, is driven by its unconscious. Listening to the unconscious and acting on it – this is the assumption that can be drawn – is dangerous and can only bring about disorders.
[327] The association of the protagonist with Lazzaretti, which leaves no reference in contemporary studies on Fogazzaro, was suggested in the years immediately following Fogazzaro's death. See Donadoni's contribution dating 1913 (39) and the scholarly volume written in honour of Fogazzaro's death in 1914 (87).
[328] As Scartozzi writes, '[è] così concretizzata una strana alleanza […] fra trono e altare vòlta a spegnere la minaccia eretica-sovversiva' (476).

potrebbe poi anche provocare dei disordini', the state official forcibly advises him to stipulate a pact with the authorities by which he can avoid the trial but has to immediately leave Rome, better even Italy. The protagonist does not give in, requiring the intervention of the State Secretary and the Minister of the Interior. But Fogazzaro's hero does not yield to them either.

Il Santo manages to hide from the authorities by finding protection in the house of a professor through Jeanne's help. There, his health ruinously damaged, he spends the last moments of his life, invoking his self-annihilation as the mean to permanently join God. Even his death is ecstatic. Moving away from his bodily, mortal self, he abandons himself 'a una dolcezza che lo invadeva, alla dolcezza di non sentirsi quasi più il corpo e di sentirsi Dio nell'anima, tanto vicino e tenero e ardente' (S 448). His will is to 'gettarsi, anima e coscienza, in seno al Padre, di aderire a Lui con l'intero essere proprio, di annientarsi in esso' (S 453). '[T]rasfigurato nella mistica tensione dell'anima', il Santo gives himself 'alla Verità Divina' 'con tale violenza di desiderio da spezzarsi, quasi, nel palpito' (S 456). The violent desire of a rapturous self-shattering,[329] a sort of religious death-drive, is soon followed by the protagonist's blessed and blissful death.[330] A testimony to the great importance borne by the ecstatic theme, the ultimate deadly ecstasy experienced by il Santo stands as the proof that, whatever resistance the authorities might oppose, they cannot possibly succeed in repressing the hero's occult spirituality – his ecstatic, dis-ordered, unconscious-driven religion.

Just a year after its publication, on the 4th of April 1906, *Il santo* was included in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.[331] The fact that Fogazzaro delivered his notion of a mystical and unconscious-driven spirituality in a fictional form did not protect him from the critiques of the religious authorities. The reception of the novel split the community of believers. The Church and many of its allies considered the book to be a threat to Catholic orthodoxy and that it needed to be strictly condemned. For his mysticism and project to reform the Catholic world, il Santo (and concealed behind him Fogazzaro) was regarded as the promoter of a model of religious disorder, almost anarchy, that stood in conflict with the Church's norms and dogma. The oratorian Arturo Colletti convicted Fogazzaro's work as a text permeated by 'un pensiero cattolico intriso di eterodossia; un'identificazione non ortodossa dell'ideale religioso', and providing the example of a saint whose physiognomy is marked by 'instabilità nervosa, sensibilità esagerata, inettitudine, femminilità, incostanza, isteria mistica, rapimenti ed estasi religiose di stampo sensuale, che ne facevano esempi mirabili di psicopatia cristiana' (quoted in Migliore 117-118). A positive reception

[329] Apropos of ecstatic shatterings, Finotti claims: 'In ambito letterario senza Fogazzaro sarebbe difficile immaginare scrittori […] capaci di rappresentare le profondità fluide dell'anima, tra slanci idealisti e dissoluzioni dell'io' (2011: 59).
[330] This death is echoed by some verses quoted in the fourth and last volume of the Maironi saga, *Leila* (1910): 'In estasi spasimando | Contenta allora morrò' (Fogazzaro 1911: 28).
[331] The novel prompted a veritable 'caso Fogazzaro', perceived as 'un momento rilevante della vita italiana, e non soltanto di quella letteraria' (Morra 564).

of the novel came from the Benedictine spheres of Subiaco. Barnabites as well seemed to approve of the novel. Giovanni Semeria, in particular, praised *Il santo* and pointed to the inconsistency of the allegations that were being made against the protagonist's alleged abnormality. His defense of Fogazzaro's book seems to be a reply to Colletti's charges:

> E veramente, signori miei, io non nego che il Santo faccia in tutto il romanzo, faccia in complesso, la figura d'un uomo strano e dirò anche anormale… […] Ma, i Santi sono stati, più o meno tutti così […]. Che significa in realtà anormale? […] Anormale è ciò che non è normale – ma la norma chi la fa? […] Il Santo non è altro che l'*eroe* della vita religiosa; l'eroe, cioè l'uomo che non si contenta di viverla la vita religiosa come i più, in modo discreto, ragionevole, a dosi omeopatiche, la vuole vivere, la vive in un modo intenso, sublime, folle. […] Questi caratteri ci sono nel Santo del romanzo come ci furono e ci saranno sempre nei Santi della realtà – e il nostro compito d'apologeti non è di negarli, a dispetto della realtà, in omaggio a non so qual tipo ideale nostro di santità ben equilibrata, pacifica, filistea […]. (Semeria 68-71)

A 'santità ben equilibrata', which expressed itself under the aegis of an authority that could ensure its pacific placement within the context of an orthodox religious order, was undoubtedly what the Church wanted. The fact that when the book came out Fogazzaro was 'salutato da più parti come il vero leader del movimento di riforma cattolica' fostered by modernism, which 'in quegli anni incubava la fase di più acuto conflitto con la Chiesa di Roma' (Marangon 1999: 69),[332] placed *Il santo* precisely outside the clerical orthodox order and prompted the sacred Index Congregation to publicly condemn it as a text full of 'errori dottrinali' and 'tendenze pericolose'.[333]

Ever watchful of keeping his religious beliefs within the bosom and the favour of the Church's authority, Fogazzaro himself was concerned about the reception of his book.[334] The author's preoccupation is prophetically foreshadowed in the novel when the protagonist begs the Pope 'di non permettere che sieno posti all'Indice i libri di Giovanni Selva' (S 343). Even before the novel came out, the writer provided a sort of *excusatio non petita* by declaring in an interview led by Eugenio Cecchi that his book was 'un'opera di fede e di fede ortodossa'; 'Chi aspetta nel mio protagonista un eresiarca – he maintained – s'inganna molto' (Fogazzaro 1860: 572).[335] But the novel did end up in

[332] In 1907 the Church would issue the *Lamentabili sane exitu* and *Pascendi dominici gregis*, convicting the movement as the 'synthesis of all heresies'.
[333] From *Archivio della S. Congregazione per la Dottrina della Fede*, fondo *Congregazione dell'Indice, Protocolli* 1906-07, n.52, 'voto' del consultore p. Lorenzo Janssens OSB, quoted in Marangon 1999: 69. As Atene remarks, '[l]a Chiesa doveva condannare il *Santo* per quelle stesse ragioni per cui fu condannato il Modernismo' (241).
[334] In a letter to monsignor Bonomelli, he had already asked himself with reference to *Piccolo mondo moderno*: 'avrò fatto io opera buona?' (quoted in Gallarati-Scotti 321).
[335] The interview appeared in *Il Giornale d'Italia* on the 28th of November 1904.

the *Index* and Fogazzaro's decision to publicly submit to the religious authority on that occasion[336] does not undo or invalidate the ideas he expressed in a book that, in his own words, had to 'dire le cose che più mi stanno a cuore, essere quasi il suggello dell'intera opera mia' (1860: 491, note 1),[337] 'la corona del mio edificio letterario, l'ultima e maggior mia battaglia per quel rinnovamento religioso ortodosso che s'impone' (quoted in Ingargiola 118).

Fogazzaro employed the voice of Piero-Benedetto-il Santo to say that which he could not say elsewhere, drawing his 'autobiografia "letterale"' but also 'la propria autobiografia ideale' (Crupi 163).[338] Despite subsequently negating them under the pressure of his clerical super-ego, Fogazzaro meant the words he had written in his novels. Through il Santo's ecstatic experience he gave voice to a new spiritual order[339] grounded on the necessity to place the believer's deep and occult subjectivity at the centre of religious discourse,[340] letting divine truth and inner truth coincide and be revealed in moments of ecstatic union with God and each's unconscious self.[341] What the writer evokes is a form of spirituality profoundly linked to the self's inner drives (and less to the Church's authority) and revolving around ecstatic experiences happening within the disordered realm of the unconscious. As a public figure, the writer from Vicenza reacts to the established order by submitting himself to it. As the alter-ego of his fictional hero, he reacts by overpowering that order, making his hero everlastingly embrace the ecstatic dis-order that is inherent to his occult spirituality. In doing so, Fogazzaro left us the unundoable testimony of the alternative order of spirituality he wished to purport while strenuously attempting to negotiate the tensions between his will to act in conformity with Catholic orthodoxy and his non normative spiritual beliefs – between religious dogmatisms and spiritual, ecstatic dis-orders.

---

[336] On the 18th of April 1906, Fogazzaro published an open letter in the *Avvenire d'Italia* in which he explicitly declared that 'come cattolico, intendeva sottomettersi al decreto di condanna della congregazione romana, a cui prestava la più sincera obbedienza' (Caronti 155). His only desire, he claimed, was to 'renovate in harmony with the modern way of thinking' but 'always under the legitimate authority' (letter dated 26th of November 1909, translated and quoted by Santovetti 165, note 8).

[337] Letter to Onorato Fava, dated 1st of June 1903.

[338] Indeed, 'Pietro Maironi è personaggio foggiato a imagine e somiglianza del suo autore' (*Per Antonio Fogazzaro* 86); he is 'creato a sua immagine' (Piggioli 44). At the same time, as Pullini points out, through his hero the writer 'sogna una propria sublimazione mistica' (107).

[339] This order must be coupled with the 'nuova scienza' he advocated, open to the occult, unconscious world and freed from the lens of the exceedingly materialistic and pathologising positivistic approach. On this matter, Comoy-Fusaro states that Fogazzaro 'insorse contro' the 'indebita assimilazione' represented by the scientists' tendency to 'annoverare alcune manifestazioni di fede religiosa tra i fenomeni nevrotici', and that he even 'ridicolizza i personaggi medici' (100-101).

[340] Finotti talks of a 'spiritualismo rinnovato e riportato nel cuore del soggetto' (1997: 148). Marangon refers to how Fogazzaro expressed 'un bisogno profondo di ridire l'esperienza con il Divino in termini nuovi, talora radicalmente soggettivi, comunque oltre il positivismo e insieme al di fuori delle forme codificate dalla tradizione cattolica ufficiale' (2001: 116).

[341] Through this Fogazzaro attained that 'poetica narrativa' he had advocated in *Dell'avvenire del romanzo in Italia* (1872), which intersecting 'inconscio mistico e inconscio soggettivo', 'mirava […] ad una leonardesca, chiaroscurale evocazione dell'ombra' (Finotti 1999: 134).

9. Occult, Ecstatic Dis-order in Capuana's Short Stories: Unveiling the *Oltre* that is 'fuori di noi e dentro di noi'

According to a long-established literary tradition, Luigi Capuana is one of the leading exponents of Verismo, a literary movement grounded in positivist culture, based on the objective reproduction of reality and the exploration of the more tangible aspects of life (social, economic, politic), and influenced by the French literary movement of Naturalism. The focus on the more veristic features of Capuana's work has prevented for years the exploration of the other, pivotal, aspect of his production concerning the occult.[342] Prompted by Cigliana's inestimable publication of *Mondo occulto* (1995) – a collection of the Sicilian writer's contributions on the occult, including the long-thought unobtainable *Spiritismo?* –, recent scholarship has brought to the surface the occult aspects of Capuana's work, both fictional and non-fictional, reassessing his exclusive alignment with Verism. Given this other aspect of his production, it is no surprise that when critic Ugo Ojetti interviewed the Sicilian author in 1894, asking him about the 'misticismo' that seemed to be pervading 'come un fluido' contemporary Italian art and literature as a reaction to the excessive realism (the 'abusi del vero') brought about by Naturalism (190-191),[343] Capuana's answer was:

> Rispondo accettando anche l'opera dei neomistici. È fatale. Io, vede, da studente ero ateo, adesso sono un credente. La scienza non è bastata […]. E della religione la forma maggiore è certo il cattolicesimo. Io studio volentieri gli scrittori di dottrine religiose. Vede là? Swedenborg, Vacherot, Lefèvre, Tolstoi... Mi occupo anche di spiritismo e tanto da formarmi intorno a questi fenomeni una convinzione spassionata. […] Che miracolo è questo che stupisce i migliori e i più forti di noi, e fuor dalla luce li induce a guardar nelle tenebre, ansiosi, temendo o sperando? Che aspettano essi? Che vedono? (quoted in Ojetti 191-192)

The alleged champion of Verism not only welcomed the 'opera dei neomistici', but even widened the horizons of the 'misticismo' Ojetti referred to, subsuming under this label diverse forms of spiritual experiences: Catholicism, of course, but also occult beliefs and practices like Spiritualism. To this occult world Capuana directed his attention, sensing that something extraordinary, miraculous even, emerged beyond the thresholds of the material and rational world, something capable of dazzling even 'i migliori e i più forti di noi', prompting to glimpse into the darkness of the unknown and seek truths hidden under the surface of things, placed, going back to Serao's words, 'altrove'.

[342] According to Ruggiero, Capuana is 'by far the most involved author of the occult culture in contemporary Italy' (2020: 88).
[343] Ojetti pointed out to Capuana that Fogazzaro and Serao spoke enthusiastically about such mysticism.

By exploring the occult side of things, Capuana was pushing the boundaries of the known, ordinary reality as scientists were doing every day. The difference between the Sicilian writer and the scientific establishment represented by certain strands of positivist culture lay in the latter's normative and dogmatic approach. Against the materialistic order embodied by several exponents of positivism, who narrow-mindedly chose to close their eyes to phenomena they could not immediately classify, dismissing them as fantasies or the product of a treacherous mind and/or pathologising them,[344] Capuana juxtaposed an occult dis-order which comprised those phenomena and their charge of mystery and unintelligibility. He believed they were part of the Natural system, only limited human senses could not fully grasp them. The supranormal or paranormal – the abnormal, in certain scientists' opinion – was just something that was yet to be assessed. More specifically, Capuana interpreted occult phenomena as manifestations of unknown powers of the mind, linking them to an unconscious which emerged through experiences of ecstasies like magnetic and mediumistic trances. His occult, ecstatic dis-order included both the occult phenomena of Spiritualism and magnetism, and the occult, i.e., hidden, ones involving the unconscious. A writer of fiction, one of the significant ways Capuana sought to explore such dis-order was through his literary creations. The short stories 'Forze Occulte' (1902), 'Un vampiro' (1904), and 'Fatale influsso' (1906), dealing with cases of magnetic and mediumistic trances, are the literary pendant to Capuana's renown essays on occultism, *Spiritismo?* (1884) and *Mondo occulto* (1896), and, perhaps, the greatest testament to his attempt to investigate the disorderly occult, unconscious aspects of human life. Before analysing the fictional texts just mentioned, I shall provide an overview of Capuana's reflections on the occult by looking at the essayistic production preceding the writing of the short stories. This will allow me to fully convey the impact Capuana's encounter with ecstatic occultism had on his literary production.

The central argument of *Spiritismo?*, which came out in 1884, revolves around Capuana's conviction of a 'necessario superamento di un preconcetto obbligatorio, su tanti fenomeni e su tante manifestazioni, oltrepassanti di gran lunga i limiti della normalità naturale ed umana' (Di Blasi 1968: 121). By his own words, Capuana was probably the first one to publicly deal with the 'scabroso soggetto' (1995b: 165).[345] Throughout the essay, an open letter to Salvatore Farina, one of the main assertors of Spiritualistic doctrines in Italy, the Sicilian writer encourages the readers to turn their attention to Spiritualism, the 'inatteso problema, diciamo così, del mondo invisibile che già picchia forte all'uscio dei laboratorii, gridando: son qui anch'io!' (1995c: 63). As well as recounting his own

[344] 'seguendo un modello autoritario e razionalizzante, i medici positivisti […] cercano di ridurre il "meraviglioso" a malattia: si creano i tipi dell'ipnotizzatore criminale, della sonnambula isterica, della folla suggestionata, del medium psicopatico' (Gadebusch Bondio 38).

[345] As pointed out by Nay, 'la discussione intorno al fatto spiritico, almeno a casa nostra (in Italia), passa prima attraverso le pagine che letterati più o meno scettici vi dedicarono, e, solo in un secondo momento, fu oggetto di interesse scientifico' (63).

'disordinate escursioni a traverso l'ignoto',[346] Capuana attempts an early theoretical exploration of the facts of Spiritualism, challenging the 'ristrettissimo senso' that is given to words such as *natural* and *human* (1995c: 66, 127). Assuring his readers 'di non aver osservato male, di non esser caduto in preda di illusioni ottiche, o di allucinazioni di esaltato' (1995c: 69),[347] he invites them to consider the facts of Spiritualism as natural phenomena worthy of scientific investigation, calling for an integration of scientific order and occult dis-order.[348] The Sicilian author does not reject a scientific approach to reality, only the 'dommatiche affermazioni dei positivisti del materialismo' (Capuana 1995c: 118), unwilling to challenge their order of consolidated certainties and explore open-mindedly that alternative gnoseological and ontological (dis-)order displayed by occult phenomena.[349]

In the essay, Capuana tackled the works of renowned men of science, from Charcot to Lombroso, dealing with somnambulistic, hypnotic, hysterical phenomena involving the 'alterazione della personalità' and the activity of a 'psiche inconscia' (Giannetti 269). Like other intellectuals of the period, he came close to 'spiritism, somnambulism and other psychic phenomena' 'to move towards a better understanding of the conscious, and more so, of the unconscious mind' (Petraglia 127-128), partly reprising the 'ottica psicologica o neurologica' which placed 'la fenomenologia del paranormale […] tra le attività inconsce, tra le facoltà latenti o "subliminari" della mente' (Cigliana 1995: 17). Particularly relevant is his reference to a case of hysteria studied by Lombroso, of which the Sicilian writer quotes the following remark: 'nella eccitazione straordinaria dell'estasi sonnambolica noi acquistiamo una coscienza maggiore del nostro organismo, nelle cui condizioni, come nell'ingranaggio d'un orologio, stanno iscritte, in potenza, in germe, le varie successioni morbose' (Capuana 1995c: 133).

Capuana insisted on comparing the unconscious activity at work in occult phenomena with that inherent to artistic creation. Just as Fogazzaro believed in a 'profound affinity between artistic and mystical experiences' (Santovetti 165, note 12), so was Capuana convinced of a profound affinity between artistic and occult experiences.[350] Claiming that 'il vero punto della creazione si avvolge infine […] nelle misteriose oscurità dell'incoscienza', Capuana upholds that '[l]'artista procede […]

[346] From the early experiments with his sister's alleged mediumistic powers to his 1864 Tuscan sojourn, where he made his residence a 'piccolo regno medianico' (Di Blasi 1968: 115, 107), and to the later magnetic trials inflicted upon his lover Beppa Sansone, Capuana's entire existence was characterised by 'avvicinamenti all'ignoto', encompassing alchemy, cabala, black magic, magnetism, Spiritualism, and, 'mistero forse allora più grande, […] quei casi di psicopatologia che non erano stati illuminati dalla scienza' (Foni 2006: 29). See De Blasi 1968 on Capuana's occult biographical experience.
[347] This defensive reassurance will take the form of a prediction resolutely provided by Don Aquilante, the protagonist of *Il Marchese di Roccaverdina* (1901): 'Un giorno vi persuaderete, finalmente, che io non sono un allucinato nè un pazzo' (Capuana 1999: 55).
[348] Scartozzi suggests that 'la via aperta da Capuana è stata quella dell'*occultismo-scienza*' (506).
[349] In 'Diario spiritico, ossia comunicazioni ricevute dagli Spiriti per medianità intuitiva' (1916) – an important document, as Ruggiero (2020: 91) remarks, attesting Capuana's way of conceiving the relationship between Spiritualism and positivism – the Sicilian author writes: 'La spiegazione del mondo che ti dà la filosofia è esatta e perfetta: lo spiritismo non la combatte, la completa' (Capuana 1916: 339).
[350] On this affinity see Ruggiero 2020: 90.

come i *soggetti* del sonnambulismo provocato, ed ha la sua particolare allucinazione; la quale differisce dalle sonnamboliche unicamente per gradi' (1995c: 119-120). He experienced first-hand such hallucinated, altered state of consciousness through intuitive automatic writing experiments.[351] The account Capuana provides of them in *Spiritismo?* offers an enlightening account not only of the phenomenon of automatic writing and creative inspiration, but, generally, of the dynamics underlying trance-like states and their inextricable connection to the unconscious processes:

> Ti sei mai provato a tenere un lapis fra le dita, poggiando leggermente sopra un foglio di carta la mano, e aspettando che questa, mossa da un'energia di cui non si ha coscienza, tracci prima qualche ghirigoro, qualche lettera, poi delle parole, poi dei periodi, poi delle pagine intiere; o ceda alla dettatura di un impulso interiore, qualcosa fra il cosciente e l'incosciente, quasi uno sdoppiamento dello spirito per cui metà di esso sembri agire con pienissima libertà e l'altra far da semplice spettatrice? (1995c: 91)

The extract suggests that ecstatic states like artistic and mediumistic trances involve a split of the ego as a result of which two different systems of consciousness emerge,[352] one moving freely and the other acting as a witness. During the 'allucinazione spiritica' as well as 'l'artistica', the former system takes over, triggering the transition 'dalla quasi coscienza alla incoscienza' (Capuana 1995c: 121). As Mangini remarks, 'it is precisely the eclipsing of the ego which allows both the writer and the medium to communicate with a world inhabited by autonomous, phantasmatic entities' – spirits in the case of the medium, characters in that of the writer – which are 'able to overcome the consciousness and the will of their summoners' (83). In other words, trance-like states allow for the emergence of an unconscious Other giving voice to ideas, images, perceptions that eschew the awareness and control of the conscious self, displaying an occult, ecstatic dis-order defined by a surplus of freedom.

Though Capuana already appears to be 'notevolmente sbilanciato dalla parte degli spiriti' (Tropea 243) in his 1884 essay, the question mark at the end of the title signals that he is not free of doubts. After *Spiritismo?*, his relationship with the 'di là' enters the 'fase successiva al dubbio, all'incertezza o al timore dell'infanzia-adolescenza-prima maturità' (Scartozzi 537). The publication of *Mondo occulto* (1896) ratifies the removal of Capuana's previous 'prudente riserbo' (1995b: 165) and his utter conversion to occultism, hastened by both the scientists' increased responsiveness

[351] The 'appunti incoscienti' (Foni 2007: 53) he wrote during the trances are collected in 'Diario spiritico'.
[352] Giannetti points to the influence Richet's intuition of a 'modello dualistico della psiche', at work in hypnotic and hysterical states and involving 'processi talvolta inconsci' (271), exerted upon Capuana.

towards paranormal activities[353] and a general need to react against the excesses of certain materialistic positivistic order.[354] In the 1896 essay Capuana addresses the 'nuovi misteri, nuove forze più prodigiose e non sottomesse a nessuna delle leggi ormai accertate dalla scienza' that Nature reveals to the 'intelletto umano' (1995b: 167). Faced with the occult dis-order of a 'mondo arcano, che ci si rivela a tratti, intermittente, senza leggi e senza ordine riconoscibili', the human intellect 'si sente invadere dallo sgomento […] ed ha le vertigini' (Capuana 1995b: 167).[355] Spirits of the dead can be summoned, the dead can manifest themselves through their perispirit, saints in ecstasies can exert suggestion from a distance and materialise in different places. Somnambulism, Spiritualism, and, overall, occultism, Capuana notes, might be 'gradazioni di uno stesso fenomeno' (1995b: 167) by which the human mind/soul transcends the thresholds of the known, facing a double Nature, a double World, but also a double consciousness, a double, multiple identity. The occult emerges not only in the outside world, but within the self's identity: Otherness – an ecstatic, unconscious, Otherness – arises to widen the boundaries of the ego, bringing dis-order to it, unsettling it at its root. The 'mondo occulto', Capuana concludes, is 'fuori di noi e dentro di noi', and the challenge that 'l'umana ragione' must face while looking into its 'rivelazioni inattese, sprazzi di luce che abbagliano, riscontri che complicano le difficoltà invece di aiutare a risolverle', is to uphold its firmness, 'dare la maggior prova della sua grande saldezza' (1995b: 193).

Capuana's theoretical discourse on the occult culminates in the article 'Il "Di là"' (1901), published on *La rassegna internazionale*, where he openly postulates the existence of a world 'che sfugge ai nostri sensi ordinari' (1995d: 225). This extra-ordinary world, to which he gives the name of *Di là*, entails a gnoseological and ontological order which stands in opposition to the established materialistic and rational one, and which comprises what is 'oltre i limiti delle comuni nostre facoltà di vedere e di sentire, ma che esiste nella Natura – despite many scientists continuing to deny its existence 'ostinatamente' – precisamente come vi esistevano tante forze fisiche prima ignorate' (Capuana 1995d: 225). Mediumistic trances, like magnetic ecstasies or creative frenzies, are natural phenomena, belonging to a natural dis-order that is yet to be explored in all its multifaceted, uncanny components.

According to Di Blasi, throughout his literary activity Capuana 'toccò i molteplici aspetti dei tanti fenomeni al di là del normale', 'dal sonnambulismo allo spiritismo vero e proprio, dallo sdoppiamento della personalità ai semplici "presentimenti" sino a veri e propri casi di telepatia […]

[353] 'i fatti così detti spiritici, grazie alla savia spregiudicatezza di parecchi scienziati, hanno assunto tal valore scientifico da permettermi di uscire dal riserbo' (1995b: 165).
[354] Tenerelli refers to the 'clima di esasperato bisogno culturale di fine Ottocento a reagire irrazionalisticamente alla crisi del positivismo materialista e della scienza, […] spesso impantanata in un empirismo ottuso' (35).
[355] The protagonists of Capuana's short stories frequently experience this feeling of dismay in face of the mysterious tensions of the occult world.

sino ad ossessionanti 'presenze' di gente che non è più' (1968: 129). His fascination for 'la fenomenologia e l'epistemologia dell'occulto' goes hand in hand with his interest for 'il potenziale letterario […] dell'occultismo tardo-ottocentesco/primonovecentesco' (Scartozzi 506), generating an occult production that constitutes 'una sorta di fenomenologia […] degli affioramenti del "mondo arcano" che la finzione letteraria può registrare come certi e assodati, mentre ciò è (o è ancora) vietato alla scienza' (Cedola 9). That is, literature can get to places science cannot and/or it can get there faster. While Capuana's penchant for occult disorders left traces in his overall production, especially after his definite conversion to occultism – an example above all, *Il Marchese di Roccaverdina* (1901), a text for which the author claimed to be returning to his early verist approach and yet infused with occultism –,[356] the Sicilian writer produced texts ascribable to the genre of the fantastic that can be considered the components of a specific occult thread in his literary *œuvre*.

Long before *Spiritismo?* came out, in 1865 Capuana had published 'Il dottor Cymbalus', followed by 'Un caso di sonnambulismo' (1873). The two 'novelle antipositiviste' (Cenati 165) inaugurate, in Cedola's words, 'un filone, tra fantastico-spiritico e *science fiction*' through which he seeks to 'ridefinire i paradigmi stessi del reale, allargandone le frontiere soprattutto in direzione del sondaggio delle "misteriose forze della psiche"' (7).[357] While in verist texts like *Profumo* and *Giacinta* the examination of those boundaries and these forces are essentially related to a hysterical, pathological Otherness, in Capuana's occult texts they are linked to a magnetic, Spiritualistic Otherness, Capuana thus widening his notion of extra-normality/normativity. The two texts dating 1865 and 1873 lay the foundations of an occult production – specifically, in the form of a short fiction –[358] that attained its maturity at the beginning of the new century. Fictionalising Capuana's long-lasting curiosity towards extra-ordinary phenomena and subsuming his occult vision of the world, this production registers the writer's increasing detachment from a certain 'scientismo positivista' as well as from the paradigms of Naturalism (Ghidetti 1974a: XLIX). Positivist science had proved to be unable to explain all the mysteries of Nature, just as Naturalism had failed to explore its more enigmatic aspects. Capuana textualizes this fault by orienting his work towards the world of the occult

[356] See Scartozzi 649-675 on the presence of occultism in verist texts like *Giacinta* and *Il marchese di Roccaverdina*, denoting an integration of the verist and occult Capuana.
[357] According to Failli, the author's short stories dealing with the themes 'dell'esperimento scientifico' and 'delle pratiche occulte' are intended to show 'quante siano le cose del mondo di cui si sa poco o niente', pointing to the 'mistero di ciò che ci circonda non solo fuori ma anche dentro di noi', and to demonstrate, consequently, 'quanto sia incerto il confine tra "normale" e "anormale"' (137).
[358] I believe that Capuana's choice to explore the occult aspect of life through the specific medium of the short story is not without implications. The brief format of the *novella* is perfectly in line with the writer's possibility to deal with occult matters, especially those related to the unconscious human psyche. The narrator's consciousness can cast nothing more than '"sprazzi di luce" contro il buio del subconscio' (Oddo De Stefanis 89-90), attempting to give the former a shape that can only be a brief one.

unknown, endowing it with a 'notevole' 'coefficiente parapsicologico-spiritistico' (Scartozzi 631) and infusing it with 'la critica, o quantomeno la sfida, alla scienza ufficiale' (Corradi 2016: 76).[359]

In 'La evocatrice' (1902) one of the character claims:

> riguardo agli Spiriti, non si tratta di fatti che possono cadere sotto gli occhi, da osservarsi col microscopio, da analizzare col crogiuolo. Fantasie di menti deboli, allucinazioni di sensi malati, credenze di femminucce, resti di tradizioni primitive, quando l'uomo ancora selvaggio si dava una spiegazione superficiale dei fenomeni della natura e credeva l'ombra un duplicato della sua persona…. Se la scienza dovesse tener conto di tali sciocchezze, starebbe fresca! (Capuana 1974b: 428)

To which accusation, bringing together in a Lombroso-like manner mental illness, womanhood, and primitivism, the other character replies: 'Di tutto deve tener conto' (Capuana 1974b: 428). Capuana included in this 'tutto' different kinds of ecstatic states related to occultism – from magnetic to Spiritualistic trances –, creating an alternative gnoseological and ontological order that challenged the normative scientific order with its tendence to pathologise or dismiss and unveiled a disquieting correspondence between occultism *tout court* and the occult dynamics of the psyche. Such occult, ecstatic dis-order pervades three of Capuana's most uncanny short stories: 'Forze Occulte' (1902), 'Un vampiro' (1904), and 'Fatale influsso' (1906). I shall now proceed to analyse each of these texts.

Included in *Delitto ideale* and dedicated to fellow writer Guelfo Civinini, 'Forze occulte' tells the story of a newlywed couple whose honeymoon is disrupted by the disquieting presence of 'occult forces'. Newly-weds Aldo and Elvia Sàmara decide to spend their honeymoon in an isolated villa that is never used by its owners. Once there, Elvia is caught by '[u]n brivido per tutta la persona', '[u]n senso di freddo, come al contatto di persona disaggradevole… invisibile' (FO 369). Retaining a sceptic and superior attitude, Aldo dismisses her feelings attributing them to fantasy, dubbing them as a 'strana suggestione', and justifying them by resorting to the classic argument of women's alleged nervous excitability: 'I nervi di una giovine signora sono impressionabilissimi, la immaginazione troppo facile ad essere eccitata' (FO 370).[360] His demeanour, however, betrays him when he too is caught by 'un'indefinibile sensazione di malessere, precisamente come pel contatto di persona disaggradevole, invisibile' (FO 370). Trying to get his head around these strange impressions, he begins to suspect he is dealing with one of those 'fenomeni di cui soltanto da poco tempo alcuni scienziati osavano spregiudicatamente di occuparsi' (FO 371-372). Turning to the work of two

[359] 'alla scienza non resta altro, nelle novelle capuaniane degli ultimi quindici anni, che un doppio ruolo di 'termine di confronto', in negativo (per insufficienza interpretativa), delle verità ormai dispiegate del mondo occulto' (Cedola 52).
[360] Later, Aldo even reproaches Elvia for what he considers to be a 'debolezza femminile' (FO 372). Spirits, going back to the quotation from 'L'evocatrice', are 'credenze di femminucce'.

English authors that had claimed that 'fin i più impercettibili movimenti del nostro pensiero, non che gli atti e le parole, vengono registrati e fissati nell'universa materia cosmica', he infers that '[l]e pareti di quella casa dovevano essere certamente sature di misteriosi fluidi, di pensieri e di atti là registrati, e con tale forza da produrre terrificanti sensazioni rivelatrici' (FO 371).

The following day the couple senses that 'qualcosa d'indefinibile, d'inesplicabile vibrava dalle pareti, dagli oggetti; si sarebbe detto anche dall'aria che vi circolava' (FO 373). The disquieting impressions emerging from the walls and objects of the house grow stronger, extending to the air that circulates within the villa, causing Elvia to be overwhelmed by an 'opprimente sensazione' and Aldo to feel a 'repugnanza' (FO 373) towards the entire house. In line with 'il *topos* della *maison hanté*' (Ghidetti 2008: 45), the house appears to be inhabited by invisible forces that trouble the Sàmara, eliciting fear, anguish, repulsion. At first sceptical, Aldo can no longer 'dubitare che si trattasse di sensazioni reali' (FO 373). The removal of doubts comes with his remark about the steady and healthy condition of the Sàmara: 'Elvia era un organismo solido, ricco di salute come lui' (FO 373).[361] Aldo and Elvia's healthy physical and mental state is opposed to the 'fenomeni anormali' (FO 373) they are witnessing, resulting in two different ontological orders: a normal/healthy order vs an abnormal/unhealthy dis-order. Refining his speculations, Aldo links the 'fenomeni anormali' to the 'misteri del magnetismo e dello spiritismo' (FO 373) he has read about through the work of certain scientists, revealing his own oscillation between a sceptical, positivist-like attitude and a more open-minded, occult-inclined approach.[362]

A new day begins. Elvia appears sleepy and Aldo asks her if she is tired. The answer fails to come as he witnesses, terrified, his wife fall into a state of trance:

> – Elvia!... Elvia!... – egli gridò osservando vedendole travolgere gli occhi fino al bianco.
> Ella non rispondeva. Rigida, eretta sul busto, con gli occhi chiusi e le sopracciglia corrugate, sembrava guardasse attentamente e vedesse a occhi chiusi.
> Aldo capì subito che si trattava d'un caso di catalessi spontanea e ne fu atterrito […] E continuava a chiamare, scotendola pel braccio: – Elvia! Elvia! – osservando ansiosamente gli atteggiamenti ch'ella prendeva quasi assistesse a uno spettacolo che la faceva inorridire.
> Poi le labbra di lei si agitarono; suoni inarticolati le uscirono di bocca. In piedi, con le mani sporte in avanti, ella indietreggiava, voltando il capo da una parte come per evitar di vedere. Dié un grido, cadde tra le braccia di Aldo che furon pronte a riceverla… E riaperse gli occhi. […]

[361] The steadiness of the individual is associated by Aldo with health.
[362] Noting that 'Forze occulte' reproduce the typical 'cast del *récit* occultistico', comprising a woman, 'la più sensibile rispetto al soprannaturale', a 'colto marito-amante con una grande passione per l'inesplicabile', and a 'terzo attore che rappresenta il *côté* erudito (intransigente, progressista o entrambi)', Scartozzi points out that Aldo 'accorpa i tipi B e C' (633).

Elvia non si rammentava di niente. (FO 374-375)

Reproducing the physiognomy characterising hysterical and hypnotic ecstatic states, Elvia falls into catalepsy. A prey to occult ecstatic dis-order, when she wakes up, she cannot remember anything that has happened, nor what she has seen during her trance. If oblivion, as Cedola notes, is one of the devices Capuana resorts to in order to 'marcare l'alterità assoluta del "mondo occulto", per non dire latente, da cui provengono (o meglio affiorano, con effetto perturbante) le verità, la musica e i sogni' (30), does Elvia's vision, then, hide some sort of truth? Aldo does not dare to ask her, but, overwhelmed by the 'misteriosa forza ogni giorno più', surrounded by walls that 'vibravano terrore', frightfully wondering whether '[s]arebbe soggiaciuto alla catalessi pure lui', he is 'ormai certo che in quella villa era dovuto accadere qualche terribile tragedia rimasta ignorata' (FO 375).

The feeling of fear both characters experience allows us to bring forth the notion of the 'uncanny', as it was elaborated by Freud in his 1919 homonymous essay.[363] What the 'forze occulte' inhabiting the villa produce is precisely the feeling of the uncanny, that is, of that which is 'related to what is frightening – to what arouses dread and horror', is 'often and easily produced when the distinction between imagination and reality is effaced' (Freud 1955a: 219, 244), and, according to Freud, is also inextricably linked to the motif of the double, unveiling the ego's multiple, fragmented identity. As in other works by Capuana,[364] 'Forze occulte' presents such motif and relates it to the female subject: 'Anche in questa novella – Cedola points out – la donna si sdoppia' (50). A 'catalizzatore delle forze occulte' serving as the privilged 'tramite tra il nostro mondo e il 'di là', o l'*oltre*' (Cedola 58), she exits her normal state of being, entering a trance-like state that discloses an *oltre* outside of but also within her.[365] What is the content of this *oltre*?

To Aldo's great surprise, following her cataleptic trance, Elvia displays serenity and gives no sign of fear, showing herself 'anzi più allegra del solito' (FO 375). Strangely, though, she asks Aldo about some scene she supposes to have read in a novel or seen acted out on stage, which vividly and repetitively comes to her mind as if she had just witnessed it:

– Quale scena?

[363] In a recent contribution on Spiritualism and positivism in Capuana's short fiction (published, and thus read, after this chapter was written), Bellinzani too resorts to the notion of the uncanny to analyse certain texts by the author, including 'Forze occulte', presenting a different application of the notion than the one here provided. Though not explicitly referring to Freud's essay, Scartozzi points to the 'uncanny' element in 'Forze occulte', signalling how it 'parte dall'*unheimlich* per individuare – procedendo a tentoni, nel buio – una ragionevole spiegazione del paranormale' (633).
[364] See the short stories included in *Profili di donne* (1877) as well as the novels *Profumo* and *Giacinta*.
[365] As Michelacci aptly remarks, Capuana detects the '*désgrégation* dell'io' and 'intuisce che quella frammentazione passa prima di tutto dalle figure femminili' (2019: 152).

> – Mah… È strano! Mi sfugge… Di quel marito che ordina alla moglie creduta colpevole: 'Punisciti da te stessa!'. E lei non vuol morire di veleno né di pugnale… E vorrebbe gridare, chiamare aiuto e urta agli usci chiusi a chiave, e picchia alle imposte delle finestre inchiodate… e perde la parola e muor di terrore davanti all'inesorabile marito, che l'ha condotta in una villa lontana!... Dove ho letto questo? O dove l'ho veduto rappresentare?... È strano! È strano! (FO 375-376)

The 'scena' Elvia refers to – resembling the fixed ideas and reminiscences occupying the minds of hysterical subjects – displays the story of a woman attempting to escape the secluded villa where her husband has taken her, fearing her 'inesorabile marito'. While the story aptly fits the hypothesis postulated by Aldo 'di una persistenza fantasmatica di violente passioni' (Cedola 49-50) relating to previous inhabitants of the house, it also bears significant resemblances with the Sàmara's own circumstances. Aldo and Elvia too are husband and wife and, just as in the case of the phantasmatic couple, it is Aldo, the husband, who decides to bring Elvia to an isolated villa. Most importantly, the feeling of oppression experienced by the 'moglie' in the story, who, feeling trapped in the house, 'vorrebbe gridare, chiamare aiuto', corresponds to the 'opprimente sensazione' Elvia claims to suffer.

Considering that Capuana senses a fundamental connection between trance-like states and the realm of the unconscious and that, as Ghidetti notes, Elvia is 'una giovane signora emotivamente fragile […] che ha subito il trauma della iniziazione sessuale' (2008: 47), is it possible that the terrifying impressions coming from the house are connected to the female protagonist's unconscious world? Might the content of the vision Elvia 'sees' during her cataleptic trance convey elements of a content which is hidden within her? More specifically, might her 'iniziazione sessuale' have something to do with the 'opprimente senzazione' she feels, so overwhelming that it causes her to fall into trance, allowing for the emergence of a second, ecstatic self capable of partially expressing her feelings of fear and uneasiness? I believe that this might be the case, that in this short story Capuana hints at a correlation between the manifestation of spectres as embodied presences and the manifestation of spectres as the ego's hidden fears and desires, playing with and exploring this correlation, rather remarkably anteceding Freud's theory of the uncanny and its relation to the ego's repressed feelings.[366]

In his 1919 essay, Freud claims that the uncanny is 'something which is familiar and old-established in the mind and which has become alienated from it only through the process of repression', 'something which ought to have remained hidden but has come to light' (1955a: 241).

[366] The hypothesis fits Camilletti's definition of the '*ghost story*' as something that 'riguarda sempre un conflitto traumatico con il passato, in cui sono precisamente spazi segnati dal divenire storico – ville, castelli, dimore avite – a conservare i segni di traumi irrisolti, che demandano spiegazione o vendetta' (2018: 84). On other 'intuizioni pre-freudiane' in Capuana's first works see Comoy-Fusaro 2001.

Since according to psychoanalytic theory 'every affect belonging to an emotional impulse, whatever its kind, is transformed, if it is repressed, into anxiety', Freud reaches the conclusion that 'among instances of frightening things there must be one class [i.e., that constituting the uncanny] in which the frightening element can be shown to be something repressed which *recurs*' (1955a: 241). Hidden away, repressed in the occult realms of the unconscious, Elvia's fears and, also, desires linked to her relationship with Aldo and their honeymoon gradually come to surface during her trance. The feeling of serenity and happiness Elvia displays after the trance might find an explanation in the fact that the trance has liberated her from her anguish by letting her meet her ecstatic, unconscious self,[367] and the fears and desires concealed in it. Ecstatic dis-order, as I have stressed, is a site of freedom. Conforming to and embracing such alternative order, Elvia is now at one with her liberated, ecstatic self and the 'forze occulte' pervading the house.

Detecting the familiarity[368] that has been established between Elvia and the 'forze occulte' and put 'in maggior sospetto' by it, Aldo decides to take her away from the villa: 'Gli parve di vedere Elvia in balìa delle misteriose forze spadroneggianti nelle stanze superiori della villa abbandonata, e volle sottrarla e sottrar se stesso al loro occulto potere' (FO 376). The 'scioglimento' of the story is 'via dalla casa torna la serenità' (Ghidetti 2008: 47). Back at home, re-reading the book of the two English scientists who theorised the permanence of the soul in the physical spaces previously inhabited by it, Aldo now 'metterebbe la mano sul fuoco per attestare che essi hanno ragione' (FO 376). But even though he goes back to espousing 'una spiegazione positiva del fenomeno', Cedola remarks, 'gli rimane il sentimento inquietante d'essere stato invaso, fin nell'intimo della vita familiare, da quelle forze occulte' (50). The ecstatic dis-order Elvia meets and embodies through her trance has entered his intimate life, irretrievably unsettling it.

In 1906 Capuana published a collection of two short stories entitled *Un vampiro* and dedicated to Lombroso.[369] The first of the two *novelle*, which had previously appeared in *La Lettura* in 1904, gives its name to the short anthology and bears the 'cruciale funzione di raccogliere, mediare e rielaborare il dato spiritistico, magnetistico e occultistico in senso lato', providing '[u]na *summa* e una necessaria riflessione su quanto letto e osservato [by Capuana] in un cinquantennio di studi sul "mondo occulto"' (Scartozzi 638).

[367] Petraglia refers to the 'second, unconscious other' appearing in dreams and trance-like states related by Capuana in his tales, clarifying that it 'constitutes a separate existence of the self, as opposed to its conscious counterpart' (133).
[368] Going back to the etymology of Freud's notion of the uncanny in its original German term, i.e., *unheimlich*, the uncanny is what was once familiar and subsequently repressed. Reversely, the dissolving of an uncanny feeling relates to something that was once repressed and that has become again familiar.
[369] Capuana's dedication is prompted by 'l'idea che il soggetto delle due novelle qui riunite' had 'qualche relazione coi suoi [Lombroso's] ultimi spassionatissimi studi intorno ai fenomeni psichici, dei quali abbiamo ragionato in Roma' (1995f: 5).

The short story reprises a 'motivo fantastico di estrazione addirittura preromantica', situating it 'in piena atmosfera di scientismo positivista' (Ghidetti 1974b: 201-202). The choice of such contextualisation is textualised right from the beginning of the tale, opening with the debate on the existence of spirits. The distressed Lelio Giorgi seeks the help of his friend Mongeri, a scientist, hoping to gain from him 'la spiegazione di fatti che possono distruggere la mia felicità, e che già turbano straordinariamente la mia ragione' (V 203). Mongeri laughingly dismisses his friend's concerns,[370] naming 'allucinazioni' such 'fatti' and facetiously dubbing Lelio as a 'malato' in need of care (V 203). He links such hallucinations – transmitted between wife and husband through a 'semplice caso d'induzione' (V 203) – to '[s]ensazioni anteriori, accumulate spesso inconsapevolmente' which 'si ridestano dentro di noi, si organizzano come avviene nei sogni' (V 203). That is, while disavowing through scientific, materialistic lens the Spiritualistic occult distressing Lelio, he points to the *other* occult at the centre of Capuana's attention, that relating to the unconscious.

Soon, however, Mongeri challenges his own positivist views:

> Vorresti una spiegazione della scienza? Ebbene, in nome di essa, io ti rispondo che, per ora, non ha spiegazioni di sorta alcuna da darti. […] Per tranquillarti, ti ho parlato di allucinazioni, di induzione, di recettività… Parole, caro mio! Più studio e più mi sento preso dalla disperazione di sapere qualcosa di certo. (V 204)

Distancing himself from those who boastfully provide rigorous answers to phenomena science is yet to gauge, Mongeri takes a step back from a position of scientific oracle and dismisses his previous exposé as a list of meaningless words. It is now 'Mongeri stesso che denuncia l'incapacità della scienza di fornire un'ipotesi di strutturazione univoca e definitoria del reale' (Della Colletta 199), embodying the stance reached by Capuana at the time of writing the short story, when 'è progressivamente venuta meno la fiducia dello scrittore siciliano nel sapere scientifico' (Cedola 51). Although he questions the materialistic order he represents, Mongeri is still reluctant to meet (and submit to) occult dis-order, preventing Lelio from recounting his story. Lelio provokes him, suggesting that he is afraid of continuing the conversation because it could result in his Spiritualistic conversion. Admitting that Lelio is right, that, as all scientists, he would rather remain in his orderly

[370] '– No, non ridere! – esclamò Lelio Giorgi, interrompendosi.
– Come vuoi che non rida? – rispose Mongeri. – Io non credo agli spiriti.' (V 203)

consolidated positions, ratified by custom and shut to senses,[371] when placed 'con le spalle al muro' (V 206), Mongeri eventually agrees to hear the story.

After falling in love with Luisa, Lelio had to leave Italy and seek his fortune in America to obtain her hand from her parents. Once he returned to Italy, he found Luisa married to another man and wrote her a 'focosissima lettera di rimproveri' (V 207) which fell into the husband's hands. When the husband returned the letter to Lelio, asking him to step back, Lelio apologised and agreed. Six months later he received a telegram from Luisa, informing him that she had become a widow and always loved him. The two got married, but from the moment Luisa became pregnant, she started undergoing a 'turbamento grandissimo', while a 'forte senso di impaccio' took hold of Lelio (V 208). The situation seemed to settle down with childbirth but presently Luisa is caught again by 'quel senso di paura, anzi di terrore' (V 209), hearing strange noises just before midnight – a 'scalpiccio', an 'inesplicabile andare e venire, su e giù di persona invisibile, attorno al letto' (V 209) – which she relates to 'the spirito vagante e geloso' (Cedola 56) of her late husband.

Interrupting Lelio's narration, Mongeri offers his physiological diagnose ('Siamo in piena fisiologia'), claiming that what Luisa has been experiencing is related to the 'impressioni di *lui* [her late husband] rimaste incancellabili nelle sue carni', and the fact that Lelio shares her feelings of 'suggestione' (V 210).[372] When Lelio rebuts by assuring him that his imagination 'non lavora punto' during the manifestation of these phenomena, Mongeri answers: 'Ti pare. Non abbiamo sempre coscienza di quel che avviene dentro di noi. L'incosciente! Eh! Eh! fa prodigi anch'esso' (V 210). Again, the doctor relates the phenomena Lelio perceives as occult to another, equally prodigious, kind of occult. The reference to the 'incosciente' at this stage of the story offers a crucial key for interpreting the tale in that it suggests that the invisible presence of Luisa's late husband is linked to the impressions he leaves on the couple. In Scartozzi's gloss, 'le preoccupazioni di Luisa', and Lelio, are 'esternate/incarnate in una presenza invisibile' (639). Given the love triangle,[373] the couple's concerns might have something to do with a guilty consciousness, manifesting itself through the presence of an occult monster representing 'l'*unheimlich* freudiano', the 'soggettività alienata e percepita come altro da sé' (Della Colletta 202). As in the case of 'Forze occulte', Capuana suggests that phantasmatic, occult manifestations conceal a truth that is situated within our unconscious system.

Dismissing his friend's physiological interpretation, Lelio continues narrating his story, informing Mongeri that one night Luisa heard the voice of her late husband telling her 'Sei mia!' and

[371] 'Quando il nostro modo di vedere, di giudicare ha preso una piega, l'intelletto si rifiuta fin di prestar fede ai sensi. Anche l'intelligenza è affare di abitudine' (V 181-182).
[372] As put by Ghidetti, the doctor interprets the events reported by his friend 'come un insolito fenomeno di psicopatologia della vita familiare' (1974a: LI).
[373] 'Lui lei e il vampiro […] il più ovvio e letterario triangolo coniugale romantico-borghese, in versione spiritica' (Cedola 55).

began to act 'senza averne coscienza', 'vinta dal malefico fascino di *colui*' (V 210-211). She then picked up a conversation with him, from which Lelio deduced that he was accusing her of having poisoned him to free herself from him. As pointed out by Della Colletta, the late husband comes back to life 'come assoluta alterità', 'per portare disordine e dubbio nell'ordinamento morale del nucleo familiare' (201). The 'intervento di un prete' has no effect against this occult disorder. The mysterious presence, moreover, has started directing his hate against the baby, practicing a 'nefanda operazione', 'qualcosa di terribile, bocca con bocca, come se gli succhiasse la vita, il sangue' (V 213). Reacting 'pensoso, a testa bassa, aggrottando le sopracciglia' (V 213), Mongeri realises that Lelio and Lucia are dealing with a vampire:

> I Vampiri sarebbero individualità più persistenti delle altre, casi rari, sì, ma possibili anche senza ammettere l'immortalità dell'anima, dello spirito... Non spalancar gli occhi, non crollare la testa... È fatto, non insolito, intorno al quale la così detta superstizione popolare – diciamo meglio – la divinazione primitiva potrebbe trovarsi d'accordo con la scienza… […] (V 214-215)

By the end of Lelio's story, doctor Mongeri has turned into a doctor Van Helsing (Cedola 56) capable of conceiving the reality of occult dis-orders. Though remaining within a scientific frame of mind, grounding his argument in materialistic discourse,[374] Mongeri is inclined to admit the existence of what popular belief calls vampires, erecting an important bridge between science and superstition, and inhabiting the contradictions of his integrated, modern outlook.[375] 'Credenze popolari e spiegazione scientifica – Cedola remarks –: è il sistema integrato dell'oltre capuaniano; eros, psiche e "superstizione", per spiegare l'invisibile esistente' (56). It follows that the remedy to the predicament Lelio and Luisa face corresponds to the strategies popular belief resorts to: the 'affrettamento della distruzione del loro [the vampires'] corpo' (V 215). '[P]er nulla consonante con quelli proposti in prima istanza (sostanzialmente psichiatrici […])', Mongeri's advice is now 'connesso al *côté* leggendario-gotico' (Scartozzi 639). '[L]eggendo negli occhi del suo amico il dubbio di esser trattato da donnicciuola, da popolano ignorante' (V 216),[376] the doctor is now the one encouraging his friend to believe what he is saying, pointing to a third kind of *gnòsis*, combining materialistic approach and openness to occultism, integrating positivist order and occult dis-order.

[374] 'Per la scienza non esiste altro, all'infuori di questo mondo materiale. […]. Ma appunto la quistione si riduce, secondo qualcuno, a sapere se la putrefazione, la disgregazione degli atomi, o meglio la loro funzione organica si arresti istantaneamente con la morte, annullando ipso facto la individualità, o se questa perduri, secondo i casi e le circostanze, più o meno lungamente dopo la morte... Si comincia a sospettarlo...' (V 213-214).
[375] As Camilletti writes, 'il mito del vampiro è sempre stato legato a filo doppio al moderno e alle sue contraddizioni' (2018: 33). The vampire is the embodiment of the 'terrore occidentale per quanto di superstizioso e di arcaico sopravvive ai margini del mondo sedicente "civile"' (Camilletti 2018: 32-33)
[376] As in 'Forze occulte', the occult is associated with women.

As well as prescribing the burning of the corpse, the doctor decides to spend the night with the ill-fated family, convinced that his presence 'avrebbe impedito la manifestazione del fenomeno' (V 217). It is precisely during this night, however, that, following a movement of the cradle 'il quale non poteva esser prodotto da nessuno di loro' (V 218), Luisa falls into trance:

> cadde rovesciata su la poltrona dov'era stata seduta fin allora. Pallidissima, scossa da un fremito per tutta la persona, con gli occhi sbarrati e le pupille immobili, balbettava qualcosa che le gorgogliava nella gola e non prendeva suono di parola, e sembrava dovesse soffocarla. […]
> La signora Luisa, irrigiditasi un istante, ebbe un tremito più violento e subito parve ritornasse allo stato ordinario; se non che la sua attenzione era tutta diretta a guardare qualcosa che gli altri due non scorgevano, a prestar ascolto a parole che quelli non udivano, e delle quali indovinavano il senso dalle risposte di lei. […]
> – È in istato di trance spontanea! – disse Mongeri all'orecchio di Lelio. (V 218-219)

Luisa's transition from the 'stato ordinario' to the extraordinary state of 'trance spontanea', her moving to the *other* side, i.e., that of ecstatic dis-order, puts her in direct communication with the vampire, with whom she now shares the same linguistic code. Mongeri tries to subtract Luisa from her trance by grabbing her thumbs (i.e., performing a magnetic passage) and calling her name out loud. The 'voce cupa e irritata, voce robusta, maschile, con cui ella rispose' startles the doctor:[377] Luisa displays 'tal viso rabbuiato, […] tale espressione di durezza nei lineamenti, da sembrare altra persona' (V 219). Possessed by the vampire, Luisa 'si sdoppia' (Cedola 57).

Faced with the 'straordinario fenomeno della personificazione del fantasma', Mongeri tries to remove Luisa from her trance by ordering her to do so, hoping that his 'comando' can magnetically 'imporsi all'esaltamento nervoso della signora, superarlo' (V 219-220). His attempt is matched by a 'sardonica e lunga risata' (V 220) revealing the utter powerlessness of the scientific, rational order he is trying to enforce over Luisa's ecstatic dis-order. Mongeri finds himself replying to the male voice 'come a persona viva' (V 220), Elvia's ecstatic experience having, in fact, led him to submit to occult dis-order. When he senses a 'mano invisibile' touching his shoulder and appearing before him, 'la lucidità della sua mente già un po' turbata, non ostante gli sforzi ch'egli faceva per rimanere osservatore attento e imparziale, venne sconvolta' (V 220). The 'schieramenti prima contrapposti' embodied by the Giorgis, on the one hand, and Mongeri, on the other, are 'unificati' (Scartozzi 638) by the vampiresque incident. The doctor comes to recognise the extraordinariness of the phenomena

[377] Scartozzi notes that Mongeri's 'panico' before Luisa's possession echoes Capuana's own reactions 'durante gli esperimenti su Beppina Poggi' (640).

occurring and is overpowered by them. Right after this realisation takes place, Luisa wakes up from her trance. Following the cremation of the husband's corpse, all phenomena cease.

Though Mongeri carries out the experiment to its end, coming across as a 'scienziato […] ammirevole', not concerned by the fact that 'la sua reputazione dovesse soffrirne', in his report entitled *Un preteso caso di Vampirismo*, he fails to prove himself 'interamente sincero' (V 221). As the narrator points out:

> Non ha detto: 'I fatti sono questi, e questo il resultato del rimedio: la pretesa superstizione popolare ha avuto ragione su le negazioni della scienza: il Vampiro è *morto completamente* appena il suo corpo venne cremato'. No. Egli ha messo tanti *se*, tanti *ma* nella narrazione delle minime circostanze, ha sfoggiato tanta *allucinazione*, tanta *suggestione*, tanta *induzione nervosa* nel suo ragionamento scientifico […]. (V 221)

Throughout the story, Mongeri has alternately drew close to and distanced himself from occult, ecstatic dis-order. In the end, he cannot bring himself to fully comply with it, concealing the occult data under a series of scientific, yet vague, remarks, i.e., resorting to the same strategy of reassurance he had unmasked at the beginning of the story. The positivist order, with its compendium of hallucinations, suggestions, and nervous inductions, has prevailed, and Mongeri has confirmed what he had previously confessed: 'cioè: che anche la intelligenza è affare d'abitudine e che il mutar di parere lo avrebbe seccato' (V 221). Denouncing the doctor's final conduct, the narrator/Capuana implicitly sides with that different way of interpreting reality Mongeri had momentarily hinted at, courageously striving to comprehend, not supress or dismiss, occult ecstatic disorders.

A 'prezioso spaccato sulla *Weltanschauung* del Capuana maturo' (Scartozzi 642), the second of the two short stories in *Un vampiro*, 'Fatale influsso', provides a significant 'example of a literary text that addresses the mystery of the psyche through "magnetic" tales' (Corradi 2019: 155). While 'Un vampiro' mainly dealt with Spiritualism and Spiritualistic trances, with 'Fatale influsso' Capuana turns his mind to another realm of the occult, that of magnetic culture, exploring new kinds of ecstatic dis-orders.

As Corradi sums up, '[t]he short story recounts the unsettling outcome of a mesmeric experiment performed by a possessive man, an artist named Raimondo, on his wife Delia' (2019: 155). Love, once again, is the frame Capuana resorts to to tackle the spheres of the unknown. The artist Raimondo Palli narrates to his friend Blesio the dreadful events that have occurred following his decision to practice magnetic experiments upon his wife. In a state of 'eccessivo perturbamento', Raimondo expresses his 'rimorso' for having 'violentato l'organismo della povera creatura' not for science's sake – for the 'invincibile curiosità di studiare […] le misteriose forze della nostra psiche

in un soggetto che presentava le migliori condizioni per tale studio' –, but for the same reason for which Capuana wished to magnetise his peasant lover Beppa Sansone: obsessively doubting his wife's feeling towards him ('Mi ama davvero?'), he wants to ascertain the sincerity of Delia's love resorting to the 'azione magnetica per ottenere, all'insaputa di lei, la schietta rivelazione della verità' (FI 222-224).[378]

Casting out the hesitations connected to the fear of causing 'irrimediabili disturbi in quel sensibilissimo organismo',[379] Raimondo begins his experiments, attempting to artificially reproduce in Delia a state of ecstatic dis-order: 'notte per notte, mentr'ella dormiva al mio fianco, io m'ingegnavo di saturarla del mio fluido' (FI 224-225). One day, while Delia is posing for him and he tells her to remain still in her position ('"Sta' ferma, così!", le dissi vivamente'), Delia falls into a magnetic slumber: 'La vidi irrigidirsi, chiudere gli occhi, impallidita, col respiro ansante... Era entrata, quando meno me l'aspettavo, nel più profondo sonno magnetico' (FI 226). Taking her by her thumbs, 'appurato il controllo ottenuto su corpo e mente femminili' (Scartozzi 641), he starts to interrogate her:

> 'Ecco la mano di una persona che tu non conosci: è moglie di un mio amico. Ama il marito?... Osserva bene'.
> […]
> 'Lo ama tanto!'.
> […]
> 'Osserva meglio' insistei.
> 'Non occorre. Povera donna! Ha già capito che egli dubita, e piange spesso, in segreto. È dunque cieco costui da non accorgersi che quegli occhi hanno pianto? È strano: io provo la stessa sofferenza di lei... Devo piangere, come lei... Lasciami piangere!' (FI 226-227)

The friend's wife is of course Delia, as she herself implies by pointing to the 'stessa sofferenza' they experience, the same need to cry. The identification of the two figures underlies the subtler identification of Delia's two states, that of ecstatic, magnetic unconsciousness and of ordinary consciousness, linked together by her feeling of sorrow, manifesting itself through different degrees of intensity. The remissive protests with which Delia addresses Raimondo during her normal state of consciousness turn into an emancipatory ('Lasciami piangere'), liberating flood of tears during her

[378] Fearing that his peasant lover, Beppa Sansone, was having an affair, Capuana used magnetism, 'il mezzo infallibile' (quoted in De Blasi 1968: 144), to ascertain the truth of her conduct. The episode, together with that regarding the other Beppa, Beppina Poggi, offered him the realistic background for the writing of 'Fatale influsso'.
[379] Delia is endowed with 'una straordinaria capacità di attirare/veicolare le forze/energie occulte' (Scartozzi 641).

unconscious state of trance.[380] Occult ecstatic dis-order allows her to freely express herself and unburden her feelings.[381]

After having repeated the experiment for a week, submitting Delia to 'a lunga esposizione o possessione magnetica' (Scartozzi 641) and always obtaining the same result, Raimondo sees his magnetic power weaken: 'Delia mi sfuggiva di mano, resistendo alla mia volontà, non cadendo più nel sogno magnetico così facilmente provocato ed ottenuto fino allora' (FI 228). Not only does she resist her magnetiser, but she rebels against him, asking him 'diffidente': 'Che cosa vuoi farmi?... Che cosa mi hai fatto?' (FI 228). 'Da quel giorno in poi, caro Blesio, – Raimondo confesses to his friend – io ho assistito a tali portenti di chiaroveggenza da far perdere l'equilibrio a qualunque più solido intelletto' (FI 228). Occult phenomena, we have seen, undermine the steadiness of the mind, including that of occult practitioners.[382] Despite her will, Delia has become a 'veggente' (FI 228) and can read Raimondo's mind so that he is no longer 'libero di formolare un'idea, un desiderio, una speranza' (FI 230) without her knowing about it.

The positions of the two lovers are reversed. While before Delia was under Raimondo's magnetic power, forced to disclose her inner, unconscious self to him, and respond to his probing questions, it is now Raimondo who is in Delia's 'compiuta balìa', who has lost the privacy and, thus, the freedom of his inner world, while she remains 'chiusa, impenetrabile' (FI 230). The artist tries to defend himself from Delia's clairvoyance, from the occult disorder she now embodies autonomously, but he is no longer capable of exerting any influence on her as she proves stronger than him: 'Delia non sentiva più il mio influsso; era già più forte di me' (FI 230). Raimondo's experiment backfires: in an 'ironic reversal', '[t]he woman overpowers her husband, completely evading his control' (Corradi 2019: 156). The story suggests that trying to manipulate ecstatic disorders, submitting them to dynamics of power, can be as dangerous as discarding their existence. When Blesio tries to comfort Raimondo, remarking he has been 'un po' imprudente, forse', the artist replies '[f]orse?... Troppo dovresti dire. […] Troppo!' (FI 229), the awareness of his recklessness evoking Capuana's own regrets linked to the magnetic and hypnotic experiments practiced on Beppina Poggi in 1864.

Detecting a slight improvement in Delia's health, drained by the magnetic slumbers and clairvoyant faculties, Raimondo begins to work on a new statue, *La Giovinezza*, which ought to depict 'Delia trasformata in dea, idealizzata' (FI 231). While absorbed in his artistic creation, he perceives an emotional detachment from Delia, which she immediately detects through her clairvoyant power: 'Tu stai per cessare di amarmi!' (FI 232). Delia's clairvoyancy enlightens Raimondo's soul, revealing

[380] 'E copiose lacrime le inondarono il volto accompagnate da singhiozzi' (FI 227).
[381] 'Attesi che si sfogasse un po'', Raimondo recounts (FI 227).
[382] Raimondo's statement echoes Lelio's words in 'Un vampiro': 'Che vuoi? Non si assiste a fatti di tale natura senza che la mente più solida non ne riceva una scossa' (V 212).

to him his emotional estrangement from her, as though she was aiding him in disclosing his inner, still unconscious, feelings.[383] Her 'luminosità – Raimondo observes – […] mi pareva scendesse a illuminare le più risposte profondità del mio cuore…' (FI 232). What is at stake here? Occult clairvoyancy or capacity to detect one's occult/hidden feelings?

As the situation distresses both partners, Raimondo seeks a 'rifugio nel lavoro', working 'sotto l'impulso di tante agitazioni', 'febbrilmente', 'quasi la mia mano fosse stata mossa da un altro me stesso che conviveva dentro di me assieme con quello che si tormentava, e smaniava e delirava' (FI 233). He undergoes a split into a double consciousness, resulting in two identities: one that 'delirava', the other led by a hand that operates 'con meticolosa accuratezza' (FI 233).[384] The latter is inextricably linked, and has previously been linked, to Delia, the 'geniale inspirazione' (FI 233) behind Raimondo's statue.[385] The 'forza occulta' that according to Scartozzi drives Raimondo, as a result of which 'nell'ultimo periodo egli ha disegnato e scolpito quasi incoscientemente' (641), is connected to Delia's figure. The embodiment of occult ecstatic dis-order, it is Delia who ultimately causes Raimondo to experience first-hand such dis-order. After having brought to the reader's attention the ecstatic Otherness embodied by Delia's state of magnetic trance, Capuana now thematises an artistic Otherness relating to a different kind of ecstasy, that of creative inspiration.[386] Delia and Raimondo both point to the existence of different, ecstatic and mostly unconscious, states of the self.

Concluding his story, Raimondo tells Blesio that at the very moment the statue seems to come to life experiencing 'il miracolo della pulsazione del cuore', Delia is seized by an outrage of violence and, like a maenad in Dionysian frenzy, she horrendously disfigures it, subsequently falling unconscious 'in violenta convulsione' (FI 234).[387] The equally convulsive state Raimondo is in while recounting this final episode elicits Blesio's compassioned reaction but also his reflections on his friend's mental instability. Bringing us back to the materialistic and pathologising order we have seen to be dismissing occult ecstatic dis-orders, the short story's finale suggests that Blesio might not be pitying his friend because of his tragic story, but because he trusts it to be the tale of a madman ('già pazzo o sul punto di divenire tale', FI 235).

---

[383] Corradi refers to the magnetiser-artist's 'undetected (to a certain extent even for Raimondo himself) feelings' (2019: 156).

[384] Raimondo's artistic hand moving unconsciously and independently of his control echoes Capuana's earlier mentioned experiments of intuitive writing.

[385] Even before Delia acquires clairvoyant powers, her influence allows for the 'agile sviluppo' of some of Raimondo's 'facoltà artistiche rimaste fin allora quasi latenti', making him feel as though he were 'divenuto un altro' (FI 230).

[386] 'Fatale influsso' is not the only short story thematising a creative, ecstatic Otherness. In 'Un melodramma inedito' (1889) Capuana addresses the protagonist's perception of an Other within him, manifesting itself during creative frenzy: Ludovico listens to the music he is improvising as if it was 'cantata da un altro', as if he was assisting 'all'opera d'un altro' (1974a: 319, 321). A similar dynamic also characterises the story of Volgango in 'Il sogno d'un musicista' (1901).

[387] Corradi suggests that Delia feels threatened by the statue, which could take her place 'in Raimondo's life, once become a living entity' (2019: 156).

Two gnoseological-ontological orders can be seen at work in Capuana's early-twentieth century's short-stories as well as in his theoretical discourse on the occult. On the one hand, there is a normative, dogmatic, materialistic, and pathologising order, aiming at defending the stability and normality of the individual against mysterious, occult phenomena which alter these stability and normality,[388] creating confusion, chaos, disorder. On the other, we have a dis-order which counteracts the former order by eagerly exploring those unknown aspects of life and nature, including its apparently supernatural components (from Spiritualistic to magnetic trances), which questions the stability and alleged normality of the individual, for it discovers the vacuousness of such categories and senses that there is more, there is an Other beyond the restricting borders of what is known and what is known to be normal, steady, rational.[389] Capuana figures among those writers who oppose 'l'esigenza dell'*alterità*' to the '*doxa* normativa dell'età del positivismo' (Comoy Fusaro 8-9). The 'fantastic' genre the Sicilian writer resorts to for his occult short stories aptly conveys the dialectic between these two orders by means of its very nature. According to Cedola, one might gauge 'il grado di declinazione fantastica delle sue novelle' by considering two 'requisiti minimi' of the genre: 'la violazione della frontiera tra naturale e soprannaturale, con la sconcertante sovrapposizione e coesistenza di due ordini considerati reciprocamente inconciliabili'; 'il mancato recupero dell'equilibrio iniziale', for which 'la violazione apre una crisi nel sistema gnoseologico del mondo narrato, instaurando un dubbio permanente, irrisolvibile, riguardo alla natura degli eventi' (10).

On both a gnoseological-ontological and narratological level, the occult, ecstatic dis-order introduces a rift within the normative, rational, and known order, that cannot be amended. What is at stake is a dialectical tension between the normative paradigms deriving from the materialist, positivist *diktat* and a truth that resists these paradigms and the limiting categories it sponsors, a truth often related to an *altrove* that comes from within. The 'fascino' and 'modernità' of Capuana's occult tales is indeed 'nell'affiorare, che essi adombrano, dell'*oltre* dentro di noi' (Cedola 12).[390] The occult dis-order at work in the short stories analysed refers to an Otherness which comprises, yes, the spirits of the dead, but also the living spirits that reside within us, the different components of our inner existence.[391] The reader of the Sicilian writer's occult production is faced with a return of the dead,

[388] By investigating the notion of 'anomalia', comprising 'ciò che non rientra nella norma', Capuana allows us to determine 'il principio della distinzione e potenzialmente della frattura rispetto all'ordine sociale' (Michelacci 2015: 10).
[389] Scartozzi tellingly refers to Capuana's *oeuvre* as an 'opera-ombra', '[e]spressione di una sotto-cultura – meglio, di una *counterculture*', aiming at 'celebrare le frontiere esplorative/conoscitive "prenotate" dal presente' (607).
[390] An '*oltre* psichico-spettrale' as a result of which 'il fantastico capuaniano pare già evidentemente leggibile in una prospettiva proto-novecentesca, dove ai misteri del soprannaturale subentrano gli enigmi dell'"incosciente"' (Cedola 60; 12).
[391] In 'Lettera di uno scettico' Capuana will write, in Pirandellian terms: 'il nostro io è doppio, triplo, quadruplo e forse infinitamente multiplo' (1974c: 149). His short stories, Petraglia remarks, 'illustrate[s] the disunity of the modern subject' (135).

but also a return and a manifestation of the hidden within,[392] i.e., the unconscious. The site enabling this twofold occult *oltre*/*altrove* to manifests itself is ecstasy. It is through experiences of ecstasies that Capuana's characters confront the outer and inner occult. The ecstatic phenomena the Sicilian writer includes in his short stories, from magnetic to Spiritualistic trances, both channel and embody that resurfacing/manifestation, allowing for the emergence of a second, ecstatic self, driven by occult, unconscious energies that transgress the boundaries of the natural, normal/normative, as well as conscious, order.[393]

[392] Sometimes a return of the repressed, to use Freudian vocabulary and bearing in mind Francesco Orlando's theory of literature as the site of a *ritorno del represso*.

[393] The use of the verb transgress must be stressed as it aptly conveys the transgressive charge inherent to phenomena of ecstasy that challenge an established order casting those who experience them outside of such order. Cedola notes that Capuana's characters express 'un'incontrollabile carica trasgressiva' '[n]el sogno, nell'allucinazione artistica o spiritica, o nel delirio amoroso' that places them 'al di fuori della comunità' (38). This transgressive, ecstatic charge draws Capuana close to the production of his Scapigliati predecessors, where the 'immersione nei più oscuri recessi della psicologia' or the 'sconfinamento nell'inesplorato orizzonte della parapsicologia', an 'immersion' which can be regarded as ecstatic, takes the form of a 'trasgressione demoniaca delle norme che regolano il costume e la mentalità di un'epoca' (Ghidetti 2008: 34).

10. Beyond the Gender Principle: Queer Dis-Order in D'Annunzio's Ecstatic *Le martyre de Saint Sebastien*

Reviewing D'Annunzio's *Giovanni Episcopo* (1892) and *L'Innocente* (1892), Capuana accused the writer from Abruzzo to have abandoned himself to 'la conturbata sentimentalità russa', 'trasmodando' (1898: 83, 88-89). In his opinion, D'Annunzio's early-1890s creations were reproducing the morbid characters of Russian novels, characters who did not appear to be 'in uno stato normale' and were 'tutti, o quasi tutti, nevrotici esaltati, gente da consegnarsi nelle mani dello Charcot e del Lombroso' (Capuana 1898: 87-88). The Sicilian writer ended his essay by expressing his longing for the day in which the writer from Abruzzo would free himself 'da quella tabe patologica e corrotta che ora ispira le sue creazioni' and give birth to 'una nuova opera d'arte virile' as a 'rinnovato' 'italiano schietto' (1898: 111). In Capuana's commentary, the sensuality, passion, inebriation (i.e., ecstasy) at work in D'Annunzio's *œuvre* are perceived as marks of a pathological corruption standing in opposition to virility. The lack of virility the Sicilian writer implicitly detected in *Giovanni Episcopo* and *L'Innocente* is at the centre of the charges that other critics, less well disposed towards D'Annunzio, brought against him. If Benedetto Croce pointed to the 'tormentose visioni falliche' that haunt the protagonist of *L'Innocente*, and that, 'it is implied, also plague the author' (1929, 4: 199), Carlo Salinari saw in D'Annunzio the exponent of an 'effeminate sensuality', advising that he would have done 'better' to abandon his 'regno effeminato' (1960: 81). For both critics, Spackman glosses, the writer from Abruzzo is 'a Midas who evirates all who come into contact with him' (1989: 28). An 'evirato' (147) is how Andrea Lo Forte Randi, the most strenuous critic of D'Annunzio's effeminacy and lack of virility, dubs him. In his essay on the writer, tellingly entitled *La Superfemmina abruzzese* (1914), Lo Forte Randi refers to D'Annunzio as a 'corrottissimo ed effeminatissimo scrittore' (69), fooling his self-proclaimed 'formidabile mascolinità superumana' (144).[394]

The feminisation of the male sex the above-mentioned critics perceived in D'Annunzio's characters was being investigated at the time by Lombroso who, coherently with his pathologising, hetero-cis-normative, and misogynistic stance, noted a link between degeneration and feminisation, and more generally between degeneration and the 'confusion' between the sexes. In *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* he writes: 'L'influenza della degenerazione tende sempre più a ravvicinare e a confondere i due sessi' (Lombroso 1893: 416).[395] The undermining of gender identities, particularly the challenging of the male/masculine identity,[396] was regarded as a

[394] The critic argues that since 'un impotente, non essendo, fisiologicamente parlando, nè maschio nè femina, può, a piacer suo, immaginarsi maschio o immaginarsi femina', 'ecco perchè, non solo nei personaggi *maschi* a modo suo, ma anche nei personaggi *femmine* a modo suo, il D'Annunzio non fa che ritrarre sè stesso' (Lo Forte Randi 68).
[395] Quoted in Spackman 1989: 29-30.
[396] For a transnational recognition of 'maschilità decadenti' in the period under study see Pustianaz and Villa.

threat not only to the health of the individual body but to that of the national body of the newly unified state. Degeneration and feminisation were brought together and opposed by a national rhetoric that advocated the virile as a sign of the nation's strength and health, rejecting the effeminate as a mark of civil and moral decay.[397] Despite being scorned as the 'grande nevrastenico della letteratura italiana' (Mantegazza 1897: 282) and a symbol of the moral, cultural, and social decay that was allegedly afflicting the country, D'Annunzio acted as though he was concerned for the health of the nation and partly incorporated the rhetoric of virility that was being employed as an antidote to the country's decay. A central aspect in his writings and thought, the 'fear for the integrity of the male body' (Duncan 23) matched a fear for the integrity of the national body.[398] In 'La parola di Farsaglia' (1895), for instance, 'his proposals for the renewal of Italy are inseparable from a militant conception of masculine self-affirmation in which the male body is the grounding metaphor of his rhetorical thrust' (Duncan 23). Resorting to Spackman, moreover, Duncan dubs D'Annunzio's 'anxiety over masculine identity' – i.e., one of his 'most abiding concerns, underpinning both his political and creative writings' – as 'entirely Lombrosian' (23).

The image of D'Annunzio as the inhabitant of a 'regno effeminato' and the sponsor of a pathologic emasculation clashes with his own concerns over the masculine identity and his self-fabricated portrait as virile, military leader.[399] On the one hand the Abruzzo writer asserted a rhetoric of virility linked to a project of national renewal that ought to bring to the country an order grounded in vigour and potency. On the other hand he challenged that rhetoric, in the life he led, the relations he formed, and, finally, in the works he wrote. Already in novels like *Il piacere* (1889) and *L'Innocente* D'Annunzio revealed the spectres that haunted the phallocentric order, exposing 'a crisis in late nineteenth-century normative heterosexuality', the sparks of a 'perplexing fluidity of masculine boundaries', and 'the process by virtue of which masculinity' fails to appear 'as a solidified essence' (Duncan 20, 21, 24).[400] In *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* (1911) he seems not only to be vindicating this failure, somehow laying claim onto the criticisms of emasculation he received, but, even, to be going beyond the normative binarism of masculine and feminine identity, pointing to a heterodox, highly subversive gender and sexual order.

In *Queer Dramaturgies* Campbell and Farrier describe as follows moments of performances they have witnessed involving 'gender unrecognisable' bodies, naked bodies, bodies singularly

[397] The same goes for the '[m]edical debates on same-sex desire in late nineteenth-century Italy', which, as Ross points out 'developed within a broader cultural context which was awash with discussions about the character of the new Italians' (2015a: 29).
[398] 'The male body and the body politic are equally vulnerable. The violability of masculine identity is the violability of national identity' (Spackman 1989: 23).
[399] On D'Annunzio's 'self-fashioning' as a national '*poeta soldato*' during WWI and Fascism see Pieri 335-338.
[400] Ducan mentions Spackman's detection of the presence of a 'fluidity of gender boundaries in relation to D'Annunzio's early work' (24).

dressed up dancing in logs, bleeding bodies –: 'We recognised that these moments were transgressive, and that something was happening that felt out of place with our expectations. […] This "something", we realised, was queer' (1). They further specify the meaning of this transgressive, queer 'something' by analysing the effect those performances had on them:

> it was excessive, flowing over meaning-making in the moment – and at some level we sensed a border had been transgressed, crossed or had collapsed. The works […] seemed, paradoxically, both indecipherable and full of meaning at the same time; they were exciting, alluring and a bit dangerous;
>
> […] the performance of these key moments allowed for what felt like a queerly transitory suspension of the regular rules of sociality. […] this small suspension meant that we could contemplate other ways of being in the world, play out non-normative identities and imagine, rehearse and form new ways of expressing an experience of the world. (Campbell and Farrier 2-3)

With *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* D'Annunzio stages precisely this. A show that is exciting, alluring, but also a bit dangerous, full of meaning and at the same time indecipherable. A show faced with which the spectator perceives that borders have been broken, limits crossed and transgressed. A show entailing a suspension of social and relational norms, allowing those who witness it to contemplate new modalities of being, identities, and practices that challenge the hegemonic normative order.[401] In Hartford's words, the result is 'deliberately, provocatively confusing and open: queer' (47).

Through his 1911 play D'Annunzio not only gives birth to the first artistic depiction in which Saint Sebastian is portrayed as an androgynous being interpreted by a woman and openly designated as the object of homoerotic desire, thus making a fundamental contribution to the creation of the saint as a gay icon and, as Techmański (68) notes, his assimilation by homosexual culture.[402] Resorting to the disruptive, queer nature of Sebastian's persona,[403] he also stages a veritable queer spectacle, based

[401] According to Halperin, the word *queer* acquires meaning exactly from its 'oppositional relation to the norm': 'Queer is by definition *whatever* is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant', it 'demarcates […] a position vis-à-vis the normative' (62).

[402] 'La voie est frayée en 1911 par le livret de Gabrièle D'Annunzio *Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien*' (Techmański 68). In the homophobic words of iconologist Francesco Danieli, '[t]utto ebbe inizio da *Le Martyre de Sain Sébastien*'; meaning by that 'tutto' the spreading of the conviction of a homosexual Saint Sebastian, i.e., the 'infamante bugia', 'morbo' that would have made famous 'il povero san Sebastiano' (43). For a recognition of Sebastian as a gay saint – 'a gay idol', 'an enduring trope of modern gay fascination', who 'has essentially grown up alongside modern notions of sexuality and the formation of gay consciousness' (Summer 321-322) – see Dall'Orto, Kaye, Prower, and Summer.

[403] Goldman points to the 'volumes of the queer representational strategies through which he [Sebastian] is deployed' (quoted in Summer 322). On the queerness, in particular, of Sebastian's martyr, see Hartford 36-56.

on gender ambiguity,[404] on the dismantling of heteronormative orientations and identities, on the will to arouse astonishment and bewilderment by virtue of this ambiguity and dismantling.[405] While D'Annunzio was certainly not a precursor of queer activism, his creation did express that fin-de-siècle 'sexual anarchy' which, according to Showalter, bore the 'embryonic stirrings of a new order' (18).

Le martyre's queer dis-order called into question the moralising and pathologising views on sex and gender endorsed by the Italian political, scientific, and religious establishments according to which non-normative identities and sexual behaviours were 'a threat to society', 'powerfully disruptive elements in a social order that had to be preserved by all means' (Benadusi, Bernardini, Bianco et al. X).[406] Disavowing the 'control' of 'certain powers ascribed to nature, heteronormativity, the Church, and the State' (Batson 39-40), D'Annunzio's Sebastian retrieved those disruptive elements and ended up challenging the established norms of the period. The powerful trope through which he conveys such queer, non-normative dis-order is Sebastian's ecstasy, his mystical *jouissance*: i.e., that extraordinary state in which all differences are abolished and the self is projected in a liminal beyond that erases all boundaries. When the *Martyre* premieres at Théâtre du Châtelet in Paris on the 22nd of May 1911,[407] the audience are faced with the drama of a saint who is loved by other men and is interpreted by an androgynous woman, the Russian dancer Ida Rubinštejn. For five hours, they are trapped in their seats, captivated, and troubled by the performance of this Russian *ballerina* as a male saint who, tied naked to a pole, takes delight in being cruelly pierced by archers who claim to love him.[408] Such dilacerating ecstasy allows D'Annunzio not only to display the above-mentioned queer dis-order, but also to reveal drives that are hidden within the self and compel it to transgress and shatter not just the gender and sexual boundaries defined by the hegemonic order but the very frontiers of the living, fleshly identity.

In my analysis I will offer an overview of the genealogy of the *Martyre*'s queer, ecstatic dis-order, retracing both the aesthetic penchants and personal experiences that have informed D'Annunzio's designation of the saint and the play's overall composition. Drawing on queer theory,

[404] Hartford remarks Sebastian's 'evident gender-queerness' (46).
[405] Gullace's claim that D'Annunzio's French writings, including *Le martyre*, 'are of peripheral importance' (207) must be redressed precisely in light of the play's underlying queerness. The play's queer potential implicitly emerges in a 'queer opera' like *Les Feluettes* (2016) by Michel Marc Bouchard and Kevin March, including a scene where students attending a Catholic school 'rehearse the scandalous and sensual play, *Le Martyre de saint Sébastien*' (see Sutherland 209). Harford explicitly refers to *Le martyre* as an 'example of a culturally religious and syncretic queer-martyr text', in which D'Annunzio 'explored autonomous variations on the theme of queerness in […] a direct and compact way' (47).
[406] E.g., transvestitism, which 'took up a major role in post-unification Italy', was 'considered, and treated, to be a social problem, an "emergenza"' (Benadusi, Bernardini and Guazzo 21).
[407] The Italian premiere would take place at La Scala in Milan on the 4th of March 1926.
[408] An article published on *La Civiltà Cattolica* the day after the premiere points to the 'sguardi avidi, lampeggianti lussuria, degli spettatori' ('Sensualità' 1911: 320); Faglioni refers to the 'senso di sorpresa e di disagio' perceived 'di fronte a questo ambiguo Sebastiano' (1968: 65).

I will subsequently analyse the *Martyre*'s text, focusing on Rubinštejn's performance, and Sebastian's ecstatic dance and mystical *jouissance*.

From the *Intermezzo* dedicated to him in 1883 to the *Leda senza cigno* (1916), where D'Annunzio describes the inebriating feelings experienced at the sight of Mantegna's *San Sebastiano* at the Cà d'Oro in Venice, the figure of the saintly archer emerges as a 'persistente *leit-motiv*' (Mirabile 2013a: 25), an 'obsession' even (Woodhouse 56), in the writer's artistic and personal journey. As he discloses in an interview with Carlo Gaspare Sarti, the attraction towards Sebastian, a veritable 'fede pel giovinetto sanguinoso', has ancient roots: 'Il mio culto per San Sebastiano, pel saettato atleta di Cristo, è antichissimo. Risale al periodo umanistico, della mia prima giovinezza' (Sarti 208).[409]

Although D'Annunzio consults numerous textual sources on the life of the saint, assisted by French medievalist Gustave Cohen,[410] *Le martyre* is mostly inspired by the many iconographic representations devoted to the saint from the Renaissance onwards.[411] In such works Sebastian is portrayed as the privileged embodiment of the androgyne, that 'sesso artistico per eccellenza' in which 'si fondono armoniosamente le bellezze particolari e parziali delle diversità' (Mazzocchi Doglio 57). As Chomel observes, the Dannunzian saint has its origin in the 'corrispondenza consacrata dalla tradizione umanistica tra il mitico Ermafrodito e l'immagine del martire', and is 'rappresentato secondo i canoni della pittura quattrocentesca, nel suo carattere emblematico di figurazione dell'ideale Androgino' (193). Until the fifteenth century Sebastian was portrayed as an adult, almost an old man, clothed and with a beard. It is only with the Renaissance that the portrayal of the martyr undergoes a radical change, gaining a conspicuous erotic charge together with an androgynous revisitation of his features, as shown by Il Sodoma's portrait (1525) of an 'illanguidito, femminilizzato' Sebastian (Dall'Orto) (Figure 23). Generally, the young and ephebic martyr pierced by arrows acquires 'toni di giovinezza, bellezza efebica e languor' and an expression that seems to be 'soffusa dal languore di un'estasi mistico-erotica' (Chomel 193).

[409] According to Lo Forte Randi, D'Annunzio claimed that his 'amore del sanguinante giovanetto dal *mito Cristiano*' had been inspired by 'la più nervosa e più nobile scrittrice italiana', i.e., his 'adorabile amica' Serao (186). Referring to the latter as the 'spregiudicata scrittrice dai pur troppo liberi costumi, che ebbe un giorno la faccia tosta di scrivere il panegirico di *Santa Teresa*' (186), Lo Forte Randi's critique brings together D'Annunzio and Serao in view of the alleged subversiveness characterising their accounts of two of the most famous ecstatic saints: Sebastian and Theresa.

[410] In particular the *Legenda aurea* by Jacobus de Voragine, which he read in the French translation by Théodore de Wyzewa (see Serra 579).

[411] See Summer on 'Sebastian's broad and long-standing presence in queer artistic reproduction' (321). On *Le martyre*'s 'visual intertextualities' see Mirabile 2013b and 2014.



Figure 23

It is precisely in the artistic context of the Italian Renaissance – when Italian cities are rumoured to be ‘des havres de paix pour les sodomites’ – that Ressouni-Demigneux discerns the emergence of a ‘regard homosexuel’ towards Sebastian (6, 30-31). The creation of the aesthetic type ‘de l’adolescent ambigu’ (Chastel quoted by Ressouni-Demigneux 26), developed in Verrocchio’s studio around 1470-1475, is incorporated into the depiction of the saint. His new features of ambiguous beauty and erotic nudity transform him into an object of desire in the eyes of the ‘dévot inquiet’ (Ressouni-Demigneux 39); more specifically, an object of homoerotic desire. As Baston remarks after having highlighted the Greek influences underlying the Renaissance representation of the saint, ‘Sebastian is an object of same-sex desire; his pictorial representations spring from and to the attraction of a same-sex gaze’ (13). In the words of art historian Louis Réau, after the fifteenth

century Saint Sebastian is left with nothing but 'le patronage compromettant et inavouable des sodomites ou homosexuels, séduits par sa nudité d'éphèbe apollinien, glorifiée par Le Sodoma' (1192). It is this 'compromettant et inavouable' aspect, that androgynous and highly erotic ambiguity capable of troubling the devotee, that D'Annunzio retraces to design his own Sebastian. His aim is to provoke the same 'ambiguous *frissons*' and 'intermingled pleasure' (Batson 14) elicited by the portraits devoted to the saint from the fifteenth century onwards, depicting his beautiful, androgynous body languidly penetrated by arrows.

In D'Annunzio's *Martyre*, the retrieval of Sebastian's Renaissance iconographic tradition intertwines with the symbolist aesthetics contemporary to the writer and the overall decadent cultural frame. The androgynous and homoerotic reshaping the saint undergoes from the fifteenth century is retrieved, filtered, and enhanced by the *fin-de-siècle* culture.[412] Mazzocchi Doglio remarks that in his mystery play D'Annunzio expresses 'compiutamente' the myth of the androgynous [413] by 'ricollegandosi al gusto europeo del tempo' and, thus, offering his 'contributo, anche se tardivo a un *milieu* che aveva fatto dell'ermafroditismo un tema privilegiato' (60-61). A veritable 'ossessione' (Praz 315) for all decadent literature, the androgynous type incorporated the transgressive features of homoeroticism, ambiguity, morbidity, and a singular saintly and transcendent aura.[414] Wholly reverberating such features, Saint Sebastian came to be regarded as the 'oblique emblem of erotic emancipation, a paradoxical figure of passive yet triumphant ecstasy', symbolising 'spiritual paralysis, sexual disorder, and general crisis' (Kaye 1999a: 270, 1999b: 120).[415] D'Annunzio creates his Sebastian by drawing on his decadent reception – in Kaye's words, the saint is 'a decadent *par excellence*' (1996: 270) –, making him both a 'simbolo di trascendenza divina' and an 'esempio di perversione' (Mazzochi Doglio 62, 67). Conveying the gender confusion and fluidity characteristic of Catholic saints portrayed by decadent art and literature – one has only to think of Gustave Moreau's languid and effeminate portraits of Sebastian (Figure 24) and Huysmans's reading of Saint Francis and Saint Teresa as examples of 'souls that seem to have mistaken their sex' (quoted in Mazzoni

[412] Summer claims that the works or 'Reinassance and Baroque artists inspired an explicitly homosexual cult of Saint Sebastian in the nineteenth century' (321).
[413] As noted by Spackman, already in *Il piacere* the writer provides an example of androgyny and gender ambiguity in the character of Maria Ferres, whose voice is described as 'ambigua, […] quasi bisessuale, duplice, androginica; di due timbri' (D'Annunzio 1955: 169 quoted in Spackman 1989: 72 and 2004: 154).
[414] In his 'Hymne à l'androgyne' Josephin Péladan describes the androgynous as the 'very holy sex, the only one to have gone up to heaven' (quoted in Mazzoni 1996: 135). On the fin-de-siècle characterisation of the androgynous type see Mazzoni 1996: 134-135 and Eliade 1962: 123.
[415] Quoted in Batson 15, 41.

1996: 134) –,[416] D'Annunzio expresses that fin-de-siècle subversion of gender role and sexual norms denounced by society and the establishment as decadent deviation.[417]



Figure 24

Coined by the Italian legal doctor Arrigo Tamassia in 1878,[418] sexual inversion, comprising both homosexuality and transsexuality,[419] was diagnosed as an illness, an element of disorder that

[416] Observing that 'D'Annunzio appropriated for his own purposes the erotic and mystical obsessions of 'decadent' art and literature, Re includes among his 'decadent' sources 'the paintings of Gustave Moreau' (10).
[417] According to Showalter, the word decadence became a 'pejorative label applied by the bourgeoisie to everything that seemed unnatural, artificial, and perverse', including 'homosexuality' (169).
[418] See Benadusi, Bernardini and Guazzo 15.
[419] From 1870, the date of Westphal's article on 'contrary sexual sensations', homosexuality was no longer exclusively linked to a 'type of sexual relation' but to 'a certain way of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself', to 'a kind of interior androgyny, a hermaphrodism of the soul' (Foucault 1978: 43).

ought to be fought and expelled from society. Challenging 'the dominant, static model of sexuality', the 'invertiti' provided an example of 'individual, as well as political, emancipation' (Benadusi, Bernardini and Guazzo 21) which the establishment, represented by the State, the official science, and the Church, regarded as a dangerous threat to the stability and natural/normal identity of the individual. Ross observes that for Mantegazza '[a]ny "inversion" of normative gendered performance becomes a harbinger of disaster, leading to "a violent disorder"' (2015b: 234). The androgynous and homosexual decadent image of Sebastian offered a significant example of such a disorderly threat. Sebastian's 'decadence' stems precisely from his 'exquisite embodiment of that which defied the natural' (Kaye 1996: 270). If on the one hand, his abnormal decadent portrait distressed his Catholic supporters, placing the saint 'at the center of a nineteenth-century cultural debate on the appropriate role of a Christian hero' (Kae 1996: 229), on the other hand, it turned him into 'a symbol of choice for writers […] who sought in his life the means of denoting same-sex male desire' (Levitz 427). Sebastian was 'employé à bon escient pour désigner explicitement la figure d'un "homosexuel-martyr"': Oscar Wilde, for instance, chose to take on the pseudonym of Sebastian Melmoth in honour of the 'famously *penetrated* Saint Sebastian' once he got out of prison in 1897 following his conviction for sodomy (Techmański 68). Aligning with the late-nineteenth-century rendering of Sebastian as an androgynous, homosexual martyr, D'Annunzio offered its first creative portrait,[420] presenting the saint as the representative of a counter-culture, an alternative order that challenged the gender and sexual normativity asserted by the hegemonic culture.

D'Annunzio's subversive portrayal of the saint does not solely stem from the aesthetic ideals and sources he championed, from the ephebic and virginal Renaissance Sebastians to the mystical and morbid decadent ones, but also from his personal experience, his being plunged into an environment characterised by the presence of nonconformist sexual practices and gender identities that questioned the normative bourgeoise order. As Fonio observes, D'Annunzio's 'obsession artistique' towards the saint is always filtered 'en clé autobiographique' (394).

According to D'Annunzio's own recollections, the first appearance of a biographical Sebastian in his life dates back to 1883 and his relationship with journalist Olga Ossani. On this occasion D'Annunzio himself experiences the sadomasochistic pleasure of being pierced like the saint by his lover. Naked and tied to a laurel tree in Villa Medici, he is assailed by the vampiresque kisses and bites of Ossani who, noticing the wounds caused by those violent acts, exclaims 'San Sebastiano!'; the identification with the martyr is confirmed by D'Annunzio who signs himself as

[420] The first writing explicitly associating Saint Sebastian with homosexuality is a piece of art criticism by Georges Eekhoud entitled *Saint Sébastien dans la peinture*, published in *Akademos* in February 1909. According to Daolmi and Senici, D'Annunzio might have consulted this source (163, nota 90).

San Sebastian in his correspondence with the journalist.[421] Another relationship linked to the genesis of the writer's characterisation of the saint is that with Natalia de Goloubeff, whom D'Annunzio starts associating with the 'ecstatic martyr' (Fleischer 43-44) after she admires Mantegna's portrayal of Sebastian at the Ca' d'oro in Venice. As Andreoli points out, the letters exchanged between the two 'registrano l'immancabile visione dell'*inquiétante beauté* androgina in un gioco sadomasochista' for which '[d]a entrambe le parti si ostenta […] un erotico martirio' (460).[422] D'Annunzio's relationships with de Goloubeff and Ossani, involving nonconformist sentimental and sexual practices, mostly contribute to informing the sadomasochistic aspects characterising the writer's portrayal of the saint.[423] Those he entertains with Romaine Brooks, Ida Rubinštejn, and Robert de Montesquiou during the period of composition of the *Martyre* play a fundamental role in defining Sebastian's androgyny and his designation as an object of homoerotic desires, in addition to enhancing his sadomasochistic charge.

After moving to Paris, D'Annunzio begins a relationship with American artist Romaine Brooks, a prominent representative of the city's lesbian subculture. The painter's homosexual relationships are well known: Chiara dubs her as a 'lesbica conclamata' (206). Married to John Ellington Brooks, himself a member of the homosexual community in Capri, she reaches with him an agreement allowing both to live their sexuality freely, becoming the lover of, among others, Marchioness Luisa Casati, pianist Renata Borgatti, and writer Sibilla Aleramo. As De Cossart points out, Brooks' relationship with D'Annunzio is somewhat extraordinary in that it constitutes an 'unexpected deviation' (31) in a relational existence otherwise fundamentally homosexual. The Abruzzo writer, who has already had the opportunity to experience an open and emancipationist environment through his relationship with Eleonora Duse and his introduction to the so-called 'Duse webs' (Benadusi, Bernardini and Guazzo 22), deepens, by associating himself with Brooks, his involvement with spaces characterised by practices and desires that question conformist norms.

Brooks' name is inextricably tied to that of another woman bearing ephebic features and with whom the American painter is connected by a romantic and artistic partnership, a woman that together with de Goloubeff and Brooks, who are also 'donne efebiche', completes for D'Annunzio 'una certa iconografia da cui sarebbe nata l'immagine del santo' (Bisicchia 155): Ida Rubinštejn. The encounter with the Russian dancer is the real 'choc créateur' (de Montera and Tosi 45) leading D'Annunzio to

[421] See D'Annunzio's notes dating 29th of March 1926, and his correspondence with Ossani in May-June 1885 and on the 27th of February 1932, when he wrote to her: 'E, tanti anni prima di comporre il *Mistero di San Sebastiano*, non fui per te l'Arciere maculato? Non te ne ricordi? Non ti ricordi della selva alta di Villa Medici, e du'un di quei tronchi che sorresse il mio supplizio guadioso?' (quoted in Andreoli 126-127).
[422] See D'Annunzio's letters to de Gouloubeff dating November-December 1908 in Andreoli 460-461.
[423] It must be borned in mind, as observed in Part 1, that sadism and masochism were regarded as sexual perversions/pathologies and listed by von Krafft-Ebing in his *Psychopathologia sexualis*.

the creation of the *Martyre*'s androgynous and languid Sebastian (Figures 25-26). D'Annunzio confesses to Tommaso Antongini: 'Sono quelle le gambe di San Sebastiano che sto cercando da anni!' (Serra 577). A 'miscela di freddezza androgina e di impulso sessuale' (Serra 577), Rubinštejn appears to the writer as the living embodiment of the saint and wins him over from the moment he lays his eyes on her, seeing her act in *Une nuit de Cléopatre* and *Shéhérazade*, when he undergoes an 'epifania plastica in cui si sommano le componenti dell'invenzione poetica che domina il *Saint Sébastien*: l'androginità' (Chomel 191). It is through the sight of the Russian dancer's 'striking androgynous appearance' (Sheppard 101) that D'Annunzio's Sebastian acquires a bodily form, Rubinštejn possessing 'the ideal body […], the ideal legs, the ideal air of sexual ambiguity for the saint' (De Cossart 30). In Lo Forte Randi's scornful words, '[s]e l'Immaginifico non avesse incontrato la Rubinstein, che è una femina mascoleggiante, allo stesso modo che il Divo è un maschio femmineggiante, egli […] non avrebbe concepito quella marionetta androgine che è il suo San Sebastiano' (204). Like Brooks, Rubinštejn embodies the type of the New Woman, a free and independent subject who revolutionises the normative models imposed by the patriarchal society.[424] Not complying with any specific gender identity, choosing to remain somehow 'unmarked', Rubinštejn gives birth through her artistic activity to some of the 'most powerful visual representations of nonconformist desire of her time' (Levitz 414-415). Seduced and troubled by her performances, her audience end up fetichising her 'luxurious, androgynous body', relishing her 'transgressive sexuality' (Levitz 430). D'Annunzio's decision to choose Rubinštejn for his Sebastian can be attributed precisely to his desire to nuance the differences between sexes, creating an ambiguity through which he can trouble the spectators and bring them to relish this *troublement*.[425]

[424] She is 'the phallic woman of the Decadence' and 'an icon of sexual inversion' (Wollen 20).
[425] To this end, D'Annunzio also goes back to the tradition of medieval mysteries and their custom to make young boys interpret female roles (Serra 580).



Figure 25

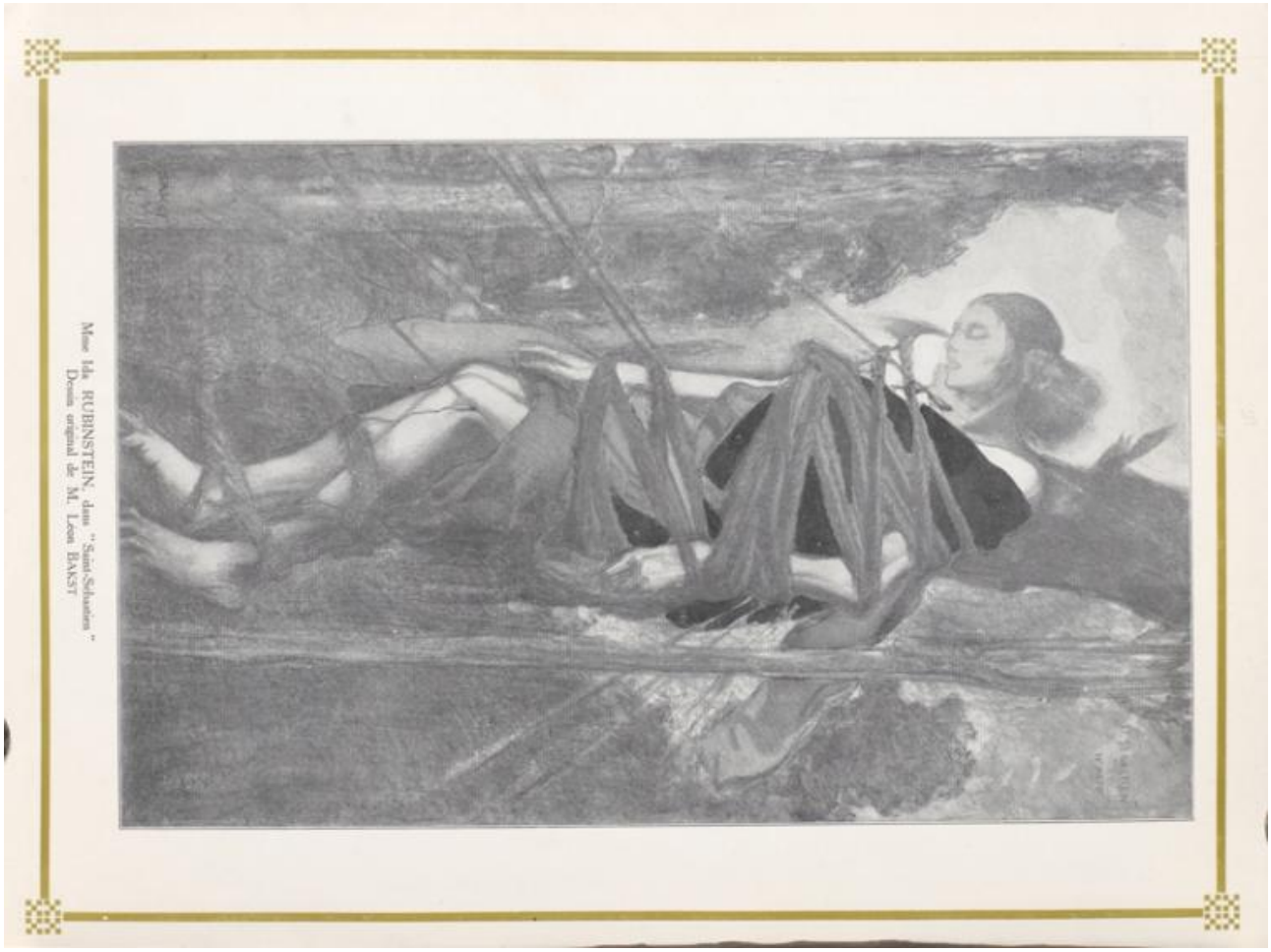


Figure 26

As for the relationship between D'Annunzio and Rubinštejn, despite the writer's own wishes, leading to a sort of love triangle with Brooks,[426] it does not seem to have taken on a romantic and/or sexual form. Their intense creative partnership,[427] however, reveals significant sadomasochistic features. Antongini tells of being sent to Paris from Arcachon, where D'Annunzio composed the *Martyre*, to purchase 'una dozzina di magnifici archi […] con la relativa dotazione di frecce', i.e., 'strumenti di tortura' (Serra 579) the writer has likely employed to sadomasochistically imitate and/or make Rubinštejn imitate Saint Sebastian. Brooks qualifies the writer's attitude towards Rubinštejn as 'sadistic' (Levitz 448). The dancer herself – whose 'masochistic submission' (Levitz 438) to D'Annunzio is evident to everyone involved in the play – will confess to being tortured by the writer at the Milanese premiere of the play when D'Annunzio allegedly left her hanging in ropes for more than half an hour during his opening speech to the audience. Sheppard suggests that the scene of the saint's piercing in the *Martyre* was 'an opportunity for its misogynistic author to take morbid delight

[426] 'It was rumored that Rubinstein was madly in love with Brooks, that Brooks left her for a relationship with D'Annunzio, and that D'Annunzio in turn left Brooks for Rubinstein, who rejected his advances' (Vertinsky 143, note 86).
[427] See Fleischer 19-92.

in seeing Rubinstein shot with arrows on stage' (101). As in Ossiani and de Goloubeff's case, moreover, the name of Sebastian returns in D'Annunzio's correspondence with Rubinštejn and Brooks, their relationship appearing to be grounded in a game of gender subversion inextricably linked to the figure of the archer: both artists sign themselves and are addressed with the name of the saint in an ambiguous alternation of the masculine and feminine forms.

Finally, the person who, in all likelihood, presents Rubinštejn to D'Annunzio is Robert de Montesquiou (the inspiration for Proust's baron de Charlus), who welcomes and introduces the Italian writer to Parisian aristocratic and intellectual circles. Andreoli suggests that the encounter between D'Annunzio and Rubinštejn originates from 'un interesse triangolare per chi [de Montesquiou] l'ha pilotato' (Andreoli 462). The French Baron is in fact infatuated with D'Annunzio and desperately tries to conquer him, but the Abruzzo writer sadistically rejects his *avances*. Perhaps even identifying with the pierced martyr, de Montesquiou plays a pivotal role in encouraging D'Annunzio to create his Sebastian.[428] Andreoli points out that 'la scelta di un Sebastiano androgino […] trova senz'altro incentivo nella complicità fra Gabriele e Robert' (462), together with, it should be added, the choice of a Sebastian object of homoerotic desires.

Brooks, Rubinštejn, and de Montesquiou draw D'Annunzio close to the world of the New Woman and the New Man, i.e., a world of figures who posed 'more or less explicitly and self-consciously – as alternative models against the rigid, dominant models of sexuality (and identity)' (Benadusi, Bernardini and Guazzo 21), 'blurring the borders between the sexes' (Showalter 169). The powerful appearance on the Italian scene of the New Woman and the New Man along with other queer subjects – '[h]omosexuals, bisexuals, transvestites, transgenders, hermaphrodites, and other creatures of uncertain sexual and personal identity' (Benadusi, Bernardini, Bianco et al. IX-X) – was received by the State as a threat to the social and moral order, by official science as a deviation from the normal state of health, by the Church as a devilish perversion.[429] Homosexuality, encompassing all non-normative gender expressions and sexual orientations, was 'viewed as an element in a more general pattern of social disorder' comprising other 'bodies of the socially undesirable' (like 'the urban poor, people form the South, women') (Duncan 19) that put at risk the integrity of the national body.

The accusations of degeneration brought by other nations to the country, pointing to the '"[d]egenerated" aliens […] roaming Italy's beautiful coasts' (Benadusi, Bernardini and Guazzo 16),

[428] Lisciani-Petrini remarks that the saint's 'singolare erotismo androgino e sado-masochista' was for the Baron 'un motore di attrazione irresistibile' (421).
[429] Addressing the disapproval of homosexual conduct by the Italian post-unification establishment, Benadusi, Bernardini, Bianco et al. observe that 'scientists endorsed […] and re-affirmed the "old", traditional Catholic morality' (X).

made the matter particularly urgent, soliciting the alliance of the established authorities.[430] Such a repressive alliance motivated even more the need for a space of freedom disrupting the 'puntigliosa tassonomia dei comportamenti, delle abitudini, dell'estetica dei due sessi' (Schettini 7) promoted by the official apparatuses, giving voice to a dis-order that could challenge and counteract such normative standpoints. 'Sexual "perversions," new ways to think about sex and practice it accordingly, new genders, rebellious – as well as outrageous – behaviours and attitudes' (Benadusi, Bernardini, Bianco et al. X) came to mark the last quarter of the nineteenth and the first decades of the twentieth centuries. D'Annunzio found himself among these non-normative identities and practices, incorporating a queer dis-order that influenced his designation of Saint Sebastian in the *Martyre* as well as his own way of living. Sadomasochism was not the only non-normative aspect informing the Abruzzo writer's life experience. D'Annunzio himself gives voice, and body, to that 'sfida alla staticità e alla stabilità dei ruoli di uomini e donne' which followed the 'rigida codificazione dei modelli di genere tentata nei decenni postunitari' (Schettini 7).

According to an interview by Matteo Collura with Cesare Musatti, 'l'uomo D'Annunzio […] conteneva in sé delle componenti androgine abbastanza forti' (quoted in Mazzocchi Doglio 55). Lo Forte Randi disdainfully remarks that 'dai diciotto ai venticinque anni, il D'Annunzio […] sarebbe parso una appetitosa educanda' (181). Rather striking is Eduardo Scarfoglio's portrait of D'Annunzio in *Il libro di Don Chisciotte* (1885). The Neapolitan writer describes him as an effeminate, prey to both female and male desire, going as far as positioning him 'as a lesbian, the feminized object of female desire' (Duncan 22).[431] D'Annunzio himself once subjected his body's alterity to scrutiny, explicitly questioning the borders between sexes. I am referring to the intercourse he enjoyed with a lesbian woman in 1929, which he describes in the following terms:

> Je suis *en elle* et contre elle, cuisses contre cuisses, poitrine contre poitrine. Elle bouge, pour *se frotter* à moi. Elle croit être femme contre femme. Et enfin elle prononce un nom: Sélysette. Je seconde son illusion trybade. La puissance de mon imagination me fait *une femme*. Je la supplie, moi-même, de m'appeler Sélysette. Je suis femme! (D'Annunzio 1990: 101-102)

In 1927 the Abruzzo writer had written that '[n]ell'apice della volutà', i.e., ecstasy, there is 'l'abolizione delle persone, la scomparsa del singolare' (D'Annunzio 1990: 100-101). In 1929 he experienced this first hand, undergoing a *jouissance* that led him to dissolve his own individuality, to the mute identity, and feel the momentary illusion of becoming a woman, ecstasy thus momentously

[430] As Ross notes, '[c]ampaigns were launched to rid Italy of its reputation as a locus for licentiousness and to strengthen "moral" values and national patriotism' (2015a: 8).
[431] See Scarfoglio 196, 201.

exposing him to queer dis-order. The episode, described by Duncan as a 'transgender identification' (22), follows by many years the composition of the *Martyre* but points to D'Annunzio's disposition to question gender roles and sexual practices. In the play, similarly to what happens in the aforementioned sexual episode, the challenging of gender and sexual borders takes place at the specific moment of Sebastian's apical pleasure, in a mystical-erotic ecstasy that leads to both the spiritual and physical shattering of the saint.

Set to music by Debussy,[432] written in octosyllable verses and archaic French,[433] the play is divided into five *mansions*, following one another like the stained-glass windows of a cathedral whose 'maestro vetraio' (Sarti 223) is D'Annunzio: *La Cour des Lys*, *La Chambre Magique*, *Le Concile des Faux Dieux*, *Le Laurier Blessé*, *Le Paradis*. The *mansions* are preceded by the dedication to Maurice Barrés, in which the Abruzzo writer introduces himself as a novel Brunetto Latini. The association is motivated by the fact that Latini too had resorted to the French language in his writings and was commended by Dante for this. But there is more to this association. I believe it is possible that D'Annunzio is here offering an anti-dantesque re-reading of the *Commedia*. It is well known that Dante meets Latini in the circle of the sodomites (*Inferno*, XV). As Duncan points out, 'Dante's representation of the sodomites in the *Inferno* set a trend that saw homosexual practice function as the grounding metaphor for other forms of turpitude' (5). Bearing this in mind, it seems as though D'Annunzio goes back to Latini precisely with the aim of associating himself with that turpitude, somewhat reclaiming it, and displaying his Sebastian as the embodiment of a turpitude that, contrarily to Dante's consideration of sodomites as sinners, is positively encouraged.

Set against the backdrop of late-imperial Rome under Diocletian's reign, the play begins with twins Mark and Marcellian waiting to be executed following their conversion to Christianism. The two brothers are tied to columns, facing prefect Julius Andronicus. The heathens that surround the scene accuse the prefect of loving the twins and wanting to save them: 'tu aimes | ces gémeaux qui n'ont pas d'étoile, | Jule Andronique. | –Tu les aimes, | tu les aimes. | –Tu les ménages' (MSS 13). Right from the start, D'Annunzio stages a homoerotic love, foreshadowing Diocletian's infatuation with Sebastian. The latter is witnessing the scene as leader of the imperial archers and suddenly starts losing blood from his left hand '*dans une sorte de ravissement*' (MSS 17), a 'rapimento estatico'

[432] The musician provides 'an example of musical androgyny' (Sheppard 102) reflecting D'Annunzio's treatment of the androgynous theme.

[433] The choice to write in French was due to economic factors: assailed by debts, D'Annunzio 'had already sold all his future Italian work to his Milan publisher' and 'by writing in French, he […] could be paid again by a French publisher' (Fleischer 48). This said, as Ross observes, in a 1923 article Raffaele Olegna pointed to the significance of D'Annunzio's use of French as a language allowing him to 'write[s] more freely' on the topic of 'male-male desire' (Ross 2015a: 217). Noting the few '[p]ochi e rari […] accenni all'omossessualità' in modern Italian literature, Olegna claims: 'La letteratura francese è invece assai più ricca e lo stesso D'Annunzio, quando scrive in francese, non esita a presentarci nel *San Sebastiano* una figura androgine' and 'dell'omosessualismo bello e buono complicato da accenni sadici o masochistici' (271-272).

(Faglioni 59) which prevents him from feeling pain. Mazzoni links this 'unconventional acquisition of stigmata' (1996: 138) to Sebastian's feminine and hysteric connotations, pointing to the archer's symbolical menstruation: 'Visible and blatantly symbolic black blood is said to flow from his groin onto his pale thigh' (1996: 135). The scholar also mentions Beizer's study on nineteenth-century hysteria and his remark on how 'the specific preoccupation with menstrual disorders hides a more fundamental anxiety about menstruation *as* disorder, or the essential disorder of the female condition' (Mazzoni 1996: 136, note 68). Sebastian undergoes this menstruation-linked disorder as an experience of ecstasy, leading him into a sort of 'ravissement'.[434] Ecstatic dis-order, and more precisely a feminine/feminised ecstatic dis-order,[435] begins to manifest itself in Sebastian's flowing blood.

Worried about their leader, the archers express their love towards him, celebrating his inebriating beauty: '– Nous t'aimons, seigneur, nous t'aimons. | – Chef à la belle chevelure, | Tes archer t'aiment. | – Tes archers | T'aiment. | – Tu es beau. | – Tu es beau | comme Adonis' (MSS 17). This is the first declaration of love directed at Sebastian: a declaration of homoerotic love that men direct to another man who is interpreted by a woman. The gender ambiguity of the episode is such that, as Faglioni writes, 'noi non sappiamo – al primo momento – capire se gli arcieri siano come femmine di un "harem" tutte accese di passione per il loro prestante signore o se lo stesso Sebastiano sia una reincarnazione della femmina desiderabilissima' (60). When the mother of the two twins appears on the scene, she tries to persuade them to disavow the newly acquired Christian faith. Marcellian, who is regarded by the mother as a woman by virtue of his sweetness, almost gives in to her pressure. As soon as Sebastian starts speaking, however, both brothers firmly assert their faith to Christ, inebriated by the archer's voice and the sight of his leaking blood. Their ecstatic conversion is interpreted as a pathological frenzy by the heathens who believed them 'to be possessed by madness' (Mazzoni 1996: 140).[436]

Soon, the crowd of heathens too is seduced by Sebastian's ecstatic beauty, which is meaningfully compared to that of Antinous, the favourite beloved of the Emperor Adrian: 'Toi, toi, bel archer, toi, si beau! | Toi, plus beau que l'Adolescent | de Bythynie, le Bien-aimé | d'Hadrien, le divinisé | d'Egypte!' (MSS 27).[437] Moving 'fatalissimo, fra turbe maschili e femminili', Sebastian elicits everywhere he goes 'ondate di lussuria' (Faglioni 66). The scene is so intoxicating that the heathens claim to be suffocating as if they were in a *calidarium*:[438] '– On étouffe. On étouffes come

[434] One inevitably thinks of Annie Leclerc's *Parole de femme* (1974), where the French feminist suggests the possibility of a *jouissance* linked to menstruation, the sort of *jouissance* Sebastian seems to be experiencing.
[435] Sebastian is the 'privileged synecdoche' of the 'feminization of Christianity' (Mazzoni 1996: 137).
[436] 'significantly – Mazzoni notes –, the less crazy one is the less feminine one' (1996: 140).
[437] The comparison is repeated shortly after, this time explicitly evoking the name of Antinous.
[438] A forerunner of the modern gay sauna?

| dans l'étuve' (MSS 28). The mother, who also falls 'proie de l'enchanteur',[439] defines him as a 'mâle avec | Ce beau visage de Furie' (MSS 28-29).[440] As the archer's delirium proceeds in an ecstatic *crescendo*, religious fervour appears to be indistinguishable from madness: '–Il est sacré par la Manie' (MSS 38), the crowd cries while observing the acts and expressions of this 'fou de Dieu', or rather, Mazzoni corrects herself by switching to the feminine, this 'folle', this 'man disguised as a woman, almost a drag queen' (1996: 140). '[U]niting in the same "diagnosis" Sebastian's sacredness and his madness' (Mazzoni 1996: 140), the crowd points to the ambiguity of the archer's bodily and mental state. Is his ecstatic condition elicited by God or hysteria? Such ambiguity, inextricably linked to Sebastian's gender ambiguity, becomes evident when he enters '*dans le parallélogramme de feu*' and begins his '*danse extatique*' on lilies (MSS 42), inciting the conversion of the onlookers.

Rubinštejn's performance, the 'entrancing languor' (Vertinsky 129) of her dancing, manifests itself in all its troubling ambiguity, questioning the boundaries between genders, sacred and profane, health and pathology.[441] Sebastian-Rubinštejn dances and '*[d]ans une ineffable ambiguité le délire alterne avec l'extase, l'ardeur avec la liesse, la saltation guerrière avec la jubilation nuptiale*': now a warrior, now a bride, now a mad person, now a mystic, Sebastian seduces and converts women and slaves, dragging them '*dans le vertige de la douleur et de l'allégresse*' (MSS 42-43). Mazzoni defines him as a 'hysterical maenad', associating his ecstatic dance to Charcot's belief of a 'pathological link between hysteria and dancing', regarded as a 'distinctively feminine activity', and Paracelsus' definition of hysteria as a '*chorea lasciva*, or "lustful dance"' (1996: 145). Another compelling comparison that can be drawn is that between Sebastian's ecstatic movements and tarantism.

Mazzoni mentions 'Cixous and Clément's discussion of southern Italian *tarantella*' (145, note 81) in relation to hysteria and dance but does not explore the possibility of a Sebastian-as-*tarantata*. An epileptic-hysterical condition present in southern Italy and supposedly provoked by the bite of a spider, tarantism is cured by means of a frenzied dance through which the subjects (always women), by entering a state of trance, can expel the tarantula (i.e., hysteria) within them. Clément rephrases De Martino's account of *tarantismo* in *La terra del rimorso* (1961) in a reading that matches Sebastian's dance: 'The pleasure comes about during the crisis, as a substitute for orgasm, mimed in all the forms of displacement, located in the hands' twisting, in acrobatics, in limbs tied in knots, in backs tensed into arcs; and the resolution of the crisis is fatigue, languor, silent immobility' (21). A

[439] Sebastian's identification with a sorcerer allows me to point to D'Annunzio's interest in the occult, kindled, among other things, by Capuana. See Mazza's *D'Annunzio e l'occulto* (1995).
[440] 'A hermaphrodite made up of masculine and feminine body parts, Sebastian has masculine organs but a mythologically feminine face' (Mazzoni 1996: 136).
[441] Rubinštejn can indeed be regarded as the embodiment of the 'ebbrezza del nevrotismo russo' (1898: 89) Capuana detected in Giovanni Episcopo.

tarantata who is touched not by a spider but by God (and/or Dionysus),[442] Sebastian dances his frenzied dance – 'a mix of mystical ecstasy and hysterical delirium' (Mazzoni 1996: 145) – until '*[i]l n'y a plus que le délire et l'extase*' and '*la transfiguration s'accomplit*' (MSS 44).[443]

Sebastian-Rubinštejn's performance, which Vertinsky (130) likens to a burlesque performance, gives us the opportunity to explore divisions related to religion and health, but also gender, displaying their ambiguity and even, with specific regard to gender differences, their deceptiveness. Following Croft's designation of 'queer dance' as a performance in which one moves across 'multiple, layered identities', producing '[i]mages that do not immediately make sense, but that somehow gather force' and for which 'desires can be remixed and reconfigured' (1), I propose to define Sebastian-Rubinštejn's ecstatic dance as a queer one, his movements 'thwart[ing] an audience's assumptions about bodies, desire, and sex' (Croft 16).

In the second *mansion* Sebastian tries to barge into the *Chambre Magique*, i.e., the room in Julius Andronicus' palace where all the pagan idols the archer wishes to destroy are kept. Here he encounters '[l]a fille malade des fièvres' (MSS 45), bearing on her plagued chest the Holy Shroud. After having disclosed her arms and revealed the divine sheet, the feverish woman faints and, as a result, the doors of the *chambre magique* open, the room loses all its pagan attributes, and acquires new Christian features, the passage being marked by the luminous apparition of the figure of the Virgin. In the third *mansion* the meeting between Sebastian and Diocletian occurs. The archer, who has been arrested, is brought before the emperor's forum, i.e., a group of heterodox figures among which castrated eunuchs and a choir of Chitaredes led by Euryalus.[444] Diocletian greets Sebastian and his beauty, declaring his love for him and his desire to crown him as though he was a god: 'Tu es trop beau. Et il est juste | qu'on te couronne, devant tous | les dieux. […]. Je t'aime.| Tu m'est cher' (MSS 78). The emperor's fascination with the archer turns into a palpable erotic desire when, repeatedly and intensively touching the shoulder of his favourite, he declares: 'Je veux ceindre l'Enfant morose | et me ceindre avec lui' (MSS 79-80). As Mazzocchi Doglio (64) suggests, D'Annunzio clearly insists on presenting Sebastian as an object of love and desire for both the Emperor and archers. Homoeroticism comes together with gender ambiguity as Sebastian, whose body is labelled by Diocletian as 'ambigu' (MSS 88), is compared to the '*dieu androgyne*' (MSS 85) of Syrian women, the virgin of Ephesus (Mary), and the maiden of Naxos (Polycrite). His ardour for this androgynous and maiden-like creature growing, the Emperor attempts to seduce Sebastian by summoning again Adrian and Antinous' relationship. The archer is one step from giving into his lures, but eventually

[442] Faglioni highlights the 'equivoco misticismo del Santo', as a result of which '[q]uella che dovrebbe essere estasi mistica si rivela piuttosto ebbrezza dionisìaca' (69-70).
[443] As seen with *Cuore infermo*'s 'ridda', i.e., an Italian medieval folk dance matching the *tarantella*, dance can appear as a powerful expression/embodiment of ecstasy.
[444] The name is reminiscent of the homoerotic relationship between the Virgilian characters of Euryalus and Nisus.

rejects his offers. Failing all attempts to seduce Sebastian and bring him back to pagan faith, Diocletian orders that he is to be suffocated by crowns, necklaces, flowers, music, gold, desires, and laments.

In the fourth *mansion* the martyrdom takes place. Sebastian is in the wood sacred to Apollon, tied naked to the trunk of a laurel. The other archers have managed to save him from death by suffocation, devising a plan so that he can escape. But Sebastian rejects the plan, declaring his wish to die. The imperial decree ordering that he is to be pierced by arrows shot by his own archers sounds more like a voluntary decision. It is Sebastian who wants to die and die like that.[445] The archers manifest their utter reluctance in executing the imperial command, but Sebastian reassures them that it will be beautiful to die ('Ce sera beau', MSS 94) and that by dying he will live again. 'Seigneur, nous allons donc tuer | notre amour!', Sanaé, Sebastian's favourite, exclaims in a desperate attempt to dissuade his *chef* from his resolutions; Sebastian's answer dispels all hesitations: 'Celui qui plus profondément | me blesse, plus profondément | m'aime' (MSS 95). The utterance, reverberating the verses of poet Veronica Gàmbara from whom D'Annunzio draws inspiration ('Chi più m'ama più mi fiede'), becomes a refrain that Sebastian repeats to incite his archers to hit him. Addressing Sanaé, who is holding the *chef*'s bow, Sebastian orders him to press it against his mouth before bending it: 'Sanaé, tu as mon arc. Viens, | frère. Presse-le sur ma bouche, | avant de le tendre. Qu'il touche | mes lèvres et mon âme. Viens' (MSS 96). The eroticism underlying the scene is arresting: Sebastian's lips, tended to kiss the bow Sanaé is offering him, languidly indulge in such offer as though they were drinking '*à longues gorgées un plein calice*'; and throughout the act Sebastian's voice '*n'est qu'une flamme vertigineuse*' (MSS 96).

Manifesting the masochistic pleasure he is experiencing, Sebastian encourages his archers not to tremble or cry, but to feel the inebriation of wounding him, to be 'ivres | de sang' (MSS 97) while striking him. The martyrdom, Nicastro remarks, is 'il trionfo del sangue e dell'orgasmo' (142). Sebastian's exhortations turn into veritable erotic enticements as the archers shoot their first arrows and are caught by '*[u]ne sorte de subite démence*' elicited by the '*voix d'ivresse*' of their leader who cries out 'Encore!' (MSS 97), offering himself to his companions 'in uno spasimo di voluttà' (Nicastro 142-143). Shaking convulsively, the archers release their arrows to Sebastian's repeated cry 'Encore!', entering '*dans une sorte d'étourdissement farouche*' (MSS 97), which is one with Sebastian's own enraptured feeling. The martyrdom of the shooting arrows takes the form of a violent and elating penetration, a *jouissance* dulling the sense of both the shooters and their target, of those who penetrate and he who is penetrated.[446] Sebastian's 'Encore!' is the Lacanian *encore*. Releasing

[445] A 'rebel' who 'claims his own subjectivity', he refuses 'to let himself be performed upon' (Batson 30-31).
[446] In their attempt 'to find the *meaning* of *jouissance* […] in a *sortie* outside oneself, into exuberance, ecstasy (21), Nancy and Van Reeth dwell on its being 'inseparable from pain' (14). The two philosophers mention as instances of such

'una carica orgiastica insolita' (Nicastro 143), the iteration of the scenic gesture of the arrow shooting enables the spectator to view what is happening on the stage as the simulation of a sexual relationship, a relation that is homoerotic and sadomasochistic, and that leads both passive and active agencies to ecstasy.

Through Rubinštejn's performance as the pierced/penetrated Sebastian, D'Annunzio allows 'feelings of shame, erotic ecstasy, and devotion to converge in a symbolic moment of decadent Catholicism' (Levitz 431). Such feelings are conveyed to the audience through the troubling voice of the Russian dancer:[447] through her screams of pleasure ('Encore!') 'we are transported in our own shudders, finding pleasure in watching the Other in pleasure' (Batson 38).[448] In a sadomasochistic climax of pain and pleasure – the scene of the martyrdom marked by a 'sadismo e masochismo pseudo-mistici' (Faglioni 88), and defined as both the 'acme dell'estasi mistica' and 'dell'aura sado-maso' (Lisciani-Petrini 422) – Sebastian reaches the peak of ecstasy and in that apical moment the ambiguity sought by D'Annunzio emerges in all its potency: men shooting arrows/penetrating a feminised man interpreted by an androgynous woman lead him to an ecstasy that places him in a dimension that is beyond categories and norms. As showed by D'Annunzio's earlier mentioned biographic episode, in mystical ecstasy as in *jouissance* gender differences are abolished; no longer do we have the specific individual, but a neutralised, spiritualised subject. Bringing the ambiguity underlaying the entire play to its climax, the ecstatic state allows to visualise the momentary dissolution of the self and its attributes, i.e., the dissolution of the steady identity of the individual, grounded in fixed and static (as opposed to ec-static) labels.[449] Most importantly, it signals that this dissolution is longed for by the individual: the self seeks its shattering.

As I observed in the chapter devoted to Serao, according to Freud, alongside an 'instinct to preserve living substance and to join it into ever larger units', i.e., *Eros*, there is an opposing, destructive drive, *beyond the pleasure principle*, a 'contrary instinct seeking to dissolve the units', i.e., *Thanatos* (Freud 1961: 118).[450] D'Annunzio, like Serao, brings to light this hidden drive of the self, placing it within the realm of ecstasy, a frenzied, sexual, mystical, hysterical ecstasy. Spackman has aptly remarked that D'Annunzio and Freud are 'two contemporaries' who 'explore similar

---

inseparability the cases of Sadean heroes, who come (in the sense of *jouir*) through 'a relationship of possession pushed to the point of destruction', and the Passion of Christ (Nancy and Van Reeth 13, 58-59). Sebastian's *jouissance* resembles both.

[447] Her Russian pronunciation, 'singolarmente straniante' (Lisciani-Petrini 423), increases the non-normativity of her performance, emphasising its queerness at a vocal level.

[448] As de Montera and Tosi point out, Rubinštejn is 'in charge of her pleasure and ours' (38).

[449] In Nancy and Van Reeth's words, *jouissance* is an 'experience' that 'implies a dissolution of the subject' (12), the 'loss of a subject capable of saying "I"' (13), involving 'an alterity of bodies that no longer conform to their functional organization' (23).

[450] The quote is from a passage of *Civilization and its Discontents* (1929), where Freud is summing up the conclusions drawn in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

problems' and, through different ways and coming to different conclusions, 'both "discover" the unconscious' (150-151). Through a 'rhetoric of sickness', D'Annunzio, she suggests, is 'discovering Freud's terrain before Freud has even set foot on it' (Spackman 150-151).[451] Spackman provides the example of *L'Innocente*, where, she claims, the Abruzzo writer 'suggests the presence of unconscious mechanisms […] that, Freud will claim, are proper to oneiric discourse' (150). In the *Martyre* D'Annunzio also anticipates the insights of the father of psychoanalysis. Giving voice to the self-shattering desire underlying Sebastian's ecstasy, he unveils that hidden drive of the ego which Freud would theorise a few years after the *Martyre*'s premiere. What is more, he relates it to a form of ecstasy that is elicited by a sadomasochistic, homosexual penetration. Focusing on the sexual aspect underlying Sebastian's ecstatic dissolution, I will now resort to Leo Bersani's antisocial, queer theory.

Bersani goes back to psychoanalysis and some its most perceptive ideas, re-reading them through the lens of queer theory. Taking up Freud's notion of death drive, he reverses his conclusion. While Freud considers such a drive as an obstacle that obstructs civilisation and, thus, needs to be opposed, Bersani believes that the '(im)politic mission of queer theory consists instead in embracing the death drive, in celebrating it' (Bernini 11). Bringing together Freud, Lacan, Bataille, but also Nietzsche and Sade, Bersani regards the sexual 'as the *jouissance* of exploded limits, as the ecstatic suffering into which the human organism momentarily plunges' (2010: 24) and is 'momentarily undone' (1996: 100). Conceiving sexuality as a 'tautology for masochism' (2010: 24), he believes that the 'truly sexual subject' is 'aroused by a dissipative drive that leads him or her to humiliation and a devaluation of the self' (Bernini 30).[452] For Bersani, such masochistic, dissipative drive is seen at work in the homosexual passive subject. Experiencing 'what is presumed to be the terrifying phenomenon of female sexuality' (Bersani 2010: 18), the penetrated gay man abdicates the position of power derived from his role as an active subject, leaning towards a self-dissolution that places him on a opposite and conflictual stand from the phallocentric order. The 'phallocentric and homophobic male logic' could not sustain 'the existence of the death drive and the consequent possibility not only of a pleasure in passivity, but of a state of enjoyment produced by this lack of control, by impotence, by humiliation' (Bernini 19). Conversely, the counter-phallocentric order, manifesting itself through passive penetration-derived ecstasy, seeks and rejoices in this self-shattering which destructs the integrity and steadiness of the ego, and the controlling power it exerts on both itself and others.

[451] It must be stressed that while Lombroso's normative attention to the abnormal body 'opens onto twentieth-century theories of racial purity', D'Annunzio's interest (like Baudelaire and Nietzsche's) in allegedly pathological subjects and his adoption of a Lombrosian 'rhetoric of sickness' – those very attention and adoption Capuana accused him of – 'opens onto the discovery of the unconscious and the exploration of psychic alterity which underlie the "decentering of the subject"' (Spackman 1989: 211, 306).

[452] Bersani 'draws mysticism from Bataille, masochism from Freud, to give us masochistic mysticism as a kind of sexual goal', promoting 'self-erasure in sex' and seeming 'to think that real sex only occurs with self-erasure' (Oliver and Edwin 86).

D'Annunzio's saintly archer mimics the pleasure derived from the embracing of this momentary state of impotence identified by Bersani with 'the suicidal ecstasy of being a woman' (2010: 18).[453] Through his 'suicidal ecstasy' – a sadomasochistic, mystical, ascetic *jouissance*,[454] which disperses the ego, its individual attributes, and its overall integrity – Sebastian upsets the audience's expectations, challenging the normative logic underlying the positivistic, clerical, statal, ultimately phallocentric order.

Going back to the text, drained and inebriated, his body pierced by the shooting arrows, the martyred/penetrated archer passes out: '*Le corps admirable s'affaisse*' (MSS 97). The Adonistic women come to collect his body, while the arrows miraculously disappear from its naked limbs and materialise on the laurel trunk. A '*lumière ineffable*' spreads: '*Les portes du Paradis sont ouvertes à l'âme de Sébastien*' (MSS 99). The last *mansion* describes Sebastian's entrance into paradise, described as 'le Jardin de clartés et de beatitudes' (MSS 100).[455] His identification with the lily with the longest stem ('Qui est celui qui vient? – the martyrs' choir asks rhetorically, resorting to the biblical refrain – | Le Lys de la cohorte. | Sa tige est la plus forte', MSS 100), emphasises till the very end his gender ambiguity, 'effectively combining – as Mazzoni notes – his military, chaste, and aesthetic attributes and making him at once both feminine and phallic' (143). Phallic, because endowed with a phallus, and feminine, because grounded in a feminine ecstatic dis-order that goes beyond the phallocratic order, the military lily that is Sebastian indeed bears some resemblance to his own author.

A 'spectacle of power, anxiety, and desire' (Batson 8) 'scandalizing and titillating French audiences' (Vertinsky 131), the play staged at the Châtelet elicits the enthusiasm of few people – Marcel Proust and Jean Cocteau among them –, and the criticisms of many. According to Lo Forte Randi – for whom 'Il Martire dannunziano […] non è altro che un debosciato', of which the author 'si compiace a descrivere le pose, le mosse effeminate' (184) – during the play's intervals, the

[453] The expression is utterly fitting given that Rubinštejn is interpreting the saint.

[454] For Bersani male homosexuality 'proposes and dangerously represents *jouissance* as a mode of ascesis' (2010: 30). According to Oliver and Edwin, Bersani seems 'to want us to compare "his" masochistic *jouissance* with the masochistic mysticism that Lacan associates with Saint Teresa' (87).

[455] If the play's paradise is 'più pagano che cristiano, con risvolti decisamente orientali, un paradiso […] dannunzianamente decadente' (Sorge), it is also inundated by a light that draws on 'l'grande lume' (Paradise *I*, 82) illuminating Dante's paradise. In the essay *Dant de Flourence* – conceived and, possibly, written during the time D'Annunzio was composing *Le martyre*, when he had 'sul telaio altri lavori impellenti, e in particular modo una *Vita di Dante* che gli stava a cuore' (Croci 198) –, the writer presents the *Commedia* as 'une imperscrutable musique', claiming: 'Dans tout l'Occident, voire dans toute la Chrétienité, il n'est point de création plus durable que celle que Dante accomplit sur nous, et ni de plus mystique que celle que nous accomplîmes sur Dante. De tout ce qui est terrible, de tout ce qui est magnanime, de tout ce qui est sublime, nous composâmes l'esprit dantesque, nous créâmes le signe dantesque, qui est comme un feu intérieur de beauté, […] ne se manifestant que de fois à autres par une flamme soudaine ou un éclair démesuré' (1992: 206). I believe the writer is here speaking of his mystical work *par excellence*, *Le martyre*. The paradise welcoming Sebastian is characterised by a dazzling and flaming brightness, an 'éclair démesuré' that is precisely the 'signe dantesque' within D'Annunzio's mystery.

audience cried out with utterances like 'È una follia d'isterico!' (211). Even before its premiere, the archbishop of Paris, Monseigneur Anette, forbade all devotees from attending the performance, considering it to be incompatible with Christian orthodoxy. The clerical authorities denounced 'the languidly erotic tone' (Mazzoni 1996: 132) with which the religious theme was treated and Rubinštejn's perverted interpretation of the saint.[456] Italian Catholic circles backed up the criticism of the French Clergy.

In an article published in *La Civiltà Cattolica*, Mario Barbera writes: 'il S. Sebastiano del D'Annunzio […] è, non più il virile martire Cristiano, ma l'anormale ed effeminato Adone androgino del paganesimo più corrotto' (38). Barbera deplores the play's 'lussuria più raffinata e anormale', the 'abbominio' represented by the 'innominabile culto pagano-orientale per la bellezza androgine', and the archers 'amore innominabile' towards Sebastian (42-43). Another article published in *La Civiltà Cattolica* points to the prostitution of the figure of the saintly archer in the play, inciting 'una dignitosa, forte e instancabile ribellione' against this 'degradazione morale, camuffata di misticismo' ('Sensualità' 1911: 320-321) and inviting everyone to refrain from attending D'Annunzio's plays, and buying and reading his works.[457] The author of the article shows that he is particularly concerned with the possibility that Italian women – committed to 'il pudore', 'quel fenomeno, ignoto ai personaggi dannunziani' – might see the play and, consequently, 'possano vincere gli scrupoli e possano godere, sotto l'ipocrisia della contemplazione artistica, la soddisfazione dei più inconfessabili istinti animaleschi' ('Sensualità' 1911: 319). Not surprisingly, the moral concern of the clerical spheres is especially directed towards women, deemed to be more exposed to the negative influence of D'Annunzio's play and its disquieting drives: sexual drives (especially given their non-normative form) but also, perhaps, those related to Sebastian's self-shattering desire.

Mostly disoriented and troubled, the audience at the Châtelet failed to comprehend the play for the same reasons why the Catholic establishment, reflecting the contemporary hegemonic values, does not understand it and criticises it: D'Annunzio's *Martyre* attempts to subvert those values. Tired of conventional theatrical performances and their 'riproduzione ossessiva di formule stereotipate […] dirette a soddisfare i valori borghesi', 'attento a ciò che avveniva nella cultura più spregiudicata' (Antonucci XV), D'Annunzio endows his theatre, as it emerges in the *Martyre*, with a revolutionary, antinormative charge. His Sebastian defies a (hetero-cis)normative vision of the world, embracing a variety of perspectives, desires, and drives displaying a counter-culture that stands in opposition to

[456] 'The embodiment of a saint by a woman was objectionable enough, but a Jewish Russian lesbian dancing a queer Sebastian seemed distinctly perverted, especially at a time when antisemitism in France was no small concern' (Vertinsky 131).

[457] The piece resorts to a dantesque expression ('Ahi serva Italia!', 'Sensualità' 1911: 320) to denounce the fact that the play of this novel Brunetto Latini will soon run in Italy.

the established social, moral, and cultural order. In this disruption of normativity one can grasp the queerness underlying the *Martyre*, its queer, ecstatic dis-order.

Staging a dis-order that undermines the normative, phallocentric perspective of which he himself appeared to be both victim and perpetrator, sponsor and resister, D'Annunzio exposes that perspective to a fluidity that the ecstatic phenomenon, with its intrinsic liminality and its overcoming of limits and barriers that challenge the steady identity of the individual, manifests and metaphorises. Echoing the fin-de-siècle 'anxiety' related to the possibility 'that sexuality and sex roles might no longer be contained within the neat and permanent borderlines of gender categories', that men and women might not be 'as clearly identified and separated as they had been' (Showalter 19), D'Annunzio tackles the anxieties related to an even more intrinsic precariousness of the individual. The disquieting awareness of the instability of the modern subject discovered to be at work in the spheres of gender identity and sexuality goes hand in hand with another disquieting discovery: that of a death drive that embraces the dissolution of the individual's overall identity. Sebastian's ecstasy dramatizes that drive, revealing a *jouissance* which finds pleasure in laceration, dissolution, self-effacement.

Anticipating, like the previous authors examined in this thesis, the theorisations of the father of psychoanalysis, D'Annunzio employs the ecstatic trope to explore and unveil the hidden, troubling drives of the modern subject. In his interview with Ojetti, he states:

> La vastità e la profondità dell'anima contemporanea sono inconcepibili. Essa non soltanto contiene l'immenso flutto delle idee, delle sensazioni e dei sentimenti definiti – accumulato dalle innumerevoli generazioni anteriori – ma anche un oscuro viluppo di germi nuovi, dei quali taluno già si va schiudendo con vigore subitaneo e sta per invadere le più lucide sfere della coscienza. E dal contrasto delle vecchie e delle nuove energie si producono ogni giorno forme di vita spirituale mirabili, non mai conosciute prima, almeno non mai osservate e rivelate […]. E sul fondo diffuso della sensibilità organica, già rischiarato dai cinque sensi normali, vanno a poco a poco apparendo strani sensi intermedii le cui percezioni sottilissime scoprono un mondo finora sconosciuto. E nuovi misteri, che non sono soprannaturali e che noi sentiamo non assolutamente inconoscibili, ci avvolgono della lor viva tenebra e paiono dare un significato profondo ai *piccoli fatti* di cui si compone l'esistenza comune. (D'Annunzio in Ojetti 324-325)

Indeed, *a forma di vita spirituale mirabile*, Sebastian's ecstasy points to a new human sensibility, different from the ordinary 'sensibilità organica', a sensibility that is 'di giorno in giorno dilatata ed acuita' (D'Annunzio in Ojetti 325) and is capable of discovering an until now unknown world made of dark mysteries through which we might make sense of our existence. The 'mistero che ciascuno

di noi in sé chiude' (D'Annunzio in Ojetti 326), Serao's *altrove*, Fogazzaro's *verità*, Capuana's *mondo occulto*, speak and manifest themselves through ecstasy and the medium most apt to convey them is literature. Acknowledging the 'conquiste […] notevoli della psicologia contemporanea' as 'miniere d'incomparabile ricchezza per l'artefice'[458] (D'Annunzio in Ojetti 326), D'Annunzio still believes that it is art, more than science, that can express

> con più forza e con più lucidità quel che la natura esprime oscuramente, rappresentando con la maggior possibile esattezza verbale i più complessi fenomeni interiori per rendere visibili i loro rapporti nascosti […]. (in Ojetti 321)

In the Abruzzo writer's opinion, as in that of the author of this thesis, art can not only 'fornire alla scienza indizii preziosi',[459] but also 'rendere manifesto ciò che ancora è dubbio': 'Fervidissimo adoratore della parola e credente nella sua assoluta superiorità su tutti gli altri mezzi di espressione, io son certo che la prima luce verrà da un libro. *E Libro lux*' (D'Annunzio in Ojetti 322, 330).

[458] 'artefice' stands for artist.
[459] D'Annunzio's *Trionfo della morte*, for instance, was 'citato ad esempio nei trattati scientifici del Roncoroni e del Tardieu' (Cavalli Pasini 112).

Conclusions

The aim of this research was not to offer solutions to an issue or provide answers to specific research questions but to open new perspectives which might help to understand and further problematise a particularly fertile and complex period of Italian culture such as that coinciding with the years between the Italian Unification in 1861 and Italy's going to war in WW1 in 1915. This I have set out to do through the lens of the ecstatic phenomenon. Ecstasy has provided a unique angle through which to explore and analyse Italian culture and literature, allowing me to visualise some of the dynamics underlying the development of modern Italy and the modern Italian self, in relation to their outer, normative agencies as well as inner, unconscious tensions. While at a figurative level ecstasy stands as a productive metaphor for the state of fragmentation, precariousness, and uncertainty characterising post-unification Italy despite the display of an allegedly united body, my focus on the ecstatic phenomenon has not been merely metaphorical.

Ecstasy was effectively present in post-Unification Italy in the years under study. Through Part 1, I have conveyed the extent to which the notion of ecstasy permeated Italian culture in a variety of different discourses, and specifically, those related to the three crucial domains of religion, science, and 'occulture', revealing how the traditional, religious-linked definition of ecstasy acquired new, multifaceted connotations. I have disclosed such permeation by providing both theoretical and embodied accounts of the ecstatic phenomenon in the different fields analysed, showing that ecstatic subjects were often regarded as ab-normal individuals in need to be overseen, governed, or even repressed and, consequently, unveiling the power dynamics informing the relation between ecstatics, on the one hand, and the, more or less established, agencies attempting to control them, on the other hand. I have situated these power dynamics within the frame of a dialectical tension between ecstatic, disorderly drives and normative, orderly ones, which I have condensed in the expression 'ecstatic dis-order'. In Part 2, I have showed how some of the most significant protagonists of Italian post-Unification literature found in the ecstatic phenomenon a fundamental trope to explore and uncover the inner tensions of the modern Italian self, partly anticipating Freud's theorisations in relation to the unconscious and the death drive. Articulating the tensions between ecstatic dis-order and normative order confronted by the collective, national body, these writers explored and gave voice to the mysterious tensions of the individual body (and mind), unveiling a second, ecstatic dis-order related to the inner and hidden, i.e., unconscious, drives of the individual.

The historical-cultural and literary investigation I have conducted relies entirely upon the theoretical framing of this double 'ecstatic dis-order', which has led me to draw the following concluding remarks on the ecstatic phenomenon within the frame of post-Unification Italy. Ecstasy

appears as an alteration of a state of normality/normativity, an alteration that concerns the individual from both a personal standpoint, closely relating to their body-mind state, and a cultural-historical standpoint, relating to the way in which the established culture and society holds this ecstatic body-mind state. More specifically, the shift from stasis to ec-stasy involves an infraction of the steadiness of the self within the self and the self within society: the ecstatic selves find themselves unsteady, unsettled, shattered in their own mind and in the eyes of the society looking at them. Ecstasy leads the individuals to discover the drives that hide beneath their normal, known, conscious selves while prompting society to regard them as strange, abnormal, unstable individuals. Ecstasy stands as a path to the unconscious self as well as the expression of an abnormal self, thus implying, to a certain extent, a *liaison dangereuse* between the danger/threat represented by the unconscious mind and the disquieting drives it harbours, and the danger/threat represented by the individual in ecstasy, challenging, when not subverting, normativity, in the eyes of society.

Throughout the thesis, the ecstatic dis-order I have addressed has often appeared to be bearing a female/feminine characterisation, the thesis consequently offering a sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit gender and, in its very last chapter, queer perspective. In particular, I hope to have shown that the female/feminine characterisation of ecstasy in post-unification Italy thematises a crucial correspondence between its dis-orderly, Othered, undermining status, and the consideration of female/feminised subjects as unstable, potentially transgressive individuals that ought to be controlled. I equally hope to have shown that, by exiting both their normal state of consciousness and their 'normal' social status of subjection, such ecstatic subjects place themselves outside the sphere of control of the dominant patriarchal culture. They are not in control of their bodies and minds, but neither are the patriarchal authorities operating within the State, Church, 'occulture', and science. Through their ecstatic otherness, woman, as well as feminine/feminised individuals, question and undermine the normative patriarchal order fostered by the political, religious, occult, and scientific agencies, counteracting the latter's repressive order with their ecstatic dis-order.

Despite the fact that each author and text analysed in Part 2 focuses on a specific form of ecstasy and the alteration/infraction of a specific, established normative order elicited by that specific ecstatic form, the literary ecstatic dis-orders taken into account present this gendered aspect and are all subject to the pathologising eye of the scientific order which classifies them as the manifestation of an abnormal, usually hysterical, condition. Hysteria being the female malady *par excellence*, it is no coincidence that the literary ecstasies investigated relate to individuals that are either female or bear female connotations. The perfect embodiment of ab-normal, ecstatic othernesses, these female/feminine figures incarnate the alteration/infraction of that order which in the period under study subsumed all static, normative orders, i.e., the male-shaped, patriarchal order, questioning, if

not subverting, it through the ecstatic otherness they represent. Such questioning and subversion match the portrayal of the female figure in late nineteenth-century Italian literature as a 'liberazione dalla coscienza', the 'potenze oscure' trying to lure the male characters away from the 'luce della coscienza', the 'zona paurosamente inaccessibile, che l'uomo paventa e da cui tuttavia è morbosamente attratto' (Cavalli Pasini 237, 239).[460] Female/feminine figures open to outer, socio-cultural ecstatic dis-orders as well as the inner, unconscious ones.[461]

I am conscious of the fact that by carrying out this investigation of ecstasy in post-Unification Italy within the framework of a dialectical tension between ecstatic dis-order and normative order, I have myself inevitably and ultimately submitted the ecstatic phenomenon, through my critical, verbal discourse, to some kind of order and control. This is probably the biggest limitation of my research. I acknowledged it and cannot possibly redress it if not by acknowledging it. As a researcher, I can only strive to grasp the meaning of the phenomena I am studying and put it into words. Other limitations of the thesis revolve around less insurmountable obstacles.

Throughout this work I have willingly chosen to draw on a wide and inclusive notion of the ecstatic phenomenon, relating to its Greek etymology *ék-stasis* (=standing out), as the moment in which the subject exits their normal state of being. I am aware that such an interpretation may be perceived as too wide and all-encompassing. The decision to resort to it depends on the multifaceted, large-scale nature of this research and its desire to dialogue with a variety of diverse fields, domains, tensions that the ecstatic phenomenon, in its neutral and most essential sense, subsumes. Such breadth has prevented me from accounting for all the tensions and problems peculiar to each kind of ecstasy explored. Some studies have already addressed those tensions and problems; I hope that others might be written to that aim.

Too wide-reaching, my thesis might at the same time seem to be too narrow in scope. My focusing on certain specific states of ecstasy relating to the religious, occult, and scientific world, and the specific geographical context of the Italian state, has inevitably led me to exclude other forms of ecstasy which are indeed present in the years I look at, from alcohol- and drug-induced ecstasies to ecstasies experienced through art, and to non-Western forms of ecstasy like those relating to shamanic beliefs and practices. For both theoretical reasons[462] and space limitation, this thesis overlooks these and other forms of ecstasy whose exploration, I believe, would bear significant fruit, shedding further lights, and shadows, on the understanding of Italian modernity. I hope that these and other gaps of

[460] Cavalli Pasini is specifically referring to D'Annunzio's *Trionfo della morte* and Fogazzaro's *Malombra*.
[461] In Finn's words, 'the female herself became a figure of the unconscious in the nineteenth century' (6).
[462] As mentioned in the introduction, the latter kinds of ecstasy do not appear to fit my theoretical frame of ecstatic dis-order and require different theoretical and analytical approaches.

my research might be filled by other scholars, and that new documents might be added to the account of a modern 'Italia estatica' and, perhaps, an 'Italia estatica' tout court.[463]

This thesis ends when Italy enters the First World War in 1915. As I have already stated in the introduction, the reason why is because from that moment onwards the notion of ecstasy acquires new connotations, mirroring a different, more disquieting kind of modernity, partly celebrated by the Futurist movement. The war uncovers an ecstasy that finds joy in killing: 'the ecstasy of sheer destruction, found in battle frenzy' (Mc Daniel 139). This form of ecstasy underlies not a self-destructive drive, inward-directed, but an-outward directed, collective drive to destruct, which can be referred to with the notion of *destrudo*, first introduced by Italian psychoanalyst, and pupil of Freud, Edoardo Weiss. Unlike the phenomena explored in this thesis, this destructive, war-related ecstasy bears an eminently male connotation. Building on it, the subsequent Fascist experiment delivers its own violent expression of ecstasy through the 'adunate oceaniche' that gather around Mussolini, Italy's new ecstatic leader.[464] It is, once again, a male-connoted ecstasy we are looking at. The presence of Futurism, i.e., one of the first European avant-garde movements, the fascist experiment, the coining of the notion of *destrudo* by Weiss, are just some of the elements which would make an investigation of the notion of ecstasy in the Italian war-related and fascist frame a valid addition in our understanding of modern Italy and a productive spin-off of this project.

[463] I am especially referring to the Renaissance as one of the other periods in Italian history where the notion of ecstasy intersects a variety of different discourses, including religion, 'occulture', science, producing a most fertile confluence. For a good starting point for an investigation of a Reinassance *Italia Estatica*, I refer to Szönyi.
[464] According to Gallini 'il fascino magnetico è tratto connotativo, caratterizzante la forte personalità del Duce' (367).

Bibliography

Alessi, Serena and Stefano Jossa. 2019. 'Italian Heroines: Literature, Gender, and the Construction of the Nation', *The Italianist*, 39 (3): 267-280

Aloisi, Alessandra and Fabio Camilletti (eds.). 2019. *The Archaeology of the Unconscious: Italian Perspectives* (New York: Routledge)

Aloisi, Alessandra. 2019. 'Francesco Soave and the Unconscious of the Somnambulist, Dreams, Madness, and Distraction in Eighteenth-Century Italy' in *The Archaeology of the Unconscious: Italian Perspectives*, ed. by Alessandra Aloisi and Fabio Camilletti (New York: Routledge), pp. 33-49

Alvarado, Carlos S., and Massimo Biondi. 2017. 'Cesare Lombroso on Mediumship and Pathology', *History of Psychiatry*, 28 (2): 225-241

Alzona, Carlo. 1911. 'Il misticismo di Antonio Fogazzaro', *Luce e ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualistiche*, March, 11 (3): 114-122

Andreoli, Annamaria. 2000. *Il vivere inimitabile: vita di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milan: Mondadori)

Antonucci, Giovanni. 1955. '*Introduzione a D'Annunzio drammaturgo*' in D'Annunzio, Gabriele. *Tutto il teatro*, ed. by Giovanni Antonucci (Rome: Newton), vol. 3, pp. XV-XXIII

Aragon, Louis and André Breton. 1928. 'Le cinquantenaire de l'hystérie', *La Révolution Surréaliste*, March 15, 11: 20-22

Armando, David. 2013. 'Spiriti e fluidi. Medicina e religione nei documenti del Sant'Uffizio sul magnetismo animale (1840-1856)' in *Médecine et Religion: Compétitions, Collaborations, Conflits (XIIe-XXe siècles)*, ed. by Maria Pia Donato (Rome: École Française de Rome), pp. 195-225

Artifoni, Enrico. 2014. 'Ascesa e tramonto della medievistica psichiatrica e criminologica in Italia al tempo di Arturo Graf. Alcuni esempi' in *Il volto di Medusa. Arturo Graf e il tramonto del positivismo*, ed. by Clara Allasia and Laura Nay (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso), pp. 115-134

Asprem, Egil. 2015. '*Science and the Occult*' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 710-719

Astaldi, Maria Luisa. 1939. *Nascita e vicende del romanzo italiano* (Milan: Treves)

Asturaro, Alfonso. 1881. *Santa Caterina da Siena: osservazioni psico-patologiche* (Naples: Morano)

Atene, Paolo. 1934. *Religione e misticismo in Antonio Fogazzaro* (Turin: Paravia)

Babini, Valeria Paola, Chiara Beccalossi, and Lucy Riall (eds.). 2015. *Italian Sexualities Uncovered, 1789-1914* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

Babini, Valeria Paola. 1996. *La questione dei frenastenici. Alle origini della psicologia scientifica in Italia (1870-1910)* (Milan: Franco Angeli)

Balducci, Ernesto. 1952. *Antonio Fogazzaro* (Brescia: Morcelliana)

Banti, Alberto Maria. 2009. *L'età contemporanea. Dalle rivoluzioni settecentesche all'imperialismo* (Rome: Laterza)

Banti, Anna. 1965. *Serao* (Turin: UTET)

Barbera, Mario. 1911. '"Il Martirio di S. Sebastiano" di G. D'Annunzio. "Mistero" o mistificazione?', *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 3: 37-52

Barlusconi, Barbara. 1984. 'Psicoanalisi dei personaggi fogazzariani' in *Antonio Fogazzaro*, ed. by Attilio Agnoletto, Enzo Girardi, and Carlo Marcora (Milan: Franco Angeli), pp. 210-225

Barnaby, Paul. 2017. '*Superuomini e no*: Dannunzian hypotexts in Capuana's *Rassegnazione*', *Forum Italicum*, 51 (2): 432-451

Barnstone, William. 1983. *The Poetics of Ecstasy: Varieties of Ekstasis from Sappho to Borges* (New York: Holmes & Meir)

Barrotta, Pierluigi, Anna Laura Lepschy, and Emma Bond (eds.). 2008. *Freud and Italian Culture* (Bern and Oxford: Peter Lang)

Barthes, Roland. 1975. *The Pleasure of the Text*, transl. by Richard Miller with a Note on the Text by Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang)

Barzellotti, Giacomo. 1884. *David Lazzaretti di Arcidosso (detto il santo)* (Bologna: Zanichelli), then in Barzellotti, Giacomo. 1909. *Monte Amiata e il suo profeta* (Milan: Fratelli Treves)

Barzini, Luigi. 1907. *Nel mondo dei misteri con Eusapia Palladino preceduto da uno studio di C. Lombroso* (Milan: Baldini, Castoldi & C.)

Bataille, George. 1986. *Erotism: Death and Sensuality*, transl. by Mary Dalwood (San Francisco: City Lights Books)

Bataille, George. 1988. *Inner Experience*, trans. by Leslie Anne Boldt (New York: SUNY Press)

Batson, Charles R.. 2005. *Dance, Desire, and Anxiety in Early Twentieth-century French Theater: Playing Identities* (Aldershot: Ashgate)

Baudi Di Vesme, Cesare. 1897. *Storia dello spiritismo* (Turin: Roux Frassati e C.), vol. 2

Beizer, Janet. 1994. *Ventriloquized Bodies: Narratives of Hysteria in Nineteenth-Century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press)

Belfiore, Giulio. 1888 [1887]. *L'ipnotismo e gli stati affini* (Naples: Luigi Pierro)

Bell, Rudolph M. and Cristina Mazzoni (eds.). 2003. *The Voices of Gemma Galgani: The Life and Afterlife of a Modern Saint* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press)

Bell, Rudolph M.. 2003. 'The Historical Setting' in *The Voices of Gemma Galgani: The Life and Afterlife of a Modern Saint*, ed. by Rudolph M. Bell and Cristina Mazzoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 1-17

Benadusi, Lorenzo, Paolo L. Bernardini, Elisa Bianco, and Paola Guazzo. 2017. '*Preface*' in *Homosexuality in Italian Literature, Society, and Culture, 1789-1919* (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), pp. IX-XIV

Benadusi, Lorenzo, Paolo L. Bernardini, and Paola Guazzo. 2017. 'Introduction. In the Shadow of J. J. Winckelmann: Homosexuality in Italy during the Long Nineteenth Century' in *Homosexuality in Italian Literature, Society, and Culture, 1789-1919*, ed. by Lorenzo Benadusi, Paolo L. Bernardini, Elisa Bianco, and Paola Guazzo (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), pp. 1-28

Berardinelli, Giuseppe Maria. 1873. *Riflessioni e giudizii sul magnetismo animale* (Modena: Gaddi)

Bernini, Lorenzo. 2017. *Queer Apocalypses. Elements of Antisocial Theory*, trans. by Julia Heim (Cham: Palgrave Mamillan)

Bersani, Leo. 2010 [2009]. *Is the Rectum a Grave?: and Other Essays* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press)

Bertani, Stefano. 2006. *L'ascensione della modernità. Antonio Fogazzaro tra santità ed evoluzionismo* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino)

Bertucci, Pia Lenore. 2008. *Da Lei, Tutto: Female Relationships in the Narratives of Matilde Serao* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill)

Bianchi, Patricia. 1998. 'La riscoperta di "Tuffolina": le prime prove narrative di Matilde Serao', *Filologia e critica*, September-December, 23 (3): 444-458

Bidaud, Eric. 2002. 'Mystique, sexualité et vérité', *Figures de la psychanalyse*, 7 (2): 149-160

Bigazzi, Roberto. 1990. 'La carriera di un novelliere' in *L'illusione della realtà: studi su Luigi Capuana. Atti del Convegno Di Montréal, 16-18 Marzo 1989*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone and Enrica Rossetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), pp. 97-112

Billanovich, Liliana. 2011. 'Una nuova "invasione mistica" nel primo Novecento? Appunti per itinerari di ricerca', *Ricerche di storia sociale e religiosa*, 79: 11-57

Billiani, Francesca and Gigliola Sulis (eds.). 2007. *The Italian Gothic and Fantastic: Encounters and Rewritings of Narrative Traditions* (Madison [NJ]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press)

Biondi, Giosuè. 1914. 'P. Schilder – *Selbstbewusstsein und Persönlichkeitsbewusstsein.* Eine psychopathologische Studie. Julius Springer. Berlin, 1914', *Rivista italiana di neuropatologia, psichiatria ed elettroterapia*, 7: 509

Biondi, Massimo. 2013. 'Spiritualism in Italy: The Opposition of the Catholic Church' in *The Spiritualist Movement: Speaking with the Dead in America and Around the World*, ed. by Christopher M. Moreman (Santa Barbara: Praeger), vol. 1, pp. 37-54

Biondi, Massimo. 1988. *Tavoli e Medium: Storia dello Spiritismo in Italia* (Rome: Gremese)

Birman, Joel. 2007. *Foucault et la psychanalyse* (Lyon: Parangon)

Bisicchia, Andrea. 1991. *D'Annunzio e il teatro: tra cronaca e letteratura drammatica* (Milan: Mursia)

Bollati, Giulio. 1996. *L'italiano. Il carattere nazionale come storia e come invenzione* (Turin: Einaudi)

Borsellino, Nino and Walter Pedullà (eds.). 2004. *Storia generale della Letteratura Italiana* (Milan: Federico Motta)

Bottazzi, Filippo. 1907. 'Nelle regioni inesplorate della Biologia umana. Osservazioni ed esperimenti su Eusapia Paladino', *Rivista d'Italia*, 1 (6): 885-951; 2 (7): 5-73

Bottinelli, Katherine and Susan Laxton. 2018. 'Psychoanalytic Feminism and the Depiction of Women in Surrealist Photography', *UC Riverside Undergraduate Research Journal*, 12 (1): 21-27

Bourneville, Désiré-Magloire, and Paul Régnard. 1876-1877. *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Paris: Bureaux du Progrès Médical, Delahaye&Co), vol.1

Bourneville, Désiré-Magloire, and Paul Régnard. 1878. *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Paris: Bureaux du Progrès Médical, Delahaye&Co), vol.2

Bourneville, Désiré-Magloire, and Paul Régnard. 1879-1880. *Iconographie Photographique de la Salpêtrière* (Paris: Bureaux du Progrès Médical, Delahaye&Co), vol.3

Bovolo, Carlo. 2019. 'Ecstasies, Stigmata, and Visions: Body and Sanctity in La Civilità Cattolica in the Age of Positivism (1888-1890)' in *The Body in History, Culture, and the Arts*, ed. by Justyna Jajszczok and Aleksandra Musiał (Routledge) [Ebook], pp. 118-156

Branca, Vittore. 1994. 'Introduzione ai Lavori' in *Antonio Fogazzaro. Le opere i tempi. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studi di Vicenza (27-29 aprile 1992)*, ed. by Ferdinando Bandini and Fabio Finotti (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica), pp. 13-19

Brancaccio, Maria Teresa. 2017. 'Between Charcot and Bernheim: The debate on hypnotism in fin-de-siècle Italy', *Notes and Records of the Royal Society*, 71 (2): 157-177

Brancaccio, Maria Teresa. 2014. 'Enrico Morselli's Psychology and "Spiritism": Psychiatry, Psychology and Psychical Research in Italy in the Decades Around 1900', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 48: 75-84

Braude, Ann. 1989. *Radical Spirits: Spiritualism and Women's Rights in Nineteenth-Century America* (Boston: Beacon Press)

Breton, André. 1960. *Nadja*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York: Grove Press)

Brigo, Francesco, Simona Lattanzi, Mariano Martini, Nicola Bragazzi, Raffaele Nardone, and Olivier Walusinski. 2020. '"Spreading the word of the master": the contribution of Italian physicians in the early dissemination of Jean-Martin Charcot's theories', *Neurological Sciences,* 41: 3787-3794

Bringhenti, Marianna. 2005. 'Antonio Fogazzaro Presidente Onorario della Società di Studi Psichici: un documento inedito sul rapporto tra spiritismo, religione, scienza', *Atti dell'Accademia roveretana degli Agiati*, 255, VIII, 5 (1): 153-171

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. 'Modernism' in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 10 March 2016, https://www.britannica.com/event/Modernism-Roman-Catholicism [accessed 2 February 2022]

Brunetière, Ferdinand. 1895. 'Après une visite au Vatican', *Revue des Deux Mondes*, January 1, 127: 97-118

Caltagirone, Giovanna, and Sandro Maxia (eds.). 2008. *Italia Magica: Letteratura Fantastica e Surreale dell'Ottocento e del Novecento: Atti del Convegno, Cagliari-Pula 7-10 Giugno 2006* (Cagliari: AM & D)

Cambridge University Press. 'ecstasy' in *Cambridge Dictionary*, https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/ecstasy [accessed 22 Decembre 2022]

Camilletti, Fabio. 2016a [2013]. *Classicism and Romanticism in Italian Literature: Leopardi's Discourse on Romantic Poetry* (New York: Routledge)

Camilletti, Fabio. 2016b. 'Il sorriso del conte zio. Manzoni, Sade e l'omaggio alla Vergine', *Enthymema*, 14: 231-246

Camilletti, Fabio. 2018. *Italia lunare. Gli anni Sessanta e l'occulto* (Oxford: Peter Lang)

Camilletti, Fabio and Alessandra Diazzi. 2020. 'Conscience, Consciousness, the Unconscious. The Italian Subject and Psychoanalysis' in *Transnational Italian Studies*, ed. by Charles Burdett and Loredana Polezzi (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)

Campbell, Alyson and Stephen Farrier. 2016. 'Introduction' in *Queer Dramaturgies. International Perspectives on Where Performance Leads Queer*, ed. by Alyson Campbell and Stephen Farrier (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 1-26

Capasa, Valerio. 2009. 'Fogazzaro Nelle Strettoie Della Ragione Ottocentesca', *Italianistica*, 38 (1): 107-117

Capuana, Luigi. 1916. 'Diario spiritico, ossia comunicazioni ricevute dagli Spiriti per medianità intuitiva', *Luce e ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualistiche*, July-August, 16 (7-8), 338-352

Capuana, Luigi. 1985. *A colloquio con me stesso? Diario tra 'Spiritismo?' e 'Mondo occulto'*, ed. by Ada Capuana (Rome: Centro Studi e Divulgazione Luigi Capuana)

Capuana, Luigi. 1995a [1880]. 'La religione dell'avvenire' in Capuana, Luigi. *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simone Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma), pp. 217-224

Capuana, Luigi. 1995b [1896]. *Mondo occulto* in Capuana, Luigi. *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simone Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma), pp. 163-211

Capuana, Luigi. 1995c [1884]. *Spritismo?* in Capuana, Luigi. *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simone Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma), pp. 55-162

Capuana, Luigi. 1995d [1901]. 'Il "di là"' in Capuana, Luigi. *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simone Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma), pp. 225-231

Capuana, Luigi. 1995e [1906]. 'Lettera aperta a Luigi Pirandello: a proposito di un fantasma', in Capuana, Luigi. *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simone Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma), pp. 239-242

Capuana, Luigi. 1995f [1906]. 'Dedica' in Capuana, Luigi. *Un vampiro* (Florence: Passigli)

Capuana, Luigi. 1974a. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 1

Capuana, Luigi. 1974b. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 2

Capuana, Luigi. 1974c. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 3

Capuana, Luigi. 1974. 'Forze occulte' in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 2, pp. 366-376

Capuana, Luigi. 1974. 'Un vampiro' in *Un vampiro* in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 3, pp. 203-221

Capuana, Luigi. 1974. 'Fatale influsso' in *Un vampiro* in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti*, ed. by Enrico Ghidetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 3 pp. 222-235

Capuana, Luigi. 1999. *Il marchese di Roccaverdina* (Milan: Garzanti)

Capuana, Luigi. 1898. 'Gabriele D'Annunzio' in *Gli 'ismi' contemporanei: Verismo, simbolismo, idealismo ed altri saggi di critica letteraria ed artistica* (Catania: Giannotta), pp. 83-111

Carli, Alberto. 2019. 'Fairy tales and ghosts. Luigi Capuana among literature, anthropology and spiritism' in *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, ed. by Annamaria Pagliaro and Brian Zuccala (Florence: Firenze University Press), pp.183-197

Caroli, Giovanni Maria. 1859. *Del magnetismo animale ossia mesmerismo: in ordine alla ragione e alla rivelazione* (Naples: Uffizio della Biblioteca Cattolica)

Caronti, Luigi. 1989. *Fogazzaro, Subiaco e 'Il Santo'* (Milan: Edizioni Paoline)

Carroy-Thirard, Jacqueline. 1981. *Le mal de Morzine: de la possession à l'hystérie (1857-1877)* (Paris: Solin)

Carroy-Thirard, Jacqueline. 1980. 'Possession, extase, hystèrie au 19e siècle', *Psychanalyse à l'université,* 5 (19): 499-515

Carta, Ambra. 2019. 'Giacinta, Giustina e le altre: Luigi Capuana tra fotografia e nevrosi di fine secolo' in *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, ed. by Annamaria Pagliaro and Brian Zuccala (Florence: Firenze University Press), pp. 111-124

Castel, Pierre-Henri. 2007. 'La Madeleine de Janet, ou comment s'écrit l'expérience de l'extase', *Savoirs et clinique*, 8 (1): 211-216.

Castelli, Francesco. 2013. 'Per una definizione del modello di processo penale del Sant'Uffizio: il procedimento inquisitoriale per affettata santità su Palma Matterelli di Oria (1869-1878)' in *'Suavis laborum memoria'. Chiesa, Papato e Curia romana, tra storia e teologia*, ed. by Paul Van Geest and Roberto Regoli (Città del Vaticano: Archivio Segreto Vaticano)

Castelnuovo Frigessi, Delia. 2003. *Cesare Lombroso* (Turin: Einaudi)

Cavalli Pasini, Annamaria. 1982. *La scienza del romanzo: romanzo e cultura scientifica fra Otto e Novecento* (Bologna: Pàtron)

Cavalli, Vincenzo. 1894. 'Animismo e spiritismo. Note e chiose', *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia. Rassegna di psicologia sperimentale*, March, 31 (3): 79-89; April, 31 (4): 116-122; May, 31 (5): 146-152; June, 31 (6): 179-184; July, 31 (7): 212-217; August, 31 (8): 240-244

Cavallini, Giorgio. 2001. 'Intorno a "Piccolo Mondo Moderno"', *Testo*, January-June, 22 (41): 43-55

Cavalluzzi, Raffaele. 2011. 'Gli anni dell'unità nel romanzo di Fogazzaro', *Italianistica*, 40 (2): 135-40

Cavalluzzi, Raffaele. 2001. 'L'ultimo Fogazzaro: parabola della dimensione religiosa', *Testo*, January-June, 22 (41): 13-30

Cedola, Andrea. 2007. 'Introduzione' in Capuana, Luigi. *Novelle del mondo occulto*, ed. by Andrea Cedola (Bologna: Pendragon), pp. 7-61

Celati, Giuliano (ed.). 2019. Capuana, Luigi. *Il sangue pazzo. Novelle veriste e antipositiviste* (Milan: Unicopli)

Cervello, Niccolò. 1863. *Storia di un caso d'isterismo con sognazione spontanea raccolta ed esposta dal prof. Niccolò Cervello* (Palermo: Solli)

Cervigni, Dino S.. 1995. 'Women Mystic Writers', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 13: 7-17

Chadwick, Owen. 1975. *The Secularization of European Mind in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Charcot, Jean-Martin. 1884. *Differenti forme d'afasia. Lezioni fatte nella Salpêtrière nel semestre d'estate dell'anno 1883, redatte col consenso dell'autore dal dottore G. Rummo* (Milan: Vallardi)

Charcot, Jean-Martin et Paul Richer. 1887. *Les démoniaques dans l'Art* (Paris: Delahaye et Lecrosnier)

Charcot, Jean-Martin. 1892b. 'La foi qui guérit', *La Revue Hebdomadaire*, 7: 112-132

Charcot, Jean-Martin. 1991. *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System*, ed. by Ruth Harris (London: Routledge)

Charcot, Jean-Martin. 1890. *Œuvre complètes de J.M. Charcot. Hémorragie et ramollissement du cerveau, métallothérapie et hypnotisme, électrothérapie*e (Paris: Lecrosnier et Babé), IX

Charcot, Jean-Martina. 1892a. *Œuvre complètes de J.M. Charcot. Leçons sur les maladies du systéme nerveux* (Paris: Battaille), I

Chazin-Bennahum, Judith. 2022. *Ida Rubinstein : Revolutionary Dancer, Acress, and Impresario* (Albany: SUNY Press)

Chiaia, Ercole. 1888. 'Una sfida per la scienza. Lettera al Prof. Lombroso', *Fanfulla della domenica*, August 19, 34, then in Chiaia, Ercole. 1888, *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia. Rassegna di psicologia sperimentale*, October, 25 (10): 310-315

Chiara, Pietro. 1981. *Vita di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Milan: Mondadori)

Chomel, Luisetta Elia. 1997. *D'Annunzio: un teatro al femminile* (Ravenna: Longo)

Cigliana, Simona. 1995. 'Introduzione' in Luigi Capuana, *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simona Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma), pp. 9-53

Cigliana, Simona. 2007. *La seduta spiritica: dove si racconta come e perché i fantasmi hanno invaso la modernità* (Rome: Fazi)

Cixous, Hélène and Catherine Clément. 1996. *The Newly Born Woman* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers)

Cixous, Hélène. 1996. 'Sorties: Out and Out: Attacks/Ways Out/Forays' in *The Newly Born Woman*, ed. by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers), pp. 63-134

Clément, Catherine. 1996. 'The Guilty One', in *The Newly Born Woman*, ed. by Hélène Cixous and Catherine Clément (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers), pp. 1-62

Clemente, Frances. 2021. '*Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* di Gabriele D'Annunzio. Una lettura queer', *Mimesis Journal*, 10 (2): 169-91

Clerici, Luca. 2018. *Libri per tutti. L'Italia della divulgazione dall'Unità al nuovo secolo* (Bari: Laterza)

Coddé, Luigi. 1851. *Il magnetismo animale svelato. Ossia teoria e pratica dell'antropo-elettro-magnetismo in armonia colle leggi di fisica, chimica e psicologia ed una nuova meccanica delle sostanze* (Casale: Corrado)

Cogevina, Angelo and Francesco Orioli. 1842. *Fatti relativi a mesmerismo e cure mesmeriche, con una prefazione storico-critica* (Corfù: Tipografia del Governo)

Coleridge, Henry James. 1872 'Amon the Prophets', *The Month: A Magazine and Review*, July-December, 6, 17: 1-32

Comoy Fusaro, Edwige. 2018. 'Capuana fotografo', *Arabeschi*, XI, 2: 93-105

Comoy Fusaro, Edwige. 2009. *Forme e figure dell'alterità: studi su De Amicis, Capuana e Camillo Boito* (Ravenna: Pozzi)

Comoy Fusaro, Edwige. 2007. *La nevrosi tra medicina e letteratura. Approccio epistemologico alle malattie nervose nella narrativa italiana (1865-1922)* (Florence: Polistampa)

Comoy Fusaro, Edwige. 2001 'Intuizioni pre-freudiane nelle prime opere di Luigi Capuana (1879-1890)', *Versants*, 39: 123-134

Cori, Paola. 2019. 'Italian Mesmerism, Religion, and the Unconscious. Irresistible Analogies from Muratori to Morselli' in *The Archaeology of the Unconscious: Italian Perspectives*, ed. by Fabio Camilletti and Alessandra Aloisi (New York: Routledge), pp. 113-140

Corradi, Morena. 2019. 'Magnetic Culture and the Self in Post-Unification Italy' in *The Archaeology of the Unconscious: Italian Perspectives*, ed. by Fabio Camilletti and Alessandra Aloisi (New York: Routledge), pp. 141-163

Corradi, Morena. 2016. *Spettri d'Italia. Scenari del fantastico nella pubblicistica postunitaria milanese* (Ravenna: Longo)

Cozza, Donatella. 2005. 'Le indemoniate di Verzegnis' in *La Patria del Friuli* (Udine: Franco Fabbro editore), pp. 85-91

Crabtree, Adam. 1993. *From Mesmer to Freud: Magnetic Sleep and the Roots of Psychological Healing* (New Haven: Yale University Press)

Crabtree, Adam. 2015. 'Animal Magnetism and Mesmerism' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 188-194

Croft, Clare. 2017. 'Introduction' in *Queer Dance*, ed. Clare Croft (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Crupi, Vincenzo. 2004. *Fra il cielo e l'inferno: ascensioni nell'ultimo Fogazzaro* (Soveria Mannelli: Rubbettino)

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1992. 'Dant de Flourence' in Valesio, Paolo. *Gabriele D'Annunzio. The Dark Flame* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press), pp. 199-209

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1990. *Di me a me stesso*, ed. by Annamaria Andreoli (Milan: Mondadori)

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1995. *Le martyre de Saint Sébastien* in *Tutto il teatro*, ed. by Giovanni Antonucci (Rome: Newton), vol. 3, pp. 1-101 (=MSS)

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1955. *Il piacere* in Tutte le opere di Gabriele D'Annunzio, ed. by Egidio Bianchetti (Milan: Mondadori), vol. 1

D'Annunzio, Gabriele. 1913. *Pagine disperse: cronache mondane – letteratura – arte*, ed. by Alighiero Castelli (Rome: Bernardo Lux)

Dal Pozzo di Mombello, Enrico. 1869. *Trattato pratico di magnetismo animale* (Foligno: Sgariglia)

Dalí, Salvador. 1933. 'Le Phénomène de l'extase'*, Minotaure. Revue artistique et littéraire*, 3-4: 76-77

Dall'Orto, Giovanni. 'San Sebastiano "santo gay"?', consulted on the 31/03/21, http://www.giovannidallorto.com/saggistoria/sansebastiano/sansebastiano.html

Damiani, Giovanni. 1872. *Spiritualism in Italy. -Mazzini a Spiritualist*, 'Human Nature', 6: 220-224

Danieli, Francesco. 2007. *La freccia e la palma. San Sebastiano tra storia e pittura con 100 capolavori dell'arte* (Rome: Edizioni Universitarie Romane)

Daolmi, Davide and Emanuele Senici. 2000. '"L'omosessualità è un modo di cantare". Il contributo queer all'indagine sull'opera in musica', *Il Saggiatore musicale*, 7 (1): 137-178

De Ceglia, Francesco Paolo, and Lorenzo Leporiere. 2018. La *pitonessa, il pirata e l'acuto osservatore* (Milan: Editrice Bibliografica)

De Ceglia, Francesco Paolo, Ernesto De Cristofaro, and Silvano Montaldo. 2023. *Lombroso e il Sud* (Rome: Donzelli)

De Certeau, Michel. 1982. *La Fable Mystique* (Paris: Gallimard)

De Cossart, Michael. 1987. *Ida Rubinstein (1885-1960): A Theatrical Life* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press)

De Donato, Gigliola. 1983. 'Donna e società nella cultura moderata del primo Ottocento', in *La parabola della donna nella Letteratura italiana dell'Ottocento*, ed. by Gigliola De Donato (Bari: Adriatica Editrice), pp. 11-96

De Leo, Maya. 2021. *Queer. Storia culturale della comunità LGBT+* (Turin: Einaudi)

De Leo, Maya. 2021. 'Le sessualità queer e le quattro "rivoluzioni" dell'età contemporanea', *Storica,* 79: 139-151, 201-202

De Martino, Ernesto. 2015. *Sud e Magia*, ed. by Fabio Dei and Antonio Fanelli (Rome: Donzelli)

De Montera, Pierre and Guy Tosi. 1972. *D'Annunzio. Montesquiou. Matilde Serao* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura)

De Nunzio Schilardi, Wanda. 2004. *L'invenzione del reale. Studi su Matilde Serao* (Bari: Palomar)

De Rienzo, Giorgio. 1994. *Fogazzaro e il Decadentismo* (Modena: Mucchi)

De Roberto, Federico. 1984. *Romanzi, novelle e saggi*, ed. by Carlo A. Madrignani (Milan: Mondadori)

Del Donno, Fabrizio and Simon Gilson. 2014. 'Introduction' in *Beyond Catholicism. Heresy, Mysticism, and Apocalypse in Italian Culture* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan)

Della Coletta, Cristina. 1995. 'Teoria realista e prassi fantastica: "Un vampiro" di Luigi Capuana', *MLN*, 110: 192-208

Della Torre, Arturo. 1984. 'Fogazzaro e il romanzo post-unitario' in *Antonio Fogazzaro*, ed. by Agnoletto, Attilio, Enzo Girardi, and Carlo Marcora (Milan: Franco Angeli), pp. 53-63

Derrida, Jacques. 1994. '"To Do Justice to Freud": The History of Madness in the Age of Psychoanalysis', *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 20, no. 2: 227-66

Descuret, Jean Baptiste Félix. 1855. *La medicina delle passioni, ovvero Le passioni considerate relativamente alle malattie alle leggi e alla religione* (Milan: Ernesto Oliva)

Dèttore, Ugo (ed.). 1973. *L'altro regno. Enciclopedia di metapsichica, di parapsicologia e di spiritismo* (Milan: Bompiani)

Di Blasi, Corrado. 1954. *Luigi Capuana* (Mineo: Edizione Biblioteca Capuana)

Di Blasi, Corrado. 1968. *Luigi Capuana originale e segreto* (Catania: Giannotta)

Di Scala, Spencer. 2009. '*Miti e incanti nella Francia "fin de siècle"*' *Italy: From Revolution to Republic: 1700 to the Present* (Boulder: Westview Press), pp.185-200

Didi-Huberman, George. 2003. *Invention of Hysteria. Charcot and the Photographic Iconography of the Salpêtrière* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press)

'Disposizioni sui manicomî e sugli alienate. Custodia e cura degli alienati'. 1904. *Gazzetta ufficiale del Regno d'Italia*. Monday, February 22, 43: 818-820

Donadoni, Eugenio. 1913. *Antonio Fogazzaro* (Naples: Perrella)

Downey, Dara. 2022. 'Grasping Spiritualists and Besotted Scientists: The Female Medium's Body as Battleground' in Cogan, Lucy, and Michelle O'Connell. *Life, Death, and Consciousness in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 215-134

Drescher, Hans-Georg. 1992. *Ernst Troeltsch: His Life and Work*, trans. by John Bowden (London: SCM)

Du Prel, Carlo (Carl). 1888. 'La salamandra mistica. Conferenza tenuta alla "Società psicologica" di Monaco in Baviera il 5 di Gennaio 1888', trans. by Niceforo Filalete, *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia. Rassegna di psicologia sperimentale*, October, 25 (10): 289-292; November, 25 (11): 321-324

Duncan, Derek. 2006. *Reading and Writing Italian Homosexuality: A Case of Possible Difference* (Aldershot and Burlington: Ashgate)

Eco, Umberto, Marina Federzoni, Isabella Pezzini, and Maria Pia Pozzato. 1979. *Carolina Invernizio, Matilde Serao, Liala* (Florence: La Nuova Italia)

Eekhoud, Georges. 1909. 'Saint Sébastien dans la peinture', *Akademos*, 15 feb., 1: 171-175

Edelman, Lee. 2004. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, N.C. and London: Duke University Press)

Eliade, Mircea. [1951] 2004. *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP)

Eliade, Mircea. 1962. *Méphistophéles et l'androgyne* (Paris: Gallimard)

Ellenberger, Henri. 1970. *Discovery of the Unconscious* (New York: Basic Books)

Ennis, Philip, H.. 1976. 'Ecstasy and Everyday Life', *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 6, 1: 40-48

Evangelista, Stefano, Valeria Giannantonio, and Elisabetta Selmi. 2018. *The Poetics of Decadence in Fin-de-siècle Italy: Degeneration and Regeneration in Literature and the Arts* (Oxford and New York: Peter Lang)

Fachinelli, Elvio, 1989. 'Conversazione sull'estasi', *Agalma. Rivista di ricerca psicoanalitica*, Decembre, 2: 133-41

Fachinelli, Elvio. 2009. *La mente estatica* (Milan: Adelphi)

Faglioni, Walter. 1968. *Il teatro francese di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Udine: Nuova Base)

Failli, Manuela. 1985. 'La voluttà di creare' in *Novelliere impenitente: studi su Luigi Capuana*, ed. by Emanuella Lugnani Scarano (Pisa: Nistri-Lischi), pp. 126-168

Fanning, Ursula. 2002. *Gender meets genre: Woman as Subject in the Fictional Universe of Matilde Serao* (Dublin and Portland (OR): Irish Academic Press)

Farassino, Alberto. 1983. 'Il gabinetto del dottor Negro: analisi di un film psichiatrico del 1908', *Aut aut*, 197-198: 151-170

Farnetti, Monica. 'Anxiety-free: Rereadings of the Freudian "Uncanny"' in *The Italian Gothic and Fantastic: Encounters and Rewritings of Narrative Traditions*, ed. by Francesca Billiani and Gigliola Sulis. 2007. (Madison [NJ]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press), pp.46-56

Ferrante, Antonia Anna. 2019. 'Sesto senso transfemminista. Telepatia in un mondo di guai' in *Femminismi futuri. Teorie. Poetiche. Fabulazioni*, ed. by Lidia Curti with Antonia Anna Ferrante and Marina Vitale (Rome: Iacobelli), pp. 112-129

Finn, Michael R.. 2017. *Figures of the Pre-Freudian Unconscious from Flaubert to Proust* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Finocchiaro Chimirri, Giovanna. 1979. *Inediti e archetipi di Luigi Capuana* (Rome: Bulzoni)

Finotti, Fabio. 2011. 'Il realismo integrale di Fogazzaro', *Lettere italiane*, 1: 55-68

Finotti, Fabio. 1999. 'L'inconscio in Fogazzaro' in *Antonio Fogazzaro tra storia, filologia, critica. Atti della Giornata di Studio, Vicenza, 16 Maggio 1997*, ed. by Gilberto Pizzamiglio and Fabio Finotti (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica), pp. 133-163

Finotti, Fabio. 2000. 'Pensiero del corpo e verità del paesaggio nel "Santo"', in *Il 'Santo' all'Indice*. *Atti del Convegno Nazionale di Studi, Subiaco, 10-11 marzo 1997*, ed. by Stefano Collura (Subiaco: Fabreschi), pp. 95-110

Finotti, Fabio. 2001. 'Pensiero e poesia: Per una lettura "metastorica" del "Santo"', *Testo*, January-June, 22 (41): 67-86

Finzi, Gilberto. 1996. *Fogazzaro e il soprannaturale: pagine di narrativa fra spiritismo e spiritualismo* (Cinisello Balsamo: San Paolo)

Finzi, Gilberto (ed.). 1980. *Racconti neri della scapigliatura* (Milan: Mondadori)

Fleischer, Mary. 2007. 'Gabriele D'Annunzio and Ida Rubinstein' in *Embodied Texts. Symbolist Playwright-Dancer Collaborations* (Amsterdam and New York: Rodopi), pp.19-92

Fogazzaro, Antonio and Henri Bremond. 2000. *Carteggio: un dialogo sulla santità e il peccato (1903-1910)*, ed. by Federica Ranzato Santin (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1901. 'A Matilde Serao. Risposta', in *Sonatine Bizzarre: Prose Disperse* (Catania: Giannotta), pp.113-124

Fogazzaro, Antonio. [1885] 1906. *Daniele Cortis* (Milan: Baldini, Castoldi & C.)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1960. *Fogazzaro nel suo piccolo mondo dai carteggi familiari*, ed. by Ottorino Morra (Bologna: Cappelli)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. [1905] 1906. *Il Santo* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi) (=S)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1911. *Leila* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1940. *Lettere scelte* (Milan: Mondadori)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1901. *Piccolo mondo moderno* (Milan: Hoepli) (=PMM)

Fogazzaro, Antonio. 1897. 'Per una nuova scienza', *Rassegna nazionale*, vol XCV, anno XIX, 1 giugno, 417-450

Foni, Fabrizio. 2007. 'Lo scrittore e/è il medium. Appunti su Capuana spiritista', *Atti Accademia Roveretana degli Agiati. A, Classe di Scienze Umane, Lettere ed Arti*, 7: 397-416

Foni, Fabrizio. 2007. *Alla fiera dei mostri. Racconti pulp, orrori e arcane fantasticherie nelle riviste italiane (1899-1932)* (Latina: Tunuè)

Fonio, Filippo. 2018. 'De quelques avant-textes et épitextes inédits du "Martyre de saint Sébastien" de Gabriele D'Annunzio: une genèse "polycentrique" à l'œuvre', *Prassi Ecdotiche della Modernità Letteraria*, 3: 385-414

Fontana, Ferdinando. 1877. *Poesie e novelle in versi* (Milan: Galli e Omodei)

Forbes Leith, James. 1906a. 'Il santo par Fogazzaro' in *Il santo par Fogazzaro: étude critique. Avec le réponse à la Lettre à un critique de m. le vte. de Vogué* (Lyon: Lyon & c.), pp. 3-32

Forbes Leith, James. 1906b. 'Réponse du P. Forbes' in *Il santo par Fogazzaro: étude critique. Avec le réponse à la Lettre à un critique de m. le vte. de Vogué* (Lyon: Lyon & c.), pp. 1-10

Forcella, Vincenzo. 1891. *Iscrizioni delle chiese e degli altri edifici di Milano dal secolo VIII ai giorni nostri* (Milan: Bortolotti di Giuseppe Prato), vol. VII

Foucault, Michel. 2003b. *Abnormal. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975* (London and New York: Verso)

Foucault, Michel. 2006a. *History of Madness* (London and New York: Routledge)

Foucault, Michel. 2006b. *Psychiatric Power. Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

Foucault, Michel. 2003a. *The Birth of The Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception* (London and New York: Routledge)

Foucault, Michel. 2001. *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (London and New York: Routledge)

Foucault, Michel. 1995. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. by Alan Sheridan (New York: Random House Vintage Books)

Foucault, Michel. 1978. *The History of Sexuality* (New York: Pantheon Books)

Franco, Giovanni Giuseppe. 1888. *L'ipnotismo tornato di moda* (Prato: Giacchetti)

Franzolini, Fernando. 1879. 'L'epidemia di ossesse (istero-demonopatie) in Verzegnis studiata dai dottori Giuseppe Chiap e Fernando Franzolini. Relazione del Dott. Fernando Franzolini', *Medicina legale* in *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria e di medicina legale*, 89-169

Frascani, Paolo. 1986. *Ospedale e società in età liberale* (Bologna: Il Mulino)

Freud, Sigmund and Josef Breuer. 1955. *Studies on Hysteria by Josef Breuer and Sigmund Freud* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. II (1893-1895)*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press)

Freud, Sigmund. 1955a. *The 'Uncanny'* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud. Vol. XVII (1917-1919)*, trans. and ed. by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press), pp. 217-256

Freud, Sigmund. 1955b. *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XVIII (1920-1922)* (London: The Hogarth Press), pp. 3-64

Freud, Sigmund. 1961. *Civilization and its Discontents* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological works of Sigmund Freud, Vol. XXI (1927-1931)* (London: The Hogarth Press), pp. 59-145

Gadebusch Bondio, Mariacarla. 1997. 'La vita oltre la morte: spiritismo, ipnotismo ed esperienze metapsichiche nei romanzi e nelle novelle di Capuana', *Italienisch*, 38: 38-50

Galgani, Gemma. 2003a. 'Ecstasies and Letters. Summer 1902' in *The Voices of Gemma Galgani: The life and Afterlife of a Modern Saint*, ed. by Rudolph M. Bell and Cristina Mazzoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 108-155

Galgani, Gemma. 2003b. 'Autobiography. Until Fall 1899' in *The Voices of Gemma Galgani: The life and Afterlife of a Modern Saint*, ed. by Rudolph M. Bell and Cristina Mazzoni (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), pp. 21-59

Gallarati Scotti, Tommaso. 1920. *La vita di Antonio Fogazzaro* (Milan: Baldini & Castoldi)

Gallini, Clara. 2013. *La sonnambula meravigliosa: magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento Italiano* (Rome: L'Asino d'oro)

Garin, Eugenio. 1962. *La cultura italiana tra '800 e '900* (Bari: Laterza)

Gebhart, Émile. 1890. *L'Italie mystique: histoire de la Renaissance religieuse au moyen âge* (Paris: Hachette,)

Ghidetti, Enrico. 1993. *Malattia, coscienza e destino. Per una mitografia del Decadentismo* (Florence: La Nuova Italia)

Ghidetti, Enrico. 1974a. '*Introduzione*' in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti* (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 1, pp. IX-LXI

Ghidetti, Enrico. 1974b. 'Nota introduttiva' to *Un vampiro* in Capuana, Luigi. *Racconti* (Rome: Salerno Editrice), vol. 3, 201-202

Ghidetti, Enrico. 2008. '"Forze occulte": Scienza, Spiritismo e Letteratura Fantastica al Tramonto del Secolo XIX' in *Italia Magica: Letteratura Fantastica e Surreale dell'Ottocento e del Novecento: Atti del*

Convegno, Cagliari-Pula 7-10 Giugno 2006, ed. by Giovanna Caltagirone and Sandro Maxia (Cagliari: AM & D), pp. 29-48

Ghidetti, Enrico. 1974. *Le idee e le virtù di Antonio Fogazzaro* (Padua: Liviana)

Ghirelli, Antonio. 1995. *Donna Matilde. La Serao. ''a Signora' di Napoli, la prima donna che diresse un quotidiano* (Venice: Marsilio)

Giannetti, Valeria. 1996. 'Capuana e lo spiritismo: l'anticamera della scrittura', *Lettere Italiane*, April-June, 48 (2): 268-85

Gigli, Andrea. 1876. *Magnetismo animale e spiritismo, matrimonio cristiano e dogma dell'immacolato concepimento di Maria santissima* (Naples: Morano)

Ginzburg, Carlo. 1989. *Storia notturna. Una decifrazione del sabba* (Turin: Einaudi)

Girardi, Enzo Noè. 2001. 'La terza fase della narrativa fogazzariana', *Testo*, January-June, 22 (41): 7-11

Giudice, Christian. 2022. *Occult Imperium: Arturo Reghini, Roman Traditionalism, and the Ant-Modern Reaction in Fascist Italy* (New York: Oxford UP)

Goldstein, Jan. 1982. The Hysteria Diagnosis and the Politics of Anticlericalism in Late Nineteenth Century France', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 54, June, No. 2: 209-239

Goldstein, Jan. 2009. *Hysteria Complicated by Ecstasy. The case of Nanette Leroux* (Princeton: Princeton University Press)

Goodman, Felicitas D.. 1988. *Ecstasy, Ritual and Alternate Reality: Religion in a Pluralistic World*, (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press)

Gramsci, Antonio. 1977. *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. by Valentino Gerratana (Turin: Einaudi), vol. I

Granholm, Kennet. 2015. 'Sociology and the Occult' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 720-731

Gruppo di coordinamento del progetto Carte da legare (ed. by). 2010. *Primo rapporto sugli archivi degli ex ospedali psichiatrici* (Angri: Editrice Gaia)

Guarnieri, Patrizia. 1988. 'Theatre and Laboratory. Medical Attitudes to Animal Magnetism in late Nineteenth-Century Italy' in *Studies in the History of Alternative Medicine*, ed. by Roger Cooter (London: Macmillan), pp. 118-139

Guarnieri, Patrizia. 1990. *The psyche in trance. Inquiries into hypnotism* (Florence: European University Institute)

Guidi, Francesco. 1863. *Il magnetismo animale considerato secondo le leggi della natura e principalmente diretto alla cura delle malattie* (Milan: Sanvito)

Guidi, Francesco. 1854. *Trattato teorico-pratico di magnetimso animale considerate sotto il punto di vista fisiologico e psicologico* (Milan: Turati)

Gullace, Giovanni. 1966. *Gabriele d'Annunzio in France. A study in cultural relations* (New York: Syracuse University Press)

Gutierrez, Cathy. 2015. 'Spiritualism' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 197-206

Hales, Edward Elton Young. 1956. *Pio Nono: A Study in European Politics and Society in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode)

Hallamore Caesar, Ann. 2007. 'Sensation, seduction, and the supernatural: Fogazzaro's Malombra' in *The Italian Gothic and Fantastic: Encounters and Rewritings of Narrative Traditions*, ed. by Francesca Billiani and Gigliola Sulis (Madison [NJ]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press), pp. 98-118

Halperin, David. 1995. *Saint=Foucault: Towards a Gay Hagiography* (New York: Oxford University Press)

Hanegraaff, Wouter J.. 1996. *New Age Religion and Western Culture. Esotericism in the Mirror of Secular Thought* (Leiden: Brill)

Harris, Ruth. 1991. 'Introduction' in Charcot, Jean-Martin. 1991. *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System*, ed. by Ruth Harris (London: Routledge), pp. IX-LXVIII

Harris, Ruth. 1999. *Lourdes: Body and Spirit in the Secular Age* (London: Allen Lane)

Harrowitz, Nancy A.. 1994. *Antisemitism, Misoginy, & The Logic of Cultural Difference. Cesare Lombroso & Matilde Serao* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press)

Hartford, Jason James. 2018. *Sexuality, Iconography, and Fiction in French: Queering the Martyr* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

Hollywood, Amy. 2002. *Sensible Ecstasy: Mysticism, Sexual Difference, and the Demands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

Imbert-Gourbeyre, Antoine. 1894a. *La stigmatization, l'extase divine et les miracles de Lourdes: réponse aux libres-penseurs* (Clermont-Ferrand: Bellet), tome I

Imbert-Gourbeyre, Antoine. 1894b. *La stigmatization, l'extase divine et les miracles de Lourdes: réponse aux libres-penseurs* (Clermont-Ferrand: Bellet), tome II

Imbert-Gourbeyre, Antoine. 1873. *Palma d'Oria. Examen de la thèse rationaliste, liste historique des stigmatisés* in *Les stigmatisées* (Paris: Victor Palmé), tome II

Imoda, Enrico. 1912. 'La media Gazzera', *Luce e ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualiste*, January, 12 (1): 1-5

Imoda, Enrico. 1912. *Fotografie di fantasmi* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca)

Infusino, Gianni (ed.). 1981. *Matilde Serao tra giornalismo e letteratura* (Naples: Guida)

Ingargiola, Igea. 1955. *L'epistolario di Antonio Fogazzaro: l'anima più addentro all'anima* (Milan: Gastaldi)

Irigaray, Luce. 1985. *Speculum of The Other Woman* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press)

Irwin, Jones and Helena Motoh. 2014. *Žižek and His Contemporaries: On the Emergence of the Slovenian Lacan* (London and New York: Bloomsbury)

James, William. 2002. *Varieties of Religious Experience* (London and New York: Routledge)

Janet, Pierre. 1901. 'Une extatique', *Bulletin de l'Institut Psychologique International*, July-August-September, 1 (5): 209-240

Janet, Pierre. [1926] 1975. *De l'angoisse à l'extase. Études sur les croyances et les sentiments* (Paris: Société Pierre Janet)

Jantzen, Grace M.. 1995. *Power, Gender and Christian Mysticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press)

Jeuland-Meynaud, Maryse. 1986. *Immagini, linguaggio e modelli del corpo nell'opera narrativa i Matilde Serao* (Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo)

Jeuland-Meynaud, Maryse. 1973. *La ville de Naples après l'annexion (1860-1915)* (Aix: Editions de l'Université de Provence)

Johnston, Jay. 2015. 'The Body in Occult Thought' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 659-671

Jones, Ann Rosalind. 1981. 'Writing the Body: Toward an Understanding of "L'Ecriture Feminine"', *Feminist Studies*, 7 (2): 247-63

Kaye, Richard A.. 1999a. '"Determined Raptures": St. Sebastian and the Victorian Discourse of Decadence', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 7 (1): 269-303

Kaye, Richard A.. 1999b. '"A Splendid Readiness for Death": T.S. Eliot, the Homosexual Cult of St. Sebastian, and World War I', *Modernism/Modernity*, April, 6 (2): 107-134

Kaye, Richard A. 1996. 'Losing His Religion: Saint Sebastian as Contemporary Gay Martyr' in *Outlooks: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities and Visual Cultures*, ed. by Peter Horne and Reina Lewis (New York: Routledge), pp. 86-105

Kelly, Mark G. E.. 2020. 'Foucault on psychoanalysis: missed encounter or Gordian knot?', *Foucault Studies*, 1 (28): 96-119

Klaniczay, Gábor. 2020. 'The stigmatized Italian visionary and the devout French physician: Palma Mattarelli d'Oria and docteur Imbert Gourbeyre', *Women's History Review*, 29 (1): 109-124

Krafft-Ebing, Richard von. 1892. *Psychopatia sexualis*, trans. by Charles Gilbert Chaddock (Philadelphia and London: The F.A. Davis Co. Publishers)

Labanca, Baldassarre. 1895. 'La bancarotta né della scienza né della religione. Lettera aperta ad Enrico Morselli', *Il pensiero italiano. Repertorio mensile di studi applicati alla prosperità e coltura sociale*, May, V, 14 (53): 1-26

Lacan, Jacques. 1975. *Le Séminaire de Jacques Lacan. Livre XX: Encore*, ed. by Jacques-Alain Miller (Paris: Seuil)

Lachapelle, Sofie. 2004. 'Between Miracle and Sickness: Louise Lateau and the Experience of Stigmata and Ecstasy', *Configurations*, 12: 77-105

Lakdhari, Sadi. 2007. 'Hypnose, hystérie, extase: de Charcot à Freud', *Savoirs et clinique*, 8 (1): 201-209

Landoni, Elena. 2004. *Antonio Fogazzaro e i cavalieri dello spirito: ascesa di un opinion leader tra Otto e Novecento* (Genoa: San Marco Dei Giustiniani)

Lanza, Vincenzo. 1842. *Nosologia positiva* (Naples: Stamperia di Reale)

Larsen, Lars Bang. 2005. 'When the Light Falls: Notes on Ecstasy and Corruption' in *Ecstasy: In and About Altered States*, ed. by Paul Schimmel and Lisa Gabrielle Mark (Cambridge, MA and London: MIT Press), pp. 176-85

Laski, Margharita. 1961. *Ecstasy: A Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences* (London: The Cresset Press)

Lazzaretti, David. 2008. *Scritti 1868-1870*, ed. by. Nello Nanny (Arcidosso: Edizioni Effigi)

Lazzaretti, David. 2016. *Scritti 1871-1873*, ed. by. Nello Nanny (Arcidosso: Edizioni Effigi)

Leclerc, Annie. 1974. *Parole de femme* (Paris: Grasset)

Leporiere, Lorenzo. 2018. 'Mediums and Science in Early 20th Century Europe', *Nuncius*, 33 (1): 104-36

Lester, John Ashby. 1968. 'Ecstasy' in *Journey Through Despair. 1880-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press), pp. 154-176

Leuba, James H. 1925. *The Psychology of Religious Mysticism* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner &Co.; New York: Harcourt, Brace& Co.)

Levitz, Tamara. 2012. *Modernist Mysteries: Perséphone* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Lewis, Ioan Myrddin. 1971. *Ecstatic Religion: An Anthropological Study of Spirit Possession and Shamanism* (Harmondsworth: Penguin)

Linati, Filippo. 1874. *Introduzione allo studio della fisiologia trascendentale* (Parma: Pietro Grazioli)

Linguerri, Sandra. 2011. *Tempi e forme dell'associazionismo scientifico*, in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 26. Scienza e cultura dell'Italia unita*, ed. by Francesco Cassata e Claudio Pogliano (Turin: Einaudi)

Lisciani-Petrini, Enrica. 2015. 'D'Annunzio – Debussy: Un sodalizio "moderno"', *Forum Italicum*, 49 (2): 412-432

Lizzatto, Sergio. 2007. *Padre Pio. Miracoli e politica nell'Italia del Novecento* (Turin: Einaudi)

Lloyd, Vincent. 2015. 'Christianity' in *The Fin-de-Siècle World*, ed. by Michael Saler (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 568-581

Lo Forte Randi, Andrea (Francesco Enotrio Ladenarda). 1914. *La Superfemmina abruzzese* (Palermo: Pedone Lauriel)

Lombroso, Cesare and Pietro Nocito. 1880. 'Davide Lazzaretti', *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali ed antropologia criminale per servire allo studio dell'uomo alienato e delinquente*, 1: 13-36; 145-162

Lombroso, Cesare. 1882. 'Alfonso Asturaro – Santa Caterina da Siena. – Napoli, Morano, 1881', *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali ed antropologia criminale per servire allo studio dell'uomo alienato e delinquente*, 3: 161

Lombroso, Cesare. 1888. 'Prefazione' in Belfiore, Giulio. *L'ipnotismo e gli stati affini* (Naples: Luigi Pierro), pp. 3-7

Lombroso, Cesare. 1890. *Pazzi ed anomali* (Città di Castello: Lapi Tipografo-Editore)

Lombroso, Cesare and Guglielmo Ferrero. 1893. *La donna delinquente, la prostituta e la donna normale* (Turin: Roux)

Lombroso, Cesare. 1894. *L'uomo di genio in rapporto alla psichiatria, alla storia ed all'estetica* (Turin: Bocca)

Lombroso, Cesare. 1897. *L'uomo delinquente in rapporto all'antropologia, alla giurisprudenza ed alla psichiatria. Atlante* (Turin: Bocca)

Lombroso, Cesare. 1906. 'Sui fenomeni spiritici e la loro interpretazione', *La Lettura: Rivista mensile* in *Corriere della Sera*, 6 (11): 978-987

Lombroso, Cesare. 1909. *Ricerche sui fenomeni ipnotici e spiritici* (Turin: UTET)

Lombroso, Cesare. 1995 [1892]. 'Esperienze spiritiche', in Capuana, Luigi. *Mondo occulto*, ed. by Simone Cigliana (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma, 1995), pp. 195-200

Longoni, Anna (ed.). 1993. *Lettere a Capuana* (Milan: Bompiani)

Lonzi, Carla. 1974. *Sputiamo su Hegel. La donna clitoridea e la donna vaginale e altri scritti* (Milan: Scritti di Rivolta Femminile)

Lowry, Elizabeth. 2012. 'Gendered Haunts: The Rhetorical and Material Culture of the Late Nineteenth-Century Spirit Cabinet', *Aries. Journal for the Study of Western Esotericism*, 12: 221-235

Madrignani, Carlo Alberto. 2001. 'Persuasione e misticismo', *Testo*, January-June, 22 (41): 57-65

Madrignani, Carlo Alberto. 1970. *Capuana e il naturalismo* (Bari: Laterza)

Mangini, Angelo M.. 2007. 'A Portrait of the Writer as a Somnambule: Reflections on Verismo and Phantasmagoria in Verga and Capuana' in *The Italian Gothic and Fantastic: Encounters and Rewritings of Narrative Traditions*, ed. by Francesca Billiani and Gigliola Sulis (Madison [NJ]: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press), pp. 80-97

Mantegazza, Paolo. 1879. *Fisiologia dell'amore* (Milan: Gaetano Brigola)

Mantegazza, Paolo. 1886. *Gli amori degli uomini. Saggio di una etnologia dell'amore* (Milan: Paolo Mantegazza)

Mantegazza, Paolo. 1887a. *Estasi umane* (Milan: Treves), I

Mantegazza, Paolo. 1887b. *Estasi umane* (Milan: Treves), II

Mantegazza, Paolo. [1887] 1995. *Il secolo nevrosico* (Pordenone: Edizione Studio Tesi)

Mantegazza, Paolo. 1893 [1892]. *Fisiologia della donna* (Milan: Treves)

Mantegazza, Paolo. 1897. *L'anno 3000* (Milan: Treves)

Marangon, Paolo. 2001. 'Da Rosmini a Fogazzaro: una metamorfosi del cattolicesimo liberale' in *Annali di Studi Religiosi* (Bologna: EDB), pp. 101-122

Marangon, Paolo. 1999. 'Le fonti del Santo' in *Antonio Fogazzaro tra storia, filologia, critica. Atti della Giornata di Studio, Vicenza, 16 Maggio 1997*, ed. by Gilberto Pizzamiglio and Fabio Finotti (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica), pp. 69-89

Marinetti, Filippo Tommaso. 1914. 'Fondazione e Manifesto del Futurismo', in *I manifesti del Futurismo* (Florence: Lacerba), pp. 3-10

Martin-Gistucci, Marie-Gracieuse. 1973. *L'Œuvre Romanesque de Matilde Serao* (Grenoble: Presses Universitaires de Grenoble)

Martin-Gistucci, Marie-Gracieuse. 1977. 'Prefazione' in Serao, Matilde. *L'ebbrezza, il servaggio e la morte*, a cura di Marie-Gracieuse Martin-Gistucci (Naples: Guida)

Marzorati, Angelo. 1916. 'Documenti medianici', *Luce e ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualistiche*, July-August, 16 (7-8): 334-337

Massicotte, Claudie. 2017. *Trance Speakers: Femininity and Authorship in Spiritual Séances, 1850-1930* (Montreal & Kingston, London, and Chicago: McGuill-Queen's University Press)

Matter, Ann E.. 1994. 'Il matrimonio mistico' in *Donne e fede: Santità e vita religiosa in Italia*, ed. by Lucetta Scaraffia and Gabriella Zarri (Bari: Laterza), pp. 43-60

Mattone, Antonello. 1981. 'Messianesimo e Sovversivismo. Le Note Gramsciane Su Davide Lazzaretti', *Studi Storici*, April-June, 22 (2): 371-385

Mauro, Walter. 1971. *Capuana. Antologia dagli scritti critici* (Bologna: Calderini)

Mazza, Attilio. 1995. *D'Annunzio e l'occulto* (Rome: Mediterranee)

Mazzocchi Doglio, Mariangela. 1992. 'Il mito dell'androgino nel "Martyre de Saint Sébastien"' in *Miti e incanti nella Francia 'fin de siècle': poesia e teatro* (Rome: Bulzoni), pp. 55-67

Mazzoni, Cristina. 1995. 'Visions of the Mystic/Mystical Visions: Interpretations and Self-Interpretations of Gemma Galgani', *Annali d'Italianistica*, 13: 371-38

Mazzoni, Cristina. 1996. *Saint Hysteria: Neurosis, Mysticism, and Gender in European Culture* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press)

McDaniel, June. 2018. *Lost Ecstasy: Its Decline and Transformation in Religion* (Cham: Palgrave Macmillan)

McGarry, Molly. 2008. *Ghosts of Futures Past: Spiritualism and the Cultural Politics of Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley: University of California Press)

Melton, J. Gordon. 'spiritualism' in *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 3 May 2013, https://www.britannica.com/topic/spiritualism-religion [accessed 25 April 2023]

Micale, Mark S.. 1995. *Approaching Hysteria: Disease and Its Interpretations* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton UP)

Michelacci, Lara. 2019. 'Capuana, lo spiritismo e i personaggi femminili' in *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, ed. by Annamaria Pagliaro and Brian Zuccala (Florence: Firenze University Press), pp. 145-157

Michelacci, Lara. 2015. *Il microscopio e l'allucinazione. Luigi Capuana tra letteratura, scienza e anomalia* (Bologna: Pendragon)

Migliore, Sandra. 2001. *Mistica povertà: Riscritture francescane tra Otto e Novecento* (Rome: Istituto Storico Dei Cappuccini)

Miller, Jacques-Alain. 1992. 'Michel Foucault and Psychoanalysis' in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*, ed. by Timothy J. Armstrong (New York: Routledge), pp. 58-64

Milletti, Nerina. 1994. 'Analoghe sconcezze. Tribadi, saffiste, invertite e omosessuali: categorie e sistemi sesso/genere nella rivista di antropologia criminale fondata da Cesare Lombroso (1880-1949), *dwf*, 24: 50-122

Mirabile, Andrea. 2013a. 'La morte del dio. Mito e soggettività in Gabriele d'Annunzio', *Italienisch*, 69: 18-33

Mirabile, Andrea. 2013b. 'Visual Intertextualities in Gabriele D'Annunzio's "Le Martyre de Saint Sébastien"', *MLN*, 128 (1): 124-50

Mirabile, Andrea. 2014. *Multimedia Archaeologies: Gabriele D'Annunzio, Belle Époque Paris, and the Total Artwork* (Amsterdam: Rodopi)

Mitchell, Katharine. 2008. 'La Marchesa Colombi, Neera, Matilde Serao: Forging a Female Solidarity in Late Nineteenth-Century Journals for Women', *Italian Studies*, 63 (1): 63-84

Mitchell, Katharine. 2010. 'Narrativizing women's experiences in late nineteenth-century Italy through domestic fiction', *Rethinking History*, 14 (4): 483-501

Mitchell, Katharine, and Helena Sanson. 2013. *Women and Gender in Post-Unification Italy: Between Private and Public Spheres* (Oxford: Peter Lang)

Mitchell, Katharine. 2014. *Italian Women Writers: Gender and Everyday Life in Fiction and Journalism, 1870-1910* (Toronto: Toronto Italian Studies)

Mitchell, Katharine. 2017. 'Ottocento Italian Dive between the woman's stage and page' in *Women and the Public Sphere in Modern and Contemporary Italy. Essays for Sharon Wood*, ed. by Simona Storchi, Marina Spunta, and Maria Morelli (Leicester: Troubador), pp. 1-13

Moores, D.J.. 2014. *The Ecstatic Poetic Tradition: A Critical Study from the Ancients Through Rumi, Wordsworth, Whitman, Dickinson, and Tagore* (Jefferson: McFarland Press)

Moretti, Mauro. 2011. *Scuola, scienza e università*, in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 26. Scienza e cultura dell'Italia unita*, ed. by Francesco Cassata and Claudio Pogliano (Turin: Einaudi), pp. 975-1010

Morselli, Enrico. 1881. 'Le ultime pazzie epidemiche in Italia', *La rassegna settimanale di politica, scienze, lettere ed* arti, August 28, 8 (191): 138-140

Morselli, Enrico. 1886. *Il magnetismo animale: la fascinazione e gli stati ipnotici* (Turin: Roux e Favale)

Morselli, Enrico. 1895. 'La pretesa "bancarotta della scienza". Una risposta del prof. Enrico Morselli', *Rivista di sociologia. Scienze sociali, politiche e morali, biologia, psicologia, antropologia, pedagogia, igiene, storia della cultura*, 2 (1): 81-100

Morselli, Enrico. 1908. *Psicologia e spiritismo. Impressioni e note critiche sui fenomeni medianici di Eusapia Paladino* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca), vol. I

Mosso, Angelo. 1892. *La fatica* (Milan: Treves)

Muchembled, Robert. 2008. *Orgasm and the West: A History of Pleasure from the Sixteenth Century to the Present* (Cambridge: Polity Press)

Musumeci, Emilia. 2021. 'David Lazzaretti: heretic, rebel, or mentally insane? A cold case in Post-Unification italy', *Stato, Chiese e pluralismo confessionale. Rivista telematica*, 6: 47-70

Nancy, Jean-Luc, Charlotte Mandell, and Adèle Van Reeth. 2017. *Coming* (New York: Fordham University Press)

Nardi, Piero. 1929. *Fogazzaro: su documenti inediti* (Vicenza: E. Jacchìa)

Nay, Laura. 1999. *Fantasmi del corpo, fantasmi della mente. La malattia fra analisi e racconto* (1870-1900) (Alessandria: Edizioni dell'Orso)

'Necrologia. Il P. Francesco Salis-Seewis d. C. d. G'. 1898. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1: 380-384

'Necrologie. Dott. Antonio Tarchini Bonfanti'. 1890. *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria e di medicina legale*, September, 27 (5): 263-264

Nencioni, Enrico. 1895. 'La letteratura mistica' in *La vita italiana nel Trecento* (Milan: Fratelli Treves), pp.218-248

Nicastro, Guido. 1988. *Il poeta e la scena. Saggio sul teatro di d'Annunzio* (Catania: Edizioni del Prisma)

Oddo De Stefanis, Giusi. 1990. 'I "simboli vivi" di Capuana: un'analisi di *Profili di donne*' in *L'illusione della realtà: studi su Luigi Capuana. Atti del Convegno Di Montréal, 16-18 Marzo 1989*, ed. by Michelangelo Picone and Enrica Rossetti (Rome: Salerno Editrice), pp. 81-96

Ojetti, Ugo. 1899. *Alla scoperta dei letterati* (Milan: Bocca)

Olegna, Raffaele. 1923. 'L'omosessualità negli ultimi romanzi francesi', *Rassegna di studi sessuali*, 3 (2): 271-276

Oliva, Gianni. 1979. 'Capuana, D'Annunzio, "Le Martyre"' in *Capuana in archivio* (Caltanissetta and Rome: Salvatore Sciascia Editore), pp. 105-129

Oliver, Kelly and Steve Edwin. 2002. *Between the Psyche and the Social: Psychoanalytic Social Theory* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers)

Orlando, Francesco. 1973. *Per una teoria freudiana della letteratura* (Turin: Einaudi)

Osselaer, Tine Van. 2017. 'Introduction' in *Sign or Symptom?: Exceptional Corporeal Phenomena in Religion and Medicine in the 19th and 20th Centuries*, ed. by Tine Van Osselaer, Henk de Smaele, and Kaat Wils (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2017), pp. 7-21

Ottolenghi, Salvatore. 1900. *La suggestione e le facoltà psichiche occulte in rapporto alla pratica legale e medico-forense* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca)

Owen, Alex. 2004. *The Darkened Room: Women, Power, and Spiritualism in Late Victorian England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press)

Pacheu, Giulio. 1910. 'I fatti mistici e la patologia mentale', *Rivista di filosofia neo-scolastica*, 2 (6): 617-634

Pagliaro, Annamaria and Brian Zuccala. 2019. 'Tradition and experimentation in Capuana and Capuana studies' in *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, ed. by Annamaria Pagliaro and Brian Zuccala (Florence: Firenze University Press), pp. 9-21

Paolella, Francesco. 2018. 'Francesco, una "ipertrofia dell'affetto"?', *Intrasformazione. Rivista di Storia delle Idee*, 7 (1): 153-170

Partini, Anna Maria. 1996. *Il sogno e il suo mistero. Tradizione, psicologia, divinazione* (Rome: Edizioni Mediterranee)

Partridge, Cristopher. 2004. *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture. Vol 1* (London: T&T Clark)

Partridge, Cristopher. 2006. *The Re-Enchantment of the West: Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture. Vol 2* (London: T&T Clark)

Partridge, Cristopher. 2015. 'Introduction' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge)

Partridge, Cristopher. 2018. *High Culture: Drugs, Mysticism, and the Pursuit of Transcendence in the Modern World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Pasi, Marco. 2017. 'Fogazzaro e il movimento teosofico. Una ricognizione sulla base di nuovi documenti inedita' in *Octagon: La ricerca della totalità riflessa in una biblioteca dedicate alla Storia delle religioni, alla filosofia e, soprattutto, all'esoterismo*, ed. by Hans Thomas Hakl (Gaggenau: Scientia Nova), vol.3, pp. 231-265

Patterson Thornburg, Mary K.. 1987. *The Monster in the Mirror: Gender and the Sentimental/Gothic Myth in 'Frankenstein'* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press)

Pelaja, Margherita and Lucetta Scaraffia. 2008. *Due in un carne. Chiesa e sessualità nella storia* (Bari: Laterza)

Pellegrini, Giuseppe. 1886. *Ciarlatani ed ingenui* (Udine: Patria del Friuli)

Pennavaria, Filippo. 1878. *Sopra un caso d'isterismo acuto con estasi e sognazione spontanea accaduto in persona della insigne poetessa Mariannina Coffa Caruso* in Morana. Considerazioni medico-filosofiche, (Ragusa: Piccitto e Antoci), then in Verdirame, Rita. 1990. *Finzione rassegnazione e rivolta: l'immagine femminile nella letteratura dell'Ottocento* (Enna: Papiro editrice)

Pesce, Giovanni. 1869. 'Storia di un caso di estasi', *Liguria medica*, 14: 181-186

Per Antonio Fogazzaro. 1914. (Marostica: Martinato)

Petraglia, Christina A. 2012. *Uncanny Resemblances: Doubles and Doubling in Tarchetti, Capuana, and De Marchi* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Wisconsin) in ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global https://www.proquest.com/dissertations-theses/uncanny-resemblances-doubles-doubling-tarchetti/docview/1278254721/se-2?accountid=13042 [accessed 18 February 2022]

Pieri, Giuliana. 2016. 'Gabriele d'Annunzio and the Self-fashioning of a National Icon', *Modern Italy*, 21(4): 329-343

Piggioli, Ferruccio. 1930. *L'opera letteraria di un mistico* (Turin: Paravia)

Pini, Gaetano. 1883. 'La epidemia di istero demonopatie in Verzegnis', *Giornale della reale società italiana d'igiene*, 5: 553-553

Piperno, Martina. 2018. *Rebuilding post-Revolutionary Italy: Leopardi and Vico's 'New science'* (Oxford: Voltaire Foundation)

Pollard, John. 2008. *Catholicism in Modern Italy: Religion, Society and Politics since 1861* (London: Routledge)

Portigliotti, Giuseppe. 1913. *Le spose di Gesù* (Bologna: Stabilimento Poligrafico Emiliano)

Portigliotti, Giuseppe. 1909. *San Francesco d'Assisi e le epidemie mistiche del Medio Evo (studio psichiatrico)* (Palermo: Sandron)

Potkay, Adam. 2007. *The Story of Joy: From the Bible to Late Romanticism* (New York: Cambridge University Press)

Praz, Mario. 1973. *La carne, la morte e il diavolo nella letteratura romantica* (Florence: Sansoni)

Prezzolini, Giuseppe. 1908. *Il Cattolicismo rosso. Studio sul presente movimento di riforma nel Cattolicismo* (Naples: Ricciardi)

Prezzolini, Giuseppe. 1909. *Cos'è il modernismo?* (Milan: Treves)

Probst-Biraben, Jean Henri. 1906. 'L'extase dans le mysticisme musulman. Les étapes du soufi', *Revue Philosophique de la France et de l'Etranger*, November, 62 (10): 490-498.

Prower, Tomás. 2018. *Queer Magic: LGBT+ Spirituality and Culture from Around the World* (Woodbury, MN: Llewellyn Worldwide)

Pullini, Giorgio. 'Autobiografismo ideale nell'ultima "trilogia"' in *Antonio Fogazzaro. Le opere i tempi. Atti del Convegno Internazionale di studi di Vicenza (27-29 aprile 1992)*, ed. by Ferdinando Bandini and Fabio Finotti (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica), pp. 93-114

Pupino, Angelo R.. 2006. *Matilde Serao. Le opere e i giorni, Atti del Convegno di studi (Napoli 1-4 dicembre 2004)* (Naples: Liguori)

Pustianaz, Marco and Villa, Luisa (eds.). 2004. *Maschilità decadenti: La lunga fin de siècle* (Bergamo: Bergamo University Press)

Ranchetti, Michele. 1963. *Cultura e riforma religiosa nella storia del modernismo* (Turin: Einaudi)

Ranzato Santin, Federica. 1999. 'Il carteggio tra Fogazzaro e Henri Bremond (1903-1910)' in *Antonio Fogazzaro tra storia, filologia, critica. Atti della Giornata di Studio, Vicenza, 16 Maggio 1997*, ed. by Gilberto Pizzamiglio and Fabio Finotti (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica), pp. 111-122

Re, Lucia. 1987. 'Gabriele D'Annunzio's Theater of Memory: Il Vittoriale degli Italiani', *The Journal of Decorative and Propaganda Arts*, 3: 6-50

Réau, Louis. 1958. *Iconographie de l'art chrétien* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France), vol. 3

Ressouni-Demigneux, Karim. 1996. *La Chair et la flèche. Le regard homosexuel sur saint Sébastien tel qu'il était représenté en Italie autour de 1500* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Université Paris I Panthéon-Sorbonne) http://semgai.free.fr/doc_et_pdf/pdf_these_articles_externes/ressouni.PDF [accessed 13 March 22]

Riall, Lucy. 1994. *The Italian Risorgimento: State, Society and National Unification* (London: Routledge)

Ribot, Théodule. 1896. *The Diseases of The Will* (Chicago: The Open Court Publishing Company)

Richer, Paul. 1881. *Etudes Cliniques sur l'Hystéro-Epilepsie ou la Grande Hystérie* (Paris: A. Delahaye et E. Lecrosnier)

Richet, Charles. 1912. 'Prefazione al libro del dott. Imoda', *Luce e ombra. Rivista mensile illustrata di scienze spiritualiste*, February, 12 (2): 67-73

Robinson, Agnes Mary Frances. 1886. 'The Novelists of Naples', *The National Review*, July, 7 (4): 683-697

Roderick, Main. 2015. 'Psychology and the Occult. Dialectics of Disenchantment and Re-Enchantment in the Modern Self' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 732-743

Romani, Gabriella, Ursula Fanning, and Katharine Mitchell. 2022. *Matilde Serao: International Profile, Reception and Networks* (Paris: Classiques Garnier)

Romani, Gabriella. 2019. ‘Muses, Heroines, and Virtuous Wives in Nineteenth-Century Italy: Erminia Fu Fusinato’s and Matilde Serao’s Literary Portrayals of the New Italian Woman’, *The Italianist*, 39 (3): 297-314

Romani, Gabriella. 2018. ‘Matilde Serao’s Art of Numbers: Naples and the Game of Lotto’ in *Delirious Naples: A Cultural History of the City of the Sun*, ed. by Pellegrino D’Acierno and Stanislao G. Pugliese (New York: Fordham University Press), pp. 322-338

Ross, Charlotte. 2015a. *Eccentricity and Sameness: Discourses on Lesbianism and Desire between Women in Italy, 1860s–1930s* (Oxford: Peter Lang)

Ross, Charlotte. 2015b. ‘Italian Medical and Literary Discourses around Female Same-Sex Desire, 1877–1906’ in *Italian Sexualities Uncovered, 1789-1914*, ed. by Valeria Paola Babini, Chiara Beccalossi, Lucy Riall (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan)

Ross, Charlotte. 2017. ‘Pathologies and Eroticism: Paolo Mantegazza’s Ambiguous Reflections on Female Same-Sex Sexuality’ in *Homosexuality in Italian Literature, Society, and Culture, 1789-1919*, ed. by Lorenzo Benadusi, Paolo L. Bernardini, Elisa Bianco, and Paola Guazzo (Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing), pp. 45-64

Rossi, Leonardo. 2020. ‘“Religious virtuosi” and charismatic leaders. The public authority of mystic women in nineteenth-century Italy’, *Women’s History Review*, 29 (1): 90-108

Ruggiero, Mauro. 2020. ‘Occult Influences on Luigi Capuana and Luigi Pirandello’, *Književna Istorija*, 52 (172): 87-102

Ruggiero, Mauro. 2019. *Le muse ermetiche. Esoterismo e occultismo nella letteratura italiana tra fin de siècle e avanguardia* (Milan: Jouvence)

Rummo, Gaetano. 1890. *Iconografia fotografica del grande isterismo* (Naples: Angelo Trani)

Russo, Teresa G.. 1997. ‘Matilde Serao: A True Verista for the Female Character’, *International Social Science Review*, 72 (3-4): 122-135

Saler, Michael. 2014. *The Fin-de-Siècle World* (Abingdon and New York: Routledge)

Salis Seewis, Francesco. 1897. ‘Le estasi, la medicina e la chiesa’, *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 11: 267-281; 533-546

Salsini, Laura A.. 1999. *Gendered Genres. Femal Experiences and Narrative Patterns in the Works of Matilde Serao* (Madison, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Press)

Sandoni, Luca. 2014. ‘Political mobilizations of ecstatic experiences in late nineteenth-century Catholic France: the case of Doctor Antoine Imbert-Gourbeyre and his “Stigmatisées” (1868-73)’, *Disputatio philosophica: International journal on philosophy and religion*, 16 (1): 19-42

Santovetti, Olivia. 2014. 'Metaliterary Fogazzaro: Bovarysme and Mysticism in Malombra (1881)' in *Beyond Catholicism. Heresy, Mysticism, and Apocalypse in Italian Culture*, ed. by Fabrizio Del Donno and Simon Gilson (New York: Palgrave Macmillan), 147-169

Sarti, Carlo Gaspare. 2002. 'L'ortodossia del *Mistero di San Sebastiano*. Un colloquio con Gabriele D'Annunzio' in *Interviste a D'Annunzio (1895-1938)*, ed. by Gianni Oliva (Lanciano: Rocco Carabba)

Scalia, Samuel Eugene. 1952. *Luigi Capuana and His Times* (New York: S.F. Vanni)

Scappaticci, Tommaso. 1995. *Introduzione a Matilde Serao* (Rome and Bari: Laterza)

Scarfoglio, Eduardo. 1885. *Il libro di Don Chisciotte* (Rome: Sommaruga)

Scartozzi, Sergio. 2017. *Letteratura italiana e 'scienze occulte' tra fin de siècle e primo Novecento* (unpublished doctoral thesis, Università degli Studi di Trento)

Schäuble, Michaela. 2016. 'Images of Ecstasy and Affliction. The Camera as Instrument for Researching and Reproducing Choreographies of Deviance in a Southern Italian Spider Possession Cult', *Anthrovision*, 4 (2): 1-28

Schettini, Laura. 2011. *Il gioco delle parti* (Milan: Mondadori)

Semeria, Giovanni. 2003. 'Conferenze sul Santo' in *Antonio Fogazzaro e il Modernismo*, ed. by Paolo Marangon (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica), pp. 65-106

'Sensualità e misticismo in G. D'Annunzio'. 1911. *La Civiltà Cattolica*, 1: 309-321

Sequeri, Pier Angelo. 2001. 'L'ordine degli affetti. Moderno e anti-moderno nella poetica religiosa di A. Fogazzaro', *Testo*, January-June, 22 (41): 31-41

Serao, Matilde. 1888. *Fior di passione* (Milan: Galli)

Serao, Matilde. 1904. *Santa Teresa* (Catania: Giannotta)

Serao, Matilde. 1901. 'I Cavalieri dello Spirito' in Antonio Fogazzaro. *Sonatine Bizzarre: Prose Disperse* (Catania: Giannotta), pp. 97-112

Serao, Matilde. [1881] 1882. *Cuore infermo* (Turin: Casanova) (=CO)

Serao, Matilde. [1883] 1932. *Fantasia* (Florence: Salani)

Serao, Matilde. [1881] 1895. *Leggende napoletane* (Rome: Edoardo Perino Editore)

Serra, Maurizio. 2018. *L'Imaginifico. Vita di Gabriele D'Annunzio* (Rome: Neri Pozza) [Ebook]

Sheppard, William Anthony. 2001. *Revealing Masks: Exotic Influences and Ritualized Performance in Modernist Music Theater* (Berkeley and London: University of California Press)

Showalter, Elaine. 1990. *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siècle* (New York and Harmondsworth: Viking Penguin)

Sighele, Scipio. 1897. *La delinquenza settaria: appunti di sociologia* (Milan: Treves)

Sighele, Scipio. 1894. 'Il dramma di Mezzojuso' in *Mondo Criminale Italiano. Seconda serie (1893-1894)*, ed. by Augusto Guido Bianchi, Guglielmo Ferrero, and Scipio Sighele (Milan: Omodei Zorini), pp. 13-57

Sighele, Scipio. 1903. *L'intelligenza della folla* (Turin: Bocca)

Sigusch, Volkmar. 2008. 'Sexual medicine History: The Birth of Sexual Medicine: Paolo Mantegazza as Pioneer of Sexual Medicine in the 19th Century', *Journal of Sexual Medicine*, 5 (1): 217-22

Sinisi, Silvana. 2011. *L'interprete totale. Ida Rubinštejn tra teatro e danza* (Novara: UTET)

Snyder, Jon R.. 2012. 'A "Study of Truth and Suffering": Matilde Serao's Early Writings on Naples, *California Italian* Studies, 3 (1): 1-8

Sorge, Paola. 2017. 'Introduzione' in D'Annunzio, Gabriele. *Il martirio di San Sebastiano*, ed. by Paola Sorge (Rome: Elliot) [Ebook]

Spackman, Barbara. 1989. *Decadent Genealogies. The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press)

Spackman, Barbara. 2004. 'D'Annunzio e la scena della convalescenza' in *Maschilità decadenti: La lunga fin de siècle*, ed. by Marco Pustianaz and Luisa Villa (Bergamo: Bergamo University Press), pp. 139-158

Stefanoni, Luigi. 1869. *Storia critica della superstizione* (Milan: Gaetano Brigola), vol. 2

Stella, Pietro. 1995. 'Prassi religiosa, spiritualità e mistica nell'Ottocento' in *Storia dell'Italia religiosa*, ed. by Gabriele De Rosa (Bari: Laterza), vol. 3, pp. 115-142

Stewart-Steinberg, Suzanne. 2007. *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians, 1860-1920* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press)

Storchi, Simona, Marina Spunta, and Maria Morelli. 2017. *Women and the Public Sphere in Modern and Contemporary Italy. Essays for Sharon Wood* (Leicester: Troubador)

Storm Josephon, Jason. 2017. *The Myth of Disenchantment (*Chicago: The University of Chicago Press)

Summers, Claude J. 2012. *The Queer Encyclopedia of the Visual Arts* (San Francisco: Cleiss Press)

Sutherland, Andrew. 2023. *Queer opera* (London: Rowman & Littlefield)

Szönyi, György E. 2015. 'The hermetic revival in Italy' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 51-73

Tagliavini, Annamaria. 1985. 'Aspects of the history of psychiatry in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century' in *The Anatomy of Madness. Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, ed. by William F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (London and New York: Tavistock Publications), vol. 2, pp. 175-196

Talamonti, Adelina. 2013. 'Prefazione' in Gallini, Clara. *La sonnambula meravigliosa: magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento Italiano* (Rome: L'Asino d'oro, 2013), pp. XI-XVII

Tarchini Bonfanti, Antonio. 1883. 'Estasi ed ipnosi', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose e più particolarmente per le alienazioni mentali*, 20: 299-314

Tebaldi, Augusto. 1879. 'La convulsionaria di Cortina d'Ampezzo', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose e più particolarmente per le alienazioni mentali*, 16: 38-50

Tebaldi, Augusto. 1884. *Fisonomia ed espressione studiate nelle loro deviazioni, con una appendice sulla espressione del delirio nell'arte. Opera corredata di un atlante* (Verona: Drucker e Tedeschi)

Techmański, Artur. 2015. 'Saint Sébastien: histoire d'une assimilation culturelle', *Źródła Humanistyki Europejskiej*, 8: 57-73

Tenerelli, Domenico. 2020. 'Una visita dal "di là": simmetrie oniriche tra Pirandello e Capuana', *Sinestesieonline*, 9 (28): 34-40

Tessari, Roberto (eds.). 1975. *La scapigliatura. Un'avanguardia artistica nella società preindustriale* (Turin: Paravia)

'The Demoniacs of Verzegnis'. 1879. *The British Medical Journal*, May 17, 1959: 746

Toews, John E. 1994. 'Foucault and the Freudian Subject: Archaeology, Genealogy, and the Historicization of Psychoanalysis' in *Foucault and the Writing of History,* ed. by Jan Goldstein (Oxford: Blackwell), pp. 116-134

Tomatis, Mariano. 2022. *Incantagioni. Storie di veggenti, sibille, sonnambule e altre fantasmagoriche liberazioni* (Rome: Nero)

Toppano, Michela. 2007. 'Saper vivere de Matilde Serao: entre la prescription de normes et la narration de soi', *Italies*, 2 (11): 477-51

Torgovnick, Mariana. 1998. *Primitive Passions: Men, Women, and the Quest for Ecstasy* (Chicago: Chicago University Press)

Troeltsch, Ernst. 1931. *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, trans. by Olive Wyon (New York: Macmillan), 2 vols.

Troilo, Erminio. 1899. *Il misticismo moderno* (Turin: Fratelli Bocca)

Tromp, Marlene. 2003. 'Spirited Sexuality: Sex, Marriage, and Victorian Spiritualism', *Victorian Literature and Culture,* 31 (1): 67-81

Tropea, Mario. 2019. 'Luigi Capuana spiritista: nei saggi, nell'opera letteraria e nel teatro' in *Luigi Capuana: Experimental Fiction and Cultural Mediation in Post-Risorgimento Italy*, ed. by Annamaria Pagliaro and Brian Zuccala (Florence: Firenze University Press, 2019), pp. 241-256

Underhill, Evelyn. 1911. *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man's Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: Dutton)

Urban, Hugh. 2015. 'Sex magic' in *The Occult World*, ed. by Christopher Partridge (Abingdon and New York: Routledge), pp. 564-570

Vaccarino, Giacomo L.. 1991. *La follia rappresentata. Matti, degenerati e idioti nella letteratura e nell'arte figurativa italiane dell'Ottocento* (Florence: Atheneum)

Valesio, Paolo. 1992. *Gabriele D'Annunzio. The Dark Flame* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press)

Verdirame, Rita. 2009. *Narratrici e Lettrici (1850-1950): Le Letture Della Nonna Dalla Contessa Lara a Luciana Peverelli* (Padua: Libreriauniversitaria.it)

Verga, Andrea. 1880. 'Davide Lazzaretti e la pazzia sensoria', *Archivio italiano per le malatie nervose e più particolarmente per le alienazioni mentali*, 17 (1-4): 27-74; 194-228; 303-357

Verga, Andrea. 'Conferenza XXIX', *Archivio storico della psicologica italiana*, Archivio Andrea Verga, Conferenze. Anno scolastico 1866-1867, 1866/12/03-1867/04/12, b.17, fasc.7, ff. 243-253

Vertinsky, Patricia. 2014. 'Ida Rubinstein: Dancing Decadence and "The Art of the Beautiful Pose"', *Nashim: A Journal of Jewish Women's Studies & Gender Issues*, 26: 122-146

Vetro, Pietro. 1922. *Luigi Capuana. La vita e le opere* (Catania: Studio editoriale moderno)

Villepelée, Jean-François. 1983. *La follia della croce. Gemma Galgani* (Rome: Città Nuova)

Vigna, Cesare. 1875. 'Il nuovo manicomio femminile di San Clemente. – *Primo resoconto statistico del dottor cav. Cesare Vigna, medico-direttore*. – Venezia 1874', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose e più particolarmente per le alienazioni mentali*, 12: 209-214

Violi, Alessandra. 2004. 'La malattia della matrice: Charcot, Beardsley e il corpo informe' in *Maschilità decadenti: La lunga fin de siècle*, ed. by Marco Pustianaz and Lusia Villa (Bergamo: Bergamo University Press), pp. 69-94

Whitebook, Joel. 2005. 'Against Interiority: Foucault's Study with Psychoanalysis' in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. by Gary Gutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 312-347

Whitebook, Joel. 1999. 'Freud, Foucault and the dialogue with unreason', *Philosophy & Social* Criticism, 25 (6): 29-66

Vinaj, Giuseppe Scipione. 1893. *La psiche nell'isterismo e nella neurastenia: osservazioni cliniche* (Milan: Casa Editrice Dottor Francesco Vallardi)

Williams, Perry. 1985. 'Psychical research and psychiatry in late Victorian Britain: trance as ecstasy or trance as insanity' in *The Anatomy of Madness. Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, ed. by William F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (London and New York: Tavistock Publications), vol. 1, pp. 233-254

Wittman, Laura. 2004. 'Omnes velut aqua dilabimur: Antonio Fogazzaro, The Saint, and Catholic Modernism' in *Italian Modernism: Italian Culture between Decadentism and Avant-Garde*, ed. by Luca Somigli, Mario Moroni and Paolo Valesio (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), pp. 130-66

Wittman, Laura. 2013. *Fogazzaro tra occultismo e modernismo* (Vicenza: Accademia Olimpica)

Wollen, Peter. 1987. ‘Fashion/Orientalism/The Body’, *New Formations*, Spring, 1: 5-37

Woodhouse, John Robert. 2001. *Gabriele D’Annunzio: Defiant Archangel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press)

Wyld, Giorgio. 1881. ‘Può la esistenza dell’anima esser provata con l’uso di Agenti anestetici?’, *Annali dello Spiritismo in Italia. Rassegna di psicologia sperimentale*, May, 18 (5): 135-139

Zangara, Mario. 1964. *Luigi Capuana* (Rome: Editrice La Navicella)

Zangari, Mattia. 2022. *Santità femminile e disturbi mentali fra Medioevo ed età moderna* (Bari: Laterza)