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The Adventures of the Unconscious: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Italy, 1920-1940s

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The Adventures of the Unconscious: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Italy, 1920-1940s

By

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Licenciatura in History, Universidad de Buenos Aires, 2003

Advisor: Walter Adamson, Doctor of Philosophy

An abstract of a dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

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Abstract

The Adventures of the Unconscious: A Cultural History of Psychoanalysis in Italy, 1920-1940s

By Mauro Pasqualini

The thesis studies the history of psychoanalysis in Italy during the interwar period (c.1920-1940s). The first part (chapters one and two) focuses on the psychoanalytic movement (chapter one) and the professions of psychiatry and psychology (chapter two). The second part (chapters three and four) focuses on the circulation of psychoanalytic notions as well as responses to psychoanalysis in literature and culture more broadly.

Chapter one contends that ideas of a strong dichotomy or antagonism between Fascism and the psychoanalytic movement are exaggerated and simplistic. While showing how some psychoanalysts were sympathetic toward Fascism or willing to shape psychoanalytic ideas in forms that could make them interesting for the regime, it points to the anti-Semitic legislation of the late 1930s as the main reason why Fascism destroyed the psychoanalytic initiatives that had emerged during the previous years.

Chapter two focuses on the professions of psychology and psychiatry. The chapter shows important profession builders within the world of psychiatry and psychology sought to integrate psychoanalysis. By so doing, it contends that Italian psychiatry and psychology could not incorporate psychoanalysis more intimately because they were institutionally weak. They could not get the resources and confidence from society that a psychoanalytic orientation of any such profession requires.

Chapter three focuses on debates around the modern novel among Italian writers and critics. These debates were crucial for shaping the reception and perception of psychoanalysis as a cultural current in interwar Italy. Some writers' reflections on psychoanalysis, in fact, were intimately linked to their ideas about the narrative genre. The chapter also shows that literary realism and perceptions of generational change emerging in the early 1930s were central for promoting psychoanalysis as a cultural contemporary trend.

In chapter four I focus on the Triestine writer Italo Svevo (1861-1928) and his appropriation of psychoanalysis. I show that Svevo's ideas on the issue were significantly shaped by his perception of the main political changes impacting Trieste in the post-war period. Through a close reading of Svevo's fiction pieces—among other documents—I show the specific concerns that guided his reading of Freud.

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Whenever my research was haunted by disorientation, despair, discouragement, and panic, Valeria Manzano was there to help organize and bring peace and reassurance to things and life. Among infinite other things, our relationship during the last fiveteen years has been made of a continuous intellectual conversation, always developing to new horizons and directions. Her questions during my research and writing, her careful reading of my texts, and her constant attention to and asssement of my thinking were crucial to transform my fantasies into ideas. Working on a dissertation implies a heavy load for partners, and I will always thank Valeria for her energy in her assistance in intellectual, emotional, and practical issues.

My interaction with Valeria was not also important to conceive this dissertation… On May 17 2012, just when I was working on the last chapter of this dissertation, Lucio made his entrance to this world. Life has another color since he is here, and time another meaning. His moments of joy and happiness, his increadibly fast growing, and his need for attention and care were a more than motivating factor to put an end to procrastination and get the job done. Among infinite other things I have to thank him for that.

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Introduction

This dissertation studies the history of psychoanalysis in Italy between, roughly, 1922 and 1945. In the first part of this thesis I focus on the main representatives of the small but serious Italian Freudian community and the ways in which they interacted with the Fascist regime ruling Italy during those years. I also study the main attitudes of important profession-builders in Italian psychiatry and psychology and their different responses to psychoanalysis. In the second part of this thesis I focus on the literary scene and on intellectual debates over realism, generational change, and the modern novel during the early 1930s. I argue that these polemics constituted one of the main venues for discussing psychoanalysis within the Italian intelligentsia, and I show the deep involvement in these polemics of members of the Società Psicoanalitica Italiana [Italian Psychoanalytic Society, hereafter SPI], who worked to endorse the cultural relevance of psychoanalysis. I also show that the Triestine writer Italo Svevo (1861-1928) engaged very fruitfully with psychoanalysis in his creative work, and I relate his appropriation of psychoanalytical insights to specific historical and biographical issues.

Throughout this thesis I make a series of contentions about the early years of Italian psychoanalysis. First, I claim that the history of Italian psychoanalysis during the interwar years is interesting. Even if Italian psychoanalytic circles were small when compared to major psychoanalytic societies elsewhere, the different strategies they undertook to strengthen their influence deserve study. Second, the Italian case is also relevant to understandings of the relationship between psychoanalysis and Fascism. My thesis shows that Italian Fascism was catastrophic for psychoanalysis due to the anti-Semitic policies instituted in 1938 that expelled or marginalized Italian psychoanalysts; prevented new psychoanalysts fleeing from Germany, Austria, or Hungary from settling in Italy; and prohibited the circulation of psychoanalytic texts.

Moreover, Fascism was also receptive to the anti-psychoanalytic lobby which was tied to hostile Catholic groups. While moving this negative role of Fascism to the foreground, my thesis also seeks to add nuance to simplistic antagonisms between psychoanalysis and Fascism. I focus on examples of compromise and negotiation between Italian psychoanalysts and Fascist cultural bureaucrats, while also highlighting some Italian psychoanalysts' intense commitments to Fascism. Finally, this thesis highlights the relevance of the artistic scene for the solidification of a psychoanalytic culture. I argue that literary and cultural criticism was crucial in making psychoanalytic ideas visible in interwar Italy. Moreover, I relate the acceptance of or reluctance to psychoanalysis by literary critics and intellectuals to specific aesthetic choices.

Psychoanalysis and History

The history of psychoanalysis is a large and growing area involving many topics and multiple methodologies. It includes, among other approaches, biographies or intellectual histories of major psychoanalysts, histories of the psychoanalytic movement, histories of psychoanalysis in specific countries, and cultural histories of the circulation of ideas among artists and intellectuals.[1] Despite this broad scope of topics and perspectives, the history of psychoanalysis

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[1] The biography of the history of psychoanalysis is so large that I can only make a very incomplete reference to some classic and recent works. For biographies and intellectual histories, see Peter Gay, *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (New York: Norton, 1988); William J. McGrath, *Freud's Discovery of Psychoanalysis: The politics of Hysteria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); Paul Robinson, *The Freudian Left: Wilhelm Reich, Geza Roheim, Herbert Marcuse* (New York: Harper and Row, 1969); Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993); Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997); John Forrester, *Dispatches from the Freud Wars: Psychoanalysis and its Passions* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997). For histories of the psychoanalytic movement, see George Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Harper Collins, 2008); Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2004); Elizabeth A Danto, *Freud's Free Clinics: Psychoanalysis and Social Justice, 1918-1933* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005); Joseph Schwartz, *Cassandra's Daughter: A History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Viking, 1999); and Paul Roazen, *Encountering Freud: The Politics and Histories of Psychoanalysis* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1990). For histories of psychoanalysis in specific countries, see Mariano Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas: The Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001); Hugo Vezzetti, *Aventuras de Freud en el País de los Argentinos: de José Ingenieros a Enrique Pichon-Rivière* (Buenos Aires: Paidós, 1996); Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Histoire de la Psychanalyse en France* (Paris: Fayard, 1994); Alexander Etkind, *The Eros of*

in Italy remains unexplored. There are understandable reasons for this. Most histories of the psychoanalytic movement focus on its early years, when Italy—along with most countries of the world—was not on the map of psychoanalysis. Moreover, for much of the twentieth century, and perhaps in part due to the events I describe in this thesis, Italy was not generally receptive to psychoanalysis. Removing Italy from the list of countries with a psychoanalytic history, however, may no longer be sustainable. Since the mid-1960s, psychoanalysis made recognizable progress in Italy.[2] In fact, as a recent census shows, with 70,000 registered psychologists in a population of around 60 million, Italy is today one of the most "psychologized" European countries.[3] Although not all of these psychologists are psychoanalytically oriented, it is clear that psychoanalytic institutions and practices have profited from this shift. Today the SPI, whose origins I describe in this thesis, has more than 800 members, making it one of the biggest psychoanalytic societies in Europe.[4] This figure of course only makes up a percentage of practicing Italian psychoanalysts who, as in other countries, are members of different societies and associations. The result is, paradoxically, that Freudian-inspired texts, ideas, and practices are more present today than when they were developed. It seems to me that this situation should

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the Impossible: A History of Psychoanalysis in Russia (Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1997); Martin A Miller, *Freud and the Bolsheviks: Psychoanalysis in Imperial Russia and the Soviet Union* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1998); Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud's French Revolution* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992), and Edith Kurzweil, *The Freudians. A Comparative Perspective* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989). For recent histories of psychoanalysis among intellectuals and artists see Veronika Fuechtner, *Berlin Psychoanalytic: Psychoanalysis and Culture in Weimar Republic Germany and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); and Rubén Gallo, *Freud's Mexico: Into the Wilds of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2010). For a helpful reflection on different perspectives about the history of psychoanalysis, see John Forrester, "'A Whole Climate of Opinion:' Rewriting the History of Psychoanalysis," in Roy Porter and Mark Micale (eds), *Discovering the History of Psychiatry* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp 174-189.

[2] See Michel David, "La psychanalyse en Italie," in Roland Jaccard (ed), *Histoire de la psychanalyse. Vol 2* (Paris: Hachette, 1982), pp. 325-326.

[3] Apparently, Italian psychologists are a third of the total of European psychologists. See Luciano Mecacci, "La psicologia: una scienza controversa" in Fracesco Cassata and Claudio Pogliano (eds), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 26. Scienze e cultura dell'Italia unita* (Turin: Einaudi, 2011), p. 702.

[4] See the webpage of the International Psychoanalytic Association for information on this: http://www.ipa.org.uk/en/Societies/Europe/ComponentSocieties.aspx

affect the attention that historians pay to the circulation of psychoanalysis in Italian society, and to how, when, and why it became accepted or rejected.

There is, in fact, a modest but relevant corpus of texts about the history of Italian psychoanalysis –most of them in Italian or French.[5] The most serious research on the subject was done during the mid-1960s, precisely when psychoanalysis was starting to expand. Its author, Michel David, was a French scholar in Italian literature and composed a very complete, useful, and insightful text which comprehends from the most remote origins in early twentieth century to the time the book was published—a re-edition in 1990 included the post-1960s scenario. David also included the literary realm, thus mentioning the main writers and literary critics who promoted, incorporated, or rejected psychoanalysis. While incredibly useful as a source of information and motivating analyses, David's narrative has become dated in many ways. First, new sources and archives have been opened and become accessible since the mid-1960s, which provide new perspectives on the subject. Second, and especially important for the interwar period, the vision of Fascism has changed substantially from the time David wrote his book. New research on the relationship between Fascism and culture has underlined the circulation and mutual recognition between the regime and intellectuals and cultural operators—something that,

[5] The basic bibliography on psychoanalysis and psychology in Italy includes: Michel David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990) [1st edition 1966]; idem, "La Psychanalyse en Italie," op. cit; and Silvia Vegetti Finzi, *Storia della psicoanalisi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1990 [1st edition: 1986]) pp. 256-268, 404-427; and Anna Maria Accerboni, "Psychanalyse et fascisme: deux approches incompatibles: Le rôle difficile d'Edoardo Weiss," Revue internationale d'histoire de la psychanalyse, Vol. 1 (1988), pp. 225-245; idem, "Vittorio Benussi and Edoardo Weiss on the Unconscious," Axiomathes, n 1-3 (1999), pp 107-126; Anna Maria Accerboni (ed), *Psicoanalisi e cultura nella mitteleuropa* (Biblioteca Cominiana, 1990); and idem *La cultura psicoanalitica* (Pordenone: Studio Tesi, 1984). There are also some narratives that include Italian psychoanalysis within the broader history of Italian psychology, such as: Luciano Mecacci, *Psicologia e psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana del Novecento* (Bari: Laterza, 1998); Sadi Marhaba, *Lineamenti della psicologia italiana, 1870-1945* (Florencia: Giunti Barbera, 1981); and Guido Cimino and Nino Dazzi (eds), *La psicologia in Italia* (Milan: Led, 1998). For a brief summary of psychoanalysis in Italy in English, see Sergio Benvenuto, "Italy and Psychoanalysis," Journal of European Psychoanalysis, n 5, Spring-Fall, 1997. For a study on psychoanalysis from gender perspectives and the history of homosexuality, see Lorenzo Benadusi, "Per una storia dell'omosessualità nell'Italia del Novecento. Gli studi psicanalitici," in Storia e Problemi Contemporanei, N 37, Year VII, Sept-Dec 2004, pp. 183-203.

as I suggest in this thesis, applies to psychoanalysts too. Third, David's main contention was that psychoanalysis in Italy had to face four major obstacles: psychiatric Positivism; the Catholic Church; Fascism; and Idealist philosophy.[6] This claim is convincing at a first glance, since intellectuals, politicians, and cultural operators linked to these groups were powerful opponents of psychoanalysis. However, a one-sided underscoring of antagonism is misleading, and prevents us from seeing the cases of mutual understanding between psychoanalysis and Fascism, or the complex responses by some Catholics. Moreover, framing the analysis in antagonistic terms is not helpful in understanding that important profession builders within the mental health disciplines simply sought to appropriate whatever they considered acceptable from psychoanalysis. Rather than open opposition, there was an attempt to redefine it or integrate it into their patterns of professional respectability. My thesis therefore seeks to contribute to the history of Italian psychoanalysis by adding new sources, complicating the map of obstacles and possibilities, and describing the variety of strategies psychoanalysts deployed to gain acceptance.

Incorporating Italy into the historiography of psychoanalysis is one goal of this thesis. Updating the narrative about Italian psychoanalysis is a second one. The third goal of this thesis is to profit from and contribute to recent studies that have undermined previous notions of a strong dichotomy between the Fascist regime and the world of intellectuals and culture, as well the image of a monolithic top-down cultural policy by Fascism. As the new scholarship shows, Fascist cultural policymakers oriented the world of culture through multiple strategies other than repression and censorship. Moreover, strictly ideological lines were not always the main force behind these strategies. Client relations and the agency of heterogeneous institutions with multiple and contrasting motivations were also characteristic of Fascism's cultural policies. In

[6] David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana*, pp. 7-8 and passim.

addition, in contrast with the case of Nazi Germany, the Italian regime was receptive to the world of modernist and avant-garde trends, and sought to integrate them into a major project of shaping a particular Italian or Fascist modernity. Because of these features, the Fascist regime appeared for many artists and intellectuals as an inviting opportunity rather than a constraining force, and many cultural producers negotiated with the regime in terms that reinforced their mutual recognition.[7] In this thesis I contend that the history of psychoanalysis under Fascism is part of this complex interaction between the regime and the world of culture, and that a psychoanalytic culture existed throughout many years of Fascism in an interplay of acceptance, negotiation, and tolerance.

Theoretical Questions

When writing the history of psychoanalysis in Italy during the interwar period, there are a series of methodological or theoretical questions that help to better frame and map the subject. One of the basic ones regards whether psychoanalysis is "necessary" or "contingent." In other words, should we assume that psychoanalysis had to happen in Italy because it is an intrinsic requirement of modern Western societies? Or should we consider psychoanalysis a set of original and creative ideas sponsored by an organized movement that became influential only in some countries and due to very specific circumstances? Depending on how we answer these questions we end up with two different kinds of histories. If we agree that psychoanalysis is something necessary, then we should conclude that Italy was an aberration in which the

[7] For the bibliography on Fascism and culture, see David Forgacs, *L'industrializzazione della cultura italiana* (1880–2000) (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2000), Chap. 3 "Lo Stato fascista e le industrie culturali," pp. 81–124; Marla Susan Stone, *The Patron State. Culture and Politics in Fascist Italy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998); Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities. Italy, 1922–1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001); Walter Adamson, "The Culture of Italian Fascism and the Fascist Crisis of Modernity: The Case of Il Selvaggio," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol 30, n 4 (Oct. 1995), pp. 555-575 and idem, *Embattled Avant-Gardes. Modernism's Resistance to Commodity Culture in Europe* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), Chap. 6 "Futurism and Its Modernist Rivals in Fascist Italy," pp. 227–263.

perversions of Fascism, some particularities of the Italian character, or the persistence of pre-modern social relations moved the country away from what was normal in many other societies. Stressing contingency, in contrast, could transform this history into a collection of anecdotes, while also preventing us from raising the question of psychoanalysis's later acceptance in Italy. Although we are still working on the map of psychoanalysis in the world and its chronology, it seems that by the late twentieth century it did become an influential social and cultural presence in major societies from Europe to Latin America to the US. There seems to be something intrinsic to the modern world that makes psychoanalysis take root. But what is it?

The first people to trace a link between psychoanalysis and specific modern realities were American sociologists writing during the early to mid-1960s, when psychoanalysis had become increasingly influential in the US. According to the sociologist Philip Rieff, for instance, the success of psychoanalysis was due to the fact that it addresses the preoccupations of the "psychological man," which he defines as a "new character type" emerging from an individualistic distancing from communal and traditional norms and always in an introspective search of his deep interiority.[8] Freudian psychoanalysis is the appropriate theory for this character type because it does not insist on making the patient accept the values of a given religion, group, or philosophy wholeheartedly, but instead searches for what he or she desires as an individual. In a further elaboration of his theory, Rieff refers to a process of "deconversion" in which, since the eighteenth century, individuals have disengaged from spontaneously accepted social norms and have privileged their self-realization and emotional welfare. This process opened the way for an "analytic attitude" by which the individual always questions the affective gratification of his or her allegiances, in contrast with the "therapies of commitment" by which

[8] Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1979)[1st edition: 1959], passim but especially p. 356.

previous societies integrated their members.[9] In a more specific consideration of the "social structure" supporting the spread of psychoanalysis, the sociologist Peter L Berger pointed to the split between the social and the private arenas as a result of the division between workplace and the domestic realm.[10] According to him, in industrialized societies the proliferation of spaces in which people shape their identity provokes a crisis regarding the modern individual's search for a "real me." Psychoanalysis, along with a number of other therapies, emerged as result of that crisis. Stressing the importance of psychoanalysis to modern society, Berger concludes: "if Freud had not existed, we should have had to invent him." (38)

A striking feature of these texts is that their authors do not recognize that at the time they were writing psychoanalysis was an influential social reality only in a few countries. Their explanations connecting psychoanalysis to general patterns of modern life imply an evident American-centrism, since they assumed that an American particularity –the strong presence of psychoanalysis—should be considered as a normal feature of all modern societies. Moreover, by pointing to crucial processes linking to modernization—industrialization, "deconversion"—as the ground for psychoanalysis' social relevance, they also left a question open: is a society less modern when psychoanalysis is not a strong part of it? Despite their failure to expand their vision in a comparative direction, we must concede to American sociologists that time proved that their general intuitions had a basis. The following years in fact witnessed the spread of psychoanalysis to other countries, thus reinforcing the impression that modern societies do tend toward psychoanalysis. In fact, American sociologists were not the only people taking psychoanalysis for granted. Writing from a different intellectual tradition a decade later, the French thinker

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[9] Philip Rieff, *The Triumph of the Therapeutic: Uses of Faith after Freud* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1987)[1st edition: 1966], 2, 7, 25.
[10] Peter L Berger, "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Psychoanalysis," Social Research, Vol 32, n 1 (Spring 1965), pp. 26-41.

Michel Foucault also approached psychoanalysis as an intrinsic and constitutive phenomenon of what he used to call “the West.”

Although not the main topic of his research, psychoanalysis certainly occupies an important place in Foucault’s work.[11] Especially in his *History of Sexuality* he argues that psychoanalysis emerges from the intersection of two processes: the “deployment of alliances” and the “deployment of sexuality.”[12] The former consists of societies’ regulation of kinship and marriage, and it finds its contemporary form in the modern nuclear heterosexual family constituted not by economic or tactic agreements but by affect. The second is more complex and consists of the ways in which, since the eighteenth century, different agents such as judges, psychiatrists, doctors, prison employees and social workers incited and “invented” sexuality as a form of “proliferating, innovating, annexing, creating, and penetrating bodies in an increasingly detailed way, and in controlling populations in an increasingly comprehensive way.” (107) This phenomenon can be seen by four different “mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex” (103): the hysterization of women’s bodies, a tighter regulation of children’s behavior regarding sex, the socialization of procreative behavior, and the psychiatrization of perverse pleasure (104-105). This situation created the conditions for the emergence of psychoanalysis, whose growth and acceptability was connected to the fact that psychoanalytic concepts made possible to “keep the deployment of sexuality coupled to the system of alliance.” (113)

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[11] The relationship between Foucault and psychoanalysis is complex and allows for many readings. In the following paragraphs I am describing just one aspect of his reflection on the issue. For analyses of Foucault and psychoanalysis see John Forrester, *The Seductions of Psychoanalysis: Freud Lacan and Derrida* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), especially the chapter: “Michel Foucault and the History of Psychoanalysis,” pp. 296-314; and also idem, “‘A Whole Climate of Opinion:’ Rewriting the History of Psychoanalysis.” See also Arnold I Davison, *The Emergence of Sexuality: Historical Epistemology and the Formation of Concepts* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), especially the appendix “Foucault, psychoanalysis, and pleasure,” pp. 209-216.

[12] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), pp. 103-114.

Foucault argues that Freud –"the most famous ears of our time" (112)—and his Oedipus complex theory conceptualized sexuality in ways that exposed the modern family's most secret anxieties. Coherent with a situation in which the family became the locus of both affect and sexuality, the intensity of the family bonds made incest a haunting presence (108-109). By presenting repressed incestuous wishes as a component of everybody's sexuality, psychoanalysis naturalized modern family, since it became both the outcome and the place of constitution for normal sexual desire (113). The psychoanalyst, moreover, appeared around the family together with a cohort of specialists who assisted with its latent dangers such as the impotent husband, the frigid wife, the hysteric girl, or the homosexual son—all issues that complicate the deployment of alliances (110-111). As Foucault concludes, "whence, after so many reticences, the enormous consumption of analysis in societies where the family system needed strengthening."(113)

Foucault is not willing to portray psychoanalysis as going against the tide of historical reality, or as a breakthrough in releasing sexuality from oppressive traditions or ideologies. Foucault's theory of the "deployment of sexuality" shows indeed that power is productive rather than repressive and that in issues of sexuality the historical trend was toward inciting rather than inhibiting discourses on sex. This certainly makes no concessions toward psychoanalytic self-representations that imagine the emergence of Freudian theories as an enlightened break with previous obscurantist attitudes regarding sex (130-131). By the same token, Foucault frames psychoanalysis as perhaps the most fully achieved and secular form of a long "technology of the self" linking confession, knowledge, and sexuality.[13] Pointing to a tradition of pastoral techniques endorsed by Christianity, Foucault considers Freud's invention as the allegedly

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[13] History of Sexuality, 113, and see also "The Confession of the Self," in Colin Gordon (ed), *Michel Foucault: Power/Knowledge. Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (New York: Pantheon books, 1980), especially pp. 209-222.

scientific version of a procedure that long ago had pointed to sexuality as the most revealing aspect of the self. Rather than the sudden liberation of sex and intimacy after a long dark night of silence, psychoanalysis is instead harmonious with the defense of the modern family, a way of legitimizing power by imagining it as repressive when it is in fact productive, a constitutive part of an invasive mechanism of power and knowledge that seeks to grasp the most private areas of individuals' lives, and perhaps the ultimate manifestation of a long-lasting injunction to make people talk more about their sexualized intimacy.

Foucault represents psychoanalysis as continuous with crucial processes of the modern world. As a result, like the American sociologists, he makes it impossible to think of psychoanalysis as a contingent or marginal reality. However, Foucault is clear that psychoanalysis was not always in agreement with crucial mechanisms of power/knowledge. Insofar as it differed from the biological theories of mental pathologies, he notes, psychoanalysis "rigorously opposed the political and institutional effects of the perversion-heredity-degenerescence system." (119) To Foucault, the pervasive power of theories of degeneration and pathological heredity that spread from the mid-nineteenth century onwards became functional for a "state-directed racism" and had strong effects in the social control of sexuality. Foucault reinforces this dichotomy when he opposes psychoanalysis to fascism. He considers the alliance between the family and sexuality in Freud's theory a form of defense against the potential despotic effects of the "deployment of sexuality." Conservative as it was, the coupling of sexuality and the family was politically insightful, as if the psychoanalytic community were particularly sensitive to detecting the dangers associated with new technologies and regimes of power. As Foucault suggests in these lines:

> It is to the political credit of psychoanalysis—or at least, of what was most coherent in it—that it regarded with suspicion (and this from its inception, that is, from the moment it broke away from the neuropsychiatry of degenerescence) the irrevocably proliferating aspects which might be contained in these power mechanisms aimed at controlling and administering the everyday life of sexuality: whence the Freudian endeavor (out of reaction no doubt to the great surge of racism that was contemporary with it) to ground sexuality in the law—the law of alliance, tabooed consanguinity, and the Sovereign-father, in short, to surround desire with the all trappings of the old order of power. It was owing to this that psychoanalysis was –in the main, with a few exceptions—in theoretical and practical opposition to fascism. But this position of psychoanalysis was tied to a specific historical conjuncture. (150)

What use can we make of these kinds of reflections by Foucault and the American sociologists for a history of psychoanalysis in Italy? To what extent do their ideas influence and orient the following chapters? Can we take them instrumentally, and apply them as working tools for organizing our research? On a general level, I find these insights productive for avoiding a too narrow focus on the psychoanalytic movement. They help to detect the processes that connect the history of psychoanalysis with major sociological or historical realities. More specifically, some issues and topics I describe in the following chapters are tied to some of the sociologists' remarks. The extreme sensitivity around "psychologism" in literature that I describe in chapter 3, for instance, might be indicative of anxieties regarding the "psychological man." My reading of Svevo in chapter 4 stresses the ways in which his multiple and overlapping identities in a very specific social context are connected to his appropriation of psychoanalysis. We may therefore

conclude that under specific historical circumstances, the borderline nature of the city of Trieste anticipated the multiplication of social identities and the fluidity and elusiveness of the self that Berger found in industrialized societies. In addition, father Agostino Gemelli, a powerful profession maker who interacted with the regime, the Catholic church, and the psy-professions and whom I study in chapter 2, may serve to confirm the relationship between the confessional procedure and psychoanalysis. Moreover, my general thesis in chapter 2 is that psychoanalysis did not penetrate Italian psy-disciplines because they were too weak to assert themselves over more layers of the population—which is what a more decisive psychoanalytic presence would have required. Some of Foucault's claims about thinking psychoanalysis in continuity with the "deployment of sexuality" have been helpful in organizing my thinking on that regard.

Although the work of the American sociologists and Foucault has been useful in establishing some basic coordinates of my topic and in highlighting some specific issues, in the following pages I neither apply their theories instrumentally nor use a sociological or Foucauldian language to describe my subject. There are many reasons for this. First, these authors' reflections assume that psychoanalysis is a central and hegemonic social reality. This is not the case in this dissertation, which focuses on psychoanalysis as a peripheral presence with important cultural effects. Second, when sociologists trace links between psychoanalysis and social realities they establish a very abstract dualism: on one extreme there are social processes or realities –the psychological man, "deconversion," industrialization—and on the other extreme psychoanalytic theories or texts corresponding to those realities. They are not interested in describing the bridges between them. This is problematic for a history of psychoanalysis that aims to understand "how" –instead of "why"—psychoanalysis spread throughout society; such a history must involve institutions, movements, literature, and the arts, among other topics.

Finally, the phrasing of some of these ideas shows that if we pay too much attention to conceptual issues, we miss opportunities to consider more undetermined areas of social experience. As mentioned before, Foucault claims that the agreement between Freud's theory of sexuality and the system of alliances explains "the enormous consumption of analysis in societies where the family system needed strengthening."(113) His analysis suggests that the success of psychoanalysis has to do with its adaptability to the requirements of the nuclear family. Connecting psychoanalysis with the reproduction –or strengthening—of the family might be right and convincing in Foucault's analysis of Freud's theory of sexuality, and also important to detect the normative aspects of Freud's thought. For the purpose of a history of psychoanalysis, however, focusing on psychoanalysis as an agent of reproduction of family relations is less interesting than it may initially seem. At least in twentieth-century Italy, crucial changes in gender and family relations were not introduced as an open assault to the family, but were instead rooted in specific issues such as women's access to the labor market; divorce; right to legal abortion; double standards for men and women regarding sexual morality; sexual permissiveness; the idea of motherhood as woman's destiny; and the naturalization, silent acceptance, or utter rejection of domestic violence. An interesting history of psychoanalysis should explore how psychoanalytic theories addressed these issues in relation to other approaches to the same concerns. Replacing such research with a "strengthening of the family" formula, even if it is convincing in conceptual terms, prevents us from a more historically situated narrative.

Foucault offers a more helpful reflection on a topic that is actually a crucial part of this dissertation: the relationship between psychoanalysis and Fascism. As mentioned before, Foucault argues that a "political credit" of psychoanalysts was that they recognized the despotic

implications of the power/knowledge mechanism very early. Attaching sexuality to the law—in other words, shaping it in agreement with the predominating system of alliances—was therefore a way of limiting the unconstrained proliferation of power mechanisms. Foucault is ambiguous when referring to the antagonism between Fascism –by which he probably means Nazism—and psychoanalysis. He says that psychoanalysis's opposition to fascism was the attitude of "the most coherent" members of the psychoanalytic movement, and also that psychoanalysis stood "in the main, with a few exceptions (…) in theoretical and practical opposition to fascism." This seems to imply that psychoanalysis was intrinsically antagonistic, or that fascist ideology and psychoanalysis are incompatible. His analysis, however, closes by referring to the fact that "this position of psychoanalysis was tied to a specific historical conjuncture" (150)—which suggests that anti-Fascism, or the impulse to deter the proliferation of mechanisms of power/knowledge, was more situational and historical.

Although it takes the form of a passing comment and is not free from ambiguities, I think that Foucault's reflection is useful for understanding why psychoanalysis was mainly oppositional to fascism in Germany and more compromising in Italy. Whereas in the former case psychoanalysts were defensive regarding the excesses of unchecked and unconstrained forms of power, in Italy a more robust and aggressive deployment of mechanisms of power/knowledge might have been perceived by psychoanalysts as an aid rather than an obstacle. It could have contributed to create the institutional spaces and a "will to know" that psychoanalysts needed in order to enlarge their influence, especially in a country where–as I contend in chapter 2—the psy disciplines were underfunded, lodged in rudimentary institutions, and lacking in widespread influence. However, while I believe that Foucault's thinking is illuminating on this point, my references to the relationship between Fascism and psychoanalysis are not framed in Foucauldian

terms. Ideas such as "deployment of sexuality" or "technologies of power" are useful in analyzing long-term processes starting in the eighteenth century or even before. In addition, whenever I found explicit alliances between psychoanalysis and Fascism in interwar Italy, they had more in common with Freud's theory of the aggressive instinct, rather than issues of sexuality. Furthermore, the closest association between an Italian psychoanalyst and radical Fascist currents I found took place in the context of debates about generational change, realism, and the modern narrative which lend themselves to be studied through a culturalist approach rather than in terms of a microphysics of power. Finally, there are more apparent and easy ways to explain the different relationships between Fascism and psychoanalysis in Italy and Germany, especially when contrasting the early and virulent anti-Semitism of the former to the lately developed one of the Italian case.

Psychoanalytic Culture and Professionalization

Throughout this thesis I base my analyses on ideas borrowed from other histories of psychoanalysis and psychiatry. The general organization of my exposition, in fact, follows the example of studies that refer to a "double implantation" of psychoanalysis, an expression that refers to the ways in which psychoanalysis developed both in the realm of science and in literature and the arts.[14] While I think this is clearly the basic way psychoanalysis entered Italy, I also contend that these two paths were not clearly separated, and that there was circulation between individuals, journals, and institutions within the scientific or artistic realms. My impression is that many people during the 1920s learned about psychoanalysis through literary journals before realizing it was a scientific and medical undertaking. Literary reviews such as *La*

[14] Roudinesco, *Histoire de la psychanalyse en France,* p. 572. That was also the strategy in David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana.*

fiera letteraria included comments on psychoanalytic works and collaboration by members of the SPI, who seem to have been conscious that gaining the support of the intelligentsia would be a crucial step for improving psychoanalysis's influence.

One concept that helps capture the position of psychoanalysis beyond the events around the psychoanalytic movement is that of a "psychoanalytic culture," which many historians use to study psychoanalysis in national settings.[15] According to Sherry Turkle, a psychoanalytic culture "refers to the way psychoanalytic metaphors and ways of thinking enter everyday life." (xiv) She considers that psychoanalysis lends itself to circulation among broad layers of a given population because of its "appropriability." This means that its concepts about regions of our mind –such as the id, ego, and super-ego—stand as metaphors that people use freely and comfortably in order to make sense of their inner lives. Psychoanalysis is also rich in providing "things to think with," since its theories do not remain abstract but are constantly in contact with what people meet in their everyday life such as slips, jokes, or dreams. While the psychoanalytic movement is a crucial component of psychoanalytic culture, the multiple ways in which psychoanalysis circulates and spreads are not reducible to it, since it occurs through other agents such as the media, educators, literature, or multiple forms of appropriation.

The notion of a psychoanalytic culture allows us to approach the history of psychoanalysis while avoiding narrow encapsulation in its institutions, congresses, and main names within the movement. There are strong reasons, however, for using this idea with caution. The most obvious one is that, as mentioned before, psychoanalysis in interwar Italy did not have the social relevance it adopted in other settings. Still, I contend that between the late 1920s and early 1930s much interest in, information about, and use of psychoanalytic vocabulary emerged

[15] Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics;* Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas.*

in Italy, until different measures taken by Fascism constrained and ultimately destroyed it. The idea of a “psychoanalytic culture” put forth in this thesis is therefore more restricted than in other histories, since it basically implies an area of cultural circulation including the psychoanalytic movement, the world of letters, and cultural criticism. Rather than rooted in initiatives on the part of the psychoanalytic movement, this circulation started when critics began to realize the impact psychoanalysis had in literary circles abroad. The work of Italo Svevo implied a strong push forward that made many critics and writers realize the potential of appropriating psychoanalytic ideas in their writing. As I mention in chapter 3, the case of the young writer Elio Vittorini is a very clear example of this.

The idea of a “psychoanalytic culture” –with its due modifications—is useful in describing the situation of psychoanalysis in Italy during the interwar years. A second important approach consists of following historians who focus on professionalization as the main way of describing the relationship between the psy-disciplines, the State, and society.[16] This approach allows me to see that different profession-builders made decisions around psychoanalysis that were not based on strictly theoretical statements. Rather, they hope to construct legitimacy and prestige in order to better attract material and symbolic resources for their activities. I therefore claim that the fixation of some psychiatrists with an organicist paradigm was a result of anxieties on their part to maintain the prestige of their discipline by relating it more straightforwardly to medicine. The psychological paradigm endorsed by psychoanalysis was rejected due to those concerns. By the same token, I also make the point that fundamental players within psychiatry and psychology did not openly confront psychoanalysis, but basically tried to integrate it into

[16] Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify. The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001) for psychiatry in France. For psychology in Germany see Mitchell G. Ash, “Psychology in Twentieth-Century Germany: Science and Profession,” and Geoffey Cocks, “The Professionalization of Psychotherapy in Germany, 1928-1949,” both in Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch, *German Professions, 1800-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 289-307, and 308-328 respectively.

their patterns of professional respectability. The picture that emerges is therefore of a highly constraining situation for psychoanalysts. On the one hand, they faced increasing limitations to campaign for and construct an independent psychoanalytic movement. On the other hand, they were invited to integrate their work into disciplines whose institutional positions were less important than they initially appeared. In such limited circumstances, psychoanalysis developed in different forms according to the interplay of two different options: remaining faithful to the independent sociability at the cost of remaining marginal, or seeking for a more official recognition by negotiating and compromising with major ideologies and institutions of Italian culture. The history of psychoanalysis in interwar Italy occurred in between those choices.

Chapter 1: Psychoanalysis Before and During Fascism, 1900-1938

In most histories of the psychoanalytic movement during the interwar period, and also later, Italian psychoanalysis is invisible. The general narratives of psychoanalysis from Freud to the present day usually start by focusing on cities such as Vienna, Zurich, Berlin, and London, and then move on to the United States and France.[1] There are understandable reasons for overlooking Italy. In comparison with the psychoanalytic situation in the main cities and countries where the movement first emerged and developed, the Italian landscape was not remarkable. By the moment of the first attempt to start an Italian psychoanalytic society, in 1925, there were already ten societies recognized by the International Psychoanalytic Association [IPA], from countries such as Austria, Germany, Switzerland, Holland, India, Great Britain, the United States, Russia, and Hungary. Membership in these societies ranged from 41 in Vienna to 12 in Russia.[2] In 1936, when the IPA finally recognized an Italian Psychoanalytic Society [SPI], it included only eight members. In fact, the SPI was one of the smallest among the 19 societies affiliated with IPA.[3]

Despite the apparent conclusiveness of these figures, they also show that Italy was among the select countries in the world where the official psychoanalytic movement had landed in the 1920s and 1930s. In this respect, Italy was ahead of the other southern European countries, such

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[1] Examples of works following the above-mention geographic itinerary are George Makari, *Revolution in Mind: The Creation of Psychoanalysis* (New York: HarpersCollins, 2008); Eli Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul: A Social and Cultural History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 2003); Joseph Schwartz, *Cassandra's Daughter: A History of Psychoanalysis* (New York: Viking, 1999); and Edith Kurzweil, *The Freudians: A Comparative Perspective* (New Have, CT: Yale University Press, 1989).

[2] See "List of Members of the International Psycho-analytical Association," Bulletin of the Intenational Psycho-analytical Association, n 7 (1926) pp. 144-153.

[3] "List of members of the International Psycho-analytical Association," Bulletin of the International Psychoanalytical Association, n 16 (1935), pp. 518-535; and "Italian Psychoanalytical Society," in Bulletin of the International Psychoanalytical Association, n 18 (1937), p. 497.

as Spain or Greece, not to mention those Latin American countries—such as Argentina—where psychoanalysis would later flourish. However, the erasure of Italy in the histories of psychoanalysis persists. Perhaps the only occasion for which Italy tends to be mentioned in general narratives of the psychoanalytic movement explains its more general absence. Italy appears briefly—and usually by way of anecdote—in descriptions of the ways in which fascist and, more broadly, totalitarian regimes persecuted psychoanalysis. [4] Italy serves to illustrate the impossibility of the growth of psychoanalysis under authoritarian conditions, or its useless and desperate attempts at survival in fascist Europe.[5] The underlying assumption of this narrative–that is, that there cannot be a strong psychoanalytic movement under authoritarian conditions—has led scholars to assume that, in interwar Italy, psychoanalysis barely existed. Despite the fact that research on Nazi Germany has highlighted the complexities of psychoanalysis, the case of Fascist Italy remains under-studied.[6]

The assumption that psychoanalysis cannot grow in a fascist country, the limited membership of the SPI, and the fact that the Italian psychoanalysts did not publish any major work with international influence, are all factors that have contributed to the invisibility of Italian psychoanalysis in historical accounts. Even the sparse literature on Italian psychoanalysis—rich in information and detail—has thus far contributed to the general sense of marginalization, focusing on the major forces and obstacles that prevented its spread. According to Michel David, the first and most respected historian of psychoanalysis in Italy, there were four main obstacles to the development of psychoanalysis: first, Positivism, which rejected any non-somatic

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[4] In what follows, I will be referring to fascism to indicate the generic movement, and Fascism with capital F to indicate the specific Italian regime.

[5] See for instance Makari, *Revolution in Mind,* p. 446, 461; and Zaretsky, *Secrets of the Soul,* 229-230.

[6] For psychoanalysis under Nazism see Geoffrey Cocks, *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich. The Göring Institute* (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

approach to mental diseases and maintained a strong grasp on Italian psychiatry; second, Italian Idealism, mainly represented by key philosophers such as Benedetto Croce and Giovanni Gentile, who considered psychology and its derivatives as a threatening but low-level substitution for philosophy; third, Catholicism, which condemned psychoanalysis's materialism and Freud's approach to religion; and finally, during the interwar years, Fascism, mainly due to anti-Semitism and the fact that Italian Fascists distrusted psychoanalysis's insights into authoritarian mass leadership.[7] By invoking these "resistances," historians stress the marginality of the Italian Freudian movement during the first half of the twentieth century and beyond.[8]

This chapter focuses on the beginnings of psychoanalysis in Italy. First, I present basic information about psychoanalysis in Italy, introducing also some of its supporters' cultural and professional trajectories. I aim to show that, even when psychoanalysis failed to be assimilated by major cultural currents in Italy, the opportunities and resources for campaigning in its favor were also available and important. In addition, I aim to complicate any simplistic dichotomy or antagonism between psychoanalysis and Fascism. Certainly, Fascism impeded the expansion of psychoanalysis in Italy. First, Fascism's receptivity to Catholicism opposed to Freudian

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[7]Michel David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana* (Turín: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990) passim, but especially 7-9, 18-67, and 90-129.

[8] The basic bibliography on psychoanalysis and psychology in Italy includes: Michel David, *La psicoanalisi*; idem, "La Psychanalyse en Italie" in Roland Jaccard (ed), *Histoire de la psychanalyse, Vol II* (Hachette, 1982) pp. 297-358; and Silvia Vegetti Finzi, *Storia della psicoanalisi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1990 [1st edition: 1986]) pp. 256-268, 404-427. There are also some narratives that include Italian psychoanalysis within the broader history of Italian psychology, such as: Luciano Mecacci, *Psicologia e psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana del Novecento* (Bari: Laterza, 1998); Sadi Marhaba, *Lineamenti della psicologia italiana, 1870-1945* (Florencia: Giunti Barbera, 1981); and Guido Cimino and Nino Dazzi (eds), *La psicologia in Italia* (Milan: Led, 1998). For a brief summary of psychoanalysis in Italy in English, see Sergio Benvenuto, "Italy and Psychoanalysis," Journal of European Psychoanalysis, n 5, Spring-Fall, 1997. For a study on psychoanalysis from gender perspectives and the history of homosexuality, see Lorenzo Benadusi, "Per una storia dell'omosessualità nell'Italia del Novecento. Gli studi psicanalitici," in Storia e Problemi Contemporanei, N 37, Year VII, Sept-Dec 2004, pp. 183-203.

influence undermined the presence of psychoanalysis in Italy. Second, and most fundamentally, its enactment of the so-called "Racial Laws" in 1938 was lethal for Italian psychoanalysis.[9] Although these laws were of course not inspired by anti-psychoanalytic aims but by a general reorientation of Italian political life resulting from the alliance with Nazi Germany, psychoanalysis was one of their so many casualties. These laws precluded the circulation of psychoanalytic texts and journals, given that psychoanalysis was strongly associated with negative Jewish influence. In addition, it prevented Jewish psychoanalysts from other countries to establish themselves in Italy and expand the psychoanalytic influence there. Finally, since almost all Italian psychoanalysts were Jewish, they had to emigrate or hide as a result of the new policies, thus losing the institutional and professional positions they had acquired. As I will try to show, however, these issues do not fully capture the experience of psychoanalysis in Fascist Italy. In particular, I will show that before 1938 the relationship between psychoanalysis and Fascism was fluid. For example, while some cultural bureaucrats were receptive to psychoanalysis, the Italian Freudians were also proactive in trying to make psychoanalysis acceptable to the regime.

Psychoanalysis had a significant cultural presence in interwar Italy, and a small but intense "psychoanalytic culture" expanded throughout the period between 1922 and 1938.[10] Despite the limited clinical and professional impact of the Freudian psychoanalytic movement, the influence of psychoanalytic ideas in some intellectual realms was relevant. Although there

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[9] See David, *La psicoanalisi,* pp. 46-51 and David, "La Psychanalyse…" op cit, pp. 315-321.

[10] Some historians use the notion of "psychoanalytic culture" to refer to the influence of psychoanalysis beyond the immediate realms of the psychoanalytic movement. See for instance, Sherry Turkle, *Psychoanalytic Politics: Jacques Lacan and Freud's French Revolution* (New York: Guilford Press, 1992)pp. xiii-xxxiii; and Mariano Plotkin, *Freud in the Pampas: the Emergence and Development of a Psychoanalytic Culture in Argentina* (Stanford, Cal: Stanford University Press, 2001) pp. 13-14.

were many attempts at importing psychoanalysis into Italy, the most long-lasting effort emerged in 1920s Trieste, where psychoanalysis began to spread as a clinical practice but also as a topic of general cultural interest. Moving from Trieste to Rome and other major cities, psychoanalysis's cultural presence reached its peak around 1930, when an intense psychoanalytic movement garnered feverish support and provoked fervent attacks. Even though psychoanalysis suffered dangerous blows from Fascist censorship, there were also opportunities for compromise and accommodation within Fascist Italy. This situation remained stable until mid-1938 with the implementation of the Fascist anti-Semitic policies that finally banished Italian psychoanalytic culture from the nation.

Antecedents: Avant-garde Florence

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed the first professional engagement with psychoanalysis in Italy, in which the young student and then psychiatrist Roberto Marco Grego Assagioli (1888-1974) played a key role. Born into a wealthy Venetian Jewish family, Assagioli moved to Florence in 1904 to study medicine at the *Istituto di Studi Superiori* –the city's university—with the intention to specialize in psychiatry. Florence was then a privileged site for the study of mental health and the mind. There, Francesco De Sarlo—an important figure in Italian psychology during that time—had organized a laboratory for experimental psychology, while Eugenio Tanzi directed the psychiatric asylum and also held a chair at the university. Tanzi authored one of the most widely read psychiatry textbooks in Italy in the first half of twentieth century, an important reference in the field.[11]

[11] Eugenio Tanzi, *Trattato delle malattie mentali* 2 vols (Milan: Società Editrice Libraria, 1904) The second and third editions, from 1914 and 1923, were co-authored with Ernesto Lugaro. For the role of De Sarlo in Italian psychology, see Mecacci, *Psicologia e psicoanalisi,* 3-4, 10-11.

Despite this convenient setting, Assagioli's trajectory shows that attention to, and information on, Freudian theories in early-twentieth-century Italy did not come from institutional quarters. Because of his broad interests, financial possibilities, and multilingual skills, Assagioli traveled extensively outside Italy, where he became familiar with the most innovative and up-to-date currents in psychiatry and psychology. While in Geneva in 1906, when he was still a medical student, he approached the psychologists Édouard Claparède and Theodor Flournoy: they were the editors of *Archives de Psychologie*, one of the pioneering journals in experimental psychology, and were receptive to Freud's work. Besides providing him with the opportunity to pursue research in their laboratory, Assagioli's acquaintance with Claparède and Flournoy seems to have been a factor in his decision to move to the Burghölzli psychiatric university clinic at Zurich. The clinic's director Eugen Bleuler, along with his assistant Carl Gustav Jung, had become an active promoter of Freud's theories. Assagioli started work in Zurich in August 1907, and he also attended meetings of the Freudian Society of Physicians founded by Jung and Bleuler. As he was not yet a doctor, he attended as an external member.[12]

Assagioli's experience in Zurich placed him at the center of the first psychoanalytic wave. During the first years of the twentieth century, the Burghölzli clinic and its staff were crucial for the transformation of psychoanalysis from a close circle of Viennese doctors to an international movement of practitioners and promoters. The clinic provided psychoanalysis with a prestigious training institution where Freudian theories could be tested and psychiatrists could get practical training with patients. Zurich therefore became a recruiting center for a cohort of psychoanalysts that included Ernest Jones, Sándor Ferenczi, Karl Abraham, and Max Eitington, among many others, who in turn spread the Freudian influence when returning to their

[12] Information on Assagioli's biography in Alessandro Berti, *Roberto Assagioli. Profilo biografico degli anni di formazione* (Florence: Edizioni Istituto di Psicosintesi, 1987).

countries.[13] Assagioli shared this missionary enthusiasm, and even though in 1908 he pursued his practice at the clinic of the anti-Freudian Emil Kraepelin at Munich, he returned to the Burghölzli in 1909. In that year, Jung wrote to Freud that Assagioli was "a very pleasant and perhaps valuable acquaintance (…) The young man is very intelligent, seems to be extremely knowledgeable and is an enthusiastic follower, who is entering the new territory with the proper brio."[14] Assagioli participated in the Second International Psychoanalytic Congress at Nuremberg in 1910, published in the recently created psychoanalytic press, and his dissertation—defended in 1910—was the first one in Italy to revolve around Freudian psychoanalysis.[15] In 1912, he settled in Florence and created a new journal of psychology, *Psiche* (1912-1915), in which he spread news on the psychoanalytic movement –especially its splits—and criticized psychiatric positivism. [16] He also played an important logistical role at the beginning of the war, when Freud and Jones had to send their letters through Assagioli's address in neutral Italy in order to be sure they would arrive at their destinations.[17]

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[13] Makari, *Revolution in Mind*, 179-227;E Falzeder and A Haynal, "Introduction to The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907-1925" in E Falzeder, *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Karl Abraham 1907-1925* (London/New York: Karnac, 2002) p. xx-xxi.

[14]"Letter from Carl G Jung to Sigmund Freud, July 13th 1909," in William McGuire, *The Freud/Jung Letters: The Correspondence between Sigmund Freud and C G Jung* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1974) p. 241; see also Freud's letter on January 2, 1910, saying that Assagioli had written to him "in perfect German, incidentally;" idem, p. 283. Ernest Jones was also reporting Freud about an Italian among the Zuricher Freudians. See letters from Jones to Freud on August 5th and December 18th 1909; and Freud's response on January 11, 1910, in Andrew Paskauskas (ed), *The Complete Correspondence between Ernest Jones and Sigmund Freud, 1908-1939* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993) pp. 28, 37, 41. See also his brief references to Assagioli in Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud. Vol.* 2 (New York: Basic Books, 1955)pp. 74, 77.

[15] Berti, *Roberto Assagioli,* 92-93.

[16] For further information on Assagioli and *Psiche* see David, *La psicoanalisi,* 148-151; 157.

[17] See letter from Jones to Freud, August 13, 1914, and from Freud to Jones, October 22, 1914. in Paskaukas, *The Complete Correspondence,* 298-302.

Along with his participation in the first international wave of psychoanalysts, Assagioli's trajectory illustrates the relationships between psychoanalysis and the Florentine modernist circles. At the turn of the twentieth century, myriad anti-Positivist currents and journals signaled the emergence of a new intellectual generation in Italy. The Florentine cultural milieu, in particular, gained momentum toward 1903, when a group of young intellectuals led by the writer Giovanni Papini and the journalist and critic Giuseppe Prezzolini gathered as part of the journal *Leonardo* (1903-1907) and constituted one of the first Italian avant-garde groups. Based on Nietzschean and Bergsonian influences, a militant anti-Positivism, and a generational appeal, the *leonardiani* called for a cultural reawakening and aimed to arrest what they perceived as a process of moral weakening fermented by the materialism and conformism that increasingly permeated Italian life. Nationalist claims as well as anti-democratic and anti-socialist attitudes were also crucial to *Leonardo's* project—as was the case with other Florentine journals of the period—although this influence was not equally distributed among all the writers of the journal.[18] Assagioli was part of the *leonardiani*: he corresponded with Papini and Prezzolini beginning in 1904; contributed financially to the journal; published in its pages a short story, pieces on the American New Thought movement, and articles on authors such as Peter Altenberg and Edward Carpenter; and became involved in its direction during its last period, in 1907.[19]

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[18] For a description of Florentine modernism within a European context, see Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1979) pp. 160-202. For the most complete description and analysis of the aesthetics and political aspects of Florentine modernism see Walter Adamson, *Avant-Garde Florence. From Modernism to Fascism.* (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press, 1993). For other analyses of these groups in the context of the relationship between modernism and politics see Emilio Gentile, *The Struggle For Modernity. Nationalism, Futurism and Fascism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 1-10; 27-76.

[19] The relationship between Assagioli, Prezzolini and Papini during this period is documented through their correspondence, now published in Manuela del Guercio Scotti and Alessandro Berti (eds), *Roberto Assagioli, Giovanni Papini; Roberto Assagioli, Giuseppe Prezzolini. Carteggio, 1904-1974* (Rome: Edizioni di Storia e

Assagioli's involvement with this group was related to the broad interests of Papini and Prezzolini in the field of psychology. Papini's closest relationship to academic positions at the time was in anthropology and comparative psychology, in part thanks to professor Paolo Mantegazza (1831-1910), who was a forerunner of sexology studies in Italy and held a long-lasting interest in psychology.[20] Despite Mantegazza's Positivism and the generational gap, Papini attended his university lectures on anthropology and psychology, and Mantegazza encouraged him to publish an academic article in his journal. Assagioli and Papini probably met for the first time at Mantegazza's Society of Anthropology, Ethnology and Comparative Psychology, where both worked as librarians.[21]

In April 1905, moreover, the Italian intelligentsia's interest in psychology increased when Rome hosted the 5th International Congress of Psychology. Papini presented a paper and met the main figures of Italian and international psychology. He also met one of his favorite

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Letteratura, 1998. [Hereafter: *Carteggio*] For Assagioli's articles in *Leonardo,* see Roberto Assagioli, "Peter Altenber" Leonardo, year III, October-December 1905; "Edward Carpenter. L'arte de la creazione," idem, Year IV, February 1906; "Fantasia in Re interiore" idem, Year V, February-March, 1907; "Per un nuevo umanesimo ariano," and "Il 'nuovo pensiero' americano" idem, year V, April-June 1907; and "L G Sera. Sulle tracce della vita" idem, year V, August 1907.

[20] Mantegazza has a minor and indirect role in the history of psychoanalysis. Based on his research in South America, he wrote an enthusiastic essay about the therapeutic benefits of the coca plant in 1859, which Freud took very seriously in his research with cocaine in the summer of 1884. For a collection of the basic sources around Freud's "coca episode" see Robert Byck (ed), *Cocaine Papers by Sigmund Freud* (New York: Stonehill, 1974). See pp. 47-74 for Freud's main paper on the issue. For a general approach to Mantegazza, see Nicoletta Piereddu, "Introduction: Paolo Mantegazza a Scientist and His Ecstasies," in Paolo Mangtegazza, *The Physiology of Love and other Writings* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007) pp. 3-53. A fragment of Mantegazza's article on coca can be read in idem, pp. 319-350.

[21] For Papini and Prezzolini's interest in psychology as well as for the relationship between Papini and Mantegazza, see Paolo Casini, *Alle origini del Novecento. 'Leonardo', 1903-1907* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002) pp. 25-36.

correspondents, the American psychologist and philosopher William James.[22] James was highly influential among the *leonardiani*, who praised his pragmatism, even though they appropriated it in a very idiosyncratic manner. Papini's prestige among certain psychologists, moreover, seems to have been significant. Apparently, Papini's letter of recommendation paved the way for Assagioli's work with Claparède in Geneva, since the Swiss psychologists were interested in establishing contacts with the Florentine modernist group.[23]

Papini's interest in psychology was rooted in his general contempt for abstract philosophical systems. For Papini, theories and ideas were not the result of impersonal deductive processes, but the expression of their authors' psychological characteristics and life experiences. Psychology provided him a way of fleshing out ideas and conceiving of intellectual activity as deeply immersed in life.[24] In addition, Papini was familiar with theories and debates concerning the unconscious or the subconscious, and the epistemological and methodological problems brought about by these concepts. As he commented in an article published in Mantegazza's journal, one of the problems of psychology was that most of the mind's activity occurred in the unobservable realm of the unconscious, and as a result, psychologists had to grasp this dimension through analogies and speculative hypothesis about conscious life. As he explained with a metaphor: "it happens as if from the top of a mountain, another mountain emerges, separated from the previous by a misty valley. What is there in the middle? (…) Assisted by previous experience, we can assume that under the veil of the vapors there are trees, houses, or perhaps an

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[22] See the letter from Papini to Assagioli on April 28th ,1905. In *Carteggio,* 10-11. For a general account of Papini's meeting with James in the Congress and their later relationship see Adamson, *Avant-garde Florence*, 77-79.

[23] Berti, *Roberto Assagioli,* p. 10.

[24] Giovanni Papini, *Il crepuscolo dei filosofi* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1921) [First edition:1905] p. 7. See also Giovanni Papini, "Licenzio la filosofia" in *Tutte le opere*, vol 1. *Filosofia e letteratura* (Milan: Mondadori, 1961) pp. 172-182 which was originally the concluding chapter of the book's first edition.

entire city." [25] Writing about the coming Psychology Congress, he showed optimism about the research on the thus-far unknown capabilities and faculties of the mind, and made explicit his expectation that "a new land of the soul will emerge out of that sort of *mare tenebrarum* that psychologists call vaguer names–unconscious, subconscious, subliminal—and into which they have thrown the plumb and the probe with so little success."[26] For Papini, further research on these unexplored human dimensions would permit the production of a more complete and richer image of man and his potentialities.

Giuseppe Prezzolini, the other leading intellectual of the *Leonardo* circle, also played with the idea of the unconscious, and some of his reflections on dreams resembled Freudian insights. In an early article, he considered dreams expressions of "the activity of that so-called unconscious consciousness which unfolds temporally, individually, illogically beneath the social, spatial, and logical life."[27] This reflection is striking in its proximity to Freud's idea of the interpretation of dreams as "the royal road to the unconscious activity of the mind."[28] Yet the parallel stops there, since Prezzolini imagined the unconscious as a cosmic and utopian realm lodging the secrets of originality and creativity. As he concluded, "from this activity derive our

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[25][Succede come se dalla cima di una montagna si scorgesse dinanzi a noi un'altra cima, che fosse separata da una valle coperta di nebbia. Che cosa c'e fra mezzo? Noi non lo scorgiamo, ma aiutati da esperienze anteriori, supponiamo sotto il fitto velo di vapori dei campi, degli alberi, delle case o magari una città intera] Giovanni Papini, "La teoria psicologica della previsione" in Archivio per l'Antropologia e la Etnologia, vol XXXII, 1902, p. 353. Papini's main reference was Edward Carpenter's theory of the unconscious cerebrations.

[26][questa nuova terra dell'anima emergerà da quella specie di *mare tenebrarum* che gli psicologi hanno chiamato con i nomi più vaghi (inconscio, sub-consciente, subliminal) e nel quale hanno gettato lo scandaglio e la sonda con tanto poco successo.] Giovanni Papini, "Avvertimenti agli psicologi", Leonardo, Year III, April 1905, 42.

[27] [io continuerò a creder che il sogno non sia altro che una vita individuale più profonda e in tal senso più vera della giornaliera; che in esso ci venga rivelata l'attività di quella coscienza che è stata detta incosciente e che al di sotto della vita sociale.] Prezzolini, "Alla sorgente dello spirito", Leonardo, year I, N 8.

[28] Sigmund Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud,* Vol. IV p. 608. [1900]

most beautiful parts, (…) all those creative moments that solely render common life worthy of being lived because it is the place at which from time to time there is an announcement of a 'beyond of life,' a realm of the pure spirit."[29] He wrote other articles that also revolved around the unconscious, always in similar terms. In a further reflection, he sketched a philosophical system articulated through a threefold schema whose points were the unconscious, which he also associated with the realm of aesthetics; consciousness, which he related to theoretical knowledge; and habit, which for him was the capability of the mind that predominated in practical and social life. While the first dimension contained the forces that nurtured creativity, the latter was associated with constraint and tended toward conservation, which extenuated that unconscious vitality through the mindless repetition of traditions and norms. Consciousness mediated between the two.[30]

The explicit interest in notions of the unconscious or the subconscious among the Florentine modernists suggests that they could have acted as a possible venue for the spread of psychoanalysis. However, between the modernists' interest and an enthusiastic acceptance of Freudian theories on the unconscious there was still a long road. For the young Italians, approaches to unexplored regions of the mind might unveil a stock of vital and creative resources ungraspable to the scientists' intellectualist and narrow categories. Those unknown resources might ideally lead toward a higher, better, or more authentic dimension of the self than the ones predominating in everyday intercourse. Assagioli's standpoint, in this respect, was not radically different than his fellow modernists'. His interest in psychoanalysis was mediated by several

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[29] [questa attività sia quella da cui derivano le parti più belle di noi (…) di tutti quei momenti creativi che soli rendono la vita comune degna di esser vissuta perché è il luogo ove si manifesta di tanto in tanto l'annunzio di un "al di là della vita" di un regno dello spirito puro.] Prezzolini, "Alle sorgente dello spirito."

[30] Giuseppe Prezzolini, "Dalla sorgente alle foci dello spirito," Leonardo, Year II, June 1904. New Series, pages 18-24.

other influences, such as the spiritualist and voluntaristic American New Thought movement, Hindu and Catholic mysticism, Romantic poets, and the ideas and perspectives of the Theosophical Society—a sort of sect mixing spiritualism with the pursuit of cosmic humanitarianism, a primitive but pioneering feminism, and a search for the integration of Western and Oriental religions.[31] His commitment to Freudian psychoanalysis was therefore limited by many other influences.

Despite the diverging paths of psychoanalysis and this generation of Florentine modernist intellectuals, it was nonetheless this cultural circle that set the stage for the circulation of Freudian ideas among a wide and lay Italian audience. This became clear when Prezzolini launched a new journal, *La Voce* (1908-1916), with a more moderate style and politics than those of *Leonardo.* Assagioli published in *La Voce* some of his ideas on education reform, claiming that psychotherapy and psychoanalysis could be integrated into pedagogy as a means of understanding education as a process of personal growth.[32] Even more decisively, in 1910 *La Voce* launched a campaign for sexual reform, which became the platform for more extensive reference of and debate concerning Freudian ideas. The campaign started with some polemics about sex education in schools–an initiative supported by Prezzolini and Assagioli, among others—and immediately translated into a special issue on the "sexual question," whose

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[31] See for instance Roberto Assagioli, "Per un nuevo umanesimo ariano," and "Il 'nuovo pensiero' americano" Leonardo, year V, April-June 1907. See also his article "La psicologia delle idee-forze e la psicagogia" Rivista di psicologia applicata, year 5, n 5, Sept-Oct. 1910. In March 1911 Assagioli gave a talk before many *leonardiani* on "the subconscious" –a term that he used as synonymous of "unconscious"—where his basic references were William James, Morton Prince, Freud, and Pierre Janet. Assagioli defended Prince's notion of unconscious as a second consciousness and as an outcome of personality dissociation, rather than a more orthodox Freudian one. Roberto Assagioli, "Il Subconsciente," in Bollettino della Biblioteca Filosofica, Year III, N xx, March 1911, pp. 445-461.

[32] Roberto Assagioli, "Per una moderna psicagogia" La Voce, February 25, 1909; and "L'educazione morale degli studenti universitari" La Voce, June 3, 1909.

contributors included August Forel, a sexual reformer who had also been director of the Burghölzli; the French syndicalist theoretician Georges Sorel; and Otto Weininger, who would become hugely popular in Italy in the years to follow.[33]

Assagioli contributed to the special issue with an article on Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, which was an enthusiastic presentation of Freud's theories. The article started with a brief introduction to Freud's approaches to neuroses and then moved into a more detailed account of his book on sexuality. In so doing, Assagioli revealed himself to be a strategic but moderate propagandist of Freud's theories, explicitly seeking to detach himself from both fanatic enthusiasts and unfair and scandalized critics, and demonstrating an enlightened attitude that celebrated that Freud's exploration into sexuality was not constrained by moralist concerns. His point was that Freud's theory of the sexual etiology of psychoneurosis was a crucial contribution to the field, even if other possible factors should not be discarded. By the same token, Assagioli accepted Freud's theory of an infantile sexuality—and used it to bolster his support of sex education in schools—yet he stated his disagreement with Freud's notion of sexuality and his "unfortunate concept of *libido*." [poco felice concetto di *libido*.] Assagioli contended that Freud's background in neuropathology led him to emphasize the "inferior and instinctive side of sexuality, and mainly its aberrations" [lato inferiore ed istintivo della sessualità e soprattutto alle sue aberrazioni] and to downplay a more spiritual and elevated notion of sex. This criticism was in line with Assagioli's enthusiasm for the idea of sublimation, which he saluted as psychoanalysis's most promising concept because "this precious faculty of the mind (…) knows how to transform the blind instinctive forces into elevated emotional and

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[33] "La questione sessuale," La Voce no. 9, 10 February, 1910

spiritual energies."[34] Also in 1910, in the First Congress on the Sexual Question that *La Voce* organized as part of the its campaign for sexual reform, Assagioli insisted on the importance of the notion of sublimation and placed Freud's at the summit of a tradition of scholars tracing back to Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, and even Schopenhauer.[35]

Embedded in the campaign for sexual reform, Freudian ideas began to make inroads toward a broader readership.[36] Aside from Asaggioli, the 1910 debates on the "sexual question" also included arguments referring to Freudian ideas about the relationship between neurosis and long-lasting sexual abstinence in arguments in favor of birth control and contraception.[37] Despite this general promotion of Freudian ideas, however, Florentine culture was not necessarily receptive to psychoanalysis on a wide basis. After listening to Assagioli's paper on sublimation at the Congress on the Sexual Question, for instance, Prezzolini protested against Freud's "Positivism."[38] This seems in line with his sensitivity regarding an alleged scientific study of the mind. Showing interest for a notion of the unconscious associated with an unexplored and almost mystic dimension of the mind was one thing; agreeing with Freud in a psychosexual and highly instinctual notion of the unconscious was another.

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[34][preziosa facoltà della psiche –che sa trasformare delle cieche forze istintive in elevate energie emozionali e spirituali.] Assagioli,"Le idee di Sigmund Freud sulla sessualità," idem.

[35] Later on Assagioli published this paper in a professional journal, "Transformazione e sublimazione delle energie sessuali*",*Rivista di psicologia applicata, no. 6, 1911.

[36] For an account of the congress and its repercussion see the minutes of the Congress published in "Il convegno per la questione sessuale," La Voce*,* no. 49, 17 November 1910. Another testimony was left by sociologist Robert Michels, in Robert Michels, Sexual Ethics: A Study of Borderland Questions (London: Transaction Publishers, 2002),283-288.

[37] Marcello Lowy, "Pro e contro l'astinenza" La Voce, Year II, N 11, February 24, 1910.

[38] "Il convegno per la questione sessuale," cit. The minutes do not bring more specific information of Prezzolini's intervention.

The anti-Positivist, voluntaristic, and spiritualist perspective of the Florentine young intellectuals resulted in calls for a moral reawakening, the creation of a powerful and overactive new man, and an uncompromising anti-materialism. This general intellectual attitude precluded a long-lasting and productive encounter between modernism and psychoanalysis in Florence. After the First World War, in fact, Prezzolini and Papini became notorious critics of the Freudian cultural influence. Assagioli also progressively detached himself from psychoanalysis and sought a more "optimistic" conception of the mind. He used his journal, *Psiche*, to complain that psychoanalysts "have an excessive inclination to 'explain' the superior manifestations of the psyche, reducing them to the inferior ones, and to approach with great lightness [disinvoltura] the most grave speculative and religious problems without the necessary philosophical preparation."[39] Assagioli burned his bridges with the Freudian movement gradually and started to make his own way into psychotherapy. Years later he became the main Italian representative of an eclectic current called "psychosynthesis," which integrated psychoanalysis along with many other heterogeneous influences. The first important experience of importing psychoanalysis into Italy was then brought to an end.

Other Beginnings

Whereas the psychoanalytic spring in Florence was intense but short, the postwar years witnessed longer-lasting commitments to the Freudian cause. The Italian psychiatrist Marco Levi Bianchini (1875-1961) took the first step in this direction. Like Assagioli, Levi Bianchini hailed from a Jewish family from the Veneto region that had enjoyed a privileged economic situation

[39] [hanno un'eccesiva tendenza a 'spiegare' le manifestazioni superiori della psiche riducendole alle inferiori e ad affrontare con grande disinvoltura i più gravi problemi speculativi e religiosi senza possedere la necessaria preparazione filosofica.] Roberto Assagioli, "La psicologia del subconsciente. La psicoanalisi",Psiche, year I, N2, March-April, 1912.

until going bankrupt on the eve of the twentieth century. A native of the town of Rovigo, Levi Bianchini studied medicine in Padua. Upon graduating, he worked in asylums in Florence, Ferrara, and Padua. Despite his northern origins, most of Levi Bianchini's career took place in southern Italy. By 1909 he became assistant at the asylum of Nocera Inferiore, near Salerno, and he was also a lecturer [libero docente] on mental and nervous diseases at Naples University from 1913—with some key interruptions, such as during the First World War, which he spent on the front serving as a doctor. Between 1924 and 1931 he moved to Teramo, in the Abruzzo region, where he became director of another asylum. He returned to Nocera Inferiore in 1931, and remained director of its asylum until 1938, when, subjected to the "Racial Laws," he was removed from his position.[40]

Levi Bianchini's interest in Freud dated back to the prewar years, when he wrote a book summarizing the modern theories of hysteria. Although he explicitly rejected Freud's theory of the sexual etiology of neurosis, by 1914 Levi Bianchini was already working on the translation of some of his texts, to be published in a collection of psychoanalytic books that included also works by Otto Rank and Oskar Pfister.[41] Moreover, in 1920 he founded the *Archivio Generale di Neurologia e Psichiatria*, which soon incorporated the word *Psicoanalisi* in its title. Levi Bianchini edited, financed, and directed the journal until 1938. Although the journal was not exclusively dedicated to psychoanalysis, its multiple book reviews included the most updated information on psychoanalysis. It also became the official publication of the Società Italiana di

[40]Information of the previous paragraph is based on Michel David, *La Psicoanalisi,* 144-161; and 194-198, and Marco Alessandrini, Rosa Maria Salerno, Francesco Saverio Moscheta, "Invito alla lettura di Marco Levi Bianchini" in Marco Levi Bianchini, *Biolibido, Antologia di scritti psicoanalitici (1920-1936)*(Chieti: Metris Editrice, 1995) pp. 9-24.

[41] See letter from Jones to Freud, November 29, 1914, in which he mentions that Levi Bianchini is working in the translation of his lectures at the Clark University. *The Complete Correspondence of Sigmund Freud and Ernest Jones,* cit, pp. 305-306.

Psiconalisi, which Levi Bianchini organized in Teramo in June of 1925. That Società was to become the first Italian Psychoanalytic Society, even when its existence was mostly nominal.

The scholars who have worked on the history of psychoanalysis and psychology in Italy agree that Levi Bianchini appropriated psychoanalysis in very idiosyncratic ways, and that he had no basic psychoanalytic training—he had not even been under analysis with any known psychoanalyst.[42] Likewise, he wrote imprecisely and made extensive use of neologisms and expressions alien to strict psychoanalytic terminology.[43] Still, as early as in 1922, the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society accepted him as a member—he would remain in the rosters of the International Psychoanalytic Society until his death. Moreover, in the interwar period Levi Bianchini was an energetic militant of the Freudian cause, raising his voice in psychiatric meetings to defend the Freudian doctrines before hostile audiences. More than anything, Levi Bianchini was optimistic about the future of psychoanalysis. In 1923, speaking to the skeptical attendants to the Psychiatry Congress in Rome, he announced that "expelled from the door (official psychiatry), psychoanalysis will reenter through the window (psychology, pedagogy, philosophy)."[44] For Levi Bianchini, even if Italian mainstream psychiatry turned its back on psychoanalysis, the Freudian influence was sooner or later going to gain acceptance in other disciplines.

Levi Bianchini's appropriation of psychoanalysis was the exact opposite of Assagioli's. Whereas Assagioli approached psychoanalysis through his anti-Positivism, Levi Bianchini

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[42] For a study on Levi Bianchini's work along these lines, see Glauco Cecarelli, *La psicologia italiana. Saggi storiografici* (Urbino: Edizioni QuattroVenti, 1999) pp. 53-104. See also David, *La psicoanalisi.*

[43] For a very detailed analysis of Levi Bianchini's writing and neologisms, see Cecarelli, *La psicologia,* pp. 86-89.

[44][cacciata dalla porta (psichiatria ufficiale) , rientrerà per la finestra (psicologia, pedagogia, filosofia)] Marco Levi Bianchini, "Difesa della Psicoanalisi," Archivio Generale di Neurologia, Psichiatria e Psicoanalisi [hereafter AGNPP], Vol. IV-V, (1923-1924), p. 9.

sought to assimilate psychoanalysis into the framework of Italian Positivism. He insistently traced analogies between Freud and the psychiatrist and father of Positivist criminology Cesare Lombroso, whom Levi Bianchini recognized as one of his intellectual mentors.[45] Levi Bianchini insisted on the symmetry between Freud's theories of the mind and Lombrosian notions of "atavism,"[atavismo] that is, the belief that criminal behavior was related to the persistence of primitive evolutionary stages among modern civilized people.[46] Levi Bianchini asserted that, similarly, Freud's analogies between children and primitive men, his notion of neurosis as a regression to more archaic modes of the working of the mind, his belief in the reciprocity of the evolution of the individual and that of the species, and his idea of an unconscious activity marked by various instinctual impulses and demands also revealed the links between modern neurotic citizens and "primitive man".[47] Psychoanalysis represented a form of excavation, through intellectualistic and rational mental activity, into the territory of civilized man's pre-historical ancestors. Or, as Levi Bianchini observed, psychoanalysis promoted the understanding that "the human soul is like a palimpsest whose primitive text, the one that has to be discovered, is hidden by a totally different one which has been set over it (…). It is necessary to decompose

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[45] See for instance his articles "Il nucleo centrale della psicoanalisi e la presa di posseso della psicoanalisi in Italia, AGNPP, Vol VII, (1926), p. 8; and "Freud e la psicoanalisi," idem, p. 103, 118.

[46] For an account of Lombroso's life and his theory of atavism see Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime. Cesare Lombroso ad the Origins of Biological Criminology* (Wesport, Conn: Praeger, 2002) p. 20-26.

[47] Marco Levi Bianchini, "Aspetti e valori sociali della psicoanalisi," AGNPP Vol. IV-V (1923-1924), 40-41; "La simbolistica sessuale del sogno mistico e profano," AGNPP, Vol VI (1925), pp. 4-5; and "Freud e la psicoanalisi," 118.

the latter, to shred it, to limn it, in order to restore to the manuscript its primitive text and beauty."[48]

Unlike that of Assagioli, Levi Bianchini's reading accepted psychoanalysis's emphasis on the instinctual and impulsive over the more "elevated" activities of the human soul. He willingly endorsed the idea that mental activity was governed by multiple drives and emotions, concluding simply that psychoanalysis basically explains "the essence of intelligence based on affectivity, and the essence of affectivity based on instincts."[49] Moreover, and despite his concerns about Freud's focus on sexuality, he straightforwardly backed Freud's theories of the origin of civilization in *Totem and Taboo* or, as Levi Bianchini put it, that "state, moral, law, and religion, in the archaic ages of humanity, were created as reactive formations against or around the Oedipus complex."[50] Levi Bianchini's flexible Positivism did not prevent his welcoming of Freudian influences, among other innovations. As the book review section of his *Archivio* reveals, his readings were remarkably broad, and included rising psychoanalytic stars such as Abraham, Jones, Ferenczi, Franz Alexander, Helene Deutsch, Heinz Hartmann, and Wilhelm Reich. In addition, his eagerness to remain constantly updated led him toward the French psychoanalytic groups. Levi Bianchini was one of the earliest readers of Jacques Lacan in Italy – when he was still a young unknown psychiatrist—and wrote a very positive review of Lacan's

[48][l'anima umana, per verità, è come un palimpsesto il cui testo primitivo, quello che si vuol riscuoprire, sia nascosto da un altro del tutto diverso a lui sopraposto. È necesario decomporre quest'ultimo, grattarlo, limarlo per restituire al manoscrito il testo e la belleza primitivi] Levi Bianchini, "Difesa della psiconalisi," p. 12.

[49][l'essenza della intelligenza basata sull'affetività e l'essenza dell'affetività basata sugli istinti] "Difesa della psicoanalisi," p. 12.

[50][l'ordinamento statale, la morale, il diritto, la religione, nelle epoche arcaiche dell'umanità, andarono creandosi quali formazioni reattive attorno e contro il complesso di Edipo] "Freud e la psicoanalisi," 119.

recently-published doctoral thesis in 1933.[51] He also received, with a non-partisan mentality, the work of the "dissidents" such as Wilhelm Stekel, Jung, and Adler. His interest in literature was also broad, and included favorable reviews of the Surrealists, Proust, and Stefan Zweig.

Levi Bianchini's psychiatric imagination combined Lombroso and Freud, two shining stars coexisting in his mind quite pacifically. However, his constellation also included a third figure: Mussolini or, more broadly, Fascism. Levi Bianchini was a Fascist from the beginning. He joined the Fascist Party in 1920—this is what made a "pre-March-on-Rome" Fascist out of him—and was very actively involved in the organization of the local *fascio* in Nocera Inferiore.[52] Although he seemingly left politics aside in his psychiatric and psychoanalytic writings, his Fascism surfaced every now and then. The review section of his *Archivio* sometimes included pro-Fascist political books as well as compilations of Mussolini's speeches, which Levi Bianchini placed along with reviews of psychiatry and books of psychoanalysis.[53] Some of his initiatives on mental health also were heavy-handed in their engagement with social issues. When in 1928 he started an outpatient service in order to expand mental health services in the community, the rhetoric of racial hygiene and eugenics ran rampant.[54] Something similar

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[51] Levi Bianchini, "Review: 'Jacques Lacan: De la psychose paranoiaque dans ses raportes avec la personalité,'" AGNPP, Vol 14 (1933), p. 176.

[52] See the report by the Political Police on Levi Bianchini's political background in Archivio Generale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale Pubblica Sicurezza, Cat. A 1, 1942, folder "Levi Bianchini, Marco."

[53] See his reviews: "Mussolini: *Sette anni di regime fascista,"* AGNPP, Vol X (1929), p. 112; "Bedel, *Fascisme an VII,"* idem p. 333-334; "Ludwig: Colloqui con Mussolini" AGNPP, Vol XIV (1933), p 81 for just some examples. Another example of a pro-Fascist propagandistic text: Domenico Soprano, "La funzione biologica e la concezione fascista dello stato," AGNPP, Vol. XII (1931), pp. 181-184.

[54] Levi Bianchini, "Fondamenti, caratteri, e funzioni del dispensario di igiene mentale" AGNPP, Vol. IX (1928), pp. 321-332.

occurred when he launched an anti-alcoholism campaign, which included a proposition for the mandatory sterilization of recurrent alcoholics.[55]

An eloquent testimony of Levi Bianchini's parallel allegiance to Fascism and Freudianism can be observed in a 1936 issue of his *Archivio*. The issue opens with a full-page inscription celebrating the proclamation of the Italian Empire after the victories over Ethiopia, scorning the shame of the Versailles treaty, and showing gratitude toward the "will and genius" of Benito Mussolini. In the following page, there is a similar plaque, this time celebrating the 80th anniversary of Sigmund Freud, "glory of Israel, creator of psychoanalysis." The juxtaposition of both plaques is timely—the proclamation of the Empire took place, according to the plaque, on May 4, 1936, and Freud's birthday was May 6. Yet it possibly reveals symmetrical motives in Levi Bianchini's tendency toward Fascism and psychoanalysis. Whereas the former, to his eyes, restored national pride by pushing Italy toward the colonization of Africa, the latter increased Jewish prestige by conquering the unconscious through science. Levi Bianchini indeed never hid his Jewish pride when referring to Freud, whom he once defined as "the greatest living genius of my immortal Jewish lineage" [il più grade Genio vivente della mia immortale Stirpe Ebraica].[56] Unfortunately for Levi Bianchini, a few months after the issue containing the plaques, the coexistence of his two loyalties reached a tragic end, when the Empire he so celebrated launched the racial legislation that disentitled him and other psychoanalysts from all professional and civic positions.

The Triestine Origins of Italian Psychoanalysis

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[55] Levi Bianchini, "Alcoholismo e proibizionismo nella psicopatología sociale" Vol. XII (1931), pp. 40-71.

[56] Levi Bianchini, "Freud e la psiconalisi," p. 103.

Whereas Assagioli's engagement with the psychoanalytic movement was intense but short-lived, Levi Bianchini's long lasting commitment was isolated. Despite directing a journal and an asylum, Levi Bianchini was a maverick and marginal psychiatrist, and the fact that he lived in the south of the country might have also been a reason to remain distant from more professionally and culturally active urban centers.[57] Moreover, even if he could attract some followers, since he was devoid of training and had never been analyzed by a recognized psychoanalyst, he was not in a position to construct a professionally solid institution—as his failed attempt at creating the SPI in 1925 showed. The initiatives leading to the creation of the first psychoanalytic movement instead started in Trieste in the immediate aftermath of the First World War.

In many respects, Trieste was exceptional. Until 1918 it was not an Italian city. It held an increasingly strategic position as a seaport of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and had expanded since the mid-nineteenth century by attracting immigrants and achieving a population of around 200,000 by 1910. Moreover, Trieste was the site of a multicultural society, where a majority Italian-speaking population lived together with Slav groups constituting the core of the local and expanding working class. On top of that, a multiethnic elite controlled finances, commerce, and industry, and reinforced the city's ties with the Germanic world and the central government. Trieste was also notable for its diverse religious life. Due to the policies of tolerance that had been enforced since the eighteenth century, Trieste hosted a variety of religious denominations, including large Jewish, Protestant, and Orthodox communities, besides the predominant Catholic one. Another important feature of the city's make-up was the fact that the main cultural

[57] See Riccardo Galiani and Paolo Cotrufo, "L'accueil de l'oeuvre psychanalytique de Marco Levi Bianchini par la psychiatrie italienne au début du XX siecle," Topique, 89, (2004) pp. 77-81 for a research on the weak repercusion of Levi Bianchini's writings.

influences came from Vienna. Given that the authorities tried—unsuccessfully—to prevent the development of pro-Italian nationalist movements, Trieste had no university, and its middle and upper classes went to the University of Vienna or Graz to obtain their degrees, thus remaining linked to the German language for social advancement.[58]

Trieste was of the city of Edoardo Weiss (1889-1970), the first Italian psychoanalyst. Weiss was the third child and second son of a family of eight children and, like Levi Bianchini and Assagioli, he belonged to a well-to-do Jewish family—his father owned an oil-refining company that employed 400 workers. Like his other brothers, after finishing the *gymnasium*—high school—Edoardo went to the University of Vienna, where he commenced medical studies in 1908. His first encounter with psychoanalysis apparently dates from 1905-1907, when he found Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in a Triestine bookstore. In October 1908, upon arriving in Vienna, Weiss interviewed Freud and told him about his plans to major in psychiatry. He soon initiated his analysis with the Viennese psychoanalyst Paul Federn, with whom he maintained a long-lasting correspondence. Weiss also attended Freud's lectures at the University of Vienna in 1910 and was accepted into the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society [VPS] in 1913, a year before becoming a neurologist. After participating at the VPS's meetings in Freud's house and being drafted by the Austro-Hungarian authorities in 1918, Weiss returned to Trieste, where

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[58] See Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954* (Rochester, NY: Boydell Press, 2005) pp. 1-5; 12-15; 46-49; 106-112; and Anna Millo, *L'elite del potere a Trieste. Una biografia colletiva, 1891-1938* (FrancoAngelli: Milan, 1989) pp. 21-41. For more specific information on the cultural influences from Vienna and Central Europe see Elizabeth Schächter, *Origins and Identity: Essays on Svevo and Trieste* (Leeds: Northern University Press, 2000) especially chap. 1 "Trieste: A City of Paradox," pp. 5-13. Further information on Trieste's history can also be found in biographies of its main writers. See for instance: John Gatt-Rutter, *Italo Svevo: A Double Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Prress, 1988), pp 11-15.

he worked at the city's hospital and also began psychoanalytic practice with some private patients.[59]

There are many pieces of evidence showing that interest and receptivity to psychoanalysis spread in Trieste before and after the war. Among the Italian psychologists, the most receptive to psychoanalysis were natives of the city: Vittorio Benussi, who held the chair of experimental psychology at the University of Padua after the war; Ferruccio Banissoni, a close friend of Weiss who played a central role in the consolidation of psychology as a discipline in Italy and became one of the first members of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society in the early 1930s; and Fabio Metelli and Gaetano Kanizsa, who moved to Padua in the 1920s to study psychology because of their interest in psychoanalysis.[60] There was also evidence of the impact of psychoanalysis in broader circles. In 1910, on the occasion of the Florentine First Congress on the Sexual Question depicted earlier, a young medical student wrote from Trieste to *La Voce* referring to the conflict between Freud and the secessionist psychoanalyst Wilhelm Stekel, which suggests that interest in the events surrounding the psychoanalytic movement was widespread in Trieste.[61] Furthermore, some Triestine intellectuals, such as the poet Umberto Saba and the literary critic Roberto Bazlen, became Weiss' patients and played an important role in defending

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[59] For information on Weiss see: Michel David, *La Psicoanalisi,*op cit, 199-202, Paul Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss: The House that Freud Built* (New Brunswick: Transaction, 2005); and Anna Accerboni Pavanello, "Sigmund Freud as Remembered by Edoardo Weiss, the Italian Pioneer of Psychoanalysis" in The International Review of Psychoanalysis, vol 17, 1990, pp.. 351-359.

[60]Michel David, *La Psicoanalisi,* op cit. For the role of Triestine psychologists in the development of Italian psychoanalysis see Cesare Musatti, "La psicoanalisis arriva a Trieste," in Anna Maria Accerboni (ed), *La cultura psicoanalitica,* op. cit, pp. 189-195. For Metelli's and Kanizsa's first years at the University of Padua, see Rodolfo Reichmann, *Cesare Musatti. Psicologo. Vol I,* (Milan: Arpa Edizioni, 1996) p. 264.

[61] Marcello Loewy, "Pro e contro l'abstinencia," La Voce, año II, N 11, 24 de Febrero de 1910.

psychoanalysis in public debates and endorsing the translation of psychoanalytic articles.[62] We also find references to psychoanalysis in the correspondence of the Triestine poet Lina Galli with the Florentine writer Sibilla Aleramo during the 1930s, where Galli mentions Weiss' work and the applicability of psychoanalysis to literary criticism.[63] Yet on top of all the contact between psychoanalysis and Triestine cultural life there is the fact that the city hosted one of the most creative encounters between psychoanalysis and literature, a partnership best exemplified in the novel *La coscienza di Zeno* (1923), by Triestine novelist and businessman Italo Svevo, a topic which I will explore in chapter 4.

According to the memoirs of Giorgio Voghera, a Triestine writer and literary critic, in the city the interwar period represented "the years of psychoanalysis."[64] To Voghera, postwar Trieste experienced a "small psychoanalytic cyclone"[piccolo cyclone psicoanalitico] that, to his eyes, was in part due to Weiss's magnetism.[65] Even though he did not portray Weiss as an outgoing personality, he certainly underscored his ability to inspire confidence among his fellow citizens. The root of his influence, according to Voghera, "was the seriousness and honesty with which he approached every human case, an attitude that did not exclude, however, a great sense of humor and a deep knowledge of men, even if he was a little skeptical and malicious."[66] Voghera left

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[62]On Saba and psychoanalysis see Umbero Saba, *Lettere sulla Psicanalisi* (Milan: SE, 1991). On Bazlen, see Aldo Carotenuto, *Jung e la Cultura Italiana* (Roma: Astrolabio, 1977), 122-136.

[63]Anna Teresa Romano Cervone, "Prove d'apprendistato. Dal carteggio Aleramo-Galli: abilità e competenze," in Graziela Pagliano (ed), *Presenze femminile nel Novecento Italiano* (Napoles: Liguori, 2003) pp. 44-55. See also letter from Galli to Aleramo dated April 27, 1933; March 8, 1934; April 14, 1934, and September 7, 1934 in Archivi della Fondazione Istituto Gramsci di Roma, Fondo Aleramo, Corrspondenza, Lina Galli a Aleramo.

[64] Giorgio Voghera, *Gli Anni della Psicanalisi* (Pordenone: Studio Tesi, 1980)

[65] Voghera, *Gli Anni*, op cit, p. 7.

[66][Ma ciò che colpiva di lui era l'onestà e serietà con cui affrontava ogni caso umano ed ogni situazione: un attegiamento che però non escludeva un grande senzo dell'umorismo ed un profonda, anzi un pò scettica e smaliziata, conoscenza degli uomini.] idem, 7.

even more vivid descriptions of the ways in which both psychoanalysis and Weiss impacted some Triestines,

> Among the fans of psychoanalysis in Trieste there was a continuous exchange of stories and interpretations of dreams and slips: a continued, amateurish diagnosis of their own and others' neuroses; an effort to frame them in one or another of the three "phases"—oral, anal, genital, as they were called then—distinguished by Freud; and, finally, a continuous blaming on the "id" of others—although implicitly also the ego—the ugliest intentions and most shameful feelings. And then ... a continuous resort to Weiss, under the most inopportune conditions, to express doubts and demand explanations, consolation and assistance (...) The more desperate they became, the more they believed that only a meeting with Weiss, a telephone conversation with him, his advice, his word, could bring some relief. And Weiss, courteous by nature, could not help but accommodate these people, who belonged to the same environment in which he himself had grown up.[67]
>
> [Fra i fanatici triestini della psicanalisi era un continuo scambiarsi di racconti ed interpretazioni di sogni e lapsi; un continuo diagnosticare da dilettanti le proprie e le altrui neurosi, cercando di inquadrarle nell'una delle tre "fasi" (orale, anale, genitale come si diceva allora) distinte da Freud; un continuo incolpare l'es degli altri –ma sotto sotto anche l'io—delle più brutte intenzioni e dei più turpi sentimenti. E poi…un continuo ricorrere a Weiss, nelle condizioni e nelle ore più inopportune, per esporre dubbi e per chiedere spiegazioni, conforti a aiuti (…) Più cresceva la disperazione, e più forte si faceva la persuasione che solo un incontro con Weiss, un colloquio telefonico con lui, una sua parola, avrebbero potuto

[67] Idem, 9-10.

> portare qualche sollievo. E Weiss, persona per sua natura cortesissima, non poteva fare a meno di dare retta a gente che apparteneva all'ambiente in cui egli stesso era cresciuto.]

Voghera's passage reveals an important paradox of the Triestine context. On the one hand, the city seems to have been highly receptive to psychoanalysis. On the other hand, the fact that Trieste was a relatively small city certainly made it hard for Weiss to establish a proper distance from his entourage, since all of his "patients" were also his friends. Moreover, interest in psychoanalysis seems to have been rather amateurish, and as a result Weiss failed to gather a group of people with serious professional ambitions. Weiss's correspondence with Freud and Federn is proof of his efforts to interest both his colleagues in the city asylum and his own patients to undertake a more professional relationship with psychoanalysis. In all cases, however, his attempts failed: his colleagues were not interested and his patients were too neurotic to initiate training analysis. Additionally, during the late 1920s Weiss started to experience economic hardship. This situation began when he left his job at the asylum in 1927 due to his refusal to Italianize his name—the campaign to transform names or last names with foreign connotations into more traditionally Italian ones was an intense Fascist initiative in Trieste.[68] In addition, as his letters to Federn reveal, most of his patients had no money, and so he had to work for many hours a day at a very low rate.[69]

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[68] Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian,* pp. 126-128. Hametz especially refers to Weiss as one of the few known cases of people rejecting a nationalization of their names. See also the letter From Weiss to Federn, dated February 26, 1929 where he comments this episode. In Library of Congress, Manuscript Section, The Papers of Edoardo Weiss, Box II, folder 6, Weiss to Federn, 1925-1932. [Hereafter, Weiss-Federn]

[69] See the letters from Weiss to Federn dated February 26, 1929; May 16, 1930 and December 21, 1930, where he says that in Trieste he worked between 10 to 12 hours and was making 2,300 schillings, which apparently was not enough. All the letters in Weiss-Federn.

Campaigning for psychoanalysis

Weiss made a crucial decision at the end of 1930 and, after considering leaving for the United States, he moved to Rome. Although he continued to complain about a lack of patients and, consequently, money, his move to Rome marked the beginning of an aggressive psychoanalytic campaign.[70] First, Weiss published his first book, *Elementi di psicoanalisi,* which was the result of a series of introductory lectures he delivered in Trieste in 1930. Since it was directed at a lay audience and, moreover, Freud wrote its preface, the book situated Weiss as the major representative of the Freudian school in Italy for both a broad audience and for mental health professionals. The impact of the book was important; its first edition sold out in six months, and it went through two other editions in 1932 and 1936.[71] Psychology and psychiatry journals reviewed the book with different emphases but sharing a general positive attitude, stressing Weiss's seriousness and capability.[72] That was not the case, however, for the comment on the book published in the daily *Corriere della Sera*, which, although respectful of Weiss and his

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[70] For his economic situation during his first year in Rome see idem, Weiss to Federn, March 12, 1932.

[71] Edoardo Weiss, *Elementi di Psicoanalisi* (Pordenone: Studio tesi, 1985). See the « Introduzione » to the 1985 edition by Anna Maria Accerboni Pavanello for information of its many editions. See also Weiss-Federn, letter of November 10, 1931 where Weiss reports Federn on the success with his book.

[72] See Giulio Cesare Ferrari, "Elementi di psicoanalisi" Revista di Psicologia, Year 27, (1931) p. 150. His description of Weiss as "100% Freudian but intelligent and honest" is certainly significant. Ferrari complained about Weiss' reference that psychoanalysis was the only psychology and not just a branch of it, and was skeptic about exploring the symbolism of dreams as a scientific method, but he was generally positive despite of that. See also Giuseppe Bertel, "Considerazioni personali e recensione critica degli 'Elementi di psicoanalisi' di E Weiss," Rivista Sperimentale di Feniatria, Vol 55, (1931) pp. 696-714 which was highly respectful of both Weiss and Freud and encouraging about psychoanalysis.

pedagogical abilities, mocked psychoanalysis in general and its pretension to make claims about an unknowable "id".[73]

The Italian cultural and intellectual response to psychoanalysis was certainly complex, as demonstrated by two of Weiss's relationships: with Giovanni Gentile, a Fascist idealist philosopher who was Minister of Public Instruction during the first years of Fascism; and with the circle of anti-Fascist idealist philosophers gathered around Benedetto Croce.[74] The triangle formed by Weiss, the Croceans, and Gentile, moreover, highlights the contrast between the passive reception of psychoanalysis by some Fascist cultural bureaucrats and its visceral rejection by some anti-Fascist intellectuals.

Among the many positions of cultural influence that Gentile held during the Fascist years, particularly important in the context of psychoanalysis was his role as director of a major multi-volume Italian encyclopedia, the *Enciclopedia Italiana di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti* [hereafter *Enciclopedia*], which was funded by a businessman named Giovanni Treccani and tightly controlled by the Catholic priest Pietro Tacchi Venturi.[75] In November of 1930, Weiss began to correspond with Gentile, with the intention of writing a series of entries on psychoanalysis for the *Enciclopedia*. Initially, Weiss proposed to write entries on "Psychoanalysis" and "Freud," and once his suggestion was accepted he also proposed other entries. Including full articles, re-submissions, and additions to already-existing pieces, Weiss proposed a total of nineteen psychoanalysis-related entries. Although Gentile did not accept all

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[73] Alfredo Panzini, "Il Signor Es" Corriere della Sera, May 16, 1931.

[74] For Gentile and Croce's relationship to the regime see Philip V Cannistraro, *La Fabbrica del Consenso. Fascismo e Mass Media* (Bari: Laterza, 1975) pp. 19-23, 46-47, 52-56.

[75]For a study on the *Enciclopedia* project see Gabriele Turi, *Il Mecenate, il filosofo, il gesuita. L'Enciclopedia Italiana, specchio de la nazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002). According to Cannistraro, Gentile's *Enciclopedia* was one of the best-designed cultural initiatives by the regime, in part because it avoided extreme partisanship and was opened to a broad array of participants. See Cannistraro, *La fabbrica del consenso,* op. cit. 51-53.

of Weiss's suggestions, a whole range of terms, such as "metapsychology," "eros," and "narcissism", were included and remitted to Weiss's entry on psychoanalysis. In addition, Weiss added a twenty-line complement to the entry "dream" summarizing Freud's theory of dreams. Still another example of Gentile's receptivity: in 1933 he asked Weiss to write the entry for "psychotherapy."[76] Moreover, the entry for "sexology" also took on psychoanalytic tones. Its author, Emilio Servadio, was part of the staff of the *Enciclopedia*, and Weiss introduced him to the psychoanalytic cause in the early 1930s. Soon after Weiss approached Gentile, Servadio began analysis with him; later on he became a psychoanalyst himself, and therefore a member of an exclusive group of psychoanalytic pioneers in Italy.[77] Servadio's presence in the *Enciclopedia* staff might be the cause of the encyclopedia's apparently favorable treatment of Weiss. His entry on "psychoanalysis," indeed, is larger than the one on "psychiatry."

At the same time as he approached Gentile, Weiss initiated a brief correspondence with Giovanni Laterza, chief editor of the publishing house that shared his name. The house was a trench of liberal Idealism—especially since the philosopher Benedetto Croce was the main editorial advisor. As with Gentile, his contact with Laterza was initially fruitful, and it crystallized with the publication of *Totem and Taboo*—translated by Weiss—which became the

[76] The Weiss – Gentile correspondence can be consulted in the Istituto della Enciclopedia Italiana [IEI], fondo Enciclopedia Italiana [FEI], Archivio Storico [AS], serie III, Materiali redazionali sottoserie, Corrispondenzia, fasc, "Edoardo Weiss." For a study on the entries related to psychology in the *Enciclopedia*, see Margarete Durst, "Gli studi di psicologia nell'Enciclopedia Italiana," en Guido Cimino e Nino Dazzi, *La Psicologia in Italia*, op cit, p. 609-650.

[77] See Servadio's autobiographical account of these years in Giovanni Errera, *Emilio Servadio. Dall'Ipnosi alla psicoanalisi* (Florence: Nardini Editore, 1990) pp. 21-34. For the role of Servadio in the Enciclopedia see Durst, "Gli studi di psicologia" op. cit.

first of Freud's works edited by a major Italian publishing house.[78] Despite this significant achievement, his relationship with Crocean Idealism was marked by strong antagonism and conflict. First of all, *Totem and Taboo* was published as part of the series "Religious, Initiatic and Esoteric Studies," generally known as the "esoteric collection" or also as the "anti-Croce collection," since it included titles, often linked to the occult or to para-psychological research, that Croce despised but that were published for their commercial potential.[79] Second, the Crocean idealists did not appraise Freud's work positively, and they were in fact one of the most virulent voices against the spread of psychoanalysis' cultural influence. Although Croce had written an ambiguous but positive review of Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* in 1926, in the early 1930s two of his closest aides became aggressively hostile to psychoanalysis.[80] The first of them was the literary critic Francesco Flora, who published a series of articles in the *Nuova Antologia* against psychoanalysis.[81] The second one was Guido De Ruggiero, a philosopher and political theorist who worked at the University of Rome and who was one of Croce's main collaborators in his long-lasting review, *La Critica*.

Although both De Ruggiero and Flora might have had an important impact, De Ruggiero's pieces on psychoanalysis, published in 1932, are more notable because of their strong contempt toward Freud and psychoanalysis. De Ruggiero argued that psychoanalysis was simply

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[78] Weiss also interested Laterza in other texts by Freud –such as *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*,—yet the project did not prevail due to disagreement on copyright issues between Laterza and the IPA. See Daniela Coli, *Croce, Laterza e la Cultura Europea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1986), pp. 61-62, 86-100, 203-204.

[79] Daniela Coli, *Croce,* Laterza, op. cit.

[80] For Croce's review see: Benedetto Croce, "S. Freud: Le rêve et son interprétation," in La Critica, Vol. XXIV (1926), p. 184. Croce's point was that Freud's theory of dreams was convincing, but added a word of caution against applying psychological theories beyond its specific limits. He showed concern about blurring the divide between psychology and aesthetics.

[81] Flora's writings were published in Fracesco Flora, *Civiltà del Novevento* (Bari: Larerza, 1934).

a cultural fashion, and that if there was anything interesting about psychoanalysis, it lay in the mystery of why the European and North American public had accepted such a "revolting and obscene" doctrine. De Ruggiero was shocked by four aspects of psychoanalysis: its "pornographic" symbolism, according to which human expressions such as dreams were related to sexuality; its blurring of the boundaries between the normal and the pathological; Freud's theory of the origin of moral prohibitions in *Totem and Taboo*; and the "debasement" of art and aesthetics to a mere compensation for unfulfilled desires in practical life. Above all, De Ruggiero refused to give theoretical and intellectual status to psychoanalysis, explaining its boom by the state of cultural and moral confusion prevailing among intellectuals and artists in a "time that has lost its sense of proportion, balance, health."[82][un tempo che ha smarrito il senso della misura, dell'equilibrio, della sanità.]

There are reasons to speculate that the influence of De Ruggiero's outlook must have been important. After it was first published in *La Critica*, De Ruggiero's article went through several more editions as a chapter in his book *Filosofi del Novecento*, which was mainly addressed to university students.[83] Its impact could be measured in a 1955 memoir by political theorist Norberto Bobbio. He especially recalled the condemnation in *La Critica* of phenomenology and psychoanalysis during his student years, and how these currents were presented as the "products of inferior cultural civilizations, from which the good and tender young idealists should better remain away in order to avoid contagion."[84] The importance of De

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[82] Guido de Ruggiero, "Freud e la Psicanalisi," *La Critica,* Vol XXX, p. 26

[83]Guido de Ruggiero, *Filosofi del Novecento* (Bari: Laterza, 1934).The book was re-edted in 1942, and several times after Fascism.

[84][certamente erano prodotti di civiltà culturali inferiori, ed era bene che i giovani e teneri idealisti non ne subissero il contagio.] Quoted in Daniela Coli, *Croce, Laterza e la Cultura Europea,* 61-62. Originally in Il contemporáneo, II, (june 1955) p. 3.

Ruggiero's articles can also be measured by the fact that Weiss, who rarely participated in public debates, was moved to respond in the journal *L'Italia Letteraria*, causing in turn a counter-reply.[85] Equally significant, De Ruggiero's articles are also important because of his background. Despite his intellectual proximity to Gentile during his youth, De Ruggiero was both a consummate anti-Fascist and a committed liberal in interwar Italy. Most of his intellectual reflections throughout the 1920s and 1930s dealt with how to recreate the social and cultural conditions for a new liberal political order.[86] His rejection of psychoanalysis is therefore significant because it illustrates the "dis-encounter" between psychoanalysis and Italian liberalism, as well as the fact that for the Italian Freudians some anti-Fascist intellectuals might have been much more upsetting and influential against psychoanalysis than those supporting the regime.[87]

A Psychoanalytic Spring

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[85] Weiss, "Il psicoanalisi di un filosofo," L'Italia Letteraria, February 7, 1932, and February 14,1932. De Rugiero's reply in De Ruggiero, "Freudiana," La Critica, Vol. XXX, 1932, p. 194-198. In 1972, writing about a series of debates on psychoanalysis, Italian philosopher Ugo Spirito had still these debates in mind. See Ugo Spirito, *Due False Scienze. La Sociologia- La Psicanalisi* (Roma: Bulzoni, 1973) p 144. It should be noticed that other literary critics were somehow defensive of psychoanalysis when writing their reviews of Flora's book. See for instance Guido Piovene, "Francesco Flora: *Civiltá del Novecento,"* Pan, Year II, Vol, II, n 4, 1934. pp. 297-299.

[86] For an analysis of his main intellectual points, see Richard Bellamy, "Idealism and Liberalism in an Italian 'New Liberal Theorist': Guido de Ruggiero's History of European Liberalism," The Historical Journal, Vol. 30, N 1, (March 1987) 191-200. Although the Fascist authorities considered De Ruggiero as harmless, they kept an eye on him and to his relationship with Croce. See the files on him at Archivio Centrale dello Stato. Ministero dell'Interno. Divisione Polizia Politica. Fascicoli Personali. B 354.

[87] De Ruggiero's position could be contrasted to sociologist and Fascist sympathizer Robert Michels, who had a more nuanced assessment of psychoanalysis in a little article written by the same period. See Roberto Michels, "Psicoanalisi, capitalismo e partito politico," in *Politica Sociale,* Year III, N 7-9, July-September 1931, pp 623-627.

No matter how strong the attacks from many intellectual quarters were, psychoanalysis made inroads in Italy. The early 1930s were flourishing years for Italian psychoanalytic culture. Still another of Weiss's initiatives in the early 1930s was to transfer Levi Bianchini's SPI to Rome. Reinvigorated with the move, the SPI became an active cultural association. The society held monthly meetings discussing papers by the members, attended the congresses of the IPA and, between 1932 and 1934 published its official journal, the *Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi*. The review included works by foreign psychoanalysts and theoreticians along with works by the Weiss group. Weiss's effort received an important and encouraging show of support from Vienna in 1936, when the SPI became accepted by the IPA.[88]

The SPI was the meeting place of the pioneers of Italian psychoanalysis. Two of them were Weiss' disciples and patients. Emilio Servadio (1904-1995), a lawyer who graduated with a dissertation on hypnosis and suggestion, had met Weiss when he approached Gentile.[89] Another central figure was Nicola Perrotti (1897-1970), a physician who approached Weiss on his own initiative. Finally, the third crucial figure was Cesare L Musatti (1897-1989), who had been analyzed under the psychologist Vittorio Benussi in Padua in the 1920s. As the director of the Institute of Psychology at the University of Padua, Musatti lectured on psychoanalysis for two consecutive academic years between 1933 and 1935, and became one of the central figures of psychoanalysis and psychology after the Second World War.[90] The SPI also included one of the first Italian women professionally working on mental health: Wanda Weiss, who was Edoardo's wife and had also studied with him in Vienna. There were also some psychiatrists, such as Levi Bianchini—named an honorary member of the SPI in recognition of his pioneering initiatives;

[88] David, *La psicoanalisi,* 199-204; Marhaba, *Lineamenti,* pp. 71-77.

[89] Errera, *Emilio Servadio*

[90] See Reichman, *Cesare Musatti,* op. cit, 197-234 and 263.

Giovanni Dalma, from the city of Fiume; and Ettore Rietti, from Turin. Finally, there were also some members connected, like Musatti, to the field of experimental psychology: Sante de Sanctis, a major figure of Italian psychology who held a Chair at the University of Rome and kept up a polite relationship with Freud, and Ferruccio Banissoni, who had been a schoolmate of Weiss in Trieste and had also studied in Vienna and attended Freud's lectures. By the early 1930s, Banissoni was living in Rome and working as De Sanctis' assistant at the University.[91]

Apart from the "ordinary members," the SPI also included a list of "adherent members," who were linked to psychoanalysis by cultural engagement rather than clinical or professional interest.[92] Most of these adherent members were related to the Roman political and cultural journal *Il Saggiatore* (1930-1933) and had been invited to participate in the SPI by Perrotti, a key player in spreading the psychoanalytic cultural influence during these years. *Il Saggiatore*, in fact, was jointly led by Perrotti and a group of young philosophy and literature graduates, and it passionately campaigned for an intense intellectual and cultural renewal around some basic principles: the rejection of Idealism as represented by both Croce and Gentile; a vitalist claim to link philosophy more intimately to life experiences and worldly issues; an enthusiasm with realism and social commitment in literature; an anti-bourgeois and anti-liberal rhetoric; and a generational appeal supporting a strong break with the past.[93] *Il Saggiatore* was unique in its

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[91] David, *La psicoanalisi,* op. cit, 199-204; Marhaba, *Lineamenti,* op. cit, 46-55, 71-77; Musatti, "La psicoanalisi arriva a Trieste," op cit.

[92] The list of "ordinary" and "adherent" members of the SPI was published in "Atti Ufficiali della Società Psicoanalitica Italiana," Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi, Year I, N, 1, January-February, 1932, p. 79-81.

[93] For an analysis of *Il Saggiatore* and similar journals, see Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities, op cit*, pp. 93-107; and Mario Sechi, *Il Mito della Nuova Cultura. Giovani, Realismo e Polica negli Anni Ttrenta* (Bari-Roma: Lacaita Editore, 1984). See also some references to *Il Saggiatore* in Alessandra Tarquini,"The Anti-Gentilians during the Fasist Regime," in Journal of Contemporary History, Vol 40, N 4, (2005) 637-662. There is a reference to this

commitment to expanding the cultural influence of psychoanalysis in Italy.[94] But if all the editors of the magazine may have upheld that attitude, Perrotti was its main proponent and enforcer, thus becoming a central figure in the history of Italian psychoanalysis. The correspondence between Freud and Weiss in fact suggests that his organizational energy was crucial in launching the SPI, and Freud made some laudatory comments after reading one of his articles in the first issue of the *Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi*.[95]

Perrotti's case and the experience of *Il Saggiatore* –which I will analyze more deeply in chapter 3—help us to see that in the "psychoanalytic spring" of the early 1930s the group of Italian psychoanalysts found possibilities for promoting psychoanalysis in open and even militant terms. Perrotti, in fact, was a crucial figure for linking psychoanalysis and politics. For many years Perrotti was a member of the Italian Socialist Party, and before Fascism he held electoral positions at the local level in his town Penne, in the Abruzzo region. One of his first psychoanalytic articles, even before meeting Weiss, was in one of the latest issues of *Critica Sociale*, the official magazine of the Socialist Party that the regime censored in 1926. In that article, Perrotti used notions of Freud's *Group Psychology and Analysis of the Ego* to explain

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experience in the memoirs of one of *Il Saggiatore's* members, see Domenico Carella, *Fascismo prima, fascismo dopo* (Rome: Armando editore, 1973).

[94] See for instance the multiple reviews of Freud 's works and debates endorsing psychoanalysis: Nicola Perrotti, "Totem e Tabú di S Freud," Il Saggiatore, Year II, Fasc 12, N 4. June 1931; Nicola Perrotti, "Elementi di Psicanalisi de Weiss," idem, Year II, Fasc 13, N 3, July 1931; Nicola Perrotti, "Edoardo Weiss," idem, Year II, Fasc 16 N 10, December 1931; Nicola Perrotti,"Elementi di Psicologia della Testimonanza di G C Musatti," idem; Nicola Perrotti, "Sigmund Freud, Il sentimento oceanico," idem Year II, Fasc 18, N 12, Feb. 1932; Nicola Perrotti, "Polemiche psicanalitiche," idem; Nicola Perrotti,"L'Anima che Guarisce: Messmer, Mary Baker-Eddy, Freud," idem, Year III, Fasc. 19, N 1, March 1932; Nicola Perrotti, "Tormento e Fellicità della Prole, di Stekel," idem; Nicola Perrotti, "Rivista Italiana di Psicanalisi," idem, Year IV, N 2, April 1933; "Warum Krieg?" idem, Year IV, N 5, July, 1933.

[95] See the letter from Freud to Weiss on April 24, 1932, in Edoardo Weiss, *Freud as a Consultant,* op. cit, p. 69.

Mussolini's rise to power.[96] As time went by and the regime consolidated, however, Perrotti's antagonism to Fascism seems to have decreased. In 1926, and due to Perrotti's socialist militancy, the regime's political police opened a file on him in the *Casellario Politico Centrale*, a general record of citizens considered subversive. In 1932, however, Perrotti was removed from the list, after a report indicating that:

> After 1926 and precisely when the United Socialist Party [PSU] broke up, he [Perrotti] changed his convictions, and then after 1928 he started to manifest open sympathy for Fascism, enrolling himself in the syndicates and his children in the ONB [Opera Nazionale Balilla, a Fascist organization for children]. He followed the directives of the regime, participating in the battle of the grain, for which he won first prize in for two consecutive years, always contributing his gains to social welfare initiatives. (…)
> During these last months he gave certain proof of his repentance through his conduct and style of life in perfect harmony with the laws of the regime.[97]
> [Dal 1926 e precisamente da quanto fu sciolto il partito socialista unificato mutò convinzioni e dal 1928 incominciò a manifestare apertamente simpatia per il Fascismo, inscrivendosi ai sindicati ed all'ONB i figli. Segue le direttive del Regime partecipando alla battaglia del grano, per cui meritò per due anni consecutivi i primi premi, e dando sempre i suoi contributi per opere assitenziali. (…)
> In questi ultimi mesi poi ha dato sicura prova di ravvedimento per la sua condotta e per il suo tenore di vita in perfetta armonia con le leggi del regime]

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[96] Nicola Perrotti, "I fatti psichici colletivi e la loro interpretazione scientifica. Funzione, evoluzione e moralità della folla," in Critica Sociale. Rivista Quindicinale del Socialismo, Year XXXV, n 11-12, June 1925.

[97] Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno. Direzione Generale di Pubblica Sicurezza. Divisione Affari Generali e Reservati. Casellario Politico Centrale B 3877, Nicola Perrotti.

The report made also a short reference to his participation in psychoanalytic congresses, whereas his writings for *Il Saggiatore* and other journals were mentioned as examples of good behavior. Perrotti's approach to Fascism is also apparent in that during this time he also published articles in official journals of the regime.[98] Moreover, his patients seem to have been powerful people related to the regime or at least to the political and social elite. According to historian of Italian psychoanalysis Anna Maria Accerboni, a member of the royal family asked to be analyzed by Perrotti.[99]

There are still other examples to see that in the early 1930s, the expansion of the psychoanalytic activity coincided with establishing fluid contacts with Fascism. Some members of the SPI, in fact, embraced a sympathetic stance toward Fascism. As mentioned before, that was the case with Levi-Bianchini, the SPI's honorary president, and also with Ferruccio Bannisoni, an ordinary member of the SPI and a Fascist sympathizer.[100] Banissoni provides examples of the ways in which psychoanalysis could be associated with Fascist initiatives. In 1933 he opened the academic year of the *Fascist Academy of Physical and Youth Education* [Academia Fascista d'Educazione Fisica e Giovanile] with a public talk on aggression. Although he based his paper on several psychologists' concepts, Banissoni also made extensive use of *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* in order to introduce his audience to Freud's ideas on the death instinct. His main point was that, given that aggression was a primary drive, it could not be

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[98] Nicola Perrotti, "Nascita dell'uomo moderno," in *Critica Fascista,* year X, N 10, May 15, 1932, p. 200.

[99] See Anna Maria Accerboni, "Psychanalyse et fascisme: deux approaches incompatibles. Le rôle difficile d'Edoardo Weiss," Revue Internationale d'histoire de la psychanalyse, Vol I, (1988) p. 229.

[100] Banissoni's academic career can be reconstructed through the university archives, see in particular Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero di Pubblica Instruzione DirezioneGenerale d'Instruzione Universitaria. Fascicoli Professori Universitari. III Serie (1940-1970) B 33: file corresponding to Ferruccio Banissoni. See also Luciano Mecacci, "Le discipline psicologiche," in Raffaella Simili and Giovanni Paoloni (eds), *Per una storia del Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche. Vol II* (Bari: Laterza, 2001) p. 516.

eliminated but would have to be transformed and properly sublimated. Among the many ways of doing so, he underscored that "the most lively, great, and actual example of sublimation of aggression is the one offered by Fascism, by the political atmosphere that in each moment wraps us up and feeds us."[101]

Even those psychoanalysts with no open sympathies for Fascism tried to gain its favor when the opportunity appeared. Weiss's background, for instance, suggests that he was inclined against Fascism. As mentioned before, he refused to Italianize his name in 1927, thus contesting one of the regime's intense policies. Moreover, his wife Wanda had a Croatian background, which suggests that Weiss did not share strong nationalist and anti-Slavic feelings common to some of his fellow Triestines. His long-lasting correspondence and friendship with his former analyst Paul Federn, an enthusiastic socialist who had also militated and held local positions in Vienna, also suggests a personal anti-fascist inclination.[102] Yet on some occasions—apart from his approach to Gentile—his professional practice led him to close encounters with Fascism. Perhaps the most notorious relates to one of his patients, the young Concetta Forzano. Concetta's father, Giovacchino, was a friend of Mussolini, and in the 1930s he wrote and directed several plays and films that were unsophisticated propaganda for the regime.[103] In April of 1933,

[101] [Ma l'esempio di sublimazione dell'aggressività più vivo, grandioso, più attuale, è quello dato dal Fascismo, dalla atmosfera política che ad ogni momento ci avvolge e ci alimenta.] Ferruccio Banissoni, "Aggressività e conoscenza," in Rivista di scienze applícate all'educazione fisica e giovanile, Rome, Sept-Dec, 1933, p. 291. The article had many other passages of praise to Mussolini and Fascism. Banissoni also quoted articles by Weiss and Perrotti in other parts of his text. In turn, Banissoni's article was positively quoted in the last issue of the *Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi*: see E[milio] S[ervadio], "F Banissoni: aggressività e conoscenza" Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi, Year III (1934), pp. 124-125.

[102] For all this information see Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss,* op. cit p. 35; Accerboni, *Psychanalyse et fascisme,* 232.

[103] The State archives bring much information on Forzano and his multiple affairs with Fascism and Mussolini, since Forzano directed several films and megaprojects using government money. He used to bring attention from the authorities because of suspicions that he had some corrupt affairs with major Fascist officials involving land

Concetta and Giovacchino Forzano requested that Weiss meet Freud, and so they visited him in Vienna. The meeting ended with Freud giving them a copy of his *Why War?*—dedicated to Mussolini. The book was a recently edited correspondence between Einstein and Freud about the reasons for war.[104] The episode has sparked much comment, in part because it conveys the impression that Weiss was well connected with Mussolini and because it also fueled the rumor that when the Nazis invaded Austria in 1938, Weiss had Mussolini intervene before Hitler on Freud's behalf.[105] In fact, Forzano did write to Mussolini on March 14, 1938, asking for his assistance to Freud in Nazi-occupied Vienna, though there is no evidence that the letter had any effect.[106]

Along with suggesting some kind of link between Weiss and Mussolini, the *Why War?* episode reveals that Italian psychoanalysts seem to have perceived Mussolini as someone approachable for the psychoanalytic cause, and that there were aspects of Freud's thinking that

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speculation. He was also involved in scandals for his harassing of the actresses of his films. In addition, the police reports also reproduced comments and complaints within the film world regarding the poor quality of his extremely expensive films. See Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Divisione Generale Pubblica Siccurezza, Fascicoli Personali, B 521, Giovacchino Forzano.

[104] For general references to this episode, see Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss,* op. cit, 35-40 ; Roazen, "Psychoanalytic Ethics: Edoardo Weiss, Freud and Mussolini," *Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences,* 27 (October 1991); Glauco Carloni, "Freud and Mussolini: A Minor Drama in Two Acts, One Interlude, and Five Characters," in *L'Italia nella psicoanalisi* (Rome: Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, 1989)pp. 51-61; Anna Maria Accerboni, "Psychanalyse et fascisme," op. cit, p. 225-230; and Weiss, *Sigmund Freud as a Consultant,* op. cit, p. 19-21.

[105] The main responsible for this impression was Ernest Jones, who wrote that Weiss' "near contact" with Mussolini might have been influential for releasing Freud from Nazi-occupied Vienna. See Ernest Jones, *The Life and Work of Sigmund Freud. Vol 3* (New York: Basic Books, 1957) pp. 120-121 and also 180. Weiss was infuriated by Jones' reference, and always denied his direct contact with Mussolini. See Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss*, pp. 34-35. It should be noticed that Freud also believed that Weiss "had direct access to Mussolini." See "Letter from Sigmund Freud to Arnold Zweig, September 30, 1934" in Ernest L Freud (ed) *The Letters of Sigmund Freud and Arnold Zweig* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1970) p. 92.

[106] See Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Archivi Fascisti, Segretaria Particolare del Duce, Carteggio Riservato, B 85, Giovacchino Forzano.

might be amenable to Fascism.[107] Subsequent moves after the meeting between the Forzanos and Freud reveal that the Italian psychoanalysts did not hesitate to highlight possible coincidences between psychoanalysis and Fascism. In its June 1933 edition, *Il Saggiatore* included Perrotti's review of Freud's *Why war?,* where Perrotti portrayed Einstein as a utopian pacifist and contrasted his position to Freud's more "realistic" reflections about the intrinsic aggressiveness of human beings. For Perrotti, Freud's theory of instincts made clear that if the aggressive instinct was not directed outward through hostility against things and other men it "could turn against ourselves, and become a self-destructive instinct."[108] As a result, Perrotti underlined that a certain exteriorization of the "combative instinct (…) must be considered useful for the life of a people and as an index of its vitality."[109] Perrotti concluded that Freud's conception of war and aggressiveness was "the most useful tonic for a virile conception of life, and the most convenient antidote against all idealisms, pacifisms, and old and new forms of acquiescence."[110] As in the case of Banissoni's address, Perrotti's review suggests that certain uses of Freud's ideas concerning aggression and the death instinct were useful in negotiating psychoanalysis' acceptance among Fascists. Those ideas were an area of Freudian and psychoanalytic thought

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[107] We know through Weiss' correspondence, in fact, that he kept updated about the destiny of the book, and whether it impacted Mussolini or not. Weiss to Federn, May 14, 1933, in Weiss-Federn, folder 7.

[108] [questo istinto agresivo, qualora non venisse rivolta al esterno con lotte e ostilità contro uomini e cose, potrebbe rivolgersi contro noi stessi e diventare spirito autodistrutivo, pernicioso per la vita individuale e, più, per quella dei popoli e delle culture]. Nicola Perrotti, "Warum Krieg? di Einstein e Freud," Il Saggiatore, Year IV, N 5, July 1933, pp. 225.

[109][deve essere considerate come utile a la vita di un popolo ed anzi come indice della vitalità di quel popolo.] idem.

[110] [il tonico più utile per una concezione virile della vita, ed il più opportuno antidoto a tutte gli idealismi, i pacifismi, ed i quitismi di antico e nuovo genere.] idem, p. 226.

that fit with Mussolini's rhetoric of struggle, battle, conflict, and war, fundamental components of the Fascist "political spectacle."[111]

The Crisis of Psychoanalytic Culture in Italy

Even though Italian psychoanalysts made efforts to gain Fascism's acceptance, the truth remains that the Italian Fascist regime was a major obstacle—though not the only one—for the growth of a psychoanalytic culture in Italy. Beginning in 1934, clear limits to the development of a psychoanalytic culture under Fascism became apparent. The first significant episode occurred when the regime banned the *Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi.* Although the psychoanalysts could still count on Levi-Bianchini's *Archivio* as a tool for publishing psychoanalytic works, the blow was a crucial one and left Weiss without his main intellectual and cultural instrument. Through his contact with Forzano, Weiss met Galeazzo Ciano—a senior Fascist official involved in the regime's cultural policies and Mussolini's son-in-law—who lifted the ban temporarily. Ciano let Weiss know that the ban came from powerful quarters—the Vatican or the Catholic hierarchy—and that it was impossible to deter it. Indeed, months later the ban was renewed, and the *Rivista* was permanently discontinued.[112]

Aside from the Catholic Church lobby, the regime found other powerful reasons to make a political and police threat out of psychoanalysis. In November of 1934, Emilio Servadio, acting as the SPI's secretary, started a formal request to get an official permit to affiliate the SPI with the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (VPS)—apparently the idea was to turn the small SPI into a

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[111] For the role of the rhetoric of war and combat in Fascism's rhetorical strategies, see Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, *Fascist Spectacle. The Aesthetics of Power in Mussolini's Italy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997) specially chap. 5 "War and Melodrama," pp. 148-182.

[112] David, *La Psicoanalisis,* 48-49; Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss,* 34-35.

branch of the VPS. Immediately after the request, the OVRA—the regime's political police—began an investigation that culminated in a report. Written by the OVRA's chief, Carmine Sernise, the report described the activities of the VPS, emphasizing the Jewish background of most of its members, their left-wing leanings, and the acceptance of psychoanalysis among Jewish and left-wing intellectuals. The report reveals why these Fascist officials were interested in discouraging the expansion of psychoanalysis in Italy:

> Based on the German and Austrian experience we can assert, without any doubt, that 99% of Jewish doctors, philosophers, lawyers, not to mention students, from German, Austrian, Germanic (sic) and Czechoslovak universities are oriented toward the left. Jewish Communist intellectuals are indeed a multitude.
> Many physicians, who are beginning to miss work and income in Austria, have emigrated or are beginning to immigrate to Italy, among other destinations. As time goes by, these people will be competitors to the Italian national element.
> It is not easy to understand the need of an association like Freud's in Italy.
> Given the Viennese experience, we don't exclude the possibility that an association of this kind could serve to mask political tendencies and work as a tool for currents certainly not favorable to Fascism.[113]
> [Dall'esperienza fatta in Germania e in Austria, si può, con tranquilla coscienza, affermare che il 99% dei medici, dei filosofi, e dei avvocati, nonché degli studenti ebrei delle università tedesche, austriache, germaniche e cecoslovacche, sono

[113] Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Minsterio dell'Interno DGPS G1 (associazioni) Busta 29 fascicolo 328 Societa Psicoanalitica Internazionale

> orientati a sinistra. Moltissimi sono gli intelletuali e le intelletuali ebraichi comunisti.
>
> Parecchi medichi, venuti loro a mancare il terreno di possibilità di lavoro e di guadagno in Austria, hanno preso e stanno prendendo, tra l'altro, la via d'Italia.
>
> Col tempo, questa gente costituirà, certamente, anche un onere di concorrenza all elemento nazionale italiano.
>
> Non si capisce il perché della necesità della creazione di una associazzione come quella del Freud.
>
> Dati i precedenti vienessi, non è esclusa la possibilità che una associazione del genere possa servire a mascherare tendenze politiche e servire di strumento a correnti non certamente favorevoli al Fascismo]

It goes without saying that permission for participating in the VPS was denied, and the same happened shortly thereafter when the Italians requested permission to join the IPA. As a result, the SPI had a precarious legal existence, which prevented it from officially becoming part of an international body. This precariousness reflects the ambiguity of the Italian psychoanalytic community during the second half of the 1930s. On the one hand, except for the ban of Weiss' *Rivista,* there was no open persecution of their activities. On the other hand, as the police report shows, the regime felt threatened by the kind of cultural, political, and intellectual sociability that psychoanalysis could bring into Italy, and therefore set strict limits on its activities.

This said, psychoanalytic ideas nonetheless expanded during this period. In 1936, for example, on the occasion of Freud's eightieth anniversary, the Italian psychoanalysts published

their first collective book based on clinical cases and theoretical reflections.[114] That same year, Weiss published his first book on agoraphobia, the result of many years of work and research.[115] Psychoanalysis also made an important inroad into Italian psychiatry when Joachim Flescher, a psychiatrist born in Poland but working at the clinic affiliated with the University of Rome, began analysis with Weiss and later became an analyst himself.[116] Moreover, Servadio also remained active during those years, publishing in the cultural magazine *Il Meridiano* on various topics related to psychoanalysis.[117]

We can get a notion of the acceptance that psychoanalysis was gaining during these years by focusing on a significant editorial event. In early 1938 the publishing house Mondadori—one of the largest in Italy—edited the book *La Psicoanalisi,* by the psychologist Enzo Bonaventura. Never affiliated with the SPI, Bonaventura directed the Institute of Experimental Psychology at the University of Florence, where he held an important and promising academic position. Ranked second in an order of merits of the Italian university system, Bonaventura could indeed

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[114] Weiss, Musatti, Servadio, Perrotti, Hirsch, Kovacs, Merloni, *Saggi di psicoanalisi in onore di Sigmund Freud* (Roma: Cremonese, 1936).

[115] Edoardo Weiss, *Agorafobia, isterismo d'angoscia* (Roma: Cremonese, 1936).

[116] "Memorandum," Private Collection, Joachim Flescher Papers. I thank Sylvia Flescher for allowing me to access to her father's private papers now in her possession.

[117] Emilio Servadio, "Psicoanalisi della creazione poetica," Il Meridiano di Roma, February 7, 1937, p. 8; and idem, February 14, p. 10; E P, "Un congresso psicoanalitico," Il Meridiano di Roma, May 30, 1937, p. 6; Historicus, "La morte d'Alfredo Adler," idem, June 13 de 1937, p 3; Emilio Servadio, "Il denaro nelle considerazione d'uno psicoanalista," July 11, 1938, p. 8, idem, July 25, p. 8. In one occasion, one of Servadio's articles was positively reviewed in the review *Il Bo*, which belonged to the Fascist Students from Padua University. See Giulio Alessi, "Servadio e la psicanalisi della creazione poetica," Il Bo, N 7, Feb 13, 1937.

have been chair in psychology at any university, providing it was vacant.[118] Given this background, Bonaventura's book on psychoanalysis had a double importance. First, it indicates the growing acceptance of psychoanalysis by professional psychologists working at Italian universities. In fact, Bonaventura's book held a positive view of psychoanalysis and argued firmly against its critics, recognizing Freud's school as an undeniable and enriching trend within psychology.[119] Second, written in an accessible and straightforward style, Bonaventura's book was explicitly addressed to broad audiences beyond the specific field of psychology. Indeed, it became a bestseller, to the point of going through a second edition only a few months after the first.[120] The picture that emerges out of this episode is that, by 1938, psychoanalysis had become a relevant body of knowledge for educated Italians, and not only for those interested in psychology. Moreover, people affiliated with institutional quarters beyond the limited group of Italian Freudians of the SPI had begun to study, accept, and appropriate the work of Freud and his followers. This situation did not last, however, beyond mid-1938.

An Abrupt End

Everything leads us to conclude that psychoanalysis' cultural presence in interwar Italy was destroyed when it was going through a period of expansion and increasing influence, and that the

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[118] For biographic information on Bonaventura see S Gore Savellini, "Enzo Bonaventura," in Cimino and Dazzi (eds), *La Psicologia Italiana,* op. cit, 403-426. For an explanation of the ranking of Italian university psychologists, see Reichmann, *CesareMusatti,* 216-218. After Bonaventura, the second in the ranking was Musatti.

[119] Enzo Bonaventura, *La Psicoanalisi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1950) [1938] passim and especially pp. 334-335, 340-356.

[120] Between March 1938 and October 1938 the book remained between second and fourth in the list of best selling books in Italian bookshops, according to the tables of best-selling books of *Il Meridiano*. Because of its two editions, it had two positive reviews in *Il Meridiano*: see Emilio Servadio, "Panorama della psicoanalisi," Il Meridiano, April, 3, 1938; Mario Tobino, "La psicoanalisi," idem, June 26, 1938, p. 4

final blow was abrupt and directly linked to the anti-Semitic legislation that the Fascist regime endorsed beginning in mid-1938. Early in 1938, the position of psychoanalysis in Italy seemed promising. New names in important institutional positions, such as Bonaventura and Flescher, had recently joined the cause; major publishing successes had been achieved; psychoanalysis was being discussed in cultural journals; and Gentile's *Enciclopedia*, with its entries written by Weiss, had been published in 1937. Moreover, Italian psychoanalysts were in such a position that they could even try to approach Mussolini, seeking his assistance regarding Freud in Nazi-occupied Austria. Even if this approach was unofficial, highly indirect, and unsuccessful, it proves that the position of Italian psychoanalysts was not desperate, especially when compared to that of their colleagues in Germany and Austria.

If we focus on end of the year 1938, however, the picture couldn't be less promising for psychoanalysis. Most analysts were unable to publish because of their Jewish background; they had lost their university positions for the same reason; and the only journal with a psychoanalytic orientation, Levi-Bianchini's *Archivio,* had been expropriated and its name changed—the word "psychotherapy" replaced the word "psychoanalysis." More importantly, migration had begun: Servadio went into exile in India in August, Weiss departed for the United States in January of 1939, and Bonaventura—who was also Jewish—emigrated to Palestine, where he died one year later. Other psychiatrists inclined to psychoanalysis also emigrated during this time, though very little is known about them: Ladislao Kovàcs, G.M. Hirsch, Giovanni Dalma, and Ettore Rietti. Apparently none of these exiled psychiatrists returned to Italy. Those who remained, such as Musatti, Flescher, and Levi-Bianchini, had to take refuge and faced precarious and dangerous situations. As for those who were not Jews—such as Perrotti—little is known, except that by the 1940s Perotti seems to have been an important participant in the anti-Fascist resistance. In fact,

during the war, Perrotti returned to the Italian Socialist Party, and immediately after the liberation occupied important political positions.

What divides early 1938 from the other end of that year? Basically, the anti-Semitic policies that the regime began to enforce in mid-1938. Even if the anti-Semitic propaganda and racist laws were instituted beforehand, the beginning of the most precise and specific racist and anti-Semitic policies dates to July 1938, following the publication of the *Manifesto of Racist Scientists*, which initiated the regime's commitment to the policies of its Nazi allies.[121] From that moment, a series of laws excluded Jews from the universities, public office, marriage to non-Jews, and many other civil rights. In addition, a series of measures on editorial censorship led to the removal of books by Jewish authors from bookstores; lists of banned authors were also drawn up, most of them including German and Austrian Jewish writers. While it is unclear when Freud began to appear in these lists, what is certain is that the general climate discouraged any publisher to invest money in anything related to psychoanalysis, since the possibility of a general confiscation was more than plausible.[122]

Fascism's racist and anti-Semitic policies and the cultural climate underlying them were responsible for the wane of psychoanalysis' cultural influence in Italy. The influence of psychoanalysis had started some years before the First World War, and it had experienced a major surge through Trieste's cultural milieu. Psychoanalysis took the offensive in the early 1930s and then embarked on an ambiguous relationship of negotiation, accommodation, and

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[121] On racial policies in Italy see Susan Zuccotti, *The Italians and the Holocaust* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), p. 30-42; and Alexander de Grand, *Italian Fascism. Its Origins and Developments* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 2000), pp. 113-116.

[122]On Fascist censorship during this time, see Guido Bonsaver, *Censorpship and Literature in Fascist Italy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2007), pp. 169-178.

toleration with Fascism. Despite the multiple obstacles presented by the regime and other intellectual and cultural factions, the overall influence of psychoanalytic culture on educated public opinion and on some areas related to the mental health professions was also on the rise by the mid-1930s. Further attempts to measure the influence of this culture would involve a comparative analysis with other countries and experiences. The description I offer in these pages, however, reveals that there was an increasingly active Italian psychoanalytic culture for a considerable duration under the Italian Fascist experience, and that it was in relative good health before it received its abrupt and lethal blow in 1938.

Chapter 2: Integrating, Filtering, and Sanitizing: Psychoanalysis and the "Psy" disciplines, 1914-1945

The previous chapter focused on the psychoanalytic movement in interwar Italy and the ways in which it interacted with Fascism. This chapter complements the picture by approaching the psychiatry and psychology professions and exploring the main factors that contributed to, or constrained, the implantation of a psychoanalytic culture in Fascist Italy. According to classic histories of psychiatry and psychoanalysis in Italy, the strong Positivist somatic approach of psychiatry undermined the reception of Freudian theories and kept psychoanalysis out of the profession. Since most psychiatrists assumed that the causes of mental disturbances were hereditary, constitutional, or acquired organic problems, psychoanalysis's emphasis on the psychological origin of neurotic disorders remained alien to Italian mental health professionals.

[1] This approach is convincing in capturing the basic limits to and possibilities for the spread of Freudian ideas in Italy. When trying to look deeper into the relationship between psychoanalysis and the "psy" disciplines, however, this basic perspective has two problems.

First, it fails to capture some nuances in the responses to psychoanalysis by influential members of the mental health professions. I contend that instead of an open opposition, some Italian mental health professionals responded to psychoanalysis by trying to integrate it into their frame of mind and their notions of professional respectability. Approaching things from this perspective is useful for seeing that the somatic or organic orientation of Italian psychiatry was

[1] See for instance Michel David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura Italiana* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990), pp. 7-8 for the point of view of the history of psychoanalysis; and Valeria P Babini, *Liberi tutti. Manicomi e psichiatri in Italia: una storia del Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009), pp 59-67; and Paolo Francesco Peloso*, La guerra dentro. La psichiatria italiana tra fascismo e resistenza,1922-1945* (Verona: Ombre Corte, 2008), pp. 34-38 for the point of view of the history of psychiatry.

only one issue in its rejection of psychoanalysis. Deeper assumptions about the doctor-patient relationship, the role of the psychiatrist in society, and issues connected to the interplay between psychiatry, race, and nation-making tasks were also crucial in maintaining the profession's distance from psychoanalysis or in assimilating it in a very particular form. Second, this chapter also shows that the mental health professions in Italy did not so much "reject" psychoanalysis as lack the basic conditions for incorporating it. The reasons for the establishment's indifference to or distance from psychoanalysis reflected to a deficiency of resources and the limited reach of psychiatric practice over the population. Because of the predominance of the mental asylum, a very low doctor-patient ratio, and the absence of proper support for new approaches and therapies, Italian psychiatry remained restricted to a custodial role, which prevented pro-psychoanalytic innovation. The same holds true for psychology, which could only expand its institutional possibilities by means of alliances and compromises with very conservative institutions.

This chapter has two parts. In the first, I trace the origins of modern psychiatry and psychology in Italy and describe their basic characteristics. I focus on the interaction between the institutional setting of the asylum and the main characteristics of the psychiatric profession. Then I move to the responses of Italian psychiatry and psychology to the war, and especially to the issue of war neurosis. I highlight the fact that whereas in many countries the war opened up opportunities for psychoanalysis, in Italy the case was different. Italian psychiatry remained attached to organic theories of mental suffering and therefore rejected psychoanalytic explanations of trauma. The inflexibility of Italian psychiatry, however, was perhaps not different than that of other countries. I suggest that the basic difference in Italy was that initiatives on the part of the state and society to finance alternative treatments were missing. The

result was that psychoanalysis did not make inroads in Italy following the war because Italy did not encourage a plurality of approaches to the treatment of war neurosis.

The second part of the chapter focuses on two major policy makers and influential figures of the psy professions in Italy: the psychiatrist Enrico Morselli (1852-1929) and the Catholic Franciscan Priest and psychologist Agostino Gemelli (1878-1959). I show that they both attempted to assimilate psychoanalysis into their strategies of profession building, and therefore elaborated different responses to Freudian theories. Focusing on these two figures allows us to better perceive that responses to psychoanalysis were affected by multiple factors and pressures, including ideological claims, cultural orientations, and predominating notions about what the mental health professions should be. This chapter shows that Morselli and Gemelli's main anxiety was the spread of an independent psychoanalytic movement with autonomous publications and forms of association. This hostility, however, did not imply a rejection of Freudian theories but an interest in trying to integrate them into official institutions. In the case of Morselli, his reading of Freud sought to trace continuities between his views on race and heredity and the Freudian unconscious, while also showing concern for the consequences of psychoanalysis for the respectability of the profession, especially regarding the doctor-patient relationship. In Gemelli's cases, his attitude toward psychoanalysis was deeply subordinated to his compromises with cultural and political powers, especially the Catholic Church and the Fascist government. His case is revealing, since it allows us to see that even at the highest moment of his relationship with the Fascist regime, his intentions consisted of reinventing psychoanalysis in order to make it acceptable. I therefore conclude that the cases of Morselli and Gemelli illustrate that the major responses to psychoanalysis consisted of attempts to assimilate it by filtering and sanitizing it. Rather than an open refusal, influential figures in

mental health sought to rid it of ethnic, cultural, and political aspects that appeared problematic in a Fascist Italy dominated by racism, anti-Semitism, nationalism, and conservatism.

Part I: The psy professions: Asylum, Positivism, and the War

Origins

The history of modern psychiatry and psychology in Italy started in the 1870s.[2] Several factors established this decade as a crucial turning point for the disciplines of the mind. First, the unification of the Italian state in 1861 provided a regular institutional setting for the care of mentally ill people. Prior to this point, insanity had been administered in a very uneven manner according to regional differences and heterogeneous institutions. A unified state changed this situation, deploying more resources for the construction and maintenance of asylums and undermining regional differences. Second, the doctors and the personnel working in asylums developed a strong sense of belonging and professional identity following the creation of the first national organizations. The first association gathering the asylum doctors and coordinating their

[2] For general histories of psychiatry, see: Michael Donnelly, *The Politics of Mental Health in Italy* (London/New York: Travistock/Routledge, 1992); Romano Canosa, *Storia del manicomio in Italia dall'unità a oggi* (Milan:Feltrinelli, 1979); Annamaria Tagliavini, "Aspects of the history of psychiatry in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century," in Brynum, Porter, Shepherd (eds), *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry. Vol 2* (London and New York: Travistock Publication, 1985), 175-196; Valeria P Babini, *Liberi tutti,* op. cit. For a long-term approach including currents and institutions since the eighteenth century, see Francesco de Peri, "Il medico e il folle: istituzione psichiatrica, sapere scientifico e pensiero medico fra Otto e Novecento" in Franco della Peruta (ed), *Storia d'Italia. Annali 7: Malattia e medicina* (Turin: Einaudi, 1984), 1059-1140, and for Italian psychiatry during the wars, Paolo Francesco Peloso*, La Guerra Dentro,* op. cit. For Italian psychology, the basic bibliography includes: Sadi Marhaba, *Lineamenti della psicologia Italiana: 1870-1945* (Florence: Giunti Barberà, 1981); Luciano Mecacci, "La psicologia: una scienza controversa" in *Storia d'Italia, Annali 26: Scienze e cultura dell'Italia unita*. Francesco Cassata e Claudio Pogliano (eds) (Turin: Einaudi, 2011); Mecacci, *Psicologia e psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana del Novecento* (Bari: Laterza, 1998); and Guido Cimino and Nino Dazzi (eds), *La psicologia in Italia. 2 Vols.* (Milano: LED, 1998).

regular congresses was the Società Italiana di Freniatria [SIF, Italian Society of Phreniatrists], created in 1873. Soon afterwards it started publishing its official publication, the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*. Finally, the cultural influence of Positivism in the late nineteenth century provided psychiatrists with a supporting ideology and a sense of common purpose. The search for organic causes determining psychological and moral phenomena; the evolutionist paradigm endorsing the role of heredity in society's development; and the belief in science as the main path to the regulation and solution of social problems became a crucial principle for endorsing the role of the psychiatrists. Psychologists also benefited from this paradigm. The founding fathers of Italian psychology were Positivist anthropologists and philosophers who wrote the first handbooks on psychology and created the first psychological laboratories in Italian universities.

Three specific conditions that shaped the psychiatric profession in the late nineteenth century became inalienable characteristics of the discipline in the following decades. First was the intimate connection between psychiatry and the asylum. The years in which psychiatrists created their main organizations and journals coincided with the development of a "great confinement" of people considered mentally ill in the Italian territory.[3] According to different censuses and reports, in 1875 there were 13,000 inmates in Italian asylums, whereas by 1908 the figure had reached 45,000 and 54,000 by 1914. This means that if in 1875, 50 per 100,000

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[3] The notion of a "great confinement" is used by Michel Foucault to refer to the increasing enclosure of people in institutions such as poor houses, schools, military barracks, and factories. According to him, this process started in the early eighteenth century. See Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment. The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon, 1977), 141-142. Some historians of Italian psychiatry used the term "great psychiatric confinement" to refer to how the asylum took force in the late nineteenth century. See Canosa, *Storia del manicomio in Italia,* 87.

persons were confined to Italian asylums, in 1914, 150 per 100,000 people shared the same fate.[4] Although these numbers pale in comparison to those of other European countries, they represent a moment of growth for the social influence and authority of Italian psychiatry. The first decades of national unification permitted the construction of new state asylums financed by the regional governments—these new asylums displaced previous charities and Church-administered hospices, putting psychiatrists in charge of the insane. Although in some cases psychiatrists also worked in university clinics that offered more opportunity for research, their attachment to the asylums as the main site of their practice was undeniable. Toward the start of the twentieth century, for instance, other countries introduced changes such as "non-restraint" systems and open-door programs, thus making the asylum organization more flexible insofar as it allowed from greater patient mobility. Although some Italian psychiatrists considered these changes seriously, the profession's response was conservative, and it insisted on the asylum as a means of separating insane individuals from society.[5]

Second, the biological orientation in Italian psychiatry was one of its longest-lasting traits. The very term through which Italian psychiatrists defined themselves, "freniatri," connoted a somatic approach: the Greek root of the word "fren" was supposed to stress the organic dimension of the mind, and was therefore opposed to the more "spiritual" or ethereal "psyche."[6] One possible explanation for the importance of the somatic in Italian approaches to mental illness was that it reinforced psychiatrists' self-representation as scientists. Considering that madness, like any other disease, had an organic cause implied that psychiatrists were similar to

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[4] For these figures see: Donnelly, *The Politics of Mental Health,* 26-27; and Canosa, *Storia del manicomio in Italia,* 87-99.

[5] For these debates, see Canosa, *Storia del manicomio,* 77-84; and Babini, *Liberi tutti,* 15-17, Tagliavini, "Aspects" 182-183.

[6] For this reflection, see De Peri, "Il medico e il folle," 1081; Donnelly, *The Politics of Mental Health,* 30.

any other doctor, thus allowing them to enjoy similar prestige and recognition. Italian psychiatrists were in this sense distancing themselves from the idea of the psychiatrist as an "alienist" who used the asylum as a way of promoting the moral reform of patients—the predominant view, especially in the early nineteenth century. In contrast to the "moralist" model, Italian psychiatrists from the late nineteenth century onward insisted in that their function was to cure patients through properly scientific methods, which for them involved the identification of somatic and anatomic pathologies. This way of conceiving the profession was also crucial as a counterpoint to the influence of the Church and charity institutions over the handling of madness. In contrast with such unprofessional personnel, psychiatrists promoted themselves as the only scientific specialists capable of dealing with mental disease and, correspondingly, allotted for themselves a monopoly on the treatment of madness.

Finally, the explicit commitment to social control was the third major characteristic of Italian psychiatry. The asylum, in fact, was an institution designed to cure but also to protect society from the potential threat of madmen and madwomen. Notions of heredity and the association of mental illness with infectious diseases such as syphilis or social evils such as alcoholism reinforced this representation. By removing the focal points of social infection from the community, psychiatrists were supposed to improve the biological stock of the nation. In addition, the Italian Positivist imagination placed the criminal, the madman and madwoman, and marginal groups such as prostitutes under the label of "degenerates." The links between the social control of crime and Positivist psychiatry were in fact crucial. A few years after the creation of the SIF, the anthropologist and criminologist Cesare Lombroso (1835-1909) published the first edition of his highly influential book, *Criminal Man* [L'uomo delinquente], which he complemented later on with many modified editions and a companion book on female

offenders.[7] Lombroso's main argument was that habitual offenders–or prostitutes in the case of women—were inborn criminals determined by their biological heredity and that their degeneration was analogous to that of mad people. Lombroso's work was the origin of a new discipline called Criminal Anthropology, which sought to detect visible evidence of degeneration in the body of criminals. Lombroso's prestige and popularity were vital in reinforcing the conceptual and in many cases institutional continuum between insanity, crime, and marginality. Although we must not exaggerate the actual influence of his thought on psychiatrists—who used their own diagnostic categories and wrote their own books on forensic psychiatry—the association of degeneration and deviancy was strong among psychiatric professionals and it strengthened their links to the state.[8]

One of the clearest signs of the increasing power of psychiatry; its role as a means of social control; and the relationship between psychiatry and the asylum took place in 1904, when the Italian parliament passed the first national law regulating asylums that remained effective until 1968. Supported by the SIF, and defended in parliament by Giovanni Giolitti—the leading politician of the pre-war years in Italy—the law was a response to the demands of psychiatrists. It guaranteed the asylum system a monopoly on treating the insane, thus reinforcing the role of the psychiatrists, who received central attributions over contracts with providers, authority over

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[7] Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006)[1876]; and *Criminal Woman: The Prostitute and the Normal Woman* (Durhman, NC: Duke University Press, 2004) [1893]. For the impact of Lombroso's work see Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter, "Editors Introduction," in *Criminal Man,* op cit, 1-31; and Renzo Villa, "Scienza Medica e criminalità nell'Italia unita," in *Storia d'Italia. Annali 7*, op cit, 1143-1178.

[8] The paradigm of degeneration and its connection with social control was not an Italian particularity, but a broader European one. See Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder (1848-1918)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); J Edward Chamberlain and Sander Gilman (eds), *Degeneration. The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); and Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France. The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

asylum personnel and, most importantly, broad powers to mandate admissions and discharge patients. Equally significant, the law defined the asylum in terms of social control, rather than therapy. According to its first article, people should be admitted into asylums "when they are dangerous to themselves or others or can provoke public scandal."[9] The notion that asylums might cure people who come to them voluntarily was not even contemplated in the text of the law. The custodial role of the asylum was made explicit by the neurologist, senator, and later Minister of Public Instruction Leonardo Bianchi (1848-1927), a crucial figure in the relationship between Italian psychiatry and the political class. When defending the law at the parliament Bianchi was clear that "the insane who clutters society stands within the social organism for what toxins or infections represent within the individual organism."[10] The main goal of the asylum was therefore to remove this noxious element from the social body and, of course, psychiatry should have the monopoly on performing that task of social hygiene.

Despite the increasing social influence and political recognition of Italian psychiatrists, not all of them were celebratory regarding the achievements of their discipline. During the turn of the century many young voices raised concerns regarding the narrow organic approach predominating among Italian psychiatrists and called for new ways of diagnostic labeling and new theorizations of mental disease. The decade before the First World War, in fact, witnessed a growing interest in innovative theories and perspectives, resulting in the creation of new journals. As we saw in chapter one, the 1900s were the years when Roberto Assagioli started his contact with psychoanalysis, while also launching his journal *Psiche,* which he used to endorse

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[9] [quando siano pericolose a sé o agli altri o riescano di pubblico scandalo]. See the text of the law in Canosa, *Storia del manicomio,* p. 221.

[10] " [il folle che ingombra la società simboleggia, nel organismo sociale, quello che rappresentano le tossine, le infezioni nell'organismo individuale]. For the parliamentary debates on the law, see Babini, *Liberi tutti,* 19, and De Peri, "Il medico e il folle" pp 1132-1134.

alternatives to the Positivist somatic approach. During 1908, the first long articles on Freud's theories were published in major journals, showing a mix of caution and expectation. By 1914, moreover, the Congress of the SFI was planning a panel on psychoanalysis, organized by the top psychiatrists interested in the issue—the war, however, suspended the Congress, and the panel never took place.[11] Although this response was a result of the increasing notoriety of the psychoanalytic movement in those years, it was also part of a general spirit of openness and expansion of perspectives within the mental health professions.[12]

One of the main consequences of this new attitude was the expansion of the field of psychology. Historians of Italian psychology usually point to 1905 as a breakthrough year for the discipline. During that year, Rome was the seat of the 5th International Congress of Psychology, an event that reunited international figures and garnered social attention for the discipline.[13] Profiting from the impact of the Congress, Leonardo Bianchi, the same senator who defended the asylum law and was Minister of Public Instruction in 1905, undertook an initiative to create the first three funded chairs in "experimental" psychology–the word "experimental" highlighted the independence of the discipline from philosophy or anthropology while also suggesting its scientific character. The chairs were finally created in the medical school at the University of Rome and the schools of letters and philosophy at Naples and Turin. Prior to that decision, psychology had been taught in some Italian universities by "libero docenti," a position without regular appointments and in some cases without salaries. As with the law regulating

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[11] See the announcement "XV Congresso della Società Freniatrica Italiana in Palermo" in Revista Sperimentale di Freniatria [hereafter RSF] Year 40 (1914), p. 232.

[12] See Babini, *Liberi tutti,* 24-32.

[13] Main international names assisting to the congress included Alfred Binet, Franz Brentano,Edouard Claparède, William Mc Dougall, William James, and Pierre Janet. For descrption of the impact of the congress, see Ferruccio Ferruzzi, *La crisi della psicologia italiana,* in *La psicologia italiana*, 669-678.

asylums, the initiative was connected with some highly influential psychiatrists, and in fact both the new professors and the committee members selecting them were all psychiatrists or physiologists. The main motivation underlying this move was a general willingness to expand the limits of the discipline by introducing a broader background into psychiatrists' education. The decision was an important leap forward in the field of psychology in Italy. That same year, in fact, a psychiatrist from Bologna named Giulio Cesare Ferrari founded the *Rivista di Psicologia*, while his colleague Eugenio Rignano launched the journal *Scientia*, which was also linked to the field of psychology. In 1910, the psychologists finally started a professional association—the Società Italiana di Psicologia, SIP—which held its first congress the following year. These were all signs that the first decades of the century were a time of expansion, diversification, and openness to foreign influences within the disciplines of the mind in Italy.[14]

Psychiatry and the War

The forces pushing for change and innovation in Italian psychiatry and psychology, however, had very precise limits. One of the most salient aspects of the history of the psy disciplines in Italy was World War I. As many historians have noted, in the US, Great Britain, and Germany, the war and its effects were crucial for undermining somatic and organic theories of madness, thus opening the doors of psychiatry to psychological approaches such as psychoanalysis. Moreover, the war was also crucial for bringing asylum psychiatry into crisis, just as it created a new culture responding to the psychological processing of loss and mourning.[15] Soon after the

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[14] For the expansion of psychology after 1905, see Marhaba, *Lineamenti,* 32-85.

[15] For the impact of shell shock in England, see Martin Stone "Shellshock and the psychologists," in *Anatomy of madness,* op cit, 242-271; for Germany: Paul Lerner*, Hysterical Men. War, Psychiatry, and the Politics of Trauma in Germany, 1890-1933* (London/Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003),esp. 61-192, and 223-248. See also a general approach in Eric J. Leed, *No Man's Land. Combat and Identity in World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge

war started, military doctors and psychiatrists detected a series of disorders that did not fit into traditional patterns. A flood of soldiers and officers from very heterogeneous backgrounds and without previous clinical history or family histories of mental illness started to suffer from panic attacks, paralysis without apparent somatic cause, depression, anxiety, alterations of sleeping and eating habits, catatonia, obsessive thoughts, and recurrent and tormenting nightmares. Given these changes, the disciplines' focus moved away from heredity and constitutional predispositions toward emotional trauma and the effect of what was coined shellshock. Since these problems continued after the war, the governments of the warring nations had to establish special services, sustained by publicly funded war pensions, that practiced new forms of psychotherapy. Along with bringing important changes to psychiatry and mental health services, new and more complex theories of trauma and disorder redrew the line dividing insanity from sanity. A tendency to view mental problems as restricted to asylums and specific categories of people (those with genetic or constitutional predispositions to insanity or intoxications) gave way to a new social perception. Now, mental disorders were also attributed to broader categories of people outside the asylum and who had to be treated with very different therapies. This shift was crucial for endorsing the psychoanalytic influence into mental health disciplines.

Italian psychiatry was not untouched by the war. Immediately after Italy's entry into the conflict, the SFI established stretch links with the army, especially geared toward mobilizing psychiatrists to the front, organizing special services for psychiatric assistance, and creating new

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University Press, 1979), chapter 5, pp. 163-192. See also the especial issue dedicated to shellshock in Journal of Contemporary History, vol. 35 (January 2000). For a general history of the notion of war neurosis and shellshock, see Ben Shepherd, *A war of nerves. Soldiers and Psychiatrists in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001). For a study on the role of loss, mourning and bereavement in the creation of the post-war world, see Jay Winter, *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning. The Great War in European Cultural History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

and special facilities.[16] The move from the "asylum to the trenches" (Babini) implied a crucial change of perspective and elicited long debates and discussions, as the psychiatrists gained familiarity with new cases that were not common in the asylums. The pages of the main psychiatric journals, in fact, became populated with cases of soldiers who became deaf, mute, or amnesiac; experienced paralysis, trembling, insensibility, or contractions of their limbs; or suffered from tachycardia and several digestive or sleeping issues even when no actual somatic cause could be identified. These problems combined with other disorders including severe depression, melancholia, confusion, aggressiveness, phobias, recurrent and tormenting nightmares, and delusions whose origin was clear emotional shock. When trying to find an explanation for these new maladies, some psychiatrists got close to recognizing Freud's merits in conceptualizing the emotional conflicts at the bottom of psychoneurosis. As a psychiatrist concluded when referring to the cases he had to deal with on the front,

> I do not mean to be either an enthusiast for or an adherent of Freud's psycho-genetic ideas: but we cannot deny Freud's merit of having drawn our attention in a very particular way to the great psycho-genetic importance of emotional stimuli when they remain suffocated within us and do not find a way out in an adequate reaction.
>
> [non voglio essere un entusiasta nè un aderente delle idee psicogenetiche di Freud: ma pur tuttavia non si può disconoscere a Freud il merito di aver

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[16] The most complete and detailed study of war neurosis in Italy is Bruna Bianchi, *La follia e la fuga. Nevrosi di guerra, diserzione e disobbedienza nell'esercito italiano (1915-1918)* (Rome: Bulzoni Ed, 2001). See also Babini, *Liberi tutti,* pp. 50-57; Peloso, *La guerra dentro,* pp. 165-193; Antonio Gibelli, *L'officina della guerra. La Grande Guerra e le trasformazioni del mondo mentale* (Turin: Bollato Boringhieri, 1991), pp. 122-163; Nicolla Bettiol, *Feriti nell'anima. Storie di soldati dai manicomi del Veneto, 1915-1918* (Treviso: ISTRESCO, 2008).

> richiamata la nostra attenzione in modo molto particolare su la grande importanza psicopatogenetica degli stimoli emotivi, quando questi siano soffocati dentro di noi e non abbiano il loro sfogo in una reazione adeguata.][17]

The impact of the war was also felt among women and the civilian population, motivating articles regarding the impact of the mobilization on women or relatives who remained alone, obsessed with the health of their beloved ones.[18] Emotions therefore were conspicuous from the start of the war, as were their pathological effects. The new realities of war, however, did not push Italian psychiatrists toward a deep reconsideration of their practice. As a military psychiatrist observed when summarizing the cases he treated in the front, "it is always emotion, war emotion, more or less acute, extended, brusque; that is why it is easily curable, and there is also the impression that, in general, it is not about actual madmen, but *occasional neuropsychopaths.*"[19]In other words, the fact that mental problems were due to emotional disorders was for many Italian psychiatrists evidence that they were not actual diseases, and that their symptoms were not dangerous. As a result, and as many historians observed, the war did not make Italian psychiatrists more open to psychoanalysis or push them toward exploring alternative approaches to mental suffering. Even when wartime cases were clear proof of the pathological role of trauma and life events, Italian psychiatrists managed to combine these

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[17] Nando Benatti, "La etiologia determinante nella nevrosi traumatica di guerra," in RSF, issue 1, Vol XLII (October 1916), p. 55.

[18] Maria del Rio, "Le malattie mentali nella donna in rapporto alla guerra," RSF, vol 42, issue 1 (Oct, 1916), pp. 87-108.

[19][sempre emozione, emozione di guerra, più o meno acuta, protratta, brusca, donde non solo la facile guaribilita difussa, ma anche la impressione che –in genere—non si tratta di veri alienati, di *ocassionali neuropsicopatici*.] Placido Consiglio, "Le anomalie del carattere dei militari in Guerra" RSF, idem, 143.

explanations with their long-standing somatic approach. According to them, the war was simply eliciting insanity in those who were predisposed by constitution or heredity.[20]

Some psychiatrists accepted that hysteria and traumatic neuroses among soldiers were emotionally caused, yet they used this argument against Freud. By emphasizing the roles of fear and life-threatening events in the origin of hysteria, many psychiatrists claimed that their findings struck "to death Freud's sexual theory."[21] Far from confirming Freud's theories that rooted hysteria in infantile sexual trauma or conflict, war neurosis moved to the foreground the pathogenic role of strong but non-sexual emotional shocks in adult life.[22] This conclusion combined with war conditions to limit the kinds of treatment available to soldiers. Instead of exploring remote causes in the personal lives of their patients, Italian doctors found it more effective to orient therapy toward removing symptoms. The treatment was therefore an energetic mix of persuasion and intimidation regarding the legal risks of persisting with symptoms that, according to many psychiatrists, were not caused by a legitimate disease. Gustavo Modena, a doctor who showed interest in Freud's theories before the war, might have been echoing the conclusion of many others when commenting on his experience:

> During my military service, I tried cures among many neurotic soldiers, and whereas I obtained the disappearance of symptoms through persuasion and energetic imperative therapy, I could never find that pre-adolescent psychical

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[20] See Babini, *Liberi tutti,* 53-57, and Peloso, *La guerra dentro,* 168-170.

[21][colpisca a morte la dottrina sessuale del Freud.] Sante de Sanctis, "L'isterismo di guerra," in RSF, Vol XLII, issue 4, (Dec. 1917), p. 475; see also Leonardo Bianchi, "La psicanalisi," Annali di nevologia,Year 39, issue 2-3, 1922, p. 76, 79.

[22] Bianchi, "La psicanalisi," p. 76.

traumas or eventually incestuous infantile complexes were at the base of the hysteric syndromes.

> [durante il servizio militare nei molti soldati neurotici tentai cure, e se ottenni la scomparsa del sintoma con paziente azione persuasiva o con energica terapia imperativa, non potei mai riscontrare che precedenti traumi psichici prepuberali o eventuali elementi incestuosi di complessi infantili fossero base delle sindromi isteriche].[23]

Finally, nationalism and subordination to state and army goals were other reasons that caused Italian psychiatry and psychology to stay away from new approaches.[24] The anti-German sentiment among psychiatrists, in particular, was intense, and it determined their responses to foreign theories. The psychiatrist Ernesto Lugaro, for instance, wrote a series of long articles during the war, which he later on edited as a booklet, discrediting all of German psychiatry as the result of pathological traits of the German personality and especially their trend to expansionism and imperialism. The chapter about psychoanalysis in that book is consequently aggressive.[25] Similar or even more infantile claims about the degenerative character of the German leadership and even the German people were also common among Italian psychiatric journals, which turned

[23] Gustavo Modena, "Nosografia e patogenesi delle psiconeurosi," RSF, Year 48, (1924)pp. 35-36.

[24] For the nationalism of Italian psychiatrists during the war, see Andrea Scartabellati, *"Il dovere dei medici italiani nell'ora presente.* Biopolitica, seduzione belliche e battaglie culturali nelle scienze umane durante il primo conflitto mondiale,*"* Medicina e storia, 7, 14, (2007), pp.65-94.

[25] See for instance Ernesto Lugaro, "Pazzia d'imperatore o aberrazione nazionale?" in Rivista di Patologia Nervosa e Mentale, Vol 20, issue 7 (July 1915), pp. 385-414, and "La psichiatria tedesca nella storia e nella attualità," in idem, Vol 22, issue 2 (February 1917), pp. 65-97. Lugaro was not an irrelevant author, since he co-authored one of the major handbooks of psychiatry.

to allied French authors for theoretical inspiration.[26] A similar spirit touched psychologists. The *Rivista di Psicologia* dedicated long articles, most of them written by its director Cesare Ferrari, describing the "moral revolution" that the war brought to Italy and emphasizing the courage of the Italian soldier.[27] Although the journal published some articles on war neuroses, the prevailing attitude consisted in portraying the war as a character-shaping experience. Spreading knowledge about war neuroses that linked the war to the disintegration of the personality was something they were not so interested in doing.

A general perspective associating health to military discipline, patriotic engagement, and adaptation to army life seems to have been key in identifying war neurosis with weakness of the will, dis-adaptation, indiscipline and, ultimately, degeneration. War neurosis and hysteria, as a result, became liminal categories in-between disease and moral weakness, since they affected soldiers unable to perform their roles. People suffering from war neurosis or hysteria, in addition, were constantly watched and held under suspicion. One of psychiatrists' most salient concerns was how to trace the line between the legitimate "wounded without wound" and the malingerers. Conceptually, in fact, the dividing line was certainly blurred and thin. Those faking their symptoms were considered criminals by psychiatrists and the law and therefore entered the

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[26] The journal Quaderni di Psichiatria provided another example of infantile patriotism in its section "Sullo stato mentale dei protagonist dei grande conflitto" where it reproduced basic stereotypes on German degeneracy and spread rumors on the atrocious behavior of German and Austrian troops.

[27] See Agostino Gemelli, "Considerazioni sulla psicologia del atto di coraggio," Rivista di Psicologia, Vol. 11, (1915), pp. 356-367; and G C Ferrari, "Saggio d'interpretazione psicologica dei metodi tedeschi di guerra;" "Varietà e variazioni del coraggio in guerra," Vincenzo Bianchi, "L'anima del soldato nel campo di battaglia," Ferrari, "Il 'morale' del soldato italiano in campo," in idem, Vol 12 (1916) pp 68-100, 119-126, 167-183, 184-217, respectively. The nationalistic commitment of the journal became more apparent when it published Mussolini's war diary in 1916. See Benito Mussolini, "Diario di guerra," idem, 17-67. Mussolini was of course not yet the leader of Fascism, but an important name within the interventionist movement.

category of "degenerates." Vice versa, neurotics and hysterics were also considered cases of failed adaptation to military duties. Consequently, they were not so different from the other "degenerates." To make things worse, war conditions allowed for little tolerance when it came to accepting specific conditions as legitimate diseases. As some psychiatrists admitted later on, pressed by military personnel, in many cases they sent to the front people who actually needed treatment or denied that severe mental conditions were due to war tension, instead explaining illnesses in terms of constitutional predisposition. All of these pressures were crucial in contributing to misconceptions about and the downplaying of war neuroses and the psychological trauma underlying them.[28]

We must be careful not to attribute psychoanalysis's failure to make inroads during the war solely to psychiatry's nationalistic or authoritarian traits. In countries that saw the spread of psychoanalysis, psychiatrists shared similar attitudes. Moreover, as Paul Lerner and Eric Leed have argued, psychoanalytic representations and explanations of war neurosis did not challenge the general ideological climate concerning war mobilization, and they also helped promote the acceptance of authority and the demands of the war effort.[29] The most important reason for psychoanalysis's failure to expand in Italy after the war is connected to the different pension and compensation policies of the belligerent countries. As Stone and Lerner have shown, in countries such as England and Germany, government agencies provided resources in the form of new outpatient clinics, the training of new personnel, and pensions specifically oriented to treating war neurosis. Moreover, diagnosis and therapy for war neuroses and hysteria fell into the hands of a broad array of professionals, including psychiatrists, neurologists, clinical doctors, and

[28] For this analysis, see Bianchi, *La follia e la fuga,* 58-71.

[29] Leed, *No Man's Land,* 170, 179-180, and Lerner, *Hysterical Men,* 164-186.

psychologists. [30]As a result, new voices aside from asylum psychiatrists challenged traditional or somatic explanations and adopted more psychologically framed theories. The expansion of the reach of mental health professions over a new population of war veterans, along with a general democratization of approaches to war-related mental issues, permitted the expansion of psychoanalysis both in an orthodox fashion and assimilated into more general conceptions of the mind.

In Italy, the terms of the handling war veterans' compensations were notoriously different. Pensions for psychologically related problems were remarkably limited. Although there are no clear figures—in itself a sign of the government's lack of interest in this problem—some estimates claim that psychiatrists treated 40,000 war-related cases.[31] The majority of these patients had severe disorders and were sent to asylums, or remained with their families. According to some estimates, war neuroses amounted to 8 to 10% of the severe cases and were treated in special facilities within belonging to the asylums. This situation suggests that, in contrast to common practices in other countries, these cases did not escape the grasp of asylum-centered psychiatry.[32] Even more problematic, some sources make apparent the persistence of very repressive ways of thinking about mental illness among psychiatrists. After the war, a group of cases connected to issues such as indiscipline, exaggeration or malingering of symptoms, and desertion remained under psychiatric responsibility—apparently due to the fact that they were

[30] Stone, "Shellshock and the psychologists," pp 245-247; and Lerner, *Hysterical Men,* 226-237. In Germany, a crucial change occurred in 1920, when war pensions moved from being administered by the War Ministry to being handled by the Labor Ministry. It then fell in the hands of Welfare institutions where notions of trauma related to labor accidents differed from the army psychiatrist's more skeptic vision on it (230). Moreover, the personnel in the Welfare offices were general practitioners, not psychiatrists (232).

[31] See Bianchi, *La follia e laa fuga,* 27-28.

[32] See "Voti emessi dal Convegno per l'assistenza agli invalidi di guerra," RSF, Vol. 43, issue 1-2 (May 1919), 340-344.

considered cases of "degeneration." Some psychiatrists in fact proposed to the government the creation of psychiatric colonies in northern Africa in order to maintain these "degenerates" under custody for an indeterminate period of time or until they could be "regenerated."[33] Moreover, the distinction between the "degenerates" faking symptoms and the "true neurotics" fell into the hands of military psychiatrists, which means that control over the war neurosis cases was less pluralistic than in other countries.[34] As a result, the post-war situation in Italy presented an unchallenged way of dealing with psychological problems that combined authoritarian attitudes, a dominant Positivist language, and the monopoly of asylum-centered psychiatry. Under those conditions, the possibilities for spreading a psychoanalytic approach were certainly limited.

Part II: The Fascist Years

The war was a missed opportunity for the development of psychoanalysis in Italy. The particular responses to war neurosis and hysteria, shellshock, compensation, and pensions are key aspects for explaining the ways in which Italy undertook a divergent path after 1914. Whereas many countries consolidated their psychoanalytic culture, Italy seems to have gone in another direction. When trying to explain why psychoanalysis did not expand in Italy as it did in other countries during the interwar years, there is a mandatory issue to address: to what extent was Fascism responsible for the weakness of a psychoanalytic culture in Italy? The relationship between Fascism and psychoanalysis was a crucial topic in chapter one. As I tried to show there, the opposition to the development of a psychoanalytic culture was varied, Fascism being only one among other issues, and not always antagonistic. Focusing on the relationship between

[33] For a claim about the continuity of the anti-social "degenerates" and the neurotics, see G Fabrizi, "Per i militari degenerate extrasociali (minorati psichici)," RSF, Vol 42, issue 4 (December 1917), pp. 548-549. The proposal for colonies in Africa in "Voti emesis dal Convegno" op cit, p. 342.

[34] See "Voti emessi" op cit. p. 343-344.

psychoanalysis and the psy professions is helpful for adding new perspective on this point. It allows us to see that the weak standing of a psychoanalytic culture in Italy was due to a lack of opportunities and institutional possibilities. In other words, psychoanalysis could not find enthusiastic reception due to the weakness and lack of diversification of the psy professions. Although Fascism was partly responsible for this, the main reasons seem to lie in longer-term attitudes in Italian culture, such as a general elitist culture that scorned the teaching of psychology in universities, and a general reluctance to finance innovative and sophisticated responses to mental disease. The result was that Italian institutions remained permeated by strong contrasts: on the one hand, the university system eliminated spaces for the teaching of psychology and replaced them with neo-Idealist conceptions favoring philosophy or more traditional and classic subjects. On the other hand, the profession-building strategy among psychiatrists remained connected to the asylum and very organic concepts of mental disease, which did not lend room for psychoanalytic practice.

The school reform undertaken by the Minister of Education Giovanni Gentile in 1923 offers important evidence of the mentality that closed off institutional possibilities for psychoanalysis. Historians of psychology have insistently referred to the negative consequences of reform for the field, since it eliminated the teaching of psychology in middle school. Psychology courses had been introduced in 1889 and saluted as a victory for Positivism, since they replaced courses on metaphysics. The Gentile reform removed them and put "history of philosophy" in their place.[35] The change was a blow for psychologists, who lost jobs in

[35] Psychology returned to Italian middle schools in 1945, by means of the measures of de-fascistization of the American occupying officers. See Ferriccio Ferruzzi, "La crisi della psicologia in italia," in *La psicologia italiana*, p. 680. For the effect of the Gentile reform on psychology, see also Guido Cimino, "Origine e sviluppi della psicologia italiana," in *idem,* 42-43; and Marhaba, *Lineamenti,* 44-54.

secondary education. Moreover, the general spirit of the reform discouraged more practical and emergent disciplines in favor of more traditional ones. It introduced a strong division between the study of classical and traditional subjects, which were seen as more elevated issues and conducive to higher education, and the more technical or scientific ones, which were considered less prestigious. Learning philosophy, Greek, and Latin, for instance, took priority over subjects such as economy or modern languages. Even more problematic for psychologists was the fact that the reform was not a top-down ideological imposition by Fascism. Rather, it represented a mentality shared by many intellectuals of the time, who endorsed a highly elitist classical notion of education. This also explains why university schools where psychology chairs had been opened during the previous years did not renew them: students and faculty oriented toward the humanities were not interested in defending chairs or taking courses that had been set up by the Positivist psychiatric elite of the pre-war years. The only remaining stronghold of psychology in universities was in the "Magisterio" –the school of education. Yet even there the trend was to abandon the pedagogical orientation for a more content-oriented and philosophical one—in fact, previously existing courses on child psychology were also lost.[36]

While psychology disappeared from middle school and universities, psychiatrists emphasized their organic and asylum-centric profile. During the early 1920s, in fact, courses on psychiatry disappeared from medical programs; they were collapsed instead with those on neurology.[37] Until the late 1930s, when another round of education reform reintroduced the

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[36] For the Gentile reform, and education in general during Fascism, see Tracy Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight. Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), 33-59; and Alexander de Grand, *Bottai e la cultura fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1978), pp. 175-216.

[37] The course on "psychiatric clinic" had been introduced in 1896, with the growing assertion of psychiatrists. During the 1920s, the two courses of "psychiatric clinic" and "neurology" became one, called "clinica delle malattie

teaching of psychology for future doctors, Italian psychiatry students had no basic knowledge of psychopathology. Ironically, a reduction in the teaching of the specifics of psychiatry occurred precisely at the moment when psychiatrists became busier than before, and also more fixed to the asylum. The Fascist years witnessed a sustained increase in the asylum population: from 60,000 in 1926 to 96,000 in 1941, or from 150 to 212 inmates per 100,000 people.[38] Although it is not clear how Fascism influenced this process, the fact that the regime created an Institute of Statistics to closely follow the asylum realities betrays some interest in sustaining the confinement of mentally ill people. The increasing number of inmates, in fact, was due to a diminution in patient releases, rather than an expansion of the psychiatric purview to include new kinds of cases. New legislation equating patients with criminals and making their release more difficult suggests that by stressing the idea of "social danger" underlying the assessment of mental patients the regime contributed to reinforcing the custodial role of the asylum.[39] The association between a highly somatic psychiatry and social control, as a result, became stronger during Fascism.

This doubly constraining reality of a neo-Idealist, classic, and elitist approach in education and a pro-somatic orientation in medicine set basic limits for the expansion of a psychoanalytic culture in interwar Italy—along with the anti-Semitic legislation mentioned in chapter one. It could be argued, in fact, that there was not a strong psychoanalytic culture because there was not a sphere of interest around the psyche. Psychiatrists were extremely concentrated on a somatic approach, whereas psychologists remained in a very marginal

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nervose."[clinic of nervous diseases]. See Babini, *Liberi tutti,* 66-67; and Guarnieri, "I rapporti tra psichiatria e psicologia in Italia," in *La psicologia in Italia. Vol 2,* 596-597.

[38]See Peloso, *La guerra dentro,* 34.

[39] See Babini, *Liberi tutti,* 94-95, and also Canosa, *Storia del manicomio,* 154-166.

situation in the main academic institutions. Focusing on this lack of possibilities for the development of psychoanalysis is useful for better understanding and framing the different responses to psychoanalysis by major operators of the psy disciplines in Italy. In the following sections, indeed, I will focus on two very influential profession builders: the Positivist psychiatrist Enrico Morselli and the Franciscan Priest Agostino Gemelli. By focusing on these two characters, I hope to show that their main reactions to psychoanalysis were nuanced and that they were not so interested in rejecting the Freudian influence as in "integrating" it. This means that they tried to adapt psychoanalysis to the criteria of professional respectability, the ideological prejudices, and the institutional possibilities predominant in interwar Italy. Exploring the experiences of both Morselli and Gemelli is therefore an opportunity for learning more about concepts of race among psychiatrists, different responses to Jewishness within the psy-professions, and the surprising initiatives of a major Catholic cultural organizer and his multiple compromises with different powers.

Enrico Morselli: Psychoanalysis and Italian Positivism.

The Italian psychiatrist Enrico Morselli (1852-1929) has drawn the attention of many researchers.[40] There are good reasons for this interest, since Morselli was a very active and influential figure. A founding member of the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria*, he held the

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[40] The most complete study of Morselli in Italian is Patrizia Guarneri, *Individualità diformi. La psichiatria antropologica di Enrico Morselli* (Milan: Franco Angelli, 1986). A chapter of this book is available in English, Patrizia Guarneri, "Between Soma and Psyche: Morselli and Psychiatry in late-nineteenth-century Italy" in W F Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shpherd (eds), *The Anatomy of Madness, Vol III The Asylum and its Psychiatry* (London: Routledge, 1988), pp. 102-124. See also a study on Morselli's notion of dysmorphophobia in Sander L Gilman, *Creating Beauty to Cure the Soul: Race and Psychology in the Shaping of Aesthetic Surgery* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1998), pp. 57-71. Morselli's interest in hypnotism and spiritualism are also analyzed in Suzanne Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect: On Making Italians (1860-1920)* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), pp. 64-70, 275-277.

chairs of psychiatry in the universities of Turin and Genoa, directed many state asylums and private clinics, authored many handbooks of psychiatry, and between 1921 and his death was the president of the SFI. Moreover, Morselli's interest went beyond the limits of psychiatry. Throughout his life he combined his medical training with an interdisciplinary interest ranging from anthropology to philosophy. He was one of the directors of the *Rivista di Filosofia Scientifica* between 1886 and 1891, which was a major organ of Italian Positivism. Much more interesting for recent scholars are Morselli's writings and experiences with spiritism, hypnosis, and magnetism during the 1880s.[41] These episodes are representative of his capability to combine his position as an insider and architect of Italian psychiatry with an openness toward issues that, in many cases, were scorned by the profession.

Morselli's was a strong voice endorsing the role of the psychiatrist as a public figure whose interests went beyond specific medical concerns. One of his most programmatic articles opening *Quaderni di Psichiatria*, a journal he launched in 1914, contended that psychiatry should avoid extreme disciplinary specialization and enrich itself from its "various and ceaseless rapports with social life."[42] Morselli was an important corporative defender of psychiatry's rights when it came to forensic medicine, criminology, education, and eugenics. Appealing to race and heredity was central for his defense of psychiatry's expansive role since, as he observed, psychiatrists had to guide and advise lawmakers on issues regarding "the conservation and defense of the normal physio-psychological type against the attacks of degenerative heredity, and

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[41]See Patrizia Guarnieri, *La psiche in trance: inquiries into Hypnotism* (Florence: European University Institute, 1990); and Stewart-Steinberg, *The Pinocchio Effect,* 64-70, 275-277.

[42][rapporti varii ed incessanti con la vita sociale] Enrico Morselli, "Ciò che vuole essere la Psichiatria," Quaderni di Psichiatria, Vol 1, n 1 (April 1914), pp. 1-13.

the possible regeneration of the race."[43] The psychiatrist, therefore, should be viewed as an authority on issues linked to the "maladies of the social body"[malattie del corpo sociale] (11), such as alcoholism, tuberculosis, syphilis, pauperism, urbanism, prostitution, and labor-related ills. The psychiatrist's role as defender of the race, moreover, did not prevent other, more intellectual aspirations. For Morselli, psychiatric knowledge should also contribute to philosophy, ethnology, philology, history, and aesthetics. As a discipline focusing on the study and care of the most elevated human faculties, psychiatry had to enrich scholarly discussion with its particular perspective on the individual and collective activity of the mind (12).

For Morselli, the model psychiatrist was a medical doctor, a guardian of the race, and a humanist scholar. This holistic conception permeated his understanding of psychiatric practice. Although Morselli recognized and valued the merits of organic approaches to mental disease, he showed concern with an extreme and one-sided anatomical direction predominating in the discipline. He was worried that psychiatry might become a branch of histology or neurology, and that it was moving away from contact with living people in favor of enclosure in research laboratories with corpses. Defending what he called a "clinical" direction in the discipline, he supported the incorporation of psychological and sociological perspectives into the psychiatrist's outlook. For him, it was crucial to approach the patient as a living being interacting in specific social relations and therefore to understand madness in relationship "with the domestic, economic, moral, judicial, and even political life of society."[44] He also claimed that psychiatry needed to integrate psychopathology as one of its main tools, although he was clear regarding the non-negotiable limits of a psychological approach. For Morselli, overlooking the organic basis of

[43] "la conservazione e difesa del tipo normale fisiopsichico contro gli attacchi della eredità degenerativa, e la possibile rigenerazione della razza." Idem, p. 11.

[44] [con la vita domestica, economica, morale, giuridica, a persino politica della società.] Idem, p. 5.

psychiatry would lead to its colonization by philosophy. As he observed, "if we exaggerate the importance of the mental element splitting it from the organic one, we risk incurring in an almost metaphysical 'psychologism.'"[45] Both his interest in and his distance from psychoanalysis sprang from the ways in which he processed all these reflections.

Morselli's first encounters with Freud's work date to the immediate pre-war years. Perhaps, his first registered contact was during 1910, when he wrote a book on neurasthenia among adolescents containing a couple of comments praising Freud's observations on the sexual etiology of neuroses.[46] He also participated as nominal director in Roberto Assagioli's journal *Psiche*, for which he wrote an article on Jung's application of the method of free association to psychotherapy, showing his skepticism.[47] Later on, his own journal *Quaderni di Psichiatria* expressed sustained interest in psychoanalysis and published articles by other authors on dream interpretation, including a piece by Edoardo Weiss. The review section also included commentary on recent books about psychoanalysis.[48] By 1926, he decided that the time was ripe

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[45] [se si esagerasse l'importanza del fatto mentale distaccandolo dall'organico, si arrischierebbe di cadere in uno 'psicologismo' poco men che metafisico.] Idem, p. 4.

[46]Enrico Morselli, *La neurastenia degli adolescenti* (Milan: Vallardi, 1912), pp. 16, 70-71.

[47]Enrico Morselli, "Alcune osservazioni sul 'metodo delle associazioni' applicato alla psicoanalisi, in Psiche. Rivista di Studi Psicologici, Vol I, issue 2, March-April, 1912, pp. 77-105.

[48] Kobylinsky, "Jung, C. G, Darstellung der psychoanalytischen Theorie," in Quaderni di psichiatria, Vol. 1, issue 5, (August-September 1914), p. 213; Sante de Sanctis, "La psico-analisi e il suo valore come metodo di onirologia scientifica,"idem, issue 7 (October 1914), pp. 290-297, pp. 133-134; M Kobylinsky, "Stekel, W, *Der Impulshandlungen*" idem, Vol. XI, issue 3-4 (March-April 1923), p. 61; Kobylinsky, "Stekel,W, *Der Fetishismus*," idem, issue 5-6, (May-June 1923), p. 104; Enrico Morselli, "Hesnard, A, *L'inconscient,*" idem, issue 7-8 (July-August 1923); Marco Treves, "Socrate psicoanalista e psicoterapeuta," idem, issue 9-10 (September-October 1923),pp. 206-209; Enrico Morselli, "Baudin, Charles, *Etudes de psychanalyse*," idem, issue 7-8 (July-August 1923), pp. 156-157; Alberto Salmon, "Sogni nella teoria psicoanalitica di Freud," idem, Vol. XI, issue 5-6, (May-June 1924), pp. 81-87; Edoardo Weiss, "Psichiatria e psicoanalisi," idem, Vol. XII, issue 3 (March 1925), pp. 206-208.

for a final and more systematic judgment on Freud's school. The result was a two-volume work titled *Psychoanalysis. Studies and Critical Notes* [La Psicoanalisi. Studi ed appunti critici]. Dedicated to Cesare Lombroso and the Positivist philosopher Roberto Ardigò, the book constitutes the most relevant reflection of a major Italian interwar psychiatrist on psychoanalysis. Due to Morselli's position, the work must have been immensely influential, and it was probably the main source through which many Italians achieved general knowledge and opinions about psychoanalysis during the late 1920s. In addition, along with other pieces by Morselli, it is a useful document for measuring the reception of psychoanalysis by a representative of Italian Positivism.

Morselli's general statements on psychoanalysis were, if not enthusiastic, at least accepting. Throughout the book, Morselli positions himself as a moderate and freethinking observer who condemns the narrow-minded overlooking or scorn of psychoanalysis by other colleagues, while also criticizing the pro-Freudian fanaticism. Commenting on the increasing influence of psychoanalysis throughout the world, he accepts that it is more than a seasonal fashion, and that its spread has been due to legitimate merits.[49] He recognizes Freud's contribution to the understanding of human sexuality (i, 13-14); celebrates the interdisciplinary possibilities that psychoanalysis have opened for psychiatry (i, 308-370); becomes enthusiastic about the evolutionism permeating Freud's thinking (i,13, i,308-331); accepts that even if Freud has not "discovered" the unconscious, he certainly has developed a sophisticated method to explore it (i, 55-56); and praises Freud's genius and creativity—to the point of comparing him with Lombroso (i,16). Morselli's critique of psychoanalysis becomes apparent when he moves to

[49] Enrico Morselli, *La psicanalisi. Studi ed apunti critici. 2 vols* (Milan: Bocca, 1926), Vol. 1 pp. 2-3, 10. For future references: i for volume 1, and ii for volume 2.

the details of the theory. He claims that Freud exaggerates both the role of the unconscious and sexuality in mental life and that he tends to attribute to the normal mind what is proper of the deviant one. He is totally uncompromising, moreover, about the theory of the psychogenic origin of neuroses (i, 31-33, ii, 3-10), while showing skepticism for Freud's therapeutic methods, which he considers extremely time-consuming , unreliable, and even dangerous (ii, 56-77, 268-271). He especially rejects the method of digging into "almost always abominable trends, ignored by the own subjects, and into that reshuffle of scabrous subjects on which civilization has rightly extended a veil."[50] (i, 5)

Morselli's book was basically an attempt to integrate psychoanalysis into the canon of professional respectability and the ideological underpinnings of Italian Positivist psychiatry. Two particular aspects of his commentary on psychoanalysis are significant in this regard. First is his original combination of ideas of race, heredity, and the unconscious. One of the surprising features of Morselli's book, indeed, is that instead of rejecting the unconscious, it proposes an alternative concept that it contrasts with Freud's psychosexual one. Second is Morselli's alarmism regarding the kind of doctor-patient relationship established through psychoanalytic treatment. For Morselli, the main problem with psychoanalysis is the extreme intimacy that it allowed between doctor and patient. As a result, most of his reflections reveal his anxiety about a method of treatment that, according to him, violates basic rules of psychiatric practice and challenges the self-representation of the psychotherapist as a moral model oriented toward reinforcing the will and shaping the character. If there are important issues to be gleaned from

[50] [tendenze quasi sempre abominevoli, ignorate dagli stessi soggetti; e quel rimescolìo di temi scabrosi, sui quali la Civiltà (…) ha fatto bene a stendere un velo.]

psychoanalysis, Morselli argues, they must to be assimilated into the larger principles of the discipline.

Race and the Unconscious

Questions of the association between race and the unconscious are present from the very beginning of Morselli's book. He is straightforward in claiming that without the idea of the unconscious, psychiatrists cannot explain a series of normal and abnormal phenomena in which consciousness and will play no role, such as deeply acquired habits, suggestion, distractions, somnambulism, automatisms, basic features of normal emotional life, obsessions, delusions, phobias, and split personality (i,41-45). Morselli also accepts Freud's idea of a dynamic unconscious, which for him means that unconscious elements can become conscious and vice versa. Beyond points of agreement, however, is critique. Morselli takes issue with what he defines as Freud's "ethical pessimism" (i,74, 84-85). Freud was mistaken, he claims, in splitting the mind between a highly immoral, egoistic, aberrant, and perverse sexual unconscious, and a conscious self that represses and censors its impulses. Morselli emphasizes that the unconscious is also furnished by self-defensive and self-conservative impulses, as well as with instincts linked to more elevated aspirations—such as filial or parental feelings, gregarious impulses, and emotions such as shame, modesty [pudore], remorse, and fear of punishment (i,50, 74). By the same token, consciousness exceeds the reductive function of censorship and repression attributed to it by Freud. It consists of ideals and aims that establish relationships of cooperation and association with the pressures coming from the unconscious (i,59-61, 65-66).

For Morselli, the unconscious is, as for Freud, a forgotten past. Yet instead of emphasizing the infantile psychosexual experience, Morselli prefers to talk of the unconscious as

composed of instincts, impulses, habits, wishes, and predispositions resultant of the ancestral "history of the race" and remaining beneath the conscious life of civilized man (i, 49-50, 54-55, 102, 172-173). He considers the unconscious as a multilayered structure. There is, in the first place, a generic unconscious composed of impulses common to all human beings that could be detected in the comparative studies of religion and mythology, disciplines that can be used to unearth shared psychological features in all cultures. In addition, there is also a "psycho-ethnic" unconscious, including the elements involved in the development of the different races, and finally a "psycho-historic" unconscious, which includes still more specific elements of a social group (62). The personal unconscious, consisting according to Freud of the repressed infantile life, is to Morselli just one of the many levels of the unconscious mind. Freud is therefore wrong, according to Morselli, in attributing too much importance to this individual aspect, thus exaggerating the psychosexual dimension over more communal impulses transmitted through heredity. This way of proceeding is strategic for Morselli, considering his interest in subsuming Freud into Italian Positivism. Quoting from the Italian anthropologist Giuseppe Sergi, a founding father of anthropology and psychology in Italy, he points out that the Italian Positivist School had anticipated Freud's idea of the unconscious, but after the fashion of a theory of "character." (i,63) Originally designed to explain crime, Sergi's theory had represented the individual as a dot in the millenarian line of species and race development. Man's emotional life is therefore constituted by a multilayered heredity or "fundamental character," which is a primitive instinctual component underlying conscious life and which, according to Sergi, "reappears more frequently than what it should."(i,63)[51] By mixing the unconscious with Sergi's theory of the "fundamental character," Morselli thus achieves his goal of incorporating psychoanalysis as a

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[51] [riapparisce però e più spesso che non dovrebbe]

minor partner into the longer and for him more prestigious intellectual tradition of Italian Positivism.

Moving race and heredity to the foreground of his reading of psychoanalysis has a second consequence in Morselli's text. As he made clear in many occasions, psychoanalysis was not for Italians because it was not adaptable to their ethnic character.[52] According to him, the sophisticated Freudian theory was a product of a German people whose repressed sexuality required a complicated system to detect the erotic component of neuroses. In a clearly nationalistic manner, Morselli contended that the Latins' sexuality was healthier than that of others, lacking the inverted and incestuous pathological tendencies observable among the Germans, the English, or Americans, for whom psychoanalytic clinical cases made more sense.[53] Even more straightforwardly, Morselli's main ethnical point was that psychoanalysis was an expression of the Jewish mind. Although he is explicit about this in his book, his main comment on the issue was in a preface he wrote in 1922 for a book by the Zionist organizer Arthur Ruppin. Along with saluting the end of Ghettoes in Europe and Italy and defending the Zionist cause as an expression of the vitality of the Jewish people, in this preface Morselli argues that Jewish identity was the result of a millenarian trans-generational experience of wandering and persecution. As a result, a series of acquired traits had been transmitted over time, thus framing the Jewish ethnical character. In particular, he points out that Jewish people have a sophisticated but also weak nervous system that makes them more inclined to psychoneurosis, hysteria,

[52] See in particular his intervention at the XVI Congress of the SFI in "Atti del XVI Congresso Società Freniatrica Italiana," in RSF, Vol 48, pp. 21-23 and pp. 64-67.

[53] Idem, 66-67.

obsessive, paranoid, phobic psychosis, sexual pathologies, and hypochondria.[54] Whereas among other people or races all of these ills would be considered evidence of degeneration, among Jews it is a normal ethnic characteristic. More to the point, he straightforwardly claims that psychoanalysis is “a typical product of Jewish mentality”:

> it was born from the psychosexual hysteria of a Viennese Jewish young woman, and has been conceived by an illustrious neuro-psychiatrist, also Jewish: Sigmund Freud, to the point of building a truly *Weltanschauung,* an universal theory of the world of thought![55]

Morselli is also explicit in this text in associating psychoanalysis’s ambitious generalizations about the human mind, its speculative statements, and its sectarian language and organization with Jewishness.[56] For Morselli, trends toward prophetic and messianic thinking were common of the Jewish mentality. By creating a movement based on a new conception of man and the mind, Freud therefore shared his lot with people such as Karl Marx, Ferdinand Lassalle, and also Lombroso, in giving free rein to a racial instinct consisting in organizing movements around a cause or a theory –a characteristic that was the secular and modern version of the Jewish prophetic and messianic tendencies of biblical times.[57] Although he accepted that this characteristic was in many cases invigorating for society, his point was that such an attitude

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[54] Enrico Morselli, “Introduzione,” in Arthur Ruppin, *Gli ebrei d’oggi* (Milan: Bocca, 1922), pp. xxxi-xxxii. The ideas of an inclination by Jews to some mental disturbances was not an originality by Morselli, by a commonplace since later 19th century medical discourse. See Sander L Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 93-113.

[55] [un tipico prodotto della mentalità ebraica; nacque dall’isterismo psico-sessuale di una giovine ebrea viennese, ed è stata concepita da un illustre neuro-psichiatra pure ebreo, Sigmund Freud, sino a farne una vera *Weltanschauung*, una teoria universale del mondo del pensiero!]. Idem, xxxiii.

[56] Morselli, *La psicanalisi,* i, 16-17;21, 37, 167.

[57] Morselli, “Introduzione,” xli.

was not suitable for Italians. Morselli insisted on contrasting the one-sided and messianic attitude permeating the psychoanalytic movement with the Latin "good sense" of moderation and healthy eclecticism.[58] In his terms, Latins were more down to earth, pragmatic, and willing to accept and take from a system whatever was useful without incurring all-or-nothing attitudes, unnecessary theoretical sophistication, or the creation of a whole new system of thought with its accompanying jargon. This was the reason why, he concluded, psychoanalysis would never spread among Italians as it did among other populations.

These representations of both Italians and Jews were probably influential when it came to the weak reception of psychoanalysis in Italy. Other important psychiatrists who perceived partial value in psychoanalysis made similar points. Sante de Sanctis, a psychiatrist who taught psychology at Rome University, for instance, showed analogous concerns. Although he maintained a good relationship with Freud and respected many of his ideas, he reproduced Morselli's thinking when analyzing Freud's theory of dreams for the *Rivista di Psicologia*. As he concluded in his article, "it is necessary to adopt psychoanalysis with the wisdom with which all scientific methods are adopted, and avoid becoming a priest of a new religion, which on the other hand reminds me of certain Asiatic cults transplanted to Rome during the Empire."[59] The fact that reflections such as Morselli's were not wrapped in aggressive or vulgar anti-Semitic rhetoric might have made this way of thinking even more powerful. It reinforced stereotypes of Italians and Jews within a respectable, pseudo-scientific language, thus asserting the representation of a psychoanalytic movement as something non-Italian.

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[58] Morselli, *La psicanalisi,* i, 4,5. See also "Atti del XVI congresso," op cit.

[59] [Ocorre adoperare la psicoanalisi con la saggezza con cui si adoperano tutti i metodi scientifici; e non farsi sacerdoti di una nuova religione che per qualche lato mi ricorda certi culti asiatici trapiantati a Roma durante l'Impero].Sante de Sanctis, "L'interpretazione dei Sogni," Rivista di Psicologia, Year X, Vol. X, p. 375.

Keeping the Profession Respectable

Ethnic stereotypes were probably important constraining forces for accepting psychoanalysis. I contend, however, that these were not the main factors fueling resistance to Freud's theories. Morselli's book is useful in showing that the most powerful reason frustrating the spread of psychoanalysis among Italian mental health professionals was related to a general way of conceiving the patient-doctor relationship. A striking issue in Morselli's book, in fact, is that it promoted a direction that was the direct inverse of what psychiatrists were doing in other countries, such as France, where some psychiatrists were dividing psychoanalysis into a general theory and a therapeutic method, showing concerns about the former and embracing the latter.[60] The formula helped spread psychoanalysis, in a non-orthodox manner, in French mental health professions. Morselli seems to have been inspired by the French example, since he also divided his book into doctrine (first volume) and practice (second volume). However, he took this division in a totally different direction in that he was reluctant but concessive concerning many issues of the former, while unambiguously negative about the latter. For him, psychoanalytic therapy was a danger both to the patients and to the profession of psychiatry. In turning to the second volume of his book, then, we can learn a good deal about how questions of professional respectability became crucial for rejecting psychoanalysis.

One of the first significant issues in Morselli's reflections on the psychoanalytic treatment is certainly not a theoretic one. When commenting on how a psychoanalytic therapy is organized, he observes that the doctor charges the patient with a fee that is not precisely low, for an undetermined amount of time, for a treatment whose result is uncertain. This fact appears

[60] Agnès Desmazières, *L'inconscient au paradis. Comment les catholiques ont reçu la psychanalyse* (Paris: Payot, 2011), p. 23.

perhaps more scandalous and unacceptable to Morselli than any other theoretical issue in all of psychoanalysis. He is in fact explicit in this volume that charging a patient directly is a "debasement" of the profession, especially for such a long and continuous treatment. This reaction is revealing for two main reasons. First, it shows some of the most ingrained attitudes among Italian asylum psychiatrists regarding the commercialization of their practice. Morselli's comment, indeed, is coherent within the institutional setting of most Italian psychiatrists, who based their careers and prestige by working in state asylums, jobs they probably attained through a combination of academic merit and clientelistic networking. Although some of them –like Morselli— also worked for private clinics, the financial link with the patient was always mediated by the administration. Having income come directly from the patients, and especially in the manner implied by a psychoanalytic treatment, appeared to Morselli dishonest and close to charlatanism. (ii, 277-278).

Second, Morselli's remarks are also revealing of the fact that he was perhaps conflating virtue with impotence. Although he was probably genuine in his scorn for psychoanalysis' commercialism, his text also shows that long and expensive therapy would be impossible for Italian psychiatry's lack of prestige among the population (ii, 34-35, 278-280, 328). As he observes with a mix of sarcasm and resignation, "among the gravest difficulties that the practice of psychoanalysis will meet in Italy, if it spreads, will be the opposition and stinginess of [the patients'] relatives."[61] For Morselli, having a patient submit to a long, exhausting, and invasive treatment is almost as utopian as having their families agree to pay for it. Asylum psychiatrists, indeed, had to use quite forceful methods and face the scorn of both patients and relatives to

[61] [tra le difficoltà più gravi che l'esercizio della Psicanalisi incontrerà in Italia, se essa vi si diffonde, consisterà nell'opposizione e nella taccagneria dei parenti]. (ii, 328)

receive payment: they could not expect patients or their families to suddenly appear and willingly pay for treatment. Moreover, a highly time-consuming therapy extending a period of months was totally unrealistic for the conditions of Italian psychiatry. Morselli insisted that the thorough and exhausting psychoanalytic methods of analysis and interpretation were a total waste of time, both for doctor and patient. By his standards, having more than one meeting or two with a patient, including a detailed and robust interrogatory, was more than enough to make apparent any possible pathological complexes.

Morselli's reasoning coheres with the general institutional conditions of Italian psychiatry. In 1926, for instance, there were 368 psychiatrists for 50,682 inmates in state asylums, meaning a patient-doctor ratio of 138.[62] This situation does not seem encouraging for theories and treatments demanding time and individualized attention. A change in these exhausting labor conditions would require a significant transformation in the way resources were driven toward the practice of mental health. Based on Morselli's comments and what we know of war pensions, it seems that neither the state, nor the families, nor the psychiatrists themselves were proactive in generating attitudes and strategies that would allow for the improved financing of mental health care in Italy. The figures were different, of course, in private clinics, where 93 doctors throughout the country were in charge of 1,732 patients, meaning that there were 19 patients for each doctor.[63] These conditions seem more encouraging for a time-consuming and expensive treatment, as well as for experimentation and innovation in the realm of therapy. We could therefore raise the question of why psychoanalysis did not spread among those institutions.

[62] See Istituto Centrale di Statistische del Regno d'Italia, *Le Malattie mentali in Italia* (Rome: tipografica operaia Romana, 1928), p 106.

[63] Idem.

Some of Morselli's reflections reveal important issues that help us to understand why, even in private clinics with abundant resources, many psychiatrists preferred to avoid psychoanalysis. In his references to the psychoanalytic therapy, Morselli accepts the grounding of Freud's theory of the sexual etiology of hysteria. (i, 27) Sometimes he also defends a reform of sexual morality. He in fact accepted that society was being extremely repressive when it came to women's sexuality, and that the conflicting pressures of accepting society's demands and satisfying their own sexual desires could have pathological effects (ii, 115-116). By the same token, he also believed that sexual abstinence was a cause of neurosis, and that sexuality had to be more properly attended to as part of a healthy mental life. Despite his concessions to Freud's theory and some of his remarks about the role of repressive sexuality in society, however, most of his reasoning on this issue emphasized the dangers of psychoanalytic treatment.

Morselli made clear that life was frustrating enough at its conscious level. As a result, unveiling and airing out unrecognized sexual impulses, denied hostile feelings, and secretly treasured resentments as the psychoanalytic procedure sought to do meant making things even more difficult. Such procedure, according to him, would end up exacerbating those repressed and suffocated passions even further. As he warned very graphically, "'let sleeping dogs lie': here's a popular proverb that some psychoanalysts (…) forget with strange imprudence. [64] Even if Morselli accepted that life involves a good deal of unhappiness, he was totally opposed to making it explicit or moving to conscious reflection the deepest sources of discontent and frustration. His attitude was coherent with his general conception of the cure, which should always appeal to the conscious part of the mind. The psychiatrist, therefore, had to have an

[64] ['non destate al cane che dorme': ecco un volgarissimo proverbio che taluni psicanalisti (…) dimenticano con strana imprudenza]. (ii,45)

inspiring role in elevating the patient's self-esteem, morality, ethical values, and strength of will. Rather than uncovering a problematic and sordid part of his or her mental life, treatment had to act through suggestion in reinforcing the patient's commitment to what Morselli considered higher values and aims (ii, 120-121, 287-290,300).

While pointing to very different conceptions about the cure of mental disease and the psychiatrist's role, Morselli's critique of psychoanalytic therapy moved to the foreground one more anxiety: the problematic intimacy between doctor and patient in psychoanalytic treatment. He was particularly concerned with the notion of transference. According to Morselli, transference involved the displacement of the patient's neurotic fixations onto the analyst, with the consequence of constituting in the clinical relationship a sort of second disease that would replace the original one and could make apparent unconscious attachments (ii, 37, 268-269). This idea was utterly scandalous for him. It would involve a transformation, he thought, of the doctor-patient connection into an extremely personal and emotional bond with an apparent erotic dimension. He was explicit that this situation could lead to all kinds of excesses and, crucially, discredit the profession. He did not hesitate to defend respectable psychiatry from the dangers implied by psychoanalysis, a warning that Morselli framed in a very exaggerated and alarmist contrast:

> instead of seeking and provoking it, this 'transfert' should be avoided, prevented. In healthy psychotherapy, in lieu of such dubious and always scarring attachment for the scarcely honest and decent consequences that can derive from it, it should be enough to have feelings of trust, respect, and suggestibility toward the healer. Going beyond these feelings, on which the right fortune of the great professionals and clinicians has always been based, implies not a few risks, such as

> transforming medicine into a sort of *ars amatoria* as Ovidio understood it or, in the best hypothesis, as Socrates practiced 'peripatetically' with his students.[65]

Morselli's point about transference was not an exaggerated personal reaction. It seems in fact a shared response within Italian psychiatry. In a university lecture on psychoanalysis, Leonardo Bianchi made a similar point. He observed that one of psychoanalysis's main problems was that "the psychiatrist enters in full confidence with his patient, and this circumstance is favorable to invest an erotic undertone to their rapports."[66] Significantly, for both Morselli and Bianchi, the risk for a personal and erotic rapport was not that doctors could abuse their patients. On the contrary, their main anxiety was that hysteric women would end up playing with the confidence of young and naïve psychiatrists. Bianchi in particular was rich in describing the hysteric woman as a fascinating and bewitching character, highly manipulative, and capable of deploying exotic enchantments on the doctor. "I have seen many times a kind of servitude that exists between the poorly trained doctor and the hysteric woman" he warned his university

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[65][piuttosto che andare a cercarlo o provocarlo, questo 'transfert' dovrebbe essere evitato, prevenuto. Alla sana Psicoterapia, anzichè un attaccamento di natura cotanto dubbia e sempre temibile per le poco oneste o poco decenti conseguenze che ne possono derivare, deve bastare un sentimento di fiducia, di rispetto, di suggestibilità verso il curante; più in là di codesti sentimenti, sui quali in ogni tempo s'è bassata la corretta fortuna dei grandi professionisti e clinici, si corrono rischi non lievi, tra cui quello di trasformare la Medicina in una specie di Arte amatoria come la intendeva Ovidio, o, nella migliore delle ipotesi, come la praticava 'peripateticamente' Socrate ai suoi scolari.]
ii, 324.

[66] [lo psicanalista entra in piena confidenza col suo paziente, e questa circonstanza è favoravole ad imprimere un colorito erotico ai loro rapporti]. Leonardo Bianchi, "La psicanalisi," op cit, p. 75, see also 79-80.

students. "He is fascinated by the phenomena exhibited by his patient, and becomes her humble servant, like a mystic to the orders of the divinity."[67]

Morselli's remarks on the evils of transference and psychoanalytic treatment more generally emerge out of similar remarks. He was explicit in claiming that the psychoanalytic technique of having a doctor and a patient in a room, with no witnesses, talking about intimate issues was a perfect recipe for disaster (ii, 40-41). His concern was that the female hysteric patient could use the situation in her favor and accuse the doctor of imaginary abuses (ii, 329-330). By no coincidence, when referring to these issues he mentioned the case of the gynecologist Luigi Maria Bossi. Although mostly famous for the doctor's visceral anti-feminism, Bossi's case is also well known because he developed a gynecological cure for hysteria—until he was murdered in 1919 by the jealous husband of one of his patients (ii, 329).[68] This episode suggests that Bianchi and Morselli's concerns were most probably very present anxieties among professionals handling hysteria. As the latter stated, to "never trust a 'nervous' woman, in 'hysterics' in particular, is a well-known law of conduct (...)"[69] (ii, 329) A rule of conduct that, perhaps, was the main reason why Italian psychiatrists should stay away from psychoanalysis.

In letters to Edoardo Weiss, Freud made clear that Morselli's study seemed to him the work of a "donkey," and incited Weiss to write a devastating criticism of it.[70] In another letter to

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[67] [Io ho più volte constatato una specie di servitù che intercede tra il medico poco accorto e la isterica.Egli è come fascinato dai fenomeni presentati dalla sua paziente, e diventa il suo umile servitore, come un mistico agli ordini della divinità.] idem, 75.

[68] Bossi and Morselli were both from Genoa and had a highly conflictive relationship. See Paolo Francesco Peloso, "Psychiatry in Genoa," in History of Psychiatry, 15 (1),(2004), pp.35-38.

[69] [Diffidare delle donne 'nervose,' delle 'isteriche' in particolare, è conosciutissima legge di condotta(…)].

[70] See "Letter from Freud to Weiss, January 23, 1926," in Edoardo Weiss, *Freud as a Consultant. Recollections of a Pioneer in Psychoanalysis* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1991),pp. 52-54.

Morselli written some weeks later, however, he maintained his politeness and manifested his "regret that you cannot accept our youthful science without great reservations."[71] Freud's letter to Morselli has elicited comments for many reasons. It is relevant for studies on Freud's sense of Jewish identity, since it includes a compliment on Morselli's essay on Zionism.[72] Although he made clear that he was not sure Morselli's thesis about psychoanalysis as a Jewish science was right, Freud added that "but if it is I wouldn't be ashamed" and mentioned his remote but poignant feeling of solidarity with the Jewish people. Other researchers have stressed Freud's duplicity in encouraging Weiss to attack Morselli, while seeking common points with him in this letter.[73] Considering the contents of Morselli's book, however, Freud's response seems the logical one before an author presenting himself as moderately accepting of psychoanalysis. Freud's comments on Jewishness, in addition, are part of the same game: he stresses his distinction and "sectarianism" before Morselli's attempt to neutralize him within Italian psychiatric Positivism. They also give him the opportunity for a spark of subtle irony. Freud in fact closed his letter showing Morselli his satisfaction that "you call yourself a pupil of a man of my race-the great Lombroso."[74]

Agostino Gemelli: Catholicism, Fascism, Psychoanalysis

As a major architect of Italian psychology and a very influential and relevant powerbroker, the Franciscan friar Agostino Gemelli (1878-1959) constitutes a crucial character in measuring

[71] Idem, and also in "Letter from Sigmund Freud to Enrico Morselli, February 18, 1926," in *Letters of Sigmund Freud, 1873-1939* (London: Hogarth Press, 1960), pp. 365-366.

[72] See for instance Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender,* p. 35.

[73] Paul Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss: The House that Freud Built* (London: Transaction Publishers, 2005), pp. 107-112.

[74] "Letter from Sigmund Freud to Enrico Morselli," op. cit.

responses to psychoanalysis.[75] Born as Edoardo Gemelli into a non-religious family, he maintained from very early in his career a political high profile. During his years as a student of physiology at Pavia University, he became a very committed Socialist militant, combining his Marxism with the then-fashionable Positivism. After a deep spiritual crisis during the early 1900s, he converted to Catholicism, rejected his previous ideological allegiances, and became a priest, while also turning toward psychology as his main professional interest. This transformation did not imply a life of retreat and passivity. Gemelli's links to the Catholic Church reinforced his ambition and talent as a high-level institutional organizer. For the rest of his life, he committed himself to the spread of neo-scholastic philosophy, a current of thought seeking to combine faith with science and a rallying cry for Catholics to have a more active life in culture, academic affairs, and politics. Although at first he exercised most of his intellectual and cultural militancy through his journals *Vita e Pensiero* and the *Rivista di Filosofia Neoscolastica* (1909), his main leap toward social relevance occurred in 1921, when he created a Catholic private university in Milan—one of the few in Italy outside the state system. Combining funding from private sources and the support of the Vatican and the different governments, Gemelli's Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore [Catholic University of the Sacred Heart] became a crucial stronghold for shaping a Catholic leadership and for initiating the move toward reconquering the cultural relevance Catholics felt they had lost since the time of Italian national unification. This initiative also endowed Gemelli with important recognition within the Catholic

[75] For basic bibliography on Gemelli, see Giorgio Cosmacini, *Gemelli. Il Machiavello di Dio* (Milan: Rizzoli, 1985) and, more recently: Maria Bocci, *Agostino Gemelli, rettore e francescano: chiesa, regime, democrazia (Brescia: Morcelliana, 2003).* See also Giovanni Miccoli, "Padre Agostino Gemelli, Università Cattolica e Regime Fascista" Studi Storici, Year 45, n 2 (april-June, 2004), 609-624.For a summary of his life in English, see the necrology of one of his disciples, Leonardo Ancona, "Agostino [Edoardo] Gemelli,1878-1959," in The American Journal of Psychology, Vol. 73, n 1, March 1960, pp. 156-159.

world, especially when the Pope Pius XI appointed him as the president of the newly created Pontifical Academy of Sciences in 1937.

Along with his role as a Catholic cultural organizer, many studies on Gemelli focus on the interwar years and the alliances he established with Fascism. In many speeches and statements especially throughout the 1930s, Gemelli made apparent his praise for Mussolini and Fascism as endorsers of Catholicism in Italy.[76] His support toward the regime emerged in fact from a mix of common perceptions and opportunism. On the one hand, Gemelli shared Fascism's contempt for liberalism, socialism, and Marxism, invested his intellectual activity with an intense nationalism, sought to reconcile modernity with patriarchal notions of family, and scorned the materialistic spirit underlying secular society.[77] His lip service to the regime, on the other hand, was oriented toward defending Catholicism and his university. He had many things to thank Fascism for in that regard. The Gentile school reform empowered the Sacro Cuore University by recognizing it as a degree-granting institution, along with introducing religious—specifically Catholic—instruction in schools. Later on, during the 1929 Concordat between the Fascist regime and the Vatican—an agreement which was crucial in working out unresolved problems between the state and the Church that traced back to the years of national unification—the Catholic University was specifically mentioned in one of its clauses, granting its autonomy from political power. Gemelli's support of the regime was visible enough to get him into trouble after 1945, when the allied authorities occupying Italy included him on the list of people to purge

[76] See Miccoli, "Padre Agostino Gemelli," and also Luisa Mangoni, , "L'universita Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Una risposta della cultura cattolica alla laicizzazione dell'insegnamento superiore." In *Storia d'Italia. Annali 9, La chiesa e il potere politico dal Medioevo all'età contemporanea* (Turin: Einaudi, 1986).

[77] For references to the initiatives on family and gender by people and groups linked to Gemelli, see Victoria de Grazia, *How Fascism Ruled Women: Italy, 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), pp. 11, 93, 143-145, 218.

from the university. Despite this difficulty, he managed to resume his influential position soon afterward. In fact, the period after World War II witnessed the summit of Gemelli's organizational efforts. The success of his politics of shaping a Catholic leadership became apparent after 1948, when Christian Democracy became the ruling party in Italy. Some graduates and professors from his university were then drafted as important personnel in government positions during the following years.[78]

Gemelli's role as a leading figure in the field of psychology is another of his defining features.[79] His skills in gaining favors from the state and Church paved the way for many professional opportunities. During the First World War, for instance, he became a consultant for the Supreme Command [Comando Supremo] of Italy's armed forces. His efforts were then focused on using psychology to reinforce obedience among the troops and administering tests for selecting pilots in the air force—thus marking him out as a pioneer in the area of personnel selection.[80] His position in the world of Italian psychology rose further after 1924. Precisely at the moment when the Gentile reform was eliminating the teaching of psychology in schools and universities, Gemelli was named chair of experimental psychology [professore ordinario] as well as the director of the psychology laboratory at his own university. Gifted in detecting areas of social relevance in his discipline, his strategy of profession building concentrated on applied psychology. He was particularly interested in the development of industrial and labor psychology and in techniques for selecting personnel, as well as in studying forms for improving productivity in factories. The strategy proved effective for regaining some terrain for

[78] See Cosmacini, *Gemelli,* 247-258.

[79] See for instance Marhaba, *Lineamenti,* 50-54, and Mecacci, *Psicologia e psicoanalisi*, 26-39; 49-51.

[80] Gemelli's experience in military psychology can be appreciated in his book of essays *Il nostro soldato* (Milan: Treves, 1917). For an analysis of Gemelli's military psychology, see Mario Isnenghi, *Il mito della grande guerra: Da Marinetti a Malaparte* (Bari: Laterza, 1970), 258-267.

psychology. He indeed had a first important success in 1939, when he convinced the government to create a Committee for the Application of Psychology in the Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche [National Council of Research]—the Italian state-sponsored institute for the funding of research in science and technology. When Italy entered the war the following year, the Committee played a central role in selecting soldiers for the army. A similar step forward occurred in 1941, when Gemelli presented plans to create graduate degree programs specializing in psychology at some Italian universities. Under his leadership, and based on his emphasis on applied psychology in close connection with the army and labor, Italian psychologists were able to regain some of the institutional ground they had lost in the previous years.[81]

Because of his proximity to positions of decision-making, his strategic situation in the building of the profession of psychology in the interwar years, and his multiple roles as a scientist, a Catholic, and a man of politics, Gemelli played a complex role in the history of psychoanalysis in Italy.[82] On a purely theoretical level, Gemelli does not appear to have been enthusiastic about psychoanalysis, but he was certainly not antagonistic to it, either. His contact with Freudian texts was instituted before the war, when he wrote a series of handbooks for Catholic priests in Latin, a language that he used in order to avoid popular circulation because his texts dealt with issues of sexuality. He quoted Freud when referring to sexuality, psychopathological issues, and introducing Catholic priests to psychotherapy.[83] His most explicit

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[81] See Marhaba, *Lineamenti,* 50-55.

[82] For references to the relationship between Gemelli and psychoanalysis, see Cosmacini, *Gemelli,* 234-237; Daria Colombo, "Psychoanalysis and the Catholic Church in Italy: The Role of Father Agostino Gemelli, 1925-1953" in Journal of the History of Behavioral Sciences, Vol. 39 (4) (Fall 2003), 333-348; Michel David, *La psicoanalisi nella cultura italiana* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990), pp 100-105; and Agnès Desmazierès, *L'inconscient au paradis*, pp. 25-41.

[83] For comments on these texts by Gemelli, see Mecacci, *Psicologia e psicoanalisi*, 47-50.

ideas on psychoanalysis, however, emerged during the 1920s and 1930s. His main point was that the most recent psychological currents such as Gestalt School, behaviorism, and psychoanalysis contributed to psychology with valuable research and insights.[84] In the particular case of psychoanalysis, he accepted the idea that the study of the psyche could not be reduced to consciousness, that pathological cases could be used to explore the unconscious part of the mind, that psychoanalysis helped illuminate the obscure life of instincts, and that it moved psychology away from a very static conception of the psyche in favor of a more dynamic one.[85] Not surprisingly, however, he was straightforward in claiming that texts by Freud addressing religion or general social issues—such as *Civilization and its Discontents* or *The Future of an Illusion*—did not belong to psychology, and that whenever Freud partook in general speculations on culture and civilization, he betrayed a highly deterministic, evolutionist, and materialist view of the world.[86] This conclusion was one of Gemelli's main philosophical and cultural gambles. He consistently repeated that, although psychology was an autonomous science, its data about man and the mind had to be integrated into neo-scholastic philosophy and, more particularly, to Aristotelian notions of the soul [anima] and the Scholastic system constructed by St Thomas of Aquinas in the middle ages. According to him, that was the main way to avoid the mechanical, deterministic, or aprioristic generalizations provided by rival philosophical systems, such as Cartesian thought, Positivism, or Italian neo-Idealism.[87]

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[84] His main articles exposing this idea are: Agostino Gemelli, "Funzione e strutture psichice," and "Lo studio della personalità umana," in Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica, vol. 17 (1926) pp. 40-68, and vol. 29 (1937), pp. 310-316. Also important the article published in booklet form: *Il punto di vista della neoscolastica di fronte alla moderna psicologia* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1934).

[85] See Gemelli, "Funzione e strutture," p. 67, *Il punto di vista…*, pp. 13-15, and "Lo studio della personalità," p. 310.

[86] See *Il punto di vista,* 15-17.

[87] This is the basic thesis in *Il punto di vista,* 18-25.

Gemelli's concessive reflections on psychoanalysis went together with other evidence of endorsement of the new science. Some scholars, in fact, believe that Gemelli corresponded with Freud.[88] Although the evidence is not convincing, what is certain is that in specific situations Gemelli showed openness to psychoanalysis. During the months of the polemics between Guido de Ruggiero and the Italian psychoanalysts [see chapter one], Gemelli showed his support for the latter. Although he was probably motivated by his scorn for the liberal De Ruggiero, he published an article in his journal praising Edoardo Weiss as the Italian expert on psychoanalysis, while also reproducing some of Nicola Perrotti's points against De Ruggiero.[89] In addition, a comparison of the syllabi for the different courses in psychology during the late 1930s shows that Gemelli's course in the Sacro Cuore University included psychoanalysis as one of the modern psychological currents—his was in fact one of the few syllabi including psychoanalysis at the time.[90] At the summit of the Fascist racial and anti-Semitic policies, Gemelli seems to have become protective toward some psychoanalysts. In 1940, he co-authored the book *Antropologia e psicologia* along with the racist anthropologist Guido Landra and the psychologist Ferruccio Banissoni—who, as noted in chapter one, was a friend of Weiss's from Trieste and a former member of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society. The book traced a map of Italian psychology, noting its many schools, trends, and institutions. It included the Padova

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[88] See Agnès Desmazières, *L'inconscient au paradis,* p. 29, and 243 footnote 24. Gemelli mentioned that he corresponded with Freud in a letter to Kurt R. Eissler on February 1957, and that the letters had been unfortunately destroyed during a fire at his university.

[89] "Le amenità filosofiche del prof. Guido de Ruggiero," Rivista di filosofia neoscolastica, vol. 25, (1933), pp.128-129. The article was not signed, but it surely was written by Gemelli or clearly approved by him.

[90] Some of the syllabuses of the courses on Italian Universities during late 1930s and early 1940s can be consulted at Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministerio Pubblica Instruzione, Direzione Generale Istruzione Superiore. Divisione II. Leggi, Regolamenti, Esamini, etc. (1925-1945) folders 152, 153, 154, and 155. For Gemelli's course for the academic year 1938-1939, see the booklet: *Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore. Programmi dei corsi ufficiali per l'anno accademica 1938-1939* pp. 66-67, in folder 152.

School of Vittorio Benussi and Cesare Musatti and their research on psychoanalysis as a legitimate part of the field. Gemelli also specifically noted that Musatti was working on a book project on "such an important subject."[tale importante argomento].[91] Considering Musatti's recent expulsion from the university due to the anti-Semitic laws, this reference was reassuring. Gemelli in fact became a protective figure when the anti-Semitic laws hit psychoanalysts or psychoanalytic-oriented psychologists. Apparently, his role was crucial in helping the psychologist Enzo Bonaventura and the psychoanalyst G M Hirsch find positions abroad.[92]

But Gemelli was not always so supportive and tolerant toward psychoanalysis. Over time, his hostility escalated, and by the 1950s he finally gave free rein to aggressive and alarmist thinking on psychoanalysis's psychical determinism as a denier of freedom, while also repudiating its invasiveness into the holiness of the soul.[93] Even more importantly, during the interwar years he might have been involved in the banning of Weiss's *Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi*.[94] As recent research has shown, after the second edition of Weiss's book *Elementi di Psicoanalisi* in 1933, many influential Italian priests within the Vatican and the Holy Office tried to condemn Weiss's book and, more generally, condemn psychoanalysis. Many Catholics in Italy and abroad repudiated Freud's ideas on religion and the alleged materialism underlying psychoanalysis, while growing quite alarmist regarding the possible competition of

[91]Guido Landra, Agostino Gemelli, Ferruccio Banissoni, *Antropologia e psicologia* (Milan: Bompiani, 1940), pp. 422-424.

[92] Gemelli also used his influence to have Bonaventura's positive book on psychoanalysis [see chapter one] translate to French. See Bocci, *Agostino Gemelli,* 517-519.

[93] Gemelli made these points in the book *La psicoanalisi oggi* (Milan: Vita e pensiero, 1954).

[94] Weiss blamed Gemelli for the banning of the *Rivista* in a letter to Ernest Jones in 1956. However, in his interview with Paul Rozen during the 1965, he manifested his doubts about the role of Gemelli. See Library of Congress, The paper of Edoardo Weiss, "Letter from Edoardo Weiss to Ernest Jones on June 30, 1956," p. 14 for the first reference, and Roazen, *Edoardo Weiss,* p. 35 for the second.

psychoanalysis and education. Pope Pius XI then consulted Gemelli for advice. Unfortunately, there are no clear records of Gemelli's position, except that soon after his intervention the Fascist government banned Weiss's journal while the Vatican suspended the process of condemnation. This evidence suggests a compromise between different trends within the Catholic world: the most recalcitrant against psychoanalysis did not insist on condemnation in exchange for an unofficial lobby on the Fascist authorities against Weiss's group—which perhaps also worked as a message to psychoanalysts abroad. It is not clear what exact role Gemelli played in this initiative. The episode, in any case, is a reminder that despite Gemelli's apparent scientific respect for psychoanalysis, he was participating in a cultural and political milieu that harbored deep and powerful suspicions against the psychoanalytic movement and used authoritarian methods to impose its views.[95]

We get a clearer sense of Gemelli's institutional and programmatic attitudes toward psychoanalysis when focusing on his strategies of profession building during the 1940s. As mentioned before, in January 1939 Gemelli became the president of the Committee for the Application of Psychology at the CNR. Because of his interest in stimulating applied psychology, he started to collaborate in the selection of personnel for the army. He then created a Center of Psychology directed by Banissoni. Because of their influential positions, both Gemelli and Banissoni became crucial players in Italian psychology at the time. One of their first strategies was to forge links with the German psychologists. The summit of these efforts arrived in June 1942, when the CNR organized a Congress in Rome and Milan, in the hope of creating links of friendship and mutual cooperation between German and Italian psychologists. One of the

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[95] For the most recent reference to the episode using new documentation, see Desmazières, *L'inconscient au paradis,* 34-37.

most relevant participants of the Congress was Matthias Heinrich Göring the cousin of Marshal Herman Göring and the director of the Nazified German Society of Psychotherapy, which had become the "Aryan" version of psychoanalysis after the Nazis destroyed the Freudian psychoanalytic movement in Germany.[96]

During the second session of the Congress, Göring explained to the Italians that German-speaking countries had housed psychoanalysis for many decades, but that the Jewish origins of this movement made most of their members' political, social, and religious principles problematic. National-socialists therefore decided to "purify" the movement, while also retaining its valuable aspects. They therefore started to assimilate it into the "psychotherapy" movement, which then "took the place of psychoanalysis, using all the scientific observations and research methods that constituted the soul of truth of the psychoanalytic movement and which should not be lost since they constitute a precious method in the struggle against neurosis."[97] Once they convinced the Nazi authorities that psychotherapy was free from its Jewish associations, they could start to gain financial and institutional favors from the government and expand its training, practice, and relevance in Germany. The session in which Göring explained "psychotherapy" to his Italian audience ended with displays of an enthusiastic reception. The Italians indeed discussed the possibilities of applying the same idea in Italy, and immediately approved a

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[96] For a history of the Göring institute and the destruction of the psychoanalytic movement in Germany, see Geoffrey Cocks, *Psychotherapy in the Third Reich: The Göring Institute* (London: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

[97] [prese il posto della psicoanalisi utilizzando tutte le osservazioni scientifiche e i metodi di indagine che costituivano l'anima di verità del movimento psicanalitico e che non doveva andar perduto in quanto costituiva un prezioso mezzo nella lotta contra la neurosi.] Giuseppe Pizzutti, "Convegno degli psicologi italiani e tedeschi," Archivio di Psicologia, Psichiatria, Neurologia e Psicoterapia, Year II, n 4 (October 1941), p. 766.

proposal to create an Italian Society of Psychotherapy, whose statutes were apparently written by Gemelli.[98]

Although significant in many ways, the summit between the Italian and German psychologists was not a new beginning for Gemelli's positions on psychoanalysis or for his strategies of profession building. In the previous years, in fact, he had undertaken similar initiatives. In 1938, when the psychoanalyst Marco Levi Bianchini lost his position and his journal due to the anti-Semitic legislation, Gemelli met him at Naples and took control of his review. The journal removed the word "psychoanalysis" from its title and added "psychotherapy," thus becoming the official organ of the CNR.[99] Gemelli maintained a similar attitude when advising Fascism about how to behave regarding psychoanalysis when collaborating for the 1940 *Dizionario di Politica* [Dictionary of Politics] edited by the Fascist Party.[100] The entry on psychoanalysis in that work was written by Gemelli, which betrays both his influence on Fascist policies on the issue and his attitude during those years. The brief essay— almost two columns long—defines psychoanalysis as a method for curing some mental disorders, while also being a doctrine that comprises pedagogy, art, social life in general, religion, and philosophy. After a schematic and value-neutral exposition of some notions of psychoanalysis, Gemelli gets to the point: in order to make a judgment on psychoanalysis it is crucial to separate the "therapeutic technique" from the "doctrine" and, with regard to the latter,

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[98]Idem, p. 769. There is not transcript of those statutes in the report of the congress.

[99] For a reference to this episode, see David, *La psicoanalisi,* 104.

[100] The four-volume *Dizionario di Politica* was an original idea by Giovanni Gentile, who wanted to create an encyclopedia of political terms without the liberal assumptions that, he thought, was the main defects of most existing dictionaries. The project finally materialized in 1940, and was directed by the Fascist Party but guided by the Instituto Treccani, which was the same institution which had edited Gentile's major *Enciclopedia italiana*. See Gabriele Turi, *Il mecenate, il filosofo, e il gesuita. L'"Enciclopedia italiana," specchio della nazione* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2002), pp. 74-75.

consider the "consequences for the political, philosophical, and religious fields."[101] Gemelli was clear that the technique was one more method of treatment among others, and even if it was dangerous due to the emotional link it established between doctor and patient, it was a valid one and definitely had to be known by practitioners. The doctrine, in contrast, was more problematic, since psychoanalysis was based on

> a deterministic conception of life, so intimately connected to the facts which are at its basis, that it becomes extremely difficult, for anyone not culturally mature or endowed with an acute critical sense, to discern how much of use there is in the psychoanalytic doctrine, detaching it from the materialistic thread that pollutes the whole psychoanalytic conception.
>
> [una concezione deterministica della vita, così intimamente connessa con i fatti che ne sono a base, da riuscire estremamente difficile per chi non è culturalmente ben maturo e dotato di acuto senso critico, sceverare quanto di utile vi è nella dottrina psicoanalitica, staccandolo della trama materialistica, che inquina tutta la concezione della psicoanalisi (…)]

The 1940 entry on psychoanalysis marked a change from Gemelli's previous articles, which had never been so politically aggressive toward psychoanalysis. He in fact closed the piece asserting that the political and philosophical consequences of psychoanalysis were quite clear from the writings of Freud and his followers: "Destructive of religion, to which it denies all

[101] [conseguenze che derivano nel campo politico e in quello filosofico e religioso]. Agostino Gemelli, "Psicoanalisi," in *Dizionario di Politica* (Rome: Istituto della enciclopedia italiana, 1940), p. 573.

value, in the political domain psychoanalysis orients its hopes toward communism."[102] This conclusion is representative of Gemelli at his worst and his Machiavellian methods. Even if he might have a point when it comes to Freud's attitudes regarding religion, he was clearly manufacturing psychoanalysis's pro-communism, probably to fuel Fascism's hostility to the Freudian movement. Taken as a whole, however, the entry reveals Gemelli's intentions concerning psychoanalysis, and it reflects how they transpired in some of his institutional undertakings. As mentioned before, during 1941 Gemelli designed a project for obtaining graduate degrees in psychology. The plan would establish a graduate degree for doctors at his university and the Milan State University. When seeking approval from the Fascist ministry of Education, Gemelli defended the need to make psychology more professional and to include teachings on psychology for medicine students. His point was that since psychology was not taught in the university, psychotherapy was unregulated, with the consequence that psychoanalysts were training many non-doctors to become practitioners.[103] Although this was an exaggeration—psychoanalysis had been destroyed in Italy by then—and probably a strategy to fuel alarmism in order to get support for his project, the comment summarizes what seems to have been Gemelli's main design in his initiatives for psychoanalysis: to incorporate the teaching of "valid" elements of Freudian theories in an official institutional setting, while discouraging by any means possible the spread of an independent, unregulated, and politically and culturally

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[102] [Distruttiva della religione, della quale nega ogni valore, nel dominio politico la psicoanalisi orienta le sue speranze verso il comunismo.] idem.

[103] See the document: "Schema di progetto per la istituzione della professione di psicologo e per la preparazione di personale capace di procedere alla valutazione della personalità sia ai fini dell'orientamento professionale, sia ai fini dell'esercizio della psichiatria," p 11. The document was a project written by Gemelli and presented to many bureaucrats in the ministry of education in order to get their approval. In ACS MPI DG Istruzione Superiore. Divisione II. Leggi, Regolamenti, Statuti, esami, corsi, statistiche, tasse, studenti, ecc. (1925-1945). B69, folder: Scuola di Specializzazione in Psicologia.

suspicious psychoanalytic movement. In other words: to assimilate psychoanalysis by filtering and sanitizing it.

Conclusion: Constructing a Profession

The experience of Italian psychiatry and the writings and initiatives by Morselli and Gemelli show us that the most influential responses to Freudian theories were determined by various factors including ideological assumptions, institutional possibilities and limitations, allegiances to different theoretical or philosophical models, and strategies for gaining symbolic and material resources for a particular discipline. This explains why an absolute rejection of psychoanalysis was impractical even for a discipline with strong somatic allegiances such as Italian psychiatry, or for a powerbroker with strong ties to the Church and the Fascist regime such as Gemelli. Getting rid of a theory and a therapy that was prestigious in other countries would mean the extreme isolation of Italian psychiatry and psychology. Moreover, straightforward commitment to ideological pressures would have contradicted the alleged autonomy of scientific knowledge from political imperatives. By the same token, full acceptance of psychoanalysis challenged basic assumptions of the doctor-patient relationship, perturbed Catholic mandates in a world in which the Church was a powerful social force, and empowered a movement whose members—outside Italy—were suspicious in the eyes of the Fascist regime. The result was a compromise that involved filtering and sanitizing psychoanalysis in order to incorporate it as part of the psy professions.

One of the most convincing ways of accounting for the attitudes of people such as Morselli and Gemelli is to conceive them as examples of profession-building strategies. In an effective summary of the theories of professionalization by Anglo-American sociologists, the

historian Jan Goldstein observes that most scholars agree on four defining features of professions. First, professions must master a specific esoteric knowledge. Second, they monopolize a given practice. Third, professions have autonomous control over who belongs or does not belong to them. Fourth, they all show a service ideal since, even when individual professionals earn a living through them, they must also show that commitment to social welfare is their goal. This last feature is crucial for explaining the prestige underlying the profession that distinguishes it from many other occupations.[104] Although Goldstein warns against using this definition ahistorically—since it is meant to describe common perceptions of professions during the twentieth century—these features can be productively applied to the Italian situation.[105]

Profession-building strategies in interwar Italy were deeply oriented by anxieties on the part of psychiatrists and psychologists regarding the status of their "specific esoteric knowledge," and how to validate, legitimize and monopolize it. The attachment of psychiatrists to a medical conception of their practice, for instance, was a way to construct legitimacy for their profession by associating it with a more prestigious science. Among psychologists, the uncertainties regarding their discipline were also explicit, since it was unclear whether it belonged to the field of humanities or was a part of the physiological sciences. In addition, its academic status was marginal. The professional weakness of psychiatrists and psychologists is also apparent in that they were extremely dependent on the government, or institutions such as the Church in the case of psychology, in order to gain symbolic and material resources—such as

[104] Jan Goldstein, *Console and Classify. The French Psychiatric Profession in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2001), 10-11.

[105] For examples of other cases of professionalization in the mental health area, see Mitchell G. Ash, "Psychology in Twentieth-Century Germany: Science and Profession," and Geoffey Cocks, "The Professionalization of Psychotherapy in Germany, 1928-1949," both in Geoffrey Cocks and Konrad H. Jarausch, *German Professions, 1800-1950* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 289-307, and 308-328 respectively.

the financing of asylums, institutional support, and official recognition. Finally, the way in which they defined their social utility was also connected to their inferiority complex. Stressing notions of heredity and race was crucial for psychiatrists who hoped to present themselves as guardians of society's biological stock. Gemelli's emphasis on applied psychology is also an example of the ways in which psychology presented itself as fulfilling requirements from industry employers and the army.

In the midst of all these anxieties around professional construction, psychoanalysis could only find a modest acceptance. In the first place, in its original form as an independent movement creating its own organization and journals, psychoanalysis challenged the monopoly of the psychotherapeutic practice. As a result, its acceptance could hardly occur under such "sectarian" fashion. Moreover, basic principles of psychoanalytic therapy, such as transference, were viewed with suspicion and as a threat to the respectability of the profession, whereas the emphasis in purely psychological origins of mental disorders diminished the "medical" self-representation of psychiatrists. Finally, psychoanalysis collided with strong corporations and social perceptions. Catholics lobbied to diminish its cultural influence, while nationalist and racist psychiatrists such as Morselli emphasized it as non-Italian, stressing the parallel between Jewishness and sectarianism. Due to these reasons, acceptance of psychoanalysis could only occur through a very fine filtering. While this attempt to assimilate psychoanalysis was conspicuous, the truth is that it was a very reduced and limited invitation by disciplines that were themselves struggling to maintain their institutional status. In this sense, a basic conclusion about the relationship between psychoanalysis and the psy disciplines in interwar Italy should be clear on one point: the limits to psychoanalysis were not due to the over-powerful arrogance of the mental health professions, but to their very weaknesses and insecurities.

Chap 3.

Psychoanalysis, the Novel, and the Politics of Realism

This chapter focuses on two interrelated phenomena. First, I analyze a series of debates and responses to the ascending importance of the modern novel among Italian writers and critics during the 1920s and 1930s. In these decades, literary and cultural magazines fueled a discussion about whether the turn toward the narrative genre among Italian writers was positive or not, and to what extent it fit within Italian aesthetic traditions. These debates became a crucial way of addressing the growing cultural influence of psychoanalysis. Among many other factors, the association of the novel with the spread of Freudian ideas was propelled by the reception of the work of the Triestine writer Italo Svevo (1862-1928), who is usually considered a forerunner of modern Italian narrative prose in the twentieth century. As I discuss in chapter four, Svevo's writings are in fact closely tied to Freudian texts and psychoanalytic insights. In this chapter, however, I focus only on general debates concerning the novel. My aim is to show that literary debates over the novel framed the reception of psychoanalysis in many cultural circles. Second, the chapter also focuses on a group of young intellectuals gathered around the Roman journal *Il Saggiatore* (1930-1933). Intensely committed to this group, the physician Nicola Perrotti was also one of the founding members of the Italian Psychoanalytic Society and a would-be key figure in Italian psychoanalysis. Perrotti's articles in *Il Saggiatore* associated psychoanalysis with a general set of concerns common among university students and graduates, including a fascination with realism as an aesthetic and ideological current, an emerging generational consciousness, and a perception of modernity as a moment of liberating crisis. Perrotti's experience, moreover, provides the clearest example of a high-profile, serious use of psychoanalysis in Fascist Italy. Although we should not exaggerate the reach of *Il Saggiatore* in

terms of circulation, its impact on intellectual milieux was certainly important—and its defense of psychoanalysis was aggressive.

Psychoanalysis and the Novel

In the 1920s and early 1930s, Italian literary circles initiated a long-lasting conversation about the novel and the need to modernize Italian narrative prose. The popularity of novels was not a new phenomenon and many novelists were bestselling writers in Italy. What changed in the mid-1920s, though, was the attitude of the critics. In the previous decades, most critics considered the novel a low and commercial-oriented cultural product, disregarding it on aesthetic grounds in favor of other genres such as poetry, essays, or short prose poems. Although this attitude slowly faded, critics continued to betray a general distrust of the novel, which in turn discouraged many writers whose narrative prose was identified with "writing badly." The gradual aesthetic acceptance of the novel incited expectations and anxieties. On the one hand, many writers and critics, especially the youngest ones, perceived the novel to be a powerful device for capturing and describing the modern experience of common men and women in a realist way. Moreover, turning toward the novel made it possible to bridge the gap between high and mass culture, by engaging with a genre that would pave the way to popular acceptance. On the other hand, the novel also fueled various concerns even among its supporters. First, critics and writers worried about how to respect artistic integrity and merit when turning to a new and popular genre. Second, they believed that Italy lacked a solid narrative tradition, and many feared rising foreign influences. Finally, concerns about the immorality of the novel, in some cases, became crucial

for associating its spread with a problematic Freudian influence.[1]

Some historians of Italian literary criticism have explicitly connected attitudes toward the novel in Italy with the acceptance or rejection of psychoanalysis.[2] Giacomo Debenedetti (1901-1967)—who was himself an active promoter of the modern novel during the 1920s and 1930s—developed the most straightforward approach in this regard. In a series of lectures in the early 1960s, Debenedetti argued that there is a close relationship between the contemporary novel and psychoanalysis, both of them emerging from a crisis of the bourgeois consciousness. In literature, this crisis started with Dostoyevsky and was full-fledged by the time of Proust and Joyce, who signaled that there are areas of human experience that cannot be accessed by means of the language, morality, and scientific canons that the nineteenth-century middle classes endorsed. Freud's theorization of the unconscious was the medical expression of this same crisis. Psychoanalysis and contemporary literature, Debenedetti thought, are therefore fellow travelers in establishing "a new system of coordinates of man in the world" [un nuovo sistema di coordinate dell'uomo nel mondo] (3-4) and a new representation of the modern man and his sense of detachment from the past, estrangement from his social environment, and inner

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[1] For studies on the responses to the novel in the interwar period, see Alberto Cadioli, *Tra prosa d'arte e romanzo del Novecento (1920-1960)* (Milan: Arcipelago Edizioni, 1989), esp. 11-111; Bruno Falcetto, *Storia della narrativa neorealista* (Milan: Mursia, 1992), pp. 11-22; Romano Luperini, *Il Novecento* (Turin: Loescher, 1981), pp. 284-286; Cesare de Michelis, *Alle origini del neorealismo. Aspetti del romanzo italiano degli anni 30* (Cosenza: Lerici, 1980), and more recently Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities: Italy 1922-1945* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), especially chap. 2, "narrating the nation," pp. 46-69. According to some scholars, the weakness of the novel in Italy is a long-lasting national characteristic tracing back to the early nineteenth century. See for instance Remo Ceserani and Pierluigi Pellini, "The Belated development of a Theory of the Novel in Italian Literary Culture," in Peter Bondanella and Andrea Ciccarelli (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to the Italian Novel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 1-19.

[2] Luperini, *Il Novecento*, 284-286; Giacomo Debenedetti, *Il Romanzo del Novecento* (Milan: Garzanti, 2001).

otherness.[3] Debenedetti argued that, in Italy, these new coordinates were established by the ascendance of the modern novel and of authors such as Federigo Tozzi, Italo Svevo, Luigi Pirandello, and Alberto Moravia, who introduced literary modernity into Italy.[4] Measuring the acceptance of these authors can help explain much of psychoanalysis' role, or lack thereof, in Italian culture.

Debenedetti's reflections are useful for locating the relation between psychoanalysis and the modern novel in the Italian context. He convincingly argues that psychoanalysis and certain forms of literary imagination are companions, and that promoting the latter might imply accepting the former. When exploring the Italian debates over the novel during the 1920s and 1930s, however, we must be cautious regarding two things. First, even if there is a connection between modern narrative and psychoanalysis, not all writers showed enthusiasm for it. In fact, writers associated with the renewal of Italian literature explicitly rejected psychoanalysis. Second, Italian critics and writers had a particular understanding of what psychoanalysis was. Many observers referred to "psychoanalytic and analytic literature" as an established genre or a particular type of novel. Even when they failed to explain its main characteristics, it was usually associated with the influence of authors such as Marcel Proust, James Joyce, Andrè Gide, or D. H. Lawrence. It is not clear how this perception emerged. In some cases we can trace the origin to French journals, and especially the influential literary journal *La Nouvelle Revue Française* (NRF), which was very vocal in associating Proust with psychoanalysis and Freud. This might also explain why Gide, who was the NRF's editor for many years, fell into the same category.[5]

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[3] Debenedetti, *Il romanzo,* 417-419, 461-463, 474-481, 590-613.

[4] Idem, 4-5, 11-12, 418-422, 451-453, 517-592.

[5] For the involvement of the NRF, Andre Gide, and many other French reviews and intellectuals with psychoanalysis during the 1920s, see Elizabeth Roudinesco, *Jacques Lacan and Co. A History of Psychoanalysis in France, 1925-1985* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), pp. 72-100.

The case of D. H. Lawrence is perhaps easier to explain, since his eroticism might be the reason for attributing a Freudian influence to his work. Joyce's inclusion in this genre is more difficult to trace. His relationship to Svevo—as I will show in the next chapter—might be a reason for this. Perhaps, some remarks by Ezra Pound on *Ulysses* pointing to the psychoanalytic influence in Molly Bloom's interior monologues were another source.[6] What is clear is that in the 1920s and 1930s many critics in Italy associated psychoanalysis with these literary trends. Moreover, many writers and critics' reflections on Freud and psychoanalysis were framed within the debates over how to integrate such narrative novelties into Italian culture. These debates therefore constitute a crucial part of the history of psychoanalysis in Italy.

The Novel and its Discontents

We can obtain a clear example of the entwinement of the responses to the novel *and* to psychoanalysis in a series of reflections by the former modernist and later Catholic nationalist writer Giovanni Papini.[7] In January 1929, Papini published an article in the conservative literary journal *Pegaso* in which he argued that Italian literature was in a dire state because Italian writers were trying to do what the national character was less prepared for, namely, novels.[8] Papini's main point was that Italians were so chaotically individualistic that they failed to gain a proper understanding of other people's behaviors and sentiments. As he put it very explicitly: "in short, we are not psychologists." [non siamo, in una parola, psicologi] (39). Whereas Italians lacked the

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[6] See Ezra Pound, "Ulysses," The Dial, LXXII, 6 (June 1922), re-edited in T S Eliot (ed) *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound* (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), pp. 403-409.

[7] For Papini's itinerary within the Florentine avant-garde, and his conversion to Catholicism during the war, see Walter Adamson, *Avant-garde Florence: From Modernism to Fascism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993), pp. 52-101, 153-181, and 214-217 for his conversion during May 1918.

[8] Giovanni Papini, "Su questa letteratura," Pegaso, year I, issue 1, (January, 1929), p. 38.

ability to create the independent realities and characters that novels required, they were good at expressing their inner selves and deploying the power of persuasion and argument. Papini thought that in order to reinvigorate national literature, writers should insist on genres and artistic skills that characterized an alleged "Italian tradition" and that better fit the national character, such as poetry, oratory, essays, history, or satire. Papini stressed that the novel was not a universal measure of artistic merit, but the result of specific traits of the French, English, and Russian national characters. Italians, in his view, should refrain from trying to imitate badly what those people excelled in, and concentrate more on what they knew how to do best.[9]

Papini's rejection of the novel was part of a deeply pessimistic perspective vis-à-vis Italian literature. He believed that the Italian writers had not produced anything relevant in decades, losing touch with common people. For Papini, the reasons were that the new spectacles, forms of entertainment, and ways of life popularized after the war had destroyed the aesthetic sensitivity of the population.[10] This was a profound impression he conveyed in his 1931 satirical book *Gog*. The work focuses on an eccentric American millionaire—Gog, short for Goggins—who tours the world and meets the main personalities of his time, such as Henry Ford, Albert Einstein, Mahatma Gandhi, and Vladimir Lenin. His meetings and discussions emphasize the problematic aspects of the modern world: lack of stable points of reference, debasement of hierarchies, and destruction of the specificity of the aesthetic experience. The chapter on Freud in that book marks a clear connection between psychoanalysis, the novel, and modernity.

Hungry to expand his knowledge of the most recent trends in European thought, Gog visits Freud for his birthday and gives him a gift—a statue of Narcissus—that pleases the

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[9] Idem, p. 42. Probably, Papini's idea was an elaboration of ideas in Benjamin Cemieux's book *Panorame de la literature italienne*, Paris, 1928, pp 86-87.

[10] Papini, "Su questa letteratura," 32-33.

Viennese doctor to the point that he agrees to have an honest and extended talk. Freud then confesses to Gog that his actual ambition had been to achieve notoriety through art, but since he was poor he had to specialize in medicine to get a living. He could only satisfy his artistic wishes by inventing psychoanalysis, which rather than a science is "the transfer of a literary vocation to terms of psychology and psychopathology."[11] For Papini's Freud, therefore, it was coherent that psychoanalysis "has been better understood and applied by writers and artists than by doctors," especially considering that "my most ancient and intense desire would be to write actual and pure novels, and I possess a trove of first-hand materials, that would be the fortune of a hundreds of novelists."[12] Freud then explains how during his visits to France for his studies, he became familiar with the French fashions that shaped his literary background: Decadence, Naturalism, the Romanticism that still survived in the early 1880s, and Symbolism. By combining these influences with his pre-existent passion for Goethe, Freud gave a medical form to what was actually a substitute for his unfulfilled literary ambition. From Romanticism, for instance, Freud took the idea of the predominance of love, while Naturalism shaped love into a more physiological and instinctual form. Decadentism was crucial to assimilate dream and artistic creativity, and thanks to Symbolism he got the focus on interpretation. (126-128) Psychoanalysis, as Freud tells Gog, is actually a translation, in scientific jargon, of "the three major literary schools of nineteenth century: Heine, Zola, and Mallarmé get together in me,

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[11] [il transferto d'una vocazione letteraria in termini di psicologia e psicopatologia]Giovanni Papini, *Gog* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1942) p. 126. [1st edition: 1931]

[12][è stata meglio intesa e applicata dagli scrittori e dagli artisti che dai medici(…)il mio più antico e tenace desiderio sarebbe di scriver veri e propri romanzi e possego un tesoro di materiali di prima mano, che farebbero la fortuna di cento romanzieri]. (129)

under the patronage of my old Goethe."[13]

Papini's ideas about the relationship between psychoanalysis and nineteenth-century literary imagination are certainly striking, and some of his remarks seem akin to ideas by later historians.[14] His chapter on Freud reveals in addition that Papini paid serious attention to his work, and that he considered him a key intellectual referent. Italian psychoanalysts, indeed, tried to capitalize on Papini's reference to Freud in *Gog*, and the psychoanalyst Emilio Servadio even detected some psychoanalytic insights in Papini's later books.[15] Yet even if Papini's reading of Freud was imaginative, sophisticated, and perhaps ambivalent, his framing of the book within a polemic on the novel was a highly hostile decision. By relating psychoanalysis with the works of novelists—and especially the French ones—Papini was marking out psychoanalysis as one of the main ills of modernity, alien to the Italian mind.

In *Gog*, Papini briefly resumed his attacks against narrative. This time, suggestively, he framed his attack within the topic of generational conflict, and the idea that modern times were empowering young people and undermining the authority of their elders—a crucial issue during those years, as I will show below. Once again, Papini related this generational revolt to the growing influence of the culture of entertainment, which also explained the recent boom of the novel. As he wonders, "how is it possible that today the most fertile and profitable genre is the

[13] [le tre maggiore scuole letterarie del secolo decimononico: Heine, Zola, e Mallarmé si congiungono in me, sotto il patronato del mio vecchio Goethe.] idem,130.

[14] The idea of Freud's frustrated ambition for social recognition as crucial for understanding the emergence of psychoanalysis is in fact a major idea in Carl Schorske, *Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture* (New York: Vintage, 1979), pp. 181-20.

[15] See the letter by Weiss to Giovanni Laterza, where he cited *Gog* as an evidence of the increasing interest in Freud among writers. The letter is reproduced in Daniela Coli, *Croce Laterza e la Cultura Europea* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1983) pp. 87-90. Emilio Servadio pointed to Papini's use of Freudian ideas in his next book, *Dante Vivo*. See Emilio Servadio, "Papini e la psicoanalisi," Rivista italiana di psicoanalisi, year II, issue 2, April 1933, pp. 140-141.

novel, which has been so ignored for centuries?" It is a question with a clear answer: "Because today men have become children and want to be told stories."[16] The progressive infantilization of society as a result of modern entertainment explained also the impact of Surrealism, Dadaism, and modern abstract painting, which were the results of grown-up people painting and writing as children. The trend had also reached philosophy, which had been captured by notions such as "the whim, the unconscious, intuition, in sum, the irrational proper of childish spirit."[17]

We must not exaggerate the popularity of Papini's stance. His idea of totally withdrawing from writing novels was extreme, and even the most conservative critics tried to nuance it.[18] Papini's standing, however, is representative because of the issues he addressed when rejecting the novel: modernity, a lack of psychological understanding by Italians, and the generation gap. One of the most active defenders of the narrative genre, on the other hand, connected the same issues but, of course, endowed them with different meaning. The literary critic Giovanni Titta Rosa (1891-1972), who contributed to many Italian reviews of the time, and especially to the cultural section of the Ferrarese journal *Corriere Padano*, was particularly articulate about how

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[16] [Come mai, oggi, il genere letterario piu fecondo e redditizio è il romanzo, del quale, per tanti secoli, il mondo ha fatto a meno?"] [Perchè gli uomini, ora, son ritornati fanciulli e voglion sentir raccontare delle storie]. Papini, *Gog,* 257.

[17] [l'estro, l'inconsciente, l'intuizione, insomma l'irrazionale, proprio dello spirito bambinesco.] Idem, 259

[18] See for instance Ugo Ojetti, "Lettera a Giovanni Papini," Pegaso, Year I, issue 5 (May 1929), pp. 609-614 where he showed more flexibility to accepting the novel as a valid artistic genre, even in Italy. The literary journal *L'Italia Letteraria* also published a series of negative responses to Papini's article in the following months: Domenico Petrini, "Di Giovanni Papini e di questa letteratura;" Piero Gadda, "Su questa letteratua. Verde Speranza;" Balbino Giuliano, "Su questa letteratua. Papini e l'Idealismo;" G B Angioletti, "Pioggia e bel tempo," in L'Italia letteraria, January 13, 20, 27 and May 12 respectively. See also a general summary of Papini's point and the responses it generated in "Esiste una crisi letteraria?" Bibliografia Fascista, Year IV, n 3-4 (February 1929), pp. 61-63. This article also highlights Papini's loneliness in his anti-novel extremism.

to promote the novel in Italy.[19] Throughout a series of articles and a book he published in 1930, Titta Rosa complained that his generation had been educated in a highly elitist and contemplative culture that downgraded the novel as a literary genre and privileged philosophical criticism, lyricism, and history as more prestigious forms of intellectual activity—in other words, exactly what Papini was defending. For Titta Rosa, this anti-novel attitude implied a detachment from a larger history of Italian narrative prose. He contended that Italy did have a tradition of novel-writing tracing back to Romantic authors such as the early-nineteenth-century writer Alessandro Manzoni, whose novels incorporated the common man into literature and challenged the elitist genres endorsed by the aristocracy and the courts. Seen under this light, the work of authors usually associated with the novel such as Gabriele D'Annunzio, Grazia Deledda, Luigi Pirandello, Svevo, and Tozzi should not be considered exceptional cases or even signs of foreign-influence, but instead legitimate expressions of the national culture.[20]

Titta Rosa's crucial point was that the strength of the novel laid in the engagement of artists with contemporary society. Key to his argument was the belief that Italy had weakened its production of novels during the nineteenth century—when England, France and Russia became predominant—due to the weakness of its national unification. The lack of a homogeneous society made it difficult for writers to create the common language and experience that make the

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[19] The *Corriere Padano* was the journal of the Fascist leader Italo Balbo. For information on its cultural page and Titta Rosa's participation in it see Anna Folli (ed), *Vent'anni di cultura ferrarese. Antologia del 'corriere padano.' Vol I*, (Bologna: Pàtron editore, 1978), especially "Introduzione," pp. XIX-XX. For some background information on Titta Rosa, see U Piscopo, "Rosa, Giovanni Battista (Titta)," in Ezio Godoli (ed), *Il Dizionario del futurismo. Vol 2*, (Florence: Vallechi, 2001), p. 990. Rosa had started his intellectual life as a Futurist.

[20] Giovanni Titta Rosa, *Invito al romanzo* (Milan: Crippa, 1930), pp. 45-47, 81-83. See also his articles, "Sull'arte del romanzo," Fiera Letteraria, July 10, 1927; and "Chiudo la polemica," Fiera letteraria, August 26, 1928; "Invito al romanzo," Corriere Padano February 16, 1928; "Postille all''invito al romanzo.' Dalla lirica al romanzo," Corriere Padano, December 11, 1934. The latter now available in *Vent'anni di cultura ferrarese*, pp. 17-19, and 244-246.

novel possible, precisely in the century when the novel was becoming the most popular genre in Europe (68-69). In contrast with that situation, Titta Rosa argued that, after the First World War, Italian society presented a unified, exciting, and dynamic national reality through which writers could resume the country's narrative tradition. The conditions were therefore ripe for young writers to portray the experience of common men and women in the modern world through realistic prose. All what they had to do was move away from the "ivory tower" and "feel contemporary life in the most intimate and committed mode."[21]

Although it seems contradictory, Titta Rosa's invitation to get involved with reality favored the influence of psychoanalysis. His defense of the novel as a way of engaging with national reality paved the way to bringing psychological insight into literature and eventually admitting the influence of some psychoanalytic-oriented currents as well. First, Titta Rosa understood that psychology was a critical technical device for modern narrative, and that an innovative Italian literature seeking to grasp the common man's experiences in the changing modern world would require "a psychologist that could also be an artist."[22] Second, Titta Rosa specifically addressed the "psychoanalytic novel," which he associated with the Freudian influence and with authors such as André Gide and his followers, Joyce's *Ulysses*, and Proust. Even when he did not show excessive enthusiasm about it, he nevertheless introduced it as one of the most important types of contemporary novel and a legitimate literary initiative. Most importantly, his approach tended to neutralize any identification of the analytic literature and complex psychological descriptions with the non-Italian—as Papini had done. In Titta Rosa's line of thought, a complex and realistic portrait of modern men and women was the result of a

[21] [sentire la vita contemporanea nel modo più intimo e impegnativo] Titta Rosa, *Invito al romanzo,* 84. See also 69-73, 87-88.

[22] [uno psicologo che sia anche un artista], idem, 73.

solid and involved national literature, which was in itself an outcome of a dynamic and engaging nation.

Titta Rosa's defense of the novel was not an isolated case. In 1932, when making the yearly balance of literary trends for the bulletin of the Bompiani publishing house, the critic Arnaldo Bocelli observed that narrative forms—the novel, the short story, and the novella—were decidedly prevailing over other genres. He notes that this is not " because of fashion, but for that intimate requirement—which is becoming more apparent—to adhere to the multiplicity of life, and to give us, of this life, an accomplished, whole representation."[23] When referring to the multiple ways of narrating this adherence to life, he sketches a list of the main genres or types of novels:

> Naturally, the means to achieve these are very different: there are those who, for instance, walk the old streets of the psychological novel with a moral, social, or worldly background; or those of the all naturalist, verist [i.e. Italian naturalism], or regionalist novel; and there are those who walk the stormy ones of the analytic or psychoanalytic novel; and those who walk those of the 'fantasy' or 'myth.' And, of course, the results are not always artistically fortunate. In fact, in many cases they are uncertain and scarce. But what is important is that in all these attempts and efforts there is seriousness and moral sincerity, and much engagement. In sum, in the writer, after so much dilettantism, the man is

[23] [non per moda, ma per quell'intima esigenza—che si va sempre meglio palesando—di aderire alla molteplicità della vita, e di darci, di questa vita, una rappresentazione compiuta, totale].Arnaldo Bocelli, "L'annata letteraria in Italia. Romanzi e novella," *Almanacco letterario Bompiani 1932* (Milan: Bompiani, 1932), p. 30. Although published in 1932, the bulletin was aimed at summarizing the trends of 1931.

emerging.[24]

[Naturalmente i mezzi per giungere a ciò sono assai disparati: c'e chi, per es., batte le vecchie strade del romanzo psicologico a sfondo morale o sociale o mondano; e chi quelle del romanzo naturalista, verista o regionalista; e chi quelle tormentose del romanzo analitico o psicanalitico; e chi quelle della 'fantasia' o del 'mito;' e, naturalmente, i resultati non sempre sono, artisticamente, felici; anzi spesso, incerti e scarsi. Ma quel che importa è che in tutti questi tentativi e sforzi c'è molta serietà e sincerità morale; molto impegno. Nello scrittore sta, insomma, dopo tanti dilettantismi, rinascendo l'uomo.]

These reflections suggest that in the early 1930s recognition of psychoanalysis as a relevant influence in literature had spread, something confirmed through the alarmist responses it elicited. A Catholic critic, for instance, complained in April 1930 that "the dirty literature of the Freudian and psychiatric consulting-rooms" [la sporca letteratura dei gabinetti freudiani e psichiatrici] had become as popular for young writers "as becoming a Hollywood 'diva' for any town girl." [come l'essere 'diva' di Hollywood da ogni femminuccia cittadina.][25] This was of course an exaggeration, and there is no evidence that the trend was so strong.[26] Rather, what happened starting in the early 1930s—and for a short period of time—was that critics such as Titta Rosa and Bocelli showed some tolerance toward the Freudian influence in literature. They basically

[24] Idem.

[25] Romeo Romita, "Tra cultura e dottrina" Il Frontespizio, (April 1930).

[26] An isolated episode reflects that some people might have sought to show allegiance to Freud for promotion purposes. In 1932 a physician from Brescia named Vincenzo Girone wrote a novel—*Lampada spenta*—with an introduction dedicated to Freud and sent it to him. See Michel David, *La psicanalisi nella cultura italiana* (Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1990) p. 609 for a reference to the episode. See also the letter from Girone to Freud in Library of Congress, The Papers of Sigmund Freud, Box 43, folder 25.

pigeonholed psychoanalysis as a genre of the novel, thus admitting it as a valid influence on a specific type of literature. Bocelli understood that the psychoanalytic influence was rooted in a moment of exploration and a search for a more spontaneous and definite style. He thought that a stream of young Italian authors including Alberto Moravia, Euralio De Michelis, Adriano Grego, and Umberto Barbaro, among others, comprised a cohort whose first novels might be obsessed with analysis and introspection. Bocelli was nevertheless confident that the young cohort would find a better balance in their writings with time.[27]

The debates over the novel show that the rhetoric of commitment to and involvement with reality was the main legitimizing argument for recognizing, accepting, and regulating innovation in literature. It gave critics the opportunity to question previously conservative positions about art and opened the Italian literature to foreign influences, while also relating the new narrative with national strength. Moreover, as Ruth Ben-Ghiat has observed, this procedure was not oppositional to Fascism, and rather, the opposite was true: some policymakers within the regime tolerated and accepted the new trends in a combination of incentives and censorship. [28] Critics such as Titta Rosa and Bocelli, in fact, wrote for Fascist journals, and the rhetoric about realism and engagement in the 1930s echoed Fascism's call to artists and intellectuals to abandon their aesthetic ivory towers and commit to social reality. [29] The reception of psychoanalysis during the early 1930s was not an exception to this. Before moving to that point more, however, I will focus on some anxieties and discussions concerning psychoanalysis and literature during

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[27] See for instance his review of Umberto Barbaro's Luce Fredda, where he made this point: Arnaldo Bocelli, "Luce Fredda," Educazione Fascista, V IX, issue 6 (June 1931), pp. 551-554.

[28] Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* 46-69;

[29] See other pieces by Bocelli in this direction: Bocelli, "Il carattere della nuova letteratura," Bibliografia Fascista, Year V, n 1, (January 1930), pp. 194-201; and "Titta Rosa, Invito al romanzo," idem, n 8 (August 1930), pp. 719-721 where he emphasized that the modern novel was possible because Fascism had created a whole new national reality.

these years.

"Psychologism" and "Cerebrality"

Exploring the debates over the novel reveals that introducing complex psychological insights into narrative sparked different anxieties. Papini's comment that Italians should refrain from writing novels because they were not psychologists was not an isolated observation. Many critics made explicit references to the characteristic psychological refinement among French authors, their management of "analytic psychology," and their ability to dissect complex emotions and sentiments as their main asset for their success. This perception provoked divided responses. Some observers considered that incorporating insights from modern psychology was the right thing to do in order to represent the modern man, whereas many others accused modern narrative trends of artificiality and lack of authenticity for portraying emotions and sentiments.[30] In

[30] See for instance Arrigo Cajumi, "La crisi del romanzo," Il Baretti, Feb 1928, pp. 10-11. Cajumi's article is very important for the debates around the novel in general. He observed that the last decades witnessed a change in the psychology of modern man, and that Italian writers had to renovate their techniques—including their understanding of psychology. See the responses to Cajumi's article: Gittierre, "La crisi del romanzo," Fiera letteraria, March 18, 1928; Gino Saviotti, "Troppa intelligenza," Fiera Letteraria, July 15, 1928; Francesco Parri, "Problemi nuovi e forme vechie," in Fiera Letteraria, July 22, 1928; G B Angioletti, "Cerebralismo e ingenuità," Fiera Letteraria, July 29, 1928; Arrigo Cajumi, "Modernità e tradizione," Fiera letteraria, August 5, 1928; Gino Saviotti, "Risposte e chiarimenti," Fiera letteraria, August 5, 1928. Gittierre and Angioletti sided with Cajumi, defended that Italians had to incorporate insights from psychology to modernize their literature, and showed a more positive attitude to foreign and modernist influences. Saviotti and Parri were against it, and promoted a more simplistic and spontaneous way of describing emotions and sentiments. See also Titta Rosa "Della psicologia nell'arte" Convegno, N 8 (August 1926) who argued that Italians did not need the French influence since they had a tradition of psychology of their own, tracing back to Manzoni. The editors of the review *Solaria* responded arguing that Titta Rosa's Italian psychological tradition was an illusion, and consequently defending an opening up to the French influence. See "Principio di schedario," Solaria, n 3, March, 1926. Another example of reflections on this issue: A Bossisio, "Psicologismo," Convegno, N 6 (June) 1931, pp. 352-355. A more explicit piece regarding psychoanalysis and its negative effects on literature is found in Ercole Reggio, "Perchè la letteratura italiana non è popolare in Europa," Nuova Antologia,

addition, the expansion of psychological language raised concerns regarding the blurring of the line dividing the pathological from the normal. The critic Emilio Cecchi made this point when he commented on the growing influence of psychoanalysis, showing his disgust with the increasing use of psychopathological language to talk about people's lives. As he observed:

> Each one wears stitched in a flap (…) an identity card certifying him as neurastenic, abnormal, psychastenic, delusional, insane, mad. And with what reciprocal tolerance, with what massonic sympathy, one accepts in the other these true or faked alterations and handicaps (…) The old rigor in spliting the insane from the healthy, the mad ones from the responsible ones, was ferocious and tremendous in some of its effects, but much more enlightened than this playing on the mobile sands of the neurastenia, the boredom, the sexual complexes, etc." [31]
>
> [ognuno porta cucito in un risvolto (…) un piastrino di riconoscimento che lo certifica nevrastenico, anormale, psicastenico, allucinato, toccato, pazzo. E con quale reciproca tolleranza, con quale massonica simpatia, l'uno considera nell'altro queste alterazioni e menomazioni, vere o presunte (…) L'antico rigore nello spartire i pazzi dai sani, i dementi dai responsabili, era feroce e tremendo in taluni effetti; ma assia più illuminato di questo vacuo trastullarsi sulle sabie mobile delle nevrastenie, dell'uggie, dei complessi sessuali, ecc.]

Year 65, issue 1405 (October 1, 1930) pp. 298-307. See the response to Reggio's article by Nicola Perrotti, "Perchè la letteratura Italiana non è popolare in Europa," Il Saggiatore, Year I, issue 9, (November 1930), pp. 285-287. See also the criticism by Granata against Titta Rossa defense of "lyricism" over analysis, in G Granata, "L'arte e la autobiografia," Il Saggiatore, Year I, n 3-4, May-June, 1930

[31] Emilio Cecchi, "Psicanalisi," Pegaso, Year I n 6, (June 1929), p. 748.

Some Fascist ideologists were also impatient with the expanded use of psychopathology for literary purposes. Sometimes they adopted humanist language and scorned the use of psychological analysis as a way of obliterating the characters' humanity and their capacity to be inspired by high aims. As one critic wrote in Giovanni Gentile's review, complaining about some contemporary writers: "masters of pathological analysis, of neuropathic and lamenting pessimism, they are incapable of representing a man, of achieving in art a simple and superior *humanitas*" [maestri nell'analisi del patologico, del pesimismo neuropatico e piangone, essi sono incapaci di rappresentarci un uomo, di riaggungere nell'arte una semplice e superiore *humanitas.*][32] In other cases, this alleged humanism adopted a more disciplinary and ideological tone. Concerns about the weakening of virility were crucial in opposing the spread of "analysis" and pathologies. A contributor to *Critica Fascista*, for instance, expressed concern because,

> We start to see circulating, in some Italian novels, kinds of dull, undecided, unachieved, will-less men, tossing between the wife and the lover or lovers; introspective, Freudian, uncertain, psychopathic men, who agitate in a grey dawn, always greyer of sensations and intuitions; men dominated, exhausted, defeated, virile-less. [33]
>
> [Si cominciano a veder circolare, in certi romanzi italiani, tipi di uomini flacchi, sconclusionati, senza volontà decisa, sballottati tra la moglie e l'amante o le amanti; uomini introspetivi, freudiani, incerti, psicopatici, che si agitano in un crepuscolo grigio, sempre più grigio, di sensazioni e d'intuizioni; uomini

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[32] Francesco Formigari, "Dell'arte fascista," Educazione Politica, Year IV, issue 10, (October1926) p. 514.

[33] Mario Labroca, "Discorsi agli uomini," Critica Fascista, Year XI, n 2, January 15,1933. See also similar comments, also directly related to the Italian novel in the column by Il Doganiere, "Situazione del romanzo," Critica Fascista, Year XI, n 15 (July 15), 1933.

dominati, affranti, vinti, svirilizzati.]

How influential were these ideas in orienting the public taste and writers' choices? How far could writers go in the descriptions and analyses of passions and emotions? Which was the right amount of pathology and neurosis a novel should contain? How thin could the line dividing the pathological and the normal get? One of the best cases for exploring how these limits were established and negotiated involves one of the most popular writers of those years: Alberto Moravia, whose 1929 novel *Gli indifferenti* [The Indifferent Ones] provoked a strong reaction among critics and readers.[34] Two years before publishing his book, the nineteenth-year-old Moravia intervened in the debates over modern narrative with a very well-regarded formula. Arguing in favor of the novel, he presented writers such as Pirandello, Proust, and Joyce as important literary references and innovative influences to consider seriously. Yet he was also clear that the richness of the novel was in its depiction of actions and reality, and that the "crisis of the novel" started as a result of an imbalance of excessive "cerebralità" [cerebrality]. He observed that, especially in the immediate postwar period, writers exaggerated the inner life of the characters, thus initiating a "psychological season" with excessive concentration on the "arbitrary world of intentions, thought, unachieved desires, subconscious."[35] He therefore drew a line between useful and realistic psychological insights in the work of nineteenth-century authors such as Dostoyevsky and the unnecessary and visceral complications among recent writers,

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[34] Fort the impact of *Gli indifferenti* see Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities, 55*-61; Cristina Benusi (ed), *Il punto su: Moravia* (Bari: Laternza, 1987) pp. 4-11; and Cadioli, *Tra prosa d'arte e romanzo del Novecento*, 87-94.

[35][mondo arbitrario delle intenzioni, del pensiero, dei desideri ineffettuati, della subconscienza.] Alberto Pincherle, "C'e una crisi del romanzo,?" Fiera Letteraria, October 9, 1927. Alberto Pincherle was Moravia's actual name. His article motivated a follow-up: Giuseppe Sciortino, "Ancora sul romanzo," idem, November 6, 1927. Sciortino coincided with Moravia but he put more emphasis in defending the post-war creative context.

> After Raskolnikoff came Leopold Bloom; after the hallucinating analysis of crime, that not so interesting one of defecation and other similar…atrocities; or thought substitutes action and we have the more or less broad monologues—such as the very beautiful one by Joyce's Mrs Bloom, or that by Miss Elsa by Schnitzler—more or less Freudian. These ones, it is good to notice, do not throw major light on the psyche of the character, in fact, among so many minor details the few notions we had about their character go astray.
> [dopo Raskolnikoff è venuto Leopold Bloom; dopo l'allucinante analisi del delitto quella non altrettanto interessante della defecazione o d'altri simile… atrocità; oppure il pensiero sostituisce addirittura l'azione ed abbiamo i monologhi più o meno ampi (come quello bellissimo della Signora Bloom di Joyce, o quello della Signorina Elsa di Schnitzler) più o meno freudiano; i quali però, è bene osservarlo, non danno alcuna luce sulla psiche del personaggio, anzi fra tante minuziosità si smarriscono le poche nozioni che si avevano del suo carattere.]

In Moravia's account, Italian authors should profit from the most recent trends in narrative but skip inconvenient, obscene details and avoid letting psychological experiments take the upper hand over the requirements of the plot. In particular, Italian literature should resume from where writers had stopped before the war, and should therefore focus on action and reality and discard what he called "the useless psychoanalytic ballast." [l'inutile zavorra psico-analitica.] This conclusion seems an outright condemnation of the Freudian influence in literature, and in fact Moravia was clearly detaching himself from any psychoanalytic orientation. The core of his reasoning, however, was more flexible. As his polemic on the novel

unfolds, he confronts authors who condemn the allegedly artificial use of psychological insights in literature.[36] In a polemic written in March 1931, Moravia claimed that "psychological analysis" [l'analisi psicologica] was useful as long as it "concretes itself around a fact (…) a character." [si concrete intorno ad un fatto (…) un carattere.][37] Moravia posited that the novel was a self-regulating organism. Any judgment about the right amount of "cerebrality" or psychology had to be based on the requirements of the plot and the story, and not on external concerns such as moralism or artificial and imposing uses of psychological theory.

Most probably, Moravia's rephrasing of his previous position was an effect of the debate set off by *Gli indifferenti*. Many reviewers responded with alarm to the novel's "disturbing" straightforwardness. Despite Moravia's previous caution about psychoanalysis, he found himself being accused of "Freudianism". The controversy that *Gli indifferenti* incited is useful in revealing the set of characteristics attributed to psychoanalysis among certain critics. The novel focuses on an impoverished aristocratic family comprised of the widow Mariagrazia, her daughter Carla, and her son Michele. Mariagrazia has a lover, Leo Merumeci, who is in charge of the family's finances and who knows about their ruin but manipulates the situation in order to make a conquest of the young and beautiful Carla. Michele, on the other hand, looks at the whole situation as a spectator, and remains indifferent while maintaining an erotic relationship with Lisa, one of Mariagrazia's closest friends and Leo's former lover. Once Carla finally decides to marry Leo, Michele tries to act and attempts to take Leo's life. Yet in a significant slip he forgets

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[36] See for instance his piece containing his main ideas on the novel and contesting Papini's claims: Alberto Moravia, "Appunti sul romanzo,"March 30, 1930. See also his polemics with Nino Savarese: Nino Savarese, "Sul romanzo italiano;" Alberto Moravia, "Ancora sul romanzo. Risposta a Nino Savarese;" and Savarese, "La polemica sul romanzo," in L'Italia letteraria, March 1, 8 and 22, 1931.

[37] Moravia, "Ancora sul romanzo," cit.

to put the bullets in the gun and loses his chance.[38] The novel ends with Carla marrying Leo and Michele immersed in his discontent with the whole situation while also being impotent to do anything to support his family or the marriage.

The novel illustrates Moravia's skill in introducing just the acceptable amount of "psychological analysis." On the one hand, it has doses of "cerebrality," or issues that could be read as "Freudian": the erotic encounters, especially those between Leo and Carla and Michele and Lisa, are almost incestuous; and descriptions of Michele's immersion in his thoughts reveal memories of his incestuous desire for his sister-.[39] Moreover, an underlying Oedipal drama can be detected in Carla's decision to marry her mother's lover or in the rivalry between Michele and Leo. Michele's failed attempt against Leo's life, in addition, seems a characteristic Freudian slip from *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*. Michele's tortured retreat into his thoughts, his sense of alienation from his own indifference, and with his fantasies about trials judging his actions serve to complete the picture.[40] On the other hand, Moravia remained faithful to his precept of skipping unnecessary psychological complication. In the final version of the novel, for example, he deleted a whole fragment describing dreams by the five characters.[41] In addition, Michele's inhibition, resentment, guilt, and sense of humiliation are not traced back to specific psychosexual issues, but to a general existential sense of detachment from life and an inability to engage in meaningful and effective action. The same happens with Carla, whose acceptance of Leo is rooted in reasons mysterious even to her, explained primarily as an escape from her

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[38] Alberto Moravia, *Gli indifferenti* (Milan: Bompiani, 2003), p. 261.

[39] Idem, 203.

[40] See for instance idem, 108-109; 142; 190-191; 216-224; 244-245; 249-258.

[41] The piece had been published in the review *Interplanetario* on February 15, 1928, under the title of "Cinque sogni" [five dreams]. It is now available, along with an explaining introduction, in Umberto Carpi, "'Gli Indiferenti' rimossi," Belfagor, n 6, November 30, 1981, pp. 696-709.

boring and meaningless existence. The reader is free to see in the characters' problems the existential or sociological situation of a generation of young Italians failing to find new values, a critique of a decadent family, a commentary on secular people who have lost the guidance of traditional beliefs, modern alienation, neurosis, or a mix of all of these issues.

Conservative and moralist reviewers highlighted the novel's "Freudianism." A scandalized critic, for instance, defined *Gli indifferenti* as the "spit-pit of all the expectorations of the phlegmatic and psychopathic (?) Freudianism," [sputacchiera di tutte le espettorazioni del freudismo incatarrito e sictopatico (sic)] due to the novel's exhibition of the protagonists' apathetic and decadent behavior.[42] Many critics, in addition, disapproved of Moravia's failure to promote virtuous personalities inspired by higher aims and showed concern for the ways in which he used pathological frameworks to construct his characters.[43] Perhaps, this moral panic was profitable for the novel's impact and repercussion. As the critic Sergio Solmi ironically commented, Moravia seemed to have achieved the title of "dangerous writer" [scrittore pericoloso], which was "among the most desired ones by modern authors." [fra le più desiderate dagli autori moderni][44] Yet even if that was the case, associating the novel with psychoanalysis seems to have jeopardized recognition of its artistic merit—this may be the reason why those

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[42] Nello Quilici, Review in Corriere padano, November 5, 1929. The *Corriere Padano* presented a double review of the novel. Titta Rosa wrote a positive look at Moravia's work, whereas Quillici was in charge of a long outraged complaint against the novel. See "Si tratta di un 'capolavoro' o di un 'aborto' letterario? Gli indifferenti o del moralismo," ídem. Now available in *Vent'anni di cultura ferrarese,* cit, 38-41.

[43] Giuseppe Lombrassa, "L'indifferenza, male di moda," Critica Fascista, January 1, 1930. See also Ungaretti's review of the novel, referring to how many critics associated Moravia's novel to the influence of Freud or Joyce. See Ungaretti, "Un romanzo," Il Tevere, 9-10 August, 1929. Now in Mario Diacono and Luciano Rebay (ed), *Giuseppe Ungaretti. Vita d'un uomo. Saggi e interventi* (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), pp. 205-206.

[44] Sergio Solmi, "*Gli indifferenti*, di Alberto Moravia," Convegno, n 8-9-10, October 25, 1929, pp 467-471.

who defended the novel disavowed it from any association with Freud.[45] Some reviewers wrote long reflections on the issue in order to evaluate to what extent Moravia's piece had taken part in "Freudianism." The critic Pietro Pancrazi, for example, expanded on the relation between nineteenth-century Naturalism and psychoanalytic-inspired literature. Pancrazi believed that Freudian literature was the extreme and logical consequence of nineteenth-century Naturalism, and that Freud was to Joyce what Positivist scholars such as Cesare Lombroso had been to writers like Émile Zola. In both cases they worked to combine science and art through a materialistic conception of man. The difference was that the old Naturalism never achieved its ultimate goals. Positivist authors failed to respect their own guidelines because they kept a political or civic inspiration in their work, and as a result they never excluded will from their aesthetic projects. In addition, Pancrazi argued, those inspired by Naturalism established limits between the pathological and the normal. Psychoanalysis, by contrast, pursued the Naturalist project to its logical conclusion by radicalizing its determinism while remaining amoralistic. The result stripped the work of art of any hint of will and morality:

> Freud continues Lombroso and, with the appearance of deepening, perverts him. Psychoanalysis explores with the pincers of determinism those areas of the soul that still appeared proper of consciousness and will. Joyce is the novelist of this last Naturalism such as Zola was the last of the former. That is how materialism moves ahead, the limits conceded to will, to the ideal, to man's freedom become more and more reduced. In contrast to Freud the dissolvent, Lombroso seems a

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[45] See for instance Solmi, "Gli indifferenti," who explicitly observed that "the names of Proust, Joyce and Freud" had nothing to do with the novel—which he associated to Dostoyevsky's influence. See also Ungaretti, "Un romanzo" for another example. From a slightly different angle: Cesare Zavattini, "'Gli indifferenti' di Moravia," L'Italia Letteraria, July 21, 1929, who made the point that Moravia added a delicate twist to the analytical and Joycean influences.

> lay missionary, an apostle. Face with Joyce, Zola is right and square as a classic.[46] [Freud continua Lombroso e, con l'apparenza di affinarlo, lo perverte. La psicanalisi fruca con le pinze del determinismo in quei lembi dell'anima che ancora sembravano propri della coscienza e della volontà. Joyce è il romanziere di questo ultimo naturalismo come Zola lo fu del primo. Così, il materialismo è in marcia; i limiti concessi alla volontà, all'ideale, alla libertà del uomo vanno via via riducendosi. In confronto di Freud il dissolvitore, Lombroso ha ancora l'aspetto di un missionario laico, di un apostol. Di fronte a Joyce, Zola è dritto e quadrato come un classico.]

Pancrazi built up this reflection in order to show that Moravia had remained "half way" [a mezza strada] between Naturalism and Freudianism. Unlike what a follower of Naturalism would have done, Moravia did not include moral values in his work, and so he remained "indifferent" when judging his characters' attitudes. This was certainly a problematic move for Pancrazi but, as he observed in a paternalistic gesture, "it's a defect that the years heal" (255) [è un difetto che gli anni guariscono.] The important point for him was that Moravia's novel "never crosses into the morbid zone of psychoanalysis" [non sconfina mai nella zona morbida della psicanalisi.] His characters, for instance, "do not make neither use nor abuse of dreams" [non fanno nè abuso nè uso di sogni] and do not present "an arbitrary link from instincts to will, from body to soul." (254) [una ilazione arbitraria dagli istinti alla volontà, dal corpo all'anima.] To Pancrazi's eyes, refraining from psychoanalysis' absolute determinism, and avoiding an exploration and exhibition of his characters' most sordid traits, exonerated Moravia from the

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[46] Pietro Pancrazi, "Alberto Moravia, *Gli indifferenti*" Pegaso, Vol. 1, part II, issue VIII (August 1929), p. 253.

charge of "Freudianism" and saved the artistic value of his novel.

In a significant comment in 1946, Moravia contended that even when he had read very little Freud, he was anyway "Freudian without knowing it" [freudiano senza saperlo], since he had realized the relevance of sexuality for literary creation.[47] These observations stress a spontaneous confluence between Moravia's narrative and psychoanalysis, and reinforce Debenedetti's analysis about modern narrative imagination and psychoanalysis as amicable fellow travelers.[48] From the point of view of the public statements on psychoanalysis in the literary milieu, though, Moravia's 1946 "confession" is interesting for what it "forgets." As mentioned earlier, one of Moravia's earliest articles contained a serious reflection on how to trace limits with regard to psychoanalysis, and how the ways he represented these limits change according to different situations. What emerges from the case of *Gli indifferenti* is that keeping a border situation with regard to "Freudianism"—not too far, not too close—was a fruitful formula for achieving the status of tolerated provoker, at least in the early 1930s. Moravia's "indifference" allowed him to gain some publicity due to alarmism, introduce innovative narrative techniques, reach audiences, and be accepted by literary critics. Moreover, Moravia's novel and the issue of "indifference" were saluted with intense sympathy by young intellectuals trying to create a generational identity in 1930s Italy.

Intimate Hell: Childhood Memories, Psychoanalysis, and Squadrism

[47] Alberto Moravia, "opinioni di de narratori," in Fiera Letteraria, year I, n 16, July 25, 1946, p. 5. The whole issue by the journal was dedicated to psychoanalysis.

[48] For a classical analysis of Moravia as a spontaneous psychoanalytic writer, see Dominique Fernandez, *Il romanzo italiano e la crisi della coscienza moderna* (Milan: Lerici, 1960), pp. 19-114.

Moravia's early warning regarding "cerebrality" and the "psychoanalytic ballast" can be contrasted with more enthusiastic and bolder attitudes. The young writer Elio Vittorini (1908-1966) exemplifies an open endorsement of psychoanalysis, at least for a short period of time. In an article he wrote for the Turinese daily *La Stampa* in September 1929, Vittorini referred to the "so-called psychoanalytic literature" [letteratura cosidetta di psicoanalisi"] as a challenging and innovative literary current initiated by Proust but renovated by Italo Svevo.[49] According to Vittorini, Proust was the founder of psychoanalytic literature because he was the first one to point to "childhood or adolescence as initial forms of morbosity" (114) [la fanciullezza o l'adolescenza come forme di morbosità iniziali.] As in a psychoanalytic inquiry, Proust's writing consisted of evoking childhood memories and regaining the contemplative and admired perspective of a "static, whimsical, a little sick child." [fanciullo estatico, estroso, un po malato.] In Vittorini's view, this literature primarily sought to revive the forgotten perspective of a sick or troubled child, and describe reality from that stance.

Although Vittorini mentioned Joyce as loosely connected to the psychoanalytic tradition, in his understanding the Irish writer had followed an extremely Naturalist direction, so his contribution to the genre was not so interesting.[50] By contrast, the most recent and important contributions to psychoanalytic literature were due to Svevo, whose main merit was that he turned Proust "upside down" by substituting the child's point of view for the one of the senile

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[49] Elio Vittorini, "Letteratura di Psicoanalisi. Svevo, 'Marcel,' and Zeno," in La Stampa, September 27, 1929, p. 3. Reprinted in Elio Vittorini, *Letteratura, Arte, Società. Articoli e Interventi, 1926-1937* (Turin: Einaudi, 1997, edited by Raffaella Rodondi) pp. 114-120. [hereafter *LAS*]

[50] Idem, 115-116. Vittorini had mentioned a relationship between Joyce and Freud in a previous article, where he compared Rabelais and Joyce. His point was that the grotesque, absurd, and disordered world of Rabelais was similar to Joyce's world of subconscious fantasies described in *Ulysses*. For him, Joyce had taken inspiration from psychoanalytic readings to achieve this. See Vittorini, "Joyce e Rabelais," La Stampa, August 23, 1929. Now in *LAS*, pp. 100-105.

old man. The result was that he maintained a psychoanalytic perspective because, like Proust, he described the world from a tired, apathetic, and egoistic point of view, and therefore he accessed "a face of the world which is not the straight and normal one." (116) [una faccia del mondo che non è la diritta e normale.] Unlike Proust, however, Svevo achieved a more transparent and serious perspective. Whereas Proust's reflections occurred through memories associated with complex and obscure connections, Svevo offered a more mature consciousness conveying a more human and solid sense of reality. Vittorini celebrated the fact that, in contrast to Proust, Svevo "never loses the dimensions of reality, and that makes us feel an earthly, bitter flavor in each part of the work."[51] Reading Svevo, therefore, "we will always retain the sense … of a hand that remains attached to a hard substance." (idem) [il senso tattile, preciso, di una mano che resta attaccata a una dura sustanza…] Vittorini's construction of a "psychoanalytic literature" recalls Moravia's 1927 article, especially since both privilege and connection to reality and action over immersion in inner complexity. Yet instead of discarding the "psychoanalytic ballast," Vittorini preferred to redefine it. He was clear that, as Svevo's example showed, it was possible to compose a deep psychological and subjective perspective within a reality-grounded narrative.

By stressing that an Italian writer had led "psychoanalytic literature" in new directions, Vittorini made apparent his optimism regarding its possibilities and richness. His move, in addition, went together with a very ambitious call to renew Italian literature. By the time Vittorini wrote his article on Proust, Joyce, and Svevo, he had also published a programmatic piece titled *Scarico di coscienza* [unloading of conscience], arguing that his generation lacked a usable or relevant Italian literary tradition. In his view, nineteenth-century Italian authors such as Giovanni Pascoli, Giosuè Carducci, and D'Annunzio; the writers and critics associated with the

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[51] [Svevo perciò non perde mai le dimensioni della realtà, di cui par che si senta ad ogni strato dell'opera un terroso, amaro, sapore.]Idem, 118

influential pre-war journal *La Voce* (1908-1916); the Futurist avant-garde; and the philosophy of Benedetto Croce and its aesthetic insights had nothing to offer young writers. Even when he acknowledged some merit to the writers and critics associated with the journal *La Ronda* (1919-1923), he also considered them too anchored to tradition and academicism. For the young Vittorini, the only Italian writer who could be profited from was Svevo, whom he associated with French writers such as Paul Valéry, Gide, and Proust. As he concluded, "It needs to be acknowledged that Paul Valery has taught us, in a few years, more things than all the books on aesthetics and criticism by Croce, and that Svevo, who came at the last moment, he who would seem a stranger, a wreck [relitto], has been more useful to us than twenty years of terrible literature." (125)[52]

Vittorini is a good example of how the enthusiasm for the new French literary trends elicited interest in Freud and psychoanalysis. In a letter to the editor Enrico Falqui, for example, Vittorini asked him to send him some French reviews to Syracuse—the Southern town where Vittorini was born and raised. In addition, Vittorini asked for books "of psychoanalysis, for instance, books by Freud—essays of literary psychoanalysis, essays on Proust and Stendhal." [53] [di psicanalisi, ad es. libri di Freud—saggi di psicanalisi letteraria, saggi su Proust e Stendhal.] Although we don't know what books he actually got and read, some clear Freudian borrowings

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[52][E, bisogna riconoscerlo, ci ha insegnato più cose Paul Valèry che insieme tutti i libri d'estetica e critica del Croce; e Svevo, venuto al ultimo momento, lui che parrebbe un estraneo, un relitto, ci ha giovato meglio che venti anni di pessima letteratura.] Elio Vittorini, "Scarico the Conscienza" originally in L'Italia Letteraria, Year 1, N 28, October 13, 1929, p.1. Now also in *LAS*, pp. 121-125. Although it was published later than the article on psychoanalytic literature, Vittorini had written this piece before, apparently during July 1929. See *LAS* 125-126 for information on this.

[53] The letter is dated July 8, 1929, and partially reproduced in *LAS,* p. 72.

appear in his critical pieces.[54] Moreover, in the months that followed the letter, Vittorini had become an insistent advocate for introducing psychological complexity to Italian literature. In a review of Mario Soldati's book *Salmace,* for instance, he complained that, despite its merits, the book had a "banal, almost boring, negligent, very superficial psychological dynamic." [banale, quasi noioso, negligente, superficialissimo movimento psicologico.] He points to evidence of Soldati's alleged psychological innocence "other than introspection, other than Freud, Joyce, psychoanalysis." [altro che introspezione, altro che Freud, che Joyce , che psicoanalisi.] [55] In other cases he regretted that some authors concentrated too much on the events and the story and not enough on the relationship between these actions and the characters' psychology, or that they constructed extremely bucolic and simplistic characters, thus stripping them of an "intimate hell" and a complex inner life.[56] Many of Vittorini's articles in 1929 and 1930 show his interest in exploring or constructing a tradition—which he traced back to Stendhal, or even to Xavier De Maistre—in which narrative writing could keep in touch with the complex and troubled psychology of its characters.[57]

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[54] One of Vittorini's articles on Stendhal used a childhood memory by the French writer in order to argue that his female characters and his romantic relations emerged from Stendhal's erotic attachment to his mother. He was probably reproducing an analogous analysis by Freud on Leonardo, which he might have read in the 1927 French translation of Freud's text. See Elio Vittorini, "Auto-psicanalisi di Stendhal," in Elio Vittorini, *Diario in Pubblico*, (Milan: Bompiani, 1957) pp. 11-12. Originally in: Il Mattino, February 12, 1930.

[55] Elio Vittorini, "Salmace," originally published in Solaria, year IV, n 12, December 1929, pp. 50-52. Now in *LAS,* pp. 141 and 145 respectively.

[56] See for instance Elio Vittorini, "'U Fraccchia, La stella del nord,'"; and "C Alvaro, L'Amata alla finestra'- 'Gente in Aspromonte;'"in Solaria, Year V, n 2 February 1930, pp. 49-52; and Solaria, year V, n 5-6, May-June 1930, pp. 92-95; now also in *LAS,* pp. 163-166, and p. 186 respectively.

[57] See for instance the whole series of "Stendhalian essays" he wrote during 1929 and 1930, in *LAS,* 67-94; as well as the article "Da De Maistre a Cocteau," in *LAS,* 155-162.

Vittorini's aggressive endorsement of change and innovation among Italian writers entailed composing a tradition of "psychoanalytic literature" that included an Italian writer as one of its main representatives, declaring his generation as a father-less one, and calling on writers to become bolder in writing psychological complexity. We should not exaggerate, however, Vittorini's involvement with Freudian influences. His campaign in favor of a psychoanalytic-inspired literature was concentrated in 1929-1930 and then vanished. Moreover, some of his moves are very contradictory. In *Scarico di coscienza*, for instance, after defending Proust as "our most genuine, spontaneous, and dearest friend," [il nostro maestro piú genuino, piú spontaneo, piú caro] he added that "we see him distinctly, without confusing him with Freud, without explaining him through psychoanalysis"[58] [noi lo vediamo distintamente senza affatto confonderlo con Freud, senza spiegarlo con la psicoanalisi.] The reflection is strange since that was exactly what he was doing in his piece on psychoanalytic literature written around the same time. Vittorini's involvement with Freudian readings seems to have been very fleeting, sometimes contradictory, and especially concentrated in the period that a scholar labeled as one of his "exercises in psychological realism." These years are always portrayed as a moment of transition when Vittorini was searching for a more stable and definite style. His curiosity about Freud and psychoanalysis, moreover, was just one fleeting interest among many others that ultimately proved more long-lasting for his writing.[59]

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[58] "Scarico di coscienza," *LAS,* p 125.

[59] Guido Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini: The Writer and the Written* (Leeds: Northern University Press, 2000), 35-42. Vittorini also associated the early 1930s to a search for "psychological realism" in 1948, in a re-edition of one of his works. See Vittorini, "Prefazione alla prima edizione del 'Garofano rosso,'" in Elio Vittorini, *Le opere narrative* (Milan: Mondadori, 1974, Maria Corti, ed), p. 431. For a detailed research into Vittorini's style and his multiple influences during these years, see Anna Panicali, *Elio Vittorini: La narrativa, la saggistica, le traduzione, le riviste, l'attività editoriale* (Milan: Mursia, 1994), pp. 51-153.

However, when Vittorini published his first book of short stories, *Piccola Borghesia* (1931), many reviewers labeled him as an "analytic" writer and included commentary on the value of his psychological complexity. [60] These readings were understandable since the book's pieces repeatedly attempted to introduce the "intimate hell" that Vittorini considered so important for modern literature. He did not stop, in fact, experiencing with some of the issues that Moravia had called "cerebrality." The daydreaming of the protagonist of one of his stories, for instance, is portrayed as a way of escaping an oppressive office routine. In other story, a series of free associations commences with an irrelevant episode and ends up suggesting incestuous desires.[61] Interestingly, Vittorini's first book elicited less alarmism than *Gli indifferenti.* This might be due to the fact that Vittorini's prose was more poetic and less straightforward than Moravia's, and so the observation that he was still keeping some "lyricism" in his writing compensated for concerns about "analysis".[62] In addition, despite the sensuality and "cerebrality" of his pieces, Vittorini could not be accused of promoting the apathy and lack of commitment that many perceived in Moravia's text. If there was something clear in Vittorini's

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[60] See for instance: Glauco Natoli, "Piccola Borghesia, di Elio Vittorini," in L'Italia Letteraria, January 17, 1932, Guido Piovene, "Piccola Borghesia di Elio Vittorini," Convegno, n 3-4, March-April, 1932, Sergio Solmi, "'Piccola Borghesia' di Elio Vittorini," Pegaso, Vol. IV, issue 6 (June 1932), pp. 761-764, for comments on how Vittorini incorporated the "analytical" influences in his writing. See Piero Bargellini, "Dotrina," in Il Frontespizio, July 1933, for an alarmist and negative reference to Vittorini as representative of psychoanalytic literature.

[61] See the short stories "Educazione di Adolfo," and "Raffiche in prefettura" for his use of daydreaming and the sordid flux of consciousness. In Elio Vittorini, *Le opere narrative. Vol I,* (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), pp 56-60, and 82-87.

[62] Arnaldo Bocelli, for instance, observed that Vittorini "reveals, under a seeming analytical realism, and in many cases contrasting with it, a frank vein of lyric 'fantasist.'"[rivela, sotto un apparente realismo analitico, e spesso in contrasto con esso, una schietta vena di 'fantasista' lirico."] See Bocelli, "L'annata letteraria in Italia," Almanacco letterario Bompiani. 1933 (Milan: Bompiani, 1933), p. 54.

ideological stance during these years, it was his alignment with Fascism, and in fact with a very radical line within it.[63]

One of the most disconcerting issues when approaching Vittorini's cultural choices in these years is the strange connection between his literary taste and his ideological allegiances. Vittorini's high-profile call for literary renewal and openness went hand in hand with his ideological and political affiliation with intransigent and radicalized currents within Fascism. Since the beginning of his intellectual life in 1926, Vittorini had published articles and fiction pieces in journals associated with the *Strapaese* movement, whose contempt for foreign influences and vindication of a rural and regional Italy was conspicuous.[64] After 1929, coinciding with Vittorini's move to Florence, he distanced himself from the movement and started working for the review *Solaria* (1926-1936), which is usually associated with an apolitical outlook and a strong intention to introduce European—and especially French—literary influences to Italy. Vittorini's "psychoanalytic turn" started at this point. Yet this did not imply his detachment from Fascism. In 1931 Vittorini became a committed participant in the journal *Il Bargello*, the official journal of the Florentine Fascist Federation. In these years Vittorini considered Fascism a revolutionary movement whose main goal was to produce a new mentality and a new civilization contrasting with the bourgeois order. This political line continued until the beginning of the Spanish Civil War in July 1936, when Vittorini finally broke with Fascism and

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[63] For Vittorini's politics during these years, see Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini* 21-34; Panicali, *Elio Vittorini,* 101-108; Raffaella Rodondi, "Introduzione," in *LAS,* pp. XXV-XXXIV.

[64] For Vittorini's first years and his involvement with the *Strapaese* ideology and journals see Panicali, *Elio Vittorini,* 11-20; and Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini,* 8-17; Rondoni, "Introduzione," XXIII-XXVIII. For analysis of the *Strapaese* movement, see Ben Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, pp. 20-28; Walter Adamson, "The Culture of Italian Fascism and the Fascist Crisis of Modernity: The Case of Il Selvaggio," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol 30, n 4 (Oct. 1995), pp. 555-575; and Luisa Mangoni, *L'interventismo della cultura. Intelletuali e riviste del fascismo*(Bari: Laterza, 1974), 93-121, 136-172.

initiated his move toward becoming a leading intellectual of the Left—an itinerary common to other members of his generation. Before that, Vittorini's articles engaged in some of the dearest themes of some radical branches of Fascism: the cult of Mussolini, the praise of the natural and healthy barbarianism of the Italian people, and deeply anti-bourgeois rhetoric.[65]

Two aspects of Vittorini's ideological positions might help explain his appropriation of Freudian ideas. First, he aggressively confronted respectability. Vittorini did not concede to decorum or modesty, which seems to have facilitated his contact with psychoanalytic currents, especially regarding sexual issues.[66] Second, Vittorini managed to articulate his anti-bourgeois critique through a particular focus on childhood and the use of coming-of-age themes. Despite his endorsement of Svevo's "senile" outlook in his 1929 article, most of Vittorini's writings evoke childhood as containing an archaic current of desires, fantasies, and instinctual intensities that remain buried under the routine and normalcy of adult or bourgeois life. Sexual awakening and rebellious adolescence, in addition, were also motives he introduced in his writings.[67] His interest in these issues was connected with his openness to some recent French authors, such as Jean Cocteau and Raymond Radiguet.[68] However, he combined this influence with a more

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[65] See Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini,* 3-33; Panicali, *Elio Vittorini,* 101-108; Rondoni, "Introduzione,"XXVII-XXXII

[66] Bonsaver has observed on the connection between Vittorini's *Strapaese* background and the way he writes about sexuality, Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini,* 54-56.

[67] See in particular the short stories "Il nome ispirato," "Caffè Lagrange," "Per ringraziare una fanciulla," and "Gilda" where the focus on childhood as contrasting with routine is crucial: Elio Vittorini, *Le opere narrative. Vol.II* (Milan: Mondadori, 1974), pp. 739-745, 752-755, 756-762,763-767 [Hereafter *ON*]. See also the short story "La mia guerra" in his volume *Piccola Borghesia*, where the child experiencing of the war is presented as a moment of excitement and liberation from routine, in *ON*, 5-28. Other stories use childhood reminiscences as a way to contrast with everyday routine: "Quindici minuti di ritardo," p. 39; "La signora della stazione," pp. 100-115.

[68] See Gilbert Bosetti, "'Solaria' e la cultura francese: l'influenza dei modelli della 'NRF' sui narratori solariani," Inventario, n 16-17, (1986), pp. 60-78 who highlights the influence of authors such as Raymond Radiguet, Jean Cocteau, and Gide on Vittorini and the Solaria group, especially for their approach to childhood and adolescence.

specific ideological involvement, connected to his Fascist militancy. If he made any use of Freudian texts during these years, it was linked to these general influences and concerns.

Vittorini's first novel, *Il garofano rosso* [The Red Carnation], provides a good example of the ways in which he integrated the issues of childhood and coming of age into his ideological stance. The story focuses on the sixteen year-old student Alessio during 1924 and, more precisely, during the months of political crisis following the assassination of the opposition leader Giacomo Matteotti.[69] Along with other students and friends, Alessio is a committed Fascist who believes that the Matteotti crisis will force Fascism to break its alliance with the parties of the status quo and therefore push the movement in a revolutionary direction. His militancy is also spiced by episodes of street fighting and other actions–such as the taking of the school building during a strike against the pro-Matteotti professors—that add additional excitement to the cause. These actions reinforce the cleavage between young radical supporters of Fascism and the world of the adults, such as the police or the professors, who represent discipline, order, authority, and all that Alessio is against. The divide becomes apparent, too, in Alessio's split love between Giovanna, the daughter of a colonel, and Zobeida, who works in a brothel. The concluding pages, when a young boy [ragazzino] dressed in working-class clothes makes a sort of radical-utopian speech calling for a change in customs and morality through a new code regulating emotions and forcing all men to become virtuous, reinforces the division between childhood as synonymous with an anti-bourgeois attitude and adulthood as representing respectability and integration.

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[69] Giacomo Matteotti was an anti-Fascist deputy who was kidnapped and murdered by a Fascist squad. The episode unleashed a political crisis which ended up with the official imposition of the Fascist dictatorship. For a discussion of the crisis and the episode, see R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini* (London: Bloomsbury academic, 2010), 159-176.

Il garofano rosso has a complicated publishing history. It started as a novel published in installments in *Solaria* in 1933, until the Prefect suspended it for obscenity in 1934. As a result, Vittorini had to finish it under the control of Fascist censorship, which surely altered his original intentions.[70] Because of this, it is likely that many of his original "Freudian" insights were dropped. The book indeed was quite rich in appealing to dreams and childhood memories as forms of disclosing Alessio's instinctual, emotional, and sordid side. Some fragments in fact suggest that he might have intended to gradually unfold aspects of Alessio's personality by excavating into his childhood. An early memory in the first pages of the novel, for instance, shows an infantile desire to shoot someone, which might have been intended to trace the remote origins of his hostility. When remembering this event, he immediately associates it with his excitement of having a gun during the March on Rome.[71] By the same token, throughout the novel Vittorini also plays with another set of memories more directly connected to infantile sexuality and incestuous wishes—references that he eliminated or rephrased in the later re-writing. When Alessio first approaches Giovanna, for instance, he is absorbed by the desire to roll with her in the pile of hay he used to play in during his childhood, a desire so strong that it makes him tremble.[72] In the opening pages of the novel, the image seems naïve, poetic, and full of bucolic overtones. Two chapters later, when visiting his hometown, we find out that the pile

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[70] For information and analysis of this event, see Panicali, *Elio Vittorini,* 109-115; Bonsaver, *Elio Vittorini,* 53-57. Although Vittorini re-wrote the *Solaria* version afterwards in order to have it published in book form, he could never do it during Fascism. A first complete version of the novel appeared only in 1948. See "Prefazione alla prima edizione del 'Garofano rosso,'" in *ON,* pp. 423-450, for Vittorini's outlook on the novel and its history. Many scholars warn, however, to be careful with Vittorini's late version of the event, since he emphasized an anti-Fascist content in the novel, which was not its original intention during the time it was written.

[71]Elio Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, I," Solaria, Year 8, n 2-3, (February-March, 1933), p. 11. Vittorini pointed to the centrality of the "ricordo d'infanzia" [memory childhood] in the preface to the book edition of the novel. See Vittorini, "Prefazione,"448.

[72] Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, I,"p. 3.

of hay contains a more significant story connected to some sexual intimacy with his older sister—which was in itself a result of observing their parents' intercourse.[73]

Vittorini's novel uses other strategies to display a stock of symbols and images tracing back to early childhood that reveal aspects of Alessio's emotions and sexuality. Some of Vittorini's most provocative passages occur in the way he portrays this area of Alessio's psyche. In the first chapter of the novel, for instance, Alessio gets sexually excited by hearing the flush of a latrine and imagining Giovanna pulling on her underwear, an image striking in its crudeness.[74] As the novel unfolds, we learn that running water has an intense psychosexual connotation in Alessio's mind. In one of his first moments of proximity with Giovanna he observes that he lacked words and, as he says, "I could not feel but a mill water making io-io-io and becoming hot inside of me." [non sentiva che un'acqua di mulino farmi io-io-io e diventare calda dentro di me.][75] The image of the mill and the water accompanies him when he goes to bed that night (7,8), and one of his recurrent childhood nightmares involves him asking a girl "if she wanted him to pump up water for her." [se voleva che le pompassi dell'acqua.][76] The symbolism combines with another childhood memory that involves him as a little boy and his mother showing him the heavy rain from a train window.[77]

Another case of a recurrent symbol involves his "shooting memory" and his nightmare. When Alessio mentions his childhood memory of killing someone, the victim is a man with a gray beard. Probably, he is the same man "who had not shaved" [che non si era fatto la barba]

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[73] Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, III" Solaria, Year 8, n 6-7 (June-July, 1933), pp 36, 43.

[74] Vittorini, Il garofano rosso, I," pp. 5-6,15.

[75] Idem, 4.

[76] Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, V," Solaria, Year 8, n 11-12 (November-December 1933), p. 69.

[77] Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, III," pp. 32-33.

who appears in the nightmare of the pump and attacks the girl.[78] The nightmare is highly disturbing to Alessio, and dramatizes the intensity of his desire to grow up. He wakes up experiencing "horror to be a child" [orrore di tornare a essere bimbo] and impatient "to become a grown up." [di diventare grande.][79] Alessio's intense desire to grow up underlies his involvement with squadrism and its violence, which works as a rite of passage toward his maturity. Something that strikes Alessio when remembering the pile of hay is how his sister Menta succeeded in forgetting the event. "How is it that she does not remember?" [Come mai non se ne ricorda?] he wonders, intrigued, and remarks that his sister is even older than him. He concludes that "perhaps grown ups like her knew some strange feeling that permitted them not to suffer from, and perhaps even laugh at, those infantile foolish things." [forse i grandi come lei conoscevano qualche strano sentimento che permetteva loro di non soffrire, e magari di sorridere, di quelle vecchie sciocchezze d'infanzia.][80] His despairing wish to become adult is a wish to leave behind the problematic desires and memories of his childhood.

In working on these details, Vittorini was neither interested in portraying Alessio as an aberrant character nor in presenting squadrism as pathological.[81] Rather, the novel traces a parallel between the protagonist's problematic coming of age and Fascism's critical transition from its early squadrist period to its institutionalization as a regime—a huge issue during the "Matteotti crisis." As the historian Ben-Ghiat has argued, in *Il garofano rosso* Vittorini joined other writers who during the mid-1930s developed narratives about early squadrism as a moment

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[78] Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, V, " p. 69.

[79] Idem, p. 70.

[80] Vittorini, "Il garofano rosso, III," p. 43.

[81] In his introduction to the book edition, he suggested this re-reading of his novel. That was clearly not the case when he wrote it. See Vittorini, "Prefazione," pp. 448-449.

of "unlimited liberties" and an "antidisciplinarian body politics."[82] Portraying squadrism in this manner allowed him to establish a correspondence with childhood since, in both, free instinctiveness would reign. This image, in addition, contrasted with the link of Fascism as a regime with adulthood, since both "eras" seek to compromise and cope with reality. Alessio's psychosexual development was a metaphor for revisiting Fascism's inner crisis during the period of the Matteotti crime, when the clashes between pro-squadrist and intransigent currents and those striving to normalize the regime became strong.[83] Operating is such a way permitted Vittorini to move to the foreground the question of how to canalize primitive instinctual wishes or violent demands without lessening their intensity or fixating on overtly problematic impulses. Moreover, in considering these questions, Vittorini could create a story centered on the "intimate hell" that he considered so important for the modernization of Italian narrative and situate it in the middle of a deeply realistic and political context. The Freudian interests and readings Vittorini had done during the time were clearly subordinated to that strategy.

Part II: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Revolution

The debates over the new narrative were not the only cultural scenario in which psychoanalysis was discussed. In the early 1930s, the Roman journal *Il Saggiatore* (1930-1933) became an enthusiastic advocate for psychoanalysis in Italy. In these years, Italy witnessed the emergence of a set of small cultural journals directed and staffed by young people seeking to renovate Italian cultural life. The regime allowed and even encouraged these journals as part of a general

[82] Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* 117,and 250, footnote 100.

[83] For the debates and disputes within Fascism, see Alexander de Grand, *Bottai e la cultura fascista* (Bari: Laterza, 1978), pp. 29-70, for a political analysis, and Adamson, "The Culture of Italian Fascism,"pp. 558-562, and Mangoni, *L'interventismo*, 93-121, 136-172, for a more cultural one.

policy seeking to get young professionals involved with politics. Even if this implied tolerance for a relatively autonomous and critical realm, different sources of funding, awards and prizes, and a relaxed censorship sought to generate conditions where young intellectuals could voice their complaints and design general ideological and cultural projects.[84] Mobilizing and gaining the favor of youth was indeed one of Fascism's major concerns. Fascism's generational consciousness and youth rhetoric had been elements of the movement since its inception. In its consolidation, furthermore, the regime created mass organizations to promote and control the socialization of young people from childhood until their mid-20s. Fascists were sensitive to the general apathy and opposition of university students, and that elicited their willingness to try to assimilate them through a combination of incentives and repression.[85]

As a result of the incentives, myriad new journals emerged, including *Il Saggiatore* (Rome, 1930-1933), *L'Universale* (Florence, 1931-1935), *Orpheus* (Milan, 1932-1934), *Cantiere* (Rome and Milan, 1934), *Oggi* (Rome, 1933), *Caratteri* (Rome, 1933), and *Camminare* (Milan, 1934-1935). Although these journals were not massive in terms of circulation, their cultural relevance is significant for many reasons. First, they served as the political initiation of important intellectuals and politicians in post-war Italy. Second, due to their high profile, their discussions and polemics were amplified by their impact in many other journals. Moreover, some Fascist leaders took these journals seriously and engaged in debates with them. Finally, since many of

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[84] For analyses and information on this experience, see Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 99-122; Mario Sechi, *Il mito della nuova cultura. Giovani, realismo e politica negli anni trenta* (Rome: Lacaita, 1984); Pasquale Voza, "Il problema del realismo negli anni trenta, 'Il Saggiatore,' 'Il Cantiere,'" Lavoro Critico, (January-June 1981),pp. 65-105; Mangoni, *L'interventismo*, 197-239.

[85] For the regime's policies and institutions on youth see Tracy Koon, *Believe, Obey, Fight: Political Socialization of Youth in Fascist Italy, 1922-1943* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985). For the role of generational consciousness and rhetoric of youth in Italian Fascism, see also Bruno Wanrooij, "The Rise and Fall of Italian Fascism as Generational Revolt," Journal of Contemporary History, Vol. 22, N 3 (July 1987), pp. 401-418.

these journals welcomed other European trends, they constituted a venue of cultural renewal and intellectual change within Fascist Italy. *Il Saggiatore*'s promotion of psychoanalysis, the interest of *Orpheus'* editors in phenomenology, and *L'Universale*'s support of rationalist architecture exemplified this. Moreover, their cultural approach was forward-looking and viewed modernity as a time of constant change, liberating crisis, and unprecedented experience.[86]

Although heterogeneous and different on many levels, these journals shared a set of characteristics. First, they kept an ideological high profile and followed a gradually radicalizing itinerary. These young intellectuals considered Fascism as a potentially revolutionary movement and made clear their intention to bring changes in that direction. Mussolini's speeches in the early 1930s might have fueled these expectations, since they were flushed with anti-bourgeois and revolutionary rhetoric. The result was that these journals created an atmosphere of "cultural revolution" and rebellious mobilization, intended to counter Fascism's alleged bureaucratic and compromising trends through a focus on what they considered the movement's revolutionary potential. Second, the young rebels' keyword for articulating their ideology was "realism." This expression was very flexible and encompassed different foreign influences and Italian authors. In broad terms, "realism" summarized a general aim of engagement and commitment, and of portraying reality without idealistic or moralist embellishments, as well as contempt for the notion of the autonomy of art and of the artist asliving in an "ivory tower." As we saw in the previous section, debates over the novel and the new narrative were crucial in shaping this "realist" identity.[87] Among these groups, in addition, the term took on a more specifically

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[86] See Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* 99-107.

[87] For the relationship between these groups and realism, see Falcetto, *Storia della narrativa neo-realista,* pp. 28-33; de Michelis, *Alle origini del neorealismo*, 40-81. The word "neo-realismo" was also used in these years with similar purposes. It emerged as a way to indicate similarities with the German *Neue Sachlichkeit* [New objectivity] current, even though the Italian neo-realist authors were very different to that German current.

political and ideological meaning.[88] Third, they became fascinated with the corporative programs that some Fascist intellectuals and politicians promoted during the 1930s. In their view, the corporative system was a way of organizing production and political representation outside of capitalism and Soviet Communism. The young intellectuals in these journals took this invitation seriously and viewed the corporative system not just as an institutional or economic issue, but as an original, modern, and uniquely Fascist way to mediate the relationship between the individual and the masses. Much of their energies, chiefly in 1933 and 1934, were devoted to this issue.[89]

A fourth common trait of those journals was the way they strove to forge generational consciousness and youth identity as empowering devices. In part this was due to Fascist rhetoric, which put youth in a privileged position—a fact from which the young writers in these journals profited. Since they were the first generation educated under Fascism and after the Great War, they considered themselves the best qualified people to break with the intellectual habits and create a new modern culture. Generational consciousness was thus a rhetorical companion to their calls to detach from the past; depart from the old liberal, rationalistic, and Idealist traditions of the pre-war world; and criticize the bureaucratic tendencies within Fascism. Finally, the chronology of this experience is well delimited. Most of these journals began in 1930 and ended by 1935. During the summer of 1934, in fact, the regime started to lose patience with the radical claims of these groups and adopted more aggressive policies of repression and co-optation. The leading authors from these journals faced hard choices. Some of them disavowed Fascism and any commitment to the regime, becoming anti-Fascists or alienated from politics. Others, in

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[88] The more political use of the notion of realism became apparent in January 10, 1933, when the journal *L'Universale* launched a *Manifesto Realista* [Realist Manifesto] containing a series of statements about politics, culture in general, and even economics. See Mangoni, *L'interventismo,* 230-239; and De Grand, *Bottai e la cultura fascista,* 139.

[89] Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* 100-102; and De Grand, *Bottai e la cultura fascista,* 131-174.

contrast, got rid of their sharper edges and were hired as journalists, bureaucrats, or clients of different state agencies. The year 1935 was also a turning point due to the invasion of Ethiopia and the further restriction of cultural tolerance. With the imposition of a politics of autarchy and the development of more totalitarian policies of Empire making, the regime eliminated the limited spaces for debate and contestation it had generated in the early 1930s.[90]

Nicola Perrotti and *Il Saggiatore*

Throughout its thirty-seven issues and four years of existence, *Il Saggiatore* was one of the earliest and most regular publications of the young wave of the early1930s. The journal is also key for the history of Italian psychoanalysis because of its links with the Italian Psychoanalytic Society (IPS) and its enthusiastic campaigning for the Freudian cause. The five founding members and directors of the journal were affiliated with the IPS after its first session in 1932 and participated in many of its meetings. Their commitment to psychoanalysis, however, was very uneven. Four of them—Giorgio Granata, Domenico Carella, Attilio Riccio, and Luigi de Crecchio Parladore—were "adherent members" to the IPS, which meant that they never presented any scientific paper. Their interest seems to have been a loose cultural curiosity as a result of their main intellectual inclinations.[91] In contrast, the fifth director, Nicola Perrotti, was

[90] See especially Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities*, 99-122.

[91] See "Atti Ufficiali della Società Psicoanalitica Italiana," Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi, Year I, N 1 (January-February, 1932), pp. 79-81 informing of the list of members and on the discussions during the sessions of the SPI on February 10. For the participation of *Il Saggiatore* staff in the psychoanalytic meetings, see the minutes of the SPI, where Riccio and Granata are mentioned frequently, whereas Carella seems less interested. See: "Seduta scientifica del 29 Aprile," in idem, Year I, N 2-3 (March-June, 1932), pp. 206-208; "Seduta scienfica del 26 Ottobre," idem, Year I, n 5, October 1932, p. 347; "Seduta scientifica del 7 Dicembre," and "Seduta scientifica del 21 Dicembre," in idem, Year I, n 6 December, 1932, pp. 419-422; "Seduta scientifica del 1 Febbraio," idem, year II, n 1 (February 1933),p. 69; "Seduta scientifica del 17 Maggio," "seduta scientifica del 28 Giugno," idem, n 3 (June 1933), pp. 218-

an “ordinary member” of the IPS, pursued a training analysis with Edoardo Weiss, and became a forerunner and major figure of Italian psychoanalysis. In these years, in fact, Perrotti combined his training in the IPS and his specialized articles at the *Rivista Italiana di Psicoanalisi* with his essays in *Il Saggiatore,* where he connected psychoanalysis with the journal’s major concerns and perspectives. He also used *Il Saggiatore’s* pages to engage in polemics on psychoanalysis, write reviews on psychoanalytic books, and even publish translations of Freud’s texts.[92]

As a physician born in 1897, Perrotti had a different background than the rest of the members of *Il Saggiatore*. Despite the journal’s generational appeal, he was clearly not of the same age cohort. A crucial difference between Perrotti and the other members of the staff was that he did have a previous serious political experience. Perrotti had been an active and important member of the anti-Fascist Socialist Party until it was banned in 1926. He also had held electoral positions at a local level, and even published at least one article in the Socialist cultural review

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219; “Seduta scientifica del 1 Novembre,” “Seduta scientifica del 20 dicembre,” ídem, Year II, n 5-6 (December 1933), pp. 396-397. Granata also wrote a couple of reviews of psychoanalytic texts in *Il Saggiatore*, see Granata, “Paul Federn, *La depressione quale perturbamento psichico,*” Year III, n 12 (February 1933), p. 528; and “S Freud, *Il Mosè di Michelangelo*,” Year IV, n 2 (April 1933), p. 84.

[92] Most of the polemics were against the Italian liberal Idealists linked to Benedetto Croce’s journal *La Critica* referred to in chapter one, pp. 33-36. *Il Saggiatore* also published the first Italian translation of a chapter of Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents.* See Sigmund Freud, “Il Sentimento Oceanico,” Il Saggiatore, Year II, n 18 (February 1932), pp. 455-463. For Perrotti’s review of psychoanalytic texts and polemical articles, see Perrotti, “Polemiche psicoanalitiche,” Il Saggiatore, Year I, n 3-4 (May-June, 1930), pp. 110-115; “Totem e Tabú di S Freud,” Year II, n 12 (June 1931); “Elementi di Psicanalisi de Weiss,” Year II, n 13, (July 1931); “Polemiche psicoanaliche,” Year II, n 15 (November 1931), pp. 352-354; “Edoardo Weiss,” Year II, n 16 (December 1931); “Elementi di Psicologia della Testimonanza di G C Musatti,” idem; “Polemiche psicanalitiche,” Year II, n 18 (February 1932), pp. 496-502; “L’Anima che Guarisce: Messmer, Mary Baker-Eddy, Freud,” Year III, n. 19, (March 1932), pp. 41-43; “Tormento e Felicità della Prole, di Stekel,” idem, p. 44; “R Allendy, *La justice interiere,*” Year III, n 20 (April 1932), p. 93; “Il trionfo dell’insuficenza (risposta a Guido de Ruggiero), Year III, n 21 (May 1932), pp. 142-143; “Rivista Italiana di Psicanalisi,” Year IV, n 4 (April 1933), p. 187; “Warum Krieg?” Year IV, n 5 (July, 1933), pp. 224-226.

Critica Sociale. Although we have only fragmentary information on *Il Saggiatore*'s other members, what we know about two of them indicates a clear difference from Perrotti. Its two leading figures, Giorgio Granata and Domenico Carella, had been born in 1906 and were students or recent graduates in literature and philosophy from Rome University. [93] For them, *Il Saggiatore* (and the cultural climate fueling its contents) seems to have been their first important political experience. Perhaps because of this, they grew increasingly engaged with the ideological radicalization common among other young intellectuals of the time. The end of *Il Saggiatore*, in fact, came as a result of Carella and Granta joining the editors of the review *Orpheus*, Luciano Anceschi and Enzo Paci, in order to launch the journal *Il Cantiere*. The new publication pursued a more straightforward political agenda, while also promoting a more radical turn within Fascism. [94] The fact that Perrotti did not follow Carella and Granata to *Il Cantiere* suggests that he was not so engaged in the politics of his old fellow editors from *Il Saggiatore*. This also implied that, when finishing *Il Saggiatore,* the experience of the first passionate public use of psychoanalysis came to an end.

Perrotti's essays in *Il Saggiatore* matched the journal's general cultural line. The journal's main articles were for the most part complaints about how formalist, fixed, and abstract intellectual categories had lost touch with lived experience because they deprived thinking of feeling, emotion, and vitality.[95] Attacking the solipsistic and abstract constructions of the main

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[93] See their reports by the Political Police elaborated in 1939, in ACS, MI, DGPS, DPP, Fascicoli personali (1927-1944), Box 245, folder "Carella, Domenico;" and box 623, "Granata, Giorgio."

[94] See Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* 112-115.

[95] Along with other articles I will quote later, some programmatic titles in the journal were: Domenico Carella, "La concretezza del mio oggi," Year I, n 1 (April, 1930), pp. 3-8; Giorgio Granata, "Dei Giovanni," idem, pp. 9-15; Carella, "Riflessioni sul pragmatismo," Year I, n 3-4 (May-June 1930), pp. 81-87; Francesco Orlando, "Fuori della metafisica, I" idem, pp. 91-97, and "Fuori della metafisica,II" Year I, n 5 (July 1930), pp. 143-148; "Fuori della metafisica, III" n 6-7-8 (August-October, 1930), pp. 225-230; Domenico Carella, "Il problema dell'essere,I," Year I,

philosophical schools—and especially Idealism—*Il Saggiatore*'s main essays claimed that a cultural renewal would begin with a sense of "feeling trully alive in life" [sentirci ben vivi nella vita] and by driving philosophy "to the center of contemporary life." [in mezzo alla vita contemporanea][96] They stressed terms such as action, life, emotion, contingency, change, dynamism, and movement as opposed to the rigid and empty notions of old and anachronistic philosophic systems. As Carella wrote in one of his essays, "any idea, to be true, must be action, activity, movement." [Ogni idea, per essere vera, deve esser azione, attività, movimento.][97] Since they explicitly rejected identification with any philosophical school, they constructed their identity through multiple and heterogeneous cultural references. In the few cases in which they referenced explicit influences, they mentioned pragmatist authors such as William James and John Dewey, along with Freud.. In the first issues, when they called themselves "neo-romantics," they also evoked authors such as Carl Jung, Hermann Keyserling, and Oswald Spengler. They discarded them later on, however, especially when they started to explicitly define themselves as "realist" and rejected the alleged irrationalism and mysticism of the "romantics." [98]

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n 11 (January 1931), 359-365; "Il problema dell'essere, II," Year II, n 10 (April 1931), pp. 80-85; "Il problema dell'essere, III," Year II, n 13 (July 1931), pp. 281-287; "Il problema dell'essere, IV," Year II, n 14 (August-October, 1931), pp. 283-286; Granata and Riccio, "Morte dell'Idealismo," Year II, n 3 (May 1931), pp. 100-103.

[96] See the untitled opening statement, in Il Saggiatore, Year I, n 1, April, 1930, p.1.

[97] Domenico Carella, "Riflessioni sul pragmatismo," p. 81.

[98] See for instance the editorial article "Prospettive," Year I, n 10 (December 1930), pp. 289-290 where they defined themselves as "neo-romantics." Few months later, they started to use "realism" as a clearer self-reference: see for instance "Omaggio al realismo," Year I, n 7 (January 1931), pp. 351-352. During a period of time, they used both notions as non-exclusive. See for instance Attilio Riccio, "Sull'odierno romanticismo," Year II, n 9 (March 1931), pp. 10-14, who vindicated romanticism's interest in emotions and the dark sides of the self. See also Giorgio Granata, "Parole tendenziose," idem, who also endorsed a tradition on Italian romanticism. However, few weeks later they made clear their detachment of romanticism, as a way to disavow from authors such as Keyserling, Spengler, and Jung, who extremely mystical and irrational. Interestingly, the Jungian influence ended at that point,

The most constant and the strongest inspiration throughout the journal, instead, was recent Italian literature. *Il Saggiatore's* pages saluted the Italian turn toward the novel—and especially works such as Svevo's *La coscienza di Zeno,* G. A. Borgese's *Rubè*, Moravia's *Gli Indifferenti*, Euralio de Michelis' *Adamo*, and Adriano Grego's *Remo Maun. Avvocato*. The journal took these novels as expressions of an existential discontent, and a sign that a new culture was emerging and replacing the morality and aesthetic standards of previous generations.[99] Some contributors of *Il Saggiatore* professed a sort of cult for Moravia's *Gli Indifferenti*. As Granata wrote about the novel's main character—Michele—and his incapability to find a faith guiding his actions: "we all recognize that this drama is our drama (…) this indifference is our indifference." [Ognuno di noi già riconosce che questo dramma è il nostro drama (…) questa indifferenza è nostra indifferenza.][100] Moreover, for most of the journal's contributors, the novel was the cultural artifact that best expressed the desire to engage with life and to portray the dramas of modern men and women with a deep and analytical insight. As the critic Mario Pannunzio observed in one of his contributions, the novel remained "the most sensitive and insightful means of reflecting the passion, doubts, and lost faith of this our fervent and too intelligent age." [il più sensibile e lucido mezzo per riflettere le passioni i dubbi e le ultime fedi di questa nostra epoca fervida e troppo intelligente.][101] He celebrated the novel as an epic of modern times, and as a way of providing unity and form to the multiple and complex experiences

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since the observed that Jung's notion of unconscious was extremely transcendental and mystic. See the editorial article: "Rapporti col nuovo romanticismo tedesco," Il Saggiatore, Year II, n 10, (April 1931), pp. 49-51.

[99] See Granata, "Dei giovanni," esp. p. 14; and Granata, "Parole tendenziose;" De Crechio, "Adamo, di E de Michelis;"and "Fortuna delle Storie Romanzate e dei libri gialli," Year II, n 9 (March 1931); Riccio, "In margine all'ultimo Borgese," Year II, n 15 (November 1931), pp. 335-339; Granata, "Tesi e contenuto," Year III, n 8 (October 1932), p. 289, 293-295.

[100] Giorgio Granata, "Alberto Moravia o dell'Indifferenza," Il Saggiatore, Year II, n16 (December 1931), p. 394

[101] Mario Pannunzio, "Del romanzo," Il Saggiatore, Year II, n 11, January 1932, p. 433.

of contemporary society. The names affiliated with this new literature were Joyce, Aldous Huxley, D. H. Lawrence, Alfred Doblin, Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, Proust, Gide, Jules Romains, and Virginia Woolf.[102]

Perrotti's psychoanalytic essays fit within this general orientation. His point of departure was the belief that European civilization was undergoing a deep "spiritual crisis" because the old moral values, philosophies, and religions no longer appealed to emotion or vivid experience. Men were therefore left with "a vague wish for a new center of gravitation for our soul" [un desiderio vago di un nuovo centro di gravitazione della nostra anima,] a desire that also implied some nostalgia for lost values. [103] That modern discontent involved deep emotional conflicts. As he observed, "there is a part of ourselves that believes and another that does not (…) a part that wants to stop at the positions already solidly conquered, and another that wants to follow the seductions of the new and unprecedented" [vi è in noi una parte di noi stessi che crede e una che non crede (…) una parte che vuol fermarsi sulle posizioni già solidamente conquistate e l'altra che vuol cedere alle seduzioni del nuovo e del non mai provato.] (21) In accordance with his perception that the crisis was a moment of enrichment and inner search, Perrotti introduced psychoanalysis both as a result of and solution to this spiritual crisis. For him, it allowed men and women to face their inner conflicts without any alibi or escape. He described psychoanalysis as a "dissolving acid for any conscious or unconscious insincerity" [acido dissolvente di ogni insincerità cosciente ed inconsciente] (21) and an uncompromising critique of all the ideological, religious, or mystical refuges men used in the past to create complacent images of themselves.

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[102] Since 1932, the critic Mario Pannunzio took the upper hand in the defense of the novel as a genre. See for instance "Narciso o dello scrittore," Year III, n 19 (March 1932); and "Necesità del romanzo," Year III, n 4 (June 1932), pp. 158-162.

[103] Nicola Perrotti, "La crisi attuale dello spirito," Il Saggiatore, Year I, n 1, April 1930, p. 21.

Perrotti did not hide his enthusiasm for psychoanalysis when presenting it as "the most important current of thought we have had" [il movimento di pensiero più importante che abbiamo avuto] after the Enlightenment and Nietzsche (23). It was due to psychoanalytic criticism that men now had no chance but to face themselves "without veils, without escapes, without truces." [senza veli, senza scappatoie, senza tregua.](23)

Perrotti's essays in the journal expanded on the nature of this "spiritual crisis." In one of his longest contributions he pointed out that the crisis of modern society was in part due to the split between two psychological principles, which he called Logos and Eros. Whereas the former concerned the formal and rational activities of the mind, the latter involved its emotional and instinctual side. Although he was clear that "man's conduct in the last analysis is determined by Eros, by the instinctive, affective, and in great part unconscious part" [la condotta dell'uomo in ultimo analisi ci appare determinata dall'Eros, dalla parte, cioè, istintiva, affetiva e in gran parte incosciente,] his analysis was cautious in avoiding a one-sided call to instinctual or erotic liberation.[104] He noted that, in modern times, "the complete triumph of intellectualism" [il trionfo completo dell'intellettualismo] implied overlooking emotion. This, he claimed, was the reason why the main cultural and philosophical currents were being perceived as meaningless and empty.[105] A new balance between Eros and Logos was required, in his view, in order to regain a meaningful involvement with life. Perrotti specifically pointed out some important signs of change. Some new cultural trends that young people endorsed, he thought, showed that they increasingly demanded sensuality and emotion. He mentioned the way in which "film, the jazz-band, some black dances, and certain forms of novel spread and captivate" [il Cinema, lo Jazz-Band, alcune danze negre e certe forme di romanzo si diffondono e prendono gli animi] as

[104] Nicola Perrotti, "Profilo dell'uomo moderno,I" Il Saggiatore, Year I, n 11, (January 1931), p. 246.

[105] idem, 246-248 and, Perrotti, "Profilo dell'uomo moderno, II"Il Saggiatore, Year II, n 9 (March 1931), p. 30.

evidence in his favor.[106] He contended that these modern cultural trends operated like magic on new audiences because they touched a nerve in the "collective unconscious"; to him this was a proof that "modern man tends to find significant only the manifestations that come from Eros."[l'uomo moderno tende a trovare significative soltanto le manifestazioni che vengono dall'Eros.][107] The new equilibrium between Logos and Eros had therefore to be based on "Eros, the only repository of any form of renewal." [l'Eros, unico depositario di ogni forma di rinnovamento.][108]

Although Perrotti thought that modern entertainment marked the end of intellectualism, he also argued that jazz and film were not appropriate aesthetic products. The fact that these forms "act directly on the senses, on the emotions, on affect, without passing through the intermediary of intelligence" [agiscono direttamente sui sensi, sulle emozioni, sull'affetività, senza passare per l'intermediario dell'inteligenza'] signaled that they were not "art" properly, since for him art was "pure contemplation, eminently, if not purely, intellectual activity" [pura contemplazione, attitività eminente, se non esclusivamente, intelletuale.][109] In some cases he used the civilization-culture divide to make the point that film was the product of mechanical civilization, and therefore could not be seriously considered "a manifestation of life in perfect correspondence with the *whole* spirit." [una manifestazione di vita in perfetta corrispondenza con *tutto* lo Spirito.][110] This was certainly a conservative approach, and rather a surprising one considering the journal's iconoclastic and "anti-intellectual" commitments. Yet it was also instrumental for stressing the psychological component of modern cultural artifacts. Perrotti's

[106] Perrotti, "Profilo dell'uomo moderno,I," p. 249.

[107] idem, 250.

[108] idem.

[109] idem, p. 249.

[110] Perrotti, "Il cinema e le arti mecaniche," Il Saggiatore, Year II, n 2 (April, 1931), p. 92.

key concern was to show that mass society and mechanical civilization were increasingly exposed to psychological suggestion, and that many of their products drew their fascination and attraction from their direct appeal to emotions and the unconscious, “without the intervention of any superior activity” [senza alcun intervento d’attività superiore.] (93). His interest and analysis of authors such as D. H. Lawrence illustrates this point. Although Perrotti accepted that Lawrence’s artistic value was low, he maintained that his work elicited an “enigmatic and disturbing” emotional tension, which deserved exploration. He contended indeed that Lawrence was “the only truly psychoanalytic novelist” [l’unico romanziere veramente psicoanalitico,] since he stressed “the power of unconscious sexuality” [la potenza della sessualità inconscia.] Through his erotic novels, Lawrence “echoes our very repressed sexuality, touches almost magically some very delicate keys of our complexes.” [fa vibrare la nostra stessa sessualità rimossa, tocca quasi magicamente alcuni delicatissimi tasti dei nostri complessi.][111] By so doing, Lawrence’s novels provoked a conflict between the emotions and the intellect: “since we cannot understand or decipher what we feel because some aspects of our conscious activity rebel (…) our impression appears as uneasiness.”[112] These were the kinds of cultural phenomena that Perrotti was interested in exploring.

Perrotti believed that crucial features of modern mass society were analogous to slips, jokes, dreams, and neurotic symptoms, since they were displaced expressions of repressed impulses. Hence, sports or female fashion, for example, lent themselves to a psychoanalytic analysis. Perrotti noted that sports in general were a form of substitutive gratification of men’s combative spirit—which in itself derived from the sexual need to conquer women. That was the

[111] Perrotti, “L’amant di Lady Chatterley di D H Lawrence,” Il Saggiatore, Year III, n 2, (April 1932), p. 86.

[112] [poichè non possiamo comprendere e decifrare quel che sentiamo perchè alcuni aspetti della nostra attività cosciente si ribella in noi(...) la nostra impressione viene avvertita come inquietudine.] idem, 86.

reason why, for Perrotti, audiences at soccer stadiums performed a female role, insofar as they contemplated the struggle between teams competing for its favor.[113] Soccer audiences, moreover, took on all the characteristics that modern psychology attributed to "psychological crowds": emotional contagion, a reduction of critical capacities, the immediate enactment of thought and desires into action, the fusion of the individuals into the mass, and identification with a leader or a group viewed as the center of the crowd. He did not hide his negative assessment of these traits, which he considered a form of regressive primitivism. Yet his point was that participation in a psychological crowd was one of the most basic human impulses. It was the only way to exhaust "unused affective energy" [energia affettiva inutilizzata] and, more particularly, to bridge the gap between "what the ego actually is and what it would like to or should become, between the ego and the super-ego, as they say in psychoanalysis." [ciò che l'io è veramente, e quello che vorrebbe o dovrebbe diventare, fra l'Io ed il Super-Io, come si dice in psicoanalisi.] (178-179). As part of a psychological crowd, the individual can fill his or her "ego ideal" with an image, a faith, or other specific content, and orient unexhausted libidinal energies in that direction. Predictably, Perrotti also made the point that since modern society had experienced a crisis of beliefs, and since the dominant moralism and intellectualism prevented the gratification of emotional energies, watching soccer was Italy's main way of exhausting them. This idea led Perrotti to a curious prognosis: "the fever for sports, as we see today, will not last: in a few years, those affective tendencies that today seek sports, will find other modes of manifesting themselves."[114]

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[113] Perrotti, "Il problema psicologico dello sport," Il Saggiatore, Year III, n 4, (June 1932), p. 177.

[114] [la febbre per gli sport, come oggi si verifica, non può essere duratura: Non passerano molti anni, che quelle tendenze affettive che oggi fanno capo allo sport, troveranno altri modi per manifestarsi.]idem, 179.

Female fashion was another phenomenon that drew Perrotti's interest. He observed that "fashion is neither imposed capriciously, nor blindly followed; instead (…) it is driven by unconscious needs that must be sought in the female sensitivity."[115] He described women's basic need to embellish themselves as the other side of the coin to men's combative spirit: it was a resource for attracting men. (169) Fashion combined this primary need with two other psychological mechanisms: narcissism and ambivalence. The former guaranteed that, through fashion, women sought to please themselves. The latter was the reason why, according to Perrotti, fashions were cyclical. If seasons with long dresses and covered bodies were followed by shorter skirts and naked arms, this was because of the conflict between women's need to reveal their bodies—to admire themselves and be admired—and the opposite need to "hide what one would like to ardently disclose." [nascondere ciò che ardentemente si vorrebbe rivelare.] (170) Fashions were therefore analogous to sports, since both were a way of satisfying unrecognized desires. Perrotti concluded that the female instinct used fashion trends "to make evident, as a very natural thing, and almost as contraband, some of their exquisitely sexual characteristics."[per mettere in evidenza, come cose naturalissime e quasi di contrabando, alcune sue qualità squisitamente sessuali.] (171)

We must concede to Perrotti that he did not deny agency to women in his work on fashion. He was explicit that fashion allowed for individual initiative, especially "when the woman is no longer a slave of fashion but uses it for its personal benefits." [quando la donna non è più schiava della moda ma si serve di essa per il suo trionfo personale.] (172). When that happened, Perrotti considered that a woman's style could "become a direct spiritual

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[115] [la moda non viene imposta per capriccio, nè è subita ciecamente, ma (...) invece è retta da bisogni inconsci che si devono ricercare nell'animo femminile.]Nicola Perrotti, "La moda femminile," Il Saggiatore, Year II, n 4 June 1931, p. 169.

manifestation, not very different from artistic expressions." [può diventare una manifestazione diretta dello spirito non molto dissimile dalle espressioni artistiche.] (172) Considering Perrotti's conservatism when dividing art from not-art, this conclusion is certainly striking. By the same token, and consistent with his general view of modern mass society, he understood that the unconscious and instinctual aspect of fashion was not an exclusive female phenomenon. He closed his essay by making the point that a sudden attraction to a philosophical school, author, or theory, followed by an equally sudden indifference was a product of the same emotional process. Female fashion, in any case, hyperbolically revealed the dynamics of the unconscious permeating many other social phenomena involving both men and women (172).

Along with his approaches to the "contemporary spiritual crisis," sports, and fashion, Perrotti's work on psychoanalysis foregrounded another crucial topic: sexuality. He plainly stated, already in his first article, that "where official morality shows itself actually dated is in the field of sexual morality" [dove la morale ufficiale si addimostra veramente sorpassata è nel campo della morale sessuale.][116] He specifically protested, for instance, against the moral condemnation of single mothers, and against the tendency of the predominant sexual morality to set restrictive and arbitrary social conventions. Consistent with the dominant inspiration in *Il Saggiatore*, Perrotti argued that a sound morality should emerge from increasing one's involvement with life's affairs, and not from diminishing and limiting it. Sexual morality should emerge from what "psychoanalysis teaches: that sexuality can be conceived of in a higher and more expansive way, thus becoming the principal and most efficient source of spiritualization and empowerment of the individual." [la psicanalisi insegna": "che la sessualità può essere concepita in una forma più vasta e più alta, potendo divenire la fonte principale e più efficace di

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[116] Perrotti, "La crisis attuale" p. 25. See further reflections in "Considerazioni sulla Morale," Il Saggiatore, Year III, N 10, December 1932, p. 404-405

spiritualizzazione e di potenziamento dell'individuo.] (26) Immorality, then, should only be attributed to he who "lets himself be dominated by a brute form of sexuality" and not by "who knows how to dominate and sublimate it in a superior conception of the spirit." (26) ["si lascia dominare da una forma bruta di sessualità (…) chi sa dominarla e sublimarla in una concezione superiore dello spirito.]

Although it was not the journal's main focus, a call to reform sexual morality and gender relations was part of its agenda. *Il Saggiatore* featured a well-articulated reflection on sexual reform, probably as a result of Perrotti's interests. In one of their most programmatic texts, *Il Saggiatore*'s staff members argued that one of the characteristics of modern times was that "the sexual act has lost its mysterious character, and is not anymore a 'sacred' act."[l'atto sessuale ha perso ogni suo carattere misterioso, è divenuto un atto non più 'sacro.'][117] They advocated a "realistic return" [ritorno realistico] to sex, that involved the removal of nostalgic and romantic atavism—something they claimed was already happening among young people. Considering sexuality a natural fact of life, the journal protested against its association with "sin," "transgression," or as something "prohibited." (458) They extended this perception to gender relations, arguing that women were no longer invested with otherworldly, sacred, or mysterious attributes. As they concluded, "today, the woman has been reset on a real plane; her plain, true humanity has been discovered, picked up, as it must be, in life, in the little everyday deeds." [oggi, la donna è stata ricollocata (...) su di un piano reale; ne è stata scoperta quindi la sua piena, vera umanità, colta, come effetivamente deve essere colta, nella vita, nei piccoli fatti di tutti i giorni.]' (458) Although *Il Saggiatore* was an all-male journal, and even while their generational language imposed a male perspective onto their whole age cohort, they seem to have taken these

[117] "Conclusioni alla inchiesta sulla nuova generazione," Il Saggiatore, Year III, (January 1933), p. 458.

ideas seriously. Along with other journals of the period, *Il Saggiatore* made an effort to consider gender perspective in its pages.[118]

Il Saggiatore's call for "realist" sexual reform, in contrast, seems to have been less inviting toward sexual diversity. Attacking the romantic and decadent way of conceiving sex and love, the journal's members observed that such "metaphysical" visions exacerbated shyness, as well as lack of confidence in and detachment from women. As they concluded, "from there to the various degenerations the step is much more brief than what usually assumed." [di qui alle varie degenerazioni il passo è assai più breve di quel che non si immagini."][119] Blaming traditional and dated sexual morality for the permanence or spread of sexual deviancy seems in fact to have been one of their strategies for encouraging their "realist" sexual reform. As a result of this procedure, ideas of degeneration and decadence pervaded their approach to sexuality. They overtly stated that "all the various degenerations, which are still found among many, are not other than the last flashes of a moral decadentism, due to the wrong experience of love in a magical, super-human, metaphysical sense." [tutte le varie degenerazione, che sono date riscontrare presso molti ancora, non sono altro che gli ultimi sprazzi di un decadentismo morale, dovuto a quella errata esperienza dell'amore in senso magico, superumano, metafisico.] (458-

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[118] See for instance, Francesco di Chiara,"Ricerche sull'anima dell'amore e la donna nel mondo Americano," Il Saggiatore, Year I, N 8 (August-October, 1930), pp. 191-195, where the author praises some American novels for the gender equalitarianism and their portray of women as independent. The article included a comment by the journal's staff celebrating di Chiara's approach. The journal opened its pages to women in one of its surveys about the "new culture" which included the opinion of novelist Marise Ferro, and the student Lorenza Maranini. See "Contributo per una nuova cultura," Il Saggiatore, Year IV, n 6-7-8 (august-October, 1933), pp. 308-309, 347-348. In terms of demanding changes in gender right, however, the leading voice seems to have been *Orpheus*, which was in many manners a cultural ally of *Il Saggiatore*. See Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* p. 104-105, and also Mario Sechi, *Il mito della nuova cultura*, 111—who mentions an interest in the "sexual question" in the last issue of *Orpheus.*

[119] "Conclusioni," p. 458.

459) By removing the romantic mystifications from sex, their naturalist attitude would prevent such evils and provoke "a reawakening of the race" [un ringiovanimento della razza.] (458-459) Even though these ideas are clearly not framed in psychoanalytic terms, it is difficult to disengage Perrotti from them. Considering that he had been promoting reflection on sexuality since the very inception of the journal, we can imagine that he might have been particularly involved in drafting this section of the document. This conclusion seems representative of his perception of sexuality and of his eclectic way of mixing psychoanalytic terminology with notions of race, degeneration, and decadence which the young intellectuals used to promote their sexual reform.

An Experience Concludes: Corporations, Collectivization, and the Disbandment of a Cultural Project

Perrotti's essays were consistent with *Il Saggiatore*'s basic points of departure: the critique of intellectualism and the call to connect thought with "life" and realms of experience that traditional or academic philosophical approaches allegedly overlooked. The journal afforded Perrotti an important platform from which to promote psychoanalysis. It allowed him to reach a relatively broad readership, probably composed of young university students or graduates. *Il Saggiatore*'s pages, moreover, were a gathering place for many representatives of similar cultural circles who felt compelled to give their opinions or express their interest in psychoanalysis.[120] Some of the journal's most successful initiatives consisted of surveys in which well-known intellectuals and politicians were invited to respond to common questions.

[120] See for instance the survey on the "new culture" where many participants such as Enzo Paci from *Orpheus*, Berto Ricci from *L' Universale*, or Guido Lami from *Studium* expressed their opinions on psychoanalysis. "Contributo per una nuova cultura," pp. 262-266, 285-287; 335-343.

These surveys made an impact on Italian cultural life, since many other journals commented on them. *Il Saggiatore* also achieved some international recognition. In 1933, for instance, Stefan Zweig wrote a letter to the staff saluting them and inviting them to be more cautious in their radical break with the past.[121]

Promoting psychoanalysis through *Il Saggiatore*, however, also implied compromising with, and contributing to, most of its ideological perspectives. Although the journal started with very general claims about reconciling philosophy and life, its gradual involvement with specifically political issues made its anti-liberal and pro-Fascist stance more apparent. Two particular lines of thought reinforced this trend. First, *Il Saggiatore*'s initial call to consider "life" was gradually replaced with an insistence on prioritizing the political over other social activities. The appeal to engage with reality and to get rid of ideological veils gradually segued into an obsession with integrating the individual into the state and with accepting and even exalting Fascism as the only actually existent political alternative.[122] Second, the generational rhetoric and the call to break with the past reinforced this perspective. *Il Saggiatore's* staff members were serious in their reflections on generational politics. They attributed all abstract and universalistic values to the pre-war generation and its belief "in Justice, in the Good, in Disinterestedness, in Truth, in Reason" [nella Giustizia, nel Bene, nel Disinteresse, nella Verità, nella Ragione.][123] They considered that these empty notions crashed against the spirit of the trenches in World War I that shaped the generation that constructed the Fascist regime. That new society, in turn, had

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[121] Stefan Zweig, "Consensi e dissensi," Il Saggiatore, Year III, n 12 (February 1933), pp. 529-530.

[122] See for instance, Massimo Cimino, "Di un'educazione realistica," Year III, n 8 (Oct 1932),pp. 306-311; Carella, "Questa realtà," Year III, n 26, (November 1932), 338-340; Granata, "Nuova cultura," Year III, n 10, (December 1932), 385-388; de Roberto, "Nazionalismo positivo," Year III, n 12 (February 1933), pp. 505-507; Carella, "Punti Fermi," Year IV, n 2 (April 1933), pp. 49-55;Carella, "Il realismo non è conformismo," Year IV, n 3 (May 1933), pp. 115-117; "Romanità," Year IV, n 4 (June 1933), pp. 150-151.

[123] "Conclusioni all'inchiesta," op cit, p. 440.

produced a new generation—the people of the age cohort of *Il Saggiatore*—that were now saddled with the task of liquidating the last remainders of the old values and constructing a whole new culture adapted to a new reality. Liberalism and parliamentarianism were explicitly pointed out as examples of the old world and its emphasis on thinking over acting. They did not hide their resolution to combat the "reactionary forces" [forze reazionarie] and the "nostalgic sentimentalisms" [sentimentalismi nostalgici] still active in Italian culture that precluded the emergence of a new and vital spirit. (464) As they warned in the final sentences of their generational balance sheet, "these worms, rodents of the spirit, unfortunately still nest and shelter under the most unthought-of aspects of many states of mind. It is time to be alarmed and armed to prevent such dissolving forces from in some way harming our future." (464) [Questi vermi roditori dello spirito purtroppo si annidano e covano sotto i più impensati aspetti ancora in molti animi. È tempo però di essere vigili ed armati di tutto punto per impedire che tali forze dissolventi possano ancora in qualche modo nuocere al nostro avvenire.]

Even when the journal adopted a more straightforward political and ideological stance, psychoanalysis did not vanish from its pages. Perrotti, in fact, wrote a couple of essays using psychoanalytic concepts and crowd psychology to analyze the relationship between the individual and the state, as well as the role of syndicates in the new system of corporations being debated at the time.[124] The adoption of a more decisive political outlook, however, introduced differences and cleavages that disbanded a sense of shared purpose among many young intellectuals. As Ben-Ghiat has noted, after 1933 different reviews of the youth front made apparent their differences on how to face Fascist mass society. Some journals, for instance, supported a fully corporatist stance, calling for an end of individualism and endorsing de-

[124] Perrotti, "Psicologia dell'individuo nello Stato," Year IV, n 1 (March 1933), pp. 27-31; and "Valore psicologico dello Stato," Year IV, n 10, (December, 1933), pp. 444-450.

personalization through a fusion of the individual and the masses. They extended this outlook to artistic creation, arguing that art should be produced collectively and anonymously, and they attacked the notion of the independence of the artistic realm.[125] The transition that most of the staff make from *Il Saggiatore* to *Cantiere* was a major step in this direction. Other collaborators, in contrast, created other journals—such as *Oggi*—with more specific literary orientations. The fact that Perrotti did not follow either of the two lines is intriguing, and leaves us in the dark regarding further details of his stance during these years. What is clear, however, is that with the disbanding of *Il Saggiatore*, the first and most intense public encounter with psychoanalysis in Italy was brought to an end.

[125] Ben-Ghiat, *Fascist Modernities,* 107-122, see also Voza, "Il problema del realismo," pp. 98-99.

Chapter 4: "Why Cure our Disease?" Psychoanalysis and the Nation in Italo Svevo's Life and Writings

This chapter focuses on a crucial event for the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature: the writings of Italo Svevo. Italo Svevo was one of the pseudonyms of the Triestine businessman Ettore Schmitz (1861-1928), likely the first writer ever to frame a story within a psychoanalytic setting. His 1923 novel *La coscienza di Zeno* uses psychoanalytic treatment as a pretext for exposing the protagonist's life and creatively appropriates psychoanalytic theory throughout. By focusing on relevant issues of his life and his main writings, this chapter explores the relationship between Svevo and psychoanalysis, as well as the circulation between his fiction and Freudian texts. In so doing, I aim at two major goals. In the first place, I complement the analysis on debates about the novel initiated in chapter three. I seek to show that one of the writers associated to the new narrative trends emerging in Italy during the 1920s was actually proactive in tracing bridges between his fiction and psychoanalysis. Second, I aim at showing that his relationship to psychoanalytic issues was deeply influenced by important political and ideological conflicts, and that his use of psychoanalysis was a form of processing and commenting them.

The years in which Svevo worked on *La coscienza di Zeno*—between early 1919 and late 1922—are the years of the aftermath of the Great War; the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire; the unleashing of revolutionary uprisings in Russia, Budapest, Berlin, and Munich; and the assertion of Fascism in Italy. Because of its participation in both Central European and Italian social life, Svevo's Trieste was at the center of the political turmoil. The city had its own share of social stress, since the Great War brought to Trieste the end of its membership into the Austro-Hungarian Empire and its transition to Italian control. This passage coincided with the explosion

of social and ethnic violence in the streets, the early emergence of Fascist squads, and the consolidation of aggressive and totalitarian strategies of nation making.

This chapter approaches Svevo's relationship to psychoanalysis with specific attention to the particularities of the Triestine context and the social turmoil of the period. I claim that Svevo's appropriation of psychoanalysis was creative and intense, that he developed serious readings of Freudian and psychoanalytic texts, and that he used psychoanalysis to cope with social experiences that affected him personally. I contend that we can better understand Svevo's relationship to psychoanalysis by looking at two interrelated issues. First, there was Svevo's complex, even traumatic social assimilation. Because of his Jewish background and his specific situation as an Italian-speaking Triestine, Svevo lived at the crossroads of multiple cultural traditions and allegiances. His fiction pieces were as a result particularly sensitive to intense psychological experiences regarding social recognition. Second, the transformations in the forms of nation-making occurring after the Great War and the emergence of more authoritarian models of social integration, albeit in a mediated way, propelled changes in his writings and, as I will try to show, were crucial to the ways in which he processed psychoanalysis.

This chapter is divided into two parts. In the first part I provide biographical information about Svevo in order to move to the foreground what may have motivated and mediated his reading of Freudian works. In addition, I focus on the social and political complexities of life in Trieste before and after the Great War. I am interested in showing the venues by which Svevo maintained semi-direct contact with psychoanalysis, as well as the cultural traditions and personal issues that influenced his Freudian readings. In the second part of this chapter, I focus on Svevo's fiction writings in order to complement and support my thesis. I propose to read Svevo's relationship with psychoanalysis by focusing on the role of filial relations in Svevo's

narrative. I claim that Svevo used family relations as a way of commenting on social phenomena. In this respect, I aim to show that a significant transition took place in Svevo's writings. Whereas in the pre-War pieces Svevo emphasized the mother-son link to portray the psychology and interpersonal environment of his main characters, in his most famous novel, *La coscienza di Zeno,* the axis moved to the rivalry between fathers and sons and to a bitter and disconsolate analysis of patriarchy. Svevo therefore made an extensive and creative use of Oedipal motives as well as of psychoanalytic insights about guilt, ambivalence, obsessive neurosis, and transference in order to describe a crucial family role in almost desperate terms. The transition from a mother-centric model to a focus on a robust Oedipal representation of patriarchy relates to Svevo's appropriation of psychoanalysis but, more importantly, to his perspectives on post-War society.

Part I: Life

Svevo on Psychoanalysis

In many ways, Svevo is a mysterious figure. Although he began his literary life in the 1890s, he remained largely unrecognized during most of his lifetime, which motivated his withdrawal from publishing until the early 1920s. Over his youth, and in his early years as a writer, he combined literary work with his job as a bank clerk. Later, he achieved a comfortable economic position due to his marriage, but in turn this coincided with his abandoning—or postponing—his literary ambitions. Since he was never, strictly speaking, a "professional writer," he remained a lonely intellectual, never associating himself with any aesthetic current or journal. As a consequence, we don't have extensive letters or references commenting on his creative process or intellectual choices. Contributing further to this problem, many sources and materials were lost when Svevo's house and library were destroyed in a bombardment during World War II. Svevo's

personal link with a crucial name of twentieth-century literature, indeed, was anecdotal. One of his new tasks at his father-in-law's firm was to learn English with a young Irish instructor named James Joyce, who lived in Trieste between 1904 and 1914. The relationship was a motivating factor in Svevo's decision to resume writing, and Joyce played a crucial role in the reception of his last novel. However, the Svevo-Joyce relationship did not produce a significant amount of correspondence or written intellectual interchange.[1]

Svevo left little clues about his connections with the psychoanalytic world and few explicit reflections on psychoanalysis or Freud. We know for certain that, contrary to other writers more commonly associated with Freudian insights such as Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, or Thomas Mann, Svevo never met Freud. Moreover, when we try to get a more complete picture of his exact readings or how his interest in psychoanalysis emerged, his remarks are clearly disappointing. The letters, biographical sketches, and essays in which he explicitly comments on psychoanalysis were written toward the end of his life, when he was enjoying his sudden recognition. We therefore lack of primary evidence—except for his fiction pieces—about his contact with psychoanalysis previous to his writing of *La Coscienza.*

Moreover, Svevo's remarks on his relationship to psychoanalysis are highly misleading, contradictory, and ambiguous. Although he acknowledged the influence of psychoanalysis on his work and emphasized the writer's need to engage with psychoanalysis, he also sometimes downplayed the influence that Freud might have had on him and the Triestine literati. His attitude is understandable. Since Svevo had risen to success through a novel on psychoanalysis,

[1]For the most complete biographical information on Svevo, see Enrico Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo. La coscienza di un borghese triestino* (Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1992); and John Gatt Rutter, *Italo Svevo. A Double Life* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988).

he later tried to avoid a narrow identification with it in order to defend his originality and independence. In addition, considering the general contempt against psychoanalysis predominating among Italian criticism, it is understandable he would try to keep distance. More deeply, however, Svevo's comments reveal a general distrust of psychoanalysis for being extremely invasive and deterministic. Despite his many instrumental and technical appropriations of psychoanalysis, his basic response betrays a rather self-conscious resistance to the idea of surrendering one's individuality and unconscious to the versions of them elaborated by psychoanalysis.

Svevo's explicit comments on psychoanalysis are spread over a few pieces of writing. The first is a text Svevo wrote for the Milanese journal *Convegno*, apparently between September and October 1926. This text was originally prepared for a conference paper he was going to deliver, probably on Freud or psychoanalysis—although at some point he changed his mind and finally lectured the following year on James Joyce. The document, which was published posthumously as *Soggiorno londinense*, contains some interrupted reflections and significant dates and information. In November 1927, in addition, Svevo corresponded with a prospective writer called Valerio Jahier. The issue of psychoanalysis emerged in the exchange, since Jahier was considering resuming therapy along with his wife Alice; Jahier became the first patient of French psychoanalyst Marie Bonaparte, remaining under treatment with her until his suicide in 1939.[2] These letters also contain valuable information on Svevo's opinions on Freud and psychoanalysis. Finally, Svevo referred to psychoanalysis in a piece he co-wrote with a

[2] For the relationship between Valerio and Alice Jahier and Marie Bonaparte, see Rémy Amouroux, "Marie Bonaparte, her first patients and the literary world," in The International Journal of Psychoanalysis, 91 (2010)pp. 879-894. For the letters between Svevo and Valerio Jahier, see Italo Svevo, *Carteggio*, Bruno Maier ed. (Milan: Dall'Oglio, 1965) pp. 233-257.

friend and journalist named Giulio Cèsari, written as an editorial presentation of Svevo, yet only published as a booklet after his death. Further comments on psychoanalysis can also be found in his late fiction pieces, where he included some explicit opinions on the issue in reference to one of his characters.[3]

Factual information, a series of articulating issues, and significant ambiguities and silences cut across these pieces. We learn for instance that Svevo started to read Freud sometime between 1908 and 1912, and that by 1918 he was assisting his nephew, the medical student Aurelio Finzi, in the translation of a piece by Freud on dreams—probably the short essay *On Dreams*.[4] We also know that after reading Freud's work Svevo tried self-analysis "alone, without a doctor" [nella solitudine, senza medico], and that his last novel emerged as a result of this heterodox experience.[5] Although he never met Freud, he did meet a couple of other psychoanalysts. Svevo explicitly mentioned Edoardo Weiss as his "good friend" [ottimo amico] and as one of the first readers of *La coscienza*. Another important influence he somehow downplayed was Wilhelm Stekel, whom Svevo met when Stekel was still an important figure in the Freudian movement. Finally, a psychoanalyst called René Spitz, who lived in Vienna but

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[3] General references to this material can be found in biographies on Svevo. See Gatt Rutter, *Italo Svevo,* pp. 246-251, 286; and Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo.* pp. 233-246; Elizabeth Schächter, *Origin and Identity: Essays on Svevo and Trieste* (Leeds: Northern Press, 2000), pp. 135-154; Lavagetto, *L'impiegato Schmitz. E altri saggi su Svevo* (Turin: Einaudi, 1975) pp. 339-110; and Eduardo Saccone, "Ripetizioni: Freud, Svevo, e *La coscienza di Zeno,* in Pierluigi Barrotta and Laura Lepschy with Emma Bond (eds), Freud and Italian Culture (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009) pp. 51-64. The circumstances around *Soggiorno londinense* and *Profilo autobiografico* are described by Federico Bertoni and Clotilde Bertoni in the Mondadori edition of Italo Svevo's works. See Italo Svevo, *Tutte le opere. Teatro e saggi* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004), pp. 1680-1684; and Italo Svevo, *Tutte le opere. Racconti e scritti autobiografici* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004) pp. 1451-1453. From now on: *Saggi* and *Racconti* respectively.

[4] Italo Svevo, "Profilo Autobiografico," in *Racconti,* 810.

[5] Italo Svevo, "Letter to Valerio Jahier on December 10, 1927," in *Carteggio,* 239; and "Profilo autobiografico," 810.

owned a villa in Trieste was also Svevo's acquaintance and probably an important influence on him.[6] Nevertheless, Svevo was explicit in that his encounter with psychoanalysis was fundamentally a crucial "literary event" that worked as a long-lasting source of inspiration for his writing. As he concluded in *Soggiorno londinense*, "psychoanalysis never abandonmed me." [la psicanalisi non m'abbandonò più].[7] He defined psychoanalysis as "the science that teaches us to study ourselves" [la scienza per aiutare a studiare se stesso] (893-94) and claimed that no writer should "renounce of at least considering psychoanalysis" [rinunziare di pensare almeno la psicanalisi] (897). Sometimes he went as far as noting his desire to have been analyzed by Freud, since in that way "my novel should have been more complete" [il mio romanzo sarebbe risultato più intero].[8]

Despite appreciating the usefulness of psychoanalysis to literature, Svevo disavowed a more intimate relationship to it. As if he were trying to excuse himself for reading Freud, he underlined his disgust with Freud's style, and claimed that he read his work "with boredom and full antipathy" [con fatica e piena antipatia] as a result of Freud's tedious and overcomplicated writing.[9] More importantly, he also commented that, when talking about *La coscienza* with Weiss, the latter criticized Svevo's misuse of psychoanalysis and refused to write a review of the

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[6] For the relationship between Svevo and Weiss, see "Soggiorno londinense," in *Saggi,* pp 894-895. The relationship between Svevo and Stekel has been commented by Ghidetti in *Italo Svevo,* 237-238; and more recently by Elizabeth Mahler Sächter, *Origin and Identity*. For the relationship between Spitz and Svevo see Giuseppe Camerino, *Italo Svevo* (Turin: UTET, 1981) 435-436; and *Italo Svevo e la Crisi della Mitteleuropa* (Naples: Liguiri Editori, 2002) pp. 249-252. See also Giovanni Palmieri, *Schmitz, Svevo, Zeno. Storia di due 'biblioteche'* (Milan: Bompiani, 1994) p. 60-62. Spitz might by an important track to follow the relationship between psychoanalysis and literature in Trieste, since he was also a friend of the literay critic Bobi Bazlen. Spitz emigrated to the US in the 1930s.

[7] "Soggiorno londinense," 898; see also "Profilo autobiografico," 809-810.

[8] "Letter to Valerio Jahier on December 27, 1927," in Italo Svevo, *Carteggio*, p. 243.

[9] "Soggiorno londinense," 897.

book for the psychoanalytic press. This refusal might have been painful for Svevo, and it seems to have contributed to his willingness to trace lines dividing his literature and psychoanalysis. Under a different light, it is also possible that Svevo's respect for psychoanalysis had led him to emphasize that his use was dilettantish. It is clear, however, that when he abruptly tried to detach himself from psychoanalysis he was unpersuasive. His announcements in *Soggiorno londinense* that "I have nothing to do with psychoanalysis" [Io con la psicanalisi non c'entro] (894), or that in his last novel there are only "two or three ideas which are directly taken from Freud" [vi sono due o tre idee nel romanzo che sono addirittura prese di peso dal Freud] are unconvincing. In fact, they contradict other comments in the same piece, where Svevo points out that his relationship to psychoanalysis is like the one between the philosopher and the artist: it resembles legal marriage since, like husband and wife, neither understands the other but they "make beautiful children."[10] This formula seems more accurate in relation to Svevo's creative appropriation of psychoanalysis, yet it still leaves us without specific details regarding what he took from Freud or what specific texts he read.

Svevo also diminished the intensity of the contacts between literature and psychoanalysis in Trieste when writing on Joyce, although he showed some ambiguity here. In a 1926 article on Valéry Larbaud's translation of *Dubliners* Svevo agreed with Larbaud's judgment that in the modern world Joyce's name "as a celebrity is put along those of Freud and Einstein" [come

[10] "Questo rapporto intimo fra filosofo e artista, rapporto che somiglia al matrimonio legale perché non s'intendono fra di loro proprio come il marito e la moglie e tuttavia come il marito e la moglie producono dei bellisimi figliuli conquista all'artista un rinnovamento o almeno gli dà il calore e il sentimento della cosa nuova come avverrebbe se fosse possible di mutare una parte del vocabolario e darci delle parole nuove non ammuffite dalla loro antichità e dal lungo uso." "Soggiorno londinense," 896.

notorietà è posto accanto a quelli di Freud e dell'Einstein].[11] Yet he never went beyond this vague association of Freud and Joyce. When in 1927 he lectured on Joyce, he offered his experience with Joyce as proof that "Sigmund Freud's thought never reached Joyce" during the time he was working in *Ulysses*. He asserted that when Joyce left Trieste in 1915 he ignored psychoanalysis, and that when they met again in 1919, Joyce was clearly against it. He furthermore concluded that Joyce finally approached psychoanalysis in Zurich, where he migrated during the war.[12] Svevo's comment is hardly sustainable, especially when consulting Joyce's biographers, who provide evidence that it was in Trieste that Joyce became familiar with psychoanalysis. Moreover, the Weiss family might have played an important role in this introduction, since Joyce and Ottocaro Weiss—Edoardo Weiss's brother—were good friends during those years.[13] It is difficult to believe that Svevo did not know about this, and his lecture on Joyce appears as a lost opportunity to deepen this relationship further. More likely, these comments were a response to the increasing hostility to psychoanalysis within Italian literary criticism. [14]

Downplaying the Freudian influence on himself, Joyce and the Triestine artistic circles might have been a strategy to gain acceptance among the Italian literary critiques. Other comments and rejections, however, appear as more personal and sincere. Svevo was, for example, skeptical about the clinical usefulness of psychoanalysis. As he wrote to Jahier, "a great man our Freud, but more for novelists than for the ill ones." [grande uomo chel nostro

[11] Italo Svevo, "Triestinità di un grande scrittore irlandese: James Joyce," in *Saggi*, 1170. The article was originally published by Svevo in the fascist journal *Il popolo di Trieste*.

[12] Italo Svevo, "Conferenza su James Joyce," *Saggi,* p. 936.

[13] See Richard Ellmann, *The Consciousness of Joyce* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977) pp. 53-55.

[14] This is a conclusion by Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo,* p. 236.

Freud, ma più per i romanzieri che per gli ammalati].[15] This rejection was largely based on the experience of Svevo's brother-in-law, Bruno Veneziani—the youngest brother of Svevo's wife, Livia. According to Svevo, Veneziani had started treatment with Freud during 1910, and continued for two years until Freud finally dismissed him as untreatable. This came as a terrible event for Veneziani and for the whole family, probably concerned by his problems with drugs and his homosexuality. Svevo, who sympathized strongly with Veneziani, remained deeply embittered toward Freud and considered the experience a waste of Veneziani's time. He drew an interesting conclusion from the experience:

> The advice he gave me was the only positive result of his cure. He was in analysis for two years and he came back totally ruined: abulic as before but with his abulia aggravated by the conviction that, being made in such a fashion, he could not act otherwise. He was the one who gave me the conviction that it was dangerous to explain to a man how he was made, and each time I see him I love him and thank him for the old friendship and also for the new gratitude.[16]

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[15] *Carteggio,* p. 239.

[16] [L'avviso dato a me fu l'unico buon effetto della sua cura. Si fece psicanalizzare per due anni e ritornò dalla cura addirittura distrutto: Abulico come prima ma con la sua abulia aggravata dalla convinzione ch'egli, essendo fatto così, non potesse agire altrimenti. È lui che mi diede la convinzione che fosse pericoloso di spiegare ad un uomo com'era fatto ed ogni volta che lo vedo lo amo per l'antica amicizia ma anche per la nuova gratitudine] *Soggiorno londinense,* 897. Svevo does not refer to Veneziani explicitly, but as "a neurotic friend" of him. See also the reference, which most probably was to the same case, in "Letter to Jahier, December 27, 1927," in *Carteggio*.

Svevo apparently distrusted psychoanalytic therapy for being highly invasive: it robbed people of their will by delving too intimately into their selves and by stressing the conditioning factors that frame a person's character. As he wrote to Jahier when recommending doctors from the Nancy school of suggestion instead of psychoanalysis: "They won't change your intimate 'I.' And do not despair for that. I would despair if they actually succeeded."[17] Svevo's recommendation of the Nancy school was not random, indeed. Some authors found out that he had spent some time at Nancy trying a cure there. Books about suggestion were among the few surviving titles of his library, and Svevo also used some ideas from this school when composing *La coscienza.*[18]

Svevo's explicit statements do not exhaust his insights into psychoanalysis. This is particularly relevant for the cases in which he made his characters speak on the issue. In one of his last stories, titled *Corto viaggio sentimentale* [Short Sentimental Journey], it can be argued that the protagonist of the story, a businessman named Mr. Aghios, might be voicing Svevo's ideas. During a train trip, Aghios hears a conversation in which a person asserts that for psychoanalysis "the disease has its first origin in a moral wound received during early childhood and whose memory is suppressed in order to avoid suffering."[19] Aghios reacts against explaining life by tracing everything back to a sole event: for him "each wound harms, and each wound, if it has the time, incancrenes and expands."[20] In his understanding life is vaster, richer, and more undetermined than the reductive account offered by psychoanalysis. As Aghios concludes: "the longest time is that between childhood and death"—in this sense he asserts a view of life as

[17][Non Le cambieranno l'intimo il Suo 'Io.' E non disperi perció. Io dispererei se vi riuscissero] *Carteggio,* 244.

[18] Palmieri, *Schmitz, Zeno, Svevo*, 35-40.

[19] [la malattia ha la sua prima origine in una ferita morale ricevuta nella prima infanzia e di cui per non soffrirne si sospesse il ricordo]. Italo Svevo, "Corto viaggio sentimentale," in *Racconti,* 527.

[20] [ogni ferita doleva ed ogni ferita –se ne aveva il tempo—incancreniva e si dilatava] "Corto viaggio," 528.

constantly affected, modified, altered, and redefined.[21] Few pages later, however, Aghios states exactly the opposite idea, when meeting in his train car a phobic child who sparks memories about Aghios's own childhood. This leads him to observe that "based on his own experience of sixty years he could have told him that when one is born in such a way, one remains like that."[22] The second episode redefines Aghios's first angry response to psychoanalysis, while also suggesting that his previous emotional rejection had something to do with his own resistance to explore his childhood. To complicate things further, when reading the story we detect direct borrowings from Freud's clinical cases, indicating that Svevo read not only Freud's most popular pieces but also his most technical works.[23]

Even in his criticism of psychoanalysis Svevo maintained an ironic and self-reflective stance, thus avoiding one-sided responses. He was conscious, indeed, that intense resistance to and rejection of psychoanalysis could be a form of self-defense, or a reaction to one's own repressed impulses and censored features. He found amusement in the fact that psychoanalysis could be confirmed in the very act of its rejection and did not lose the opportunity to expose his taste for irony when referring to his own relationship to psychoanalysis. When commenting on his own disgust for Freud's style and his lack of interest in Freud's treatment, he noticed that:

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[21] [il più lungo tempo è quello che trascorre dall'infanzia alla morte] "Corto viaggio," 528.

[22] [per la propria esperienzia di sessant'anni avrebbe potuto raccontargli che quando si nasce fatti in un modo si resta così] "Corto viaggio," 543

[23] See "Corto viaggio" pp. 543-545. The relationship between the child's phobia and his nighmare with horses seems a borrowing from Freud's "Little Hans" case. In addition, there is a sentence in the story which is also a borrowing from Freud's Rat Man case. See also Clotilde Bertoni's notes to the Mondadori edition, idem, p. 1241. We will returing to these issues below.

> I was healthy or at least I loved my disease so much—if that was the case—as to preserve it with a self-defensive spirit. So, my antipathy against Freud's style was interepreted by a Freudian I confided to as a strike from the primitive animal living in me in order to protect my disease.[24]
>
> [Io ero sano o almeno amavo tanto la mia malattia (se c'e) da preservarmela con intero spirito di autodifesa. Anzi la mia antipatia per lo stile del Freud fu interpretata da un Freudiano cui mi confidai come un colpo di denti dato dall'animale primitivo che c'è anche in me per proteggere la propia malattia]

As I will show below, Svevo's attitude combines psychoanalytic ideas about the patient's unconscious resistance to the cure with long-standing reflections on sickness as a source of creativity. His letters to Jahier confirm this conclusion. When writing about his relationship to psychoanalysis, Jahier moved to the foreground his frustration for his lack of literary and professional achievements. He held expectations that curing his inhibitions would pave his way to success, and vice versa, that achieving success would help rid him of the "inferiority complex" that, as he dramatically said, "poisons [avvelena] my existence."[25] All this might have sounded familiar to Svevo, since he had experienced this same anxiety and frustration years earlier. Yet Svevo departed from Jahier's reasoning and made no concessions to his attitude:

> And why cure our disease? Do we really have to deprive humanity of the best of it? I believe that the true success that has given me peace is constituted by this

[24] "Soggiorno londinense," pp. 897-898.

[25] *Carteggio,* 241.

> conviction. We are living protests against the ridiculous conception of the superman that swindled to us (especially us the Italians).[26]
>
> [E perchè voler curare la nostra malattia? Davvero dobbiamo togliere all'umanità quella ch'essa ha di meglio? Io credo sicuramente che il vero successo che mi ha dato la pace è consistito in questa convinzione. Noi siamo una vivente protesta contro la ridicola concezione del superuomo come ci è stata gabellata (sopratutto a noi italiani)]

Svevo blamed psychoanalysis, or at least certain form of its consumption, for promoting a conception of health associated with social success, productivity, efficiency and, apparently, virilism. Svevo understood this notion of health as a form of personal impoverishment, of surrendering one's singularity for the purposes of social adaptation, or of becoming effective in practical matters at the cost of abandoning a deeper sense of connection with oneself based on constant search and inner exploration. These were the most powerful motives distancing him from psychoanalysis, even when he decided to remain inconclusive and ironic about it, and dodge one-sided and definite responses. At the bottom of this attitude there lie the deep existential circumstances of Svevo's life, as well as a series of ideas and perceptions he took from different literary and philosophical traditions.

"A Little Neurotic Criminal"

Svevo's writings during the late 1920s are the only materials we have that explicitly refer to his relationship with psychoanalysis. They are, for the most part, elusive and misleading. There is another set of pieces written during the early years of Svevo's intellectual life that are

[26] *Carteggio,* 243.

more revealing of what motivated Svevo to gain familiarity with psychoanalysis. These writings, dated to the 1890s, show that Svevo was aware of many ideas and literary resources that were remarkably similar to Freudian theories and observations. Some passages from Svevo's first novel, for instance, may appear to borrow directly from Freudian texts—except for the fact that the passages were written well before Freud had published their counterparts. The most surprising of these cases, perhaps, appears at the beginning of Svevo's first novel, *Una Vita* (1892). The protagonist, Alfonso Nitti, is a young clerk who had recently arrived from the countryside to work in the administrative section of a company. An ambitious, lonely, and obscure character, Alfonso scorns the world of commerce and office routine around him while dreaming of obtaining notoriety and glory through his intellectual achievements. In portraying Alfonso's complex psychology, with its mix of resentment and social climbing, Svevo is notable for his "Freudianism," especially when describing Alfonso's indulgent daydreaming during his office hours:

> He was the center of his dreams, master of himself, rich, happy. He had ambitions he was only conscious of when he dreamed. It was not enough to make of him a rich and remarkably intelligent person. He changed his father, without resurrecting him, in a noble and rich man who had married his mother out of love –the mother was remained as she actually was in his dreams, so much he loved her. He had totally forgotten his father, and profited from that by providing himself with the blue blood his dream required. With this blood in his veins, and with his wealth, he ran into [his superiors] Maller, Saneo, Cellani. He was not the

shy one anymore, they were now! But he treated them sweetly, with true nobility, not like they treated him. [27]

[Centro dei suoi sogni era lui stesso, padrone di sé, ricco, felice. Aveva delle ambizioni di cui consapevole a pieno non era che quando sognava. Non gli bastava fare di sé una persona sovranamente intelligente e ricca. Mutava il padre, non facendolo risuscitare, in un nobile e ricco che per amore aveva sposato la madre, la quale anche nel sogno lasciava quale era, tanto la voleva bene. Il padre aveva quasi del tutto dimenticato e ne approfittava per proccurarsi per mezzo suo il sangue turchino di cui il suo sogno abbisognava. Con questo sangue nelle vene e con quelle ricchezze si imbatteva in Maller, in Sanneo, in Cellani; naturalmente le parti del tutto invertite. Non era più lui il timido, erano costoro! Ma egli li trattava con dolcezza, davvero nobilmente, non come essi trattavano lui]

As others commentators have observed, the resemblance of this passage to Freud's articles on daydreaming and family romance is remarkable.[28] In Freud's theories as in Svevo's passage, daydreaming results from the frustrations of real life, contains imaginary wish-fulfillments in the form of revenge on competitors, and features characters with incredible powers as a way of imagining what Freud referred to as "his majesty the Ego."[29] Even more significantly, the daydreamer also tends toward "exalting the child's father, but no longer casts

[27] Italo Svevo, *Una Vita,* in Italo Svevo, *Tutte le opere. Romanzi e "Continuazioni"* (Milan: Mondadori, 2004) [from now on *Romanzi*], p. 17.

[28] See for instance, Brian Moloney, *Italo Svevo. A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), p. 36; and Mario Lavagetto, "Il romanzo oltre la fine del mondo," in *Romanzi*, XXIX.

[29] Freud, "Creative Writers and Day-dreaming," in *The Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol IX (1906-1908)* (London: Hogart Press,1959), p. 150.

any doubts on his maternal origin, which is regarded as something unalterable."[30]That is precisely what Svevo does in his description of Alfonso's daydreaming. These coincidences prompt us to imagine that Svevo's encounter with Freudian texts must have been a validating experience, since he found in them insights on issues in which he was deeply engaged. Moreover, they suggest that both Svevo and Freud shared a similar cultural ground, and that Svevo's encounter with psychoanalysis was therefore a result of a series of perspectives he maintained from very early in his intellectual life.

Crucial for understanding Svevo's relationship to psychoanalysis are his constant references to dreaming, discontent, disease, and maladjustment, as well as some conclusions about the relationship between pathology and artistic creation. These kinds of topics had elicited Svevo's readings on pre-Freudian psychopathology since at least the late 1880s. One of his first published articles, in fact, was a brief essay commenting on recent debates and literature concerning smoking—a very personal topic for Svevo since he was a life-long heavy smoker. Svevo pointed to the connection between smoking and neurosis, which had been developed by many doctors but especially by the American psychiatrist George Miller Beard –who also popularized the notion of neurasthenia—and illustrated by the case of one of his intellectual heroes, Èmile Zola: even accepting that smoking caused neurosis, its influence was still beneficial for literature. "Nervous finesse," argued Svevo, "is seldom found in the perfectly healthy and robust person, and that saying that provided so much calm and confidence to our parents, *Mente sana in corpore sano,* seems a little old fashioned."[31] Svevo viewed the smoker

[30] "Family Romances," idem. p. 239.

[31] [E di più é pur troppo cosa confessa che la finezza nervosa quasi mai si ritrova nella persona perfettamente sana e robusta e quel detto che ai nostri padri dava tanta fiducia e calma: *Mente sana in corpo sano* sembra alquanto

and the neurotic in direct relation to what he considered the main human type for aesthetic creation: the dreamer. True smokers, neurotics, and dreamers had allegedly all in common a low social performativity, which led them to intensify their imagination as a result of their increasingly unfulfilled desires. As he concluded with regard to the dreamer: "dream disordered by corrupted nerves" was the basis of his creativity.[32]

Svevo also tended to talk about himself as a sick, neurotic, maladapted, and inefficient person who detached himself from daily tasks due to his inner fantasies.[33] His letters to his fiancée (later his wife), Livia, are full of explicit references to his depression, hypochondria, difficulty sleeping, intense jealousy, obsession with his own death, insecurity, sense of precocious aging, and inability to focus and concentrate.[34] As he summarized in a letter in June 1900: "I am in the whole a small neurotic criminal, and sometimes I feel much unhappier about it than you can imagine."[35]

Svevo's self-representation in a pathological key was especially intense at the turn of the century, when his anxieties regarding his lack of literary success increased as he faced

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antiquato.]E Samigli [pseudonym of Italo Svevo], "Il fumo," in *Saggi*, 1087. The article was originally published in the Triestine daily L'Independente, November 17, 1890.

[32] Idem, 1088.

[33] See for instance his letter to Triestine literary critic Silvio Benco, dated November 23, 1895, in which Svevo presents himself through his illnesses, which make impossible for him to finish anything: Italo Svevo, *Epistolario* (Milan: Dall'Oglio, 1966), p. 34.

[34] See *Epistolario*: For cases of overjealousy, see for instance undated letters 8 and 9, year 1896, pp. 47-50. Hypocondria: Letters to Livia Veneziani, May 16, 17 and 20, 1898, pp. 89-98; Obsession with his own death and aging: Letter to Livia Veneziani, May 27, 1898, June 1, 1898, and May 22, 1899. See also the short diary he wrote during the months of his engagement: Italo Svevo, "Diario per la findanzata," in *Racconti* pp. 674-709 which is also an intense exposition of all these complaints.

[35] "Io sono in complesso un piccolo delinquente nevrotico e me ne sento a volte assai piú infelice di quanto puoi credere." Letter to Livia Veneziani on June 17, 1900, in *Epistolario,* pp. 210-211.

indifference by readers and critics alike. When in 1902 he tried to convince himself to eliminate from his life "that ridiculous and damaging thing called literature," he embarked on a respectable bourgeois life as an employee in his father-in-law's firm.[36] In those years, a healthier and more efficient Ettore Schmitz replaced the neurotic Italo Svevo, who moved to an underground existence. He relegated writing to a more intimate, almost secret sphere—his diary and correspondence—and eventually found a surrogate in playing the violin. Yet even when discussing the details of his job and his commercial trips, sometimes the old dreamer resurfaced: "It is true that the hard work to which I attend makes me feel sometimes the desire to enter into myself," he wrote to his wife in 1903, "you must remember how many years I devoted to such a sweet habit and how it is now so frequently impeded. My habit as a dreamer is, in the end, what keeps my serenity. (…)"[37]

There are many possible factors explaining Svevo's reflections on disease, neurosis, and dreaming—besides the obvious one that he actually had nervous problems. The influence of Naturalist authors such as Zola was crucial in this sense. Very early in his intellectual life, in fact, Svevo defended the literary use and appropriation of medical and scientific theories.[38] Svevo was always updated on psychiatric literature, and this must have put him in contact with

[36] "Io, a quest'ora e definitivamente ho eliminata della mia vita quella ridicola e dannosa cosa che si chiama letteratura." Italo Svevo, "Pagine di diario" in *Racconti* p. 737. Entry of December 1902.

[37] Letter to his wife from Charlton (England), on May 12, 1903. In Epistolario, p. 376-377. "Vero è che il rude lavoro cui accudisco mi fa sentire talvolta il desiderio di rientrare in me stesso (….) Devi ricordare quanti anni io dedicai a tale dolce abitudine e come mi sia ora tanto spesso del tutto interdetta. Il mio costume di sognatore in fondo è quello che fa la mia serenità quasi continua (…)".

[38] See his review article "'La joie de vivre' di Emilio Zola" in *Saggi,* 993-996; first published in L'independente, on March 8, 1884. A more straightforward point on this issue in his polemical article: "''Il libro di Don Chisciotte' di Edoardo Scarfoglio" in *Saggi,* 1010-1013; where he defends Zola's use of modern science against the accusations of artistic impoverishment.

the pathologies and mental disturbances that populated late-nineteenth-century medical discourse.[39] Despite his interest in these topics and his close contact with Zola's Naturalism, he established a very unique relationship with the craze for pathology characterizing the late nineteenth century.[40] Svevo did read authors such as Max Nordeau—who later on used the notion of degeneration as a general way of explaining crucial trends in modern societies. In addition, his insistence on the relationship between dreaming, artistic creation, and mental pathology could have been influenced by the Italian Positivist Cesare Lombroso, who made strong claims about the connection between genius and insanity in his early writings. Yet Svevo never incurred the alarmism around degeneration, national decline, and decadence that characterized many Positivist-influenced intellectuals during late nineteenth century.[41] By the same token, Svevo avoided stylizing sickness and decadence, and therefore we cannot include him as one of the Decadent writers fascinated by issues of disease, decomposition, and decline. Despite possible similarities, Svevo was either ignorant of or untouched by the influence of

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[39] For Svevo's contact with psychiatry of the time see Palmieri, *Schmitz, Svevo, Zeno*, pp. 13-45.

[40] For general approaches to the spred of notions of degeneration, decline, mental and physical pathology, and their connections with criminality, marginality, and social deviance in Europe in late 19th century, see Daniel Pick, *Faces of Degeneration. A European Disorder, 1848-1918* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989); and J Edward Chamberlain and Sander Gilman (eds), *Degeneration. The Dark Side of Progress* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); and Robert A. Nye, *Crime, Madness, and Politics in Modern France. The Medical Concept of National Decline* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984).

[41] See for instance Svevo's article "Il vero paese de' miliardi," in *Saggi,* 975-980, first published in *L'independente*, June 2, 1883. In that article Svevo reviewed the book "Studi e schizzi parigini di Max Nordeau" and although he found some interesting passages, he criticized Nordeau's condemnation of France and its urban life. In his unpublished essay "Del sentimento in arte" (1887) Svevo observed that "I have seen a phrenologist quote great artists and critics in which he found traits of megalomania; I think they were megalomaniacs first, and then great artists." [Ho veduto citare da un frenologo grandi artisti e critici in cui riscontrava tratti di megalomani; credo che sieno stati prima megalomani poi grandi artisti]. In *Saggi*, 838. This might be a reference to Cesare Lomboso, and especially his works on genius and insanity, such as *Genio e Follia* or *Uomo di Genio* which appeared in the early 1880s.

authors such as Baudelaire, Huysmans, and Oscar Wilde.[42] Moreover, the Italian novelist and poet Gabriele D'Annunzio was probably the only major Decadent author he read. As many biographers have observed, however, Svevo never hid his scorn for his work.[43]

The most significant intellectual source for Svevo's association of creativity and pathology was the German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer, Svevo's main explicit philosophical influence throughout his life. Svevo had read Schopenhauer during his school years, and much of his writings were direct applications of the philosopher's ideas. The dichotomy between passiveness, contemplation, and art, on the one hand, and action, success, and lack of reflection on the other was a strong element of Svevo's prose, which he adopted from Schopenhauer. Svevo's first novel, for instance, was such a direct "translation" of Schopenhauer's theses that later in his life Svevo regretted making an extremely "syllogistic" use of it.[44] But this lament never diminished his attraction to Schopenhauer, as he made explicit in his late years.[45] As a result, we can also speculate that Svevo's notions concerning pathology and

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[42] For an analysis of Decadentism in Italian literature, with especial focus on D'Annunzio, see Barbara Spackman, *Decadent Genealogies. The Rhetoric of Sickness from Baudelaire to D'Annunzio* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1989)

[43] For Svevo's scorn for D'Annunzio see Gatt-Rutter, *Italo Svevo,* 220-231. The relationship between Svevo and Naturalism is a general topic in all studies on him. The generalized attitude is to stress the differences. See for instance A Leone de Castris, *Italo Svevo* (Nistri-Lisi, Pisa, 1959), pp. 19-20 and Lavagetto, "Il romanzo oltre la fine del mondo," op.cit, where he stresses Flaubert as a bigger influence than Zola (xvii-xviii). Eduardo Saccone refers to the dual influence of Balzac and Flaubert to explicitly contest the notion of the young Svevo as a Naturalist. See Eduardo Saccone, *Il poeta travestito. Otto scritti su Svevo* Pisa: Pacini Editori, 1977), 51-52.

[44] "Profilo autobiografico," 801.

[45] As he wrote to Jahier on December 27, soon before he died: "The first one who knew about us is previous to Nietzche: Schopenhauer, and he considered the contemplative man as a product of nature, as achieved as the fighter." [Il primo che seppe di noi è anteriore al Nietzche: Schopenhauer, e considerò il contemplatore come un prodotto della natura, finite come il lottatore.' *Carteggio,* 243.

art could have had the same source. As Ghidetti has observed, Svevo's path toward Freud was in this sense similar to that of Thoman Mann, whose interest in Freud emerged out of his appreciation for Schopenhauer.[46]

Navigating Identities

All of these precise intellectual influences and cultural perceptions are clearly relevant to an understanding of Svevo's interest in the link between art and sickness as well as his self-presentation within a pathological framework. This picture is enriched if we focus on the intense social and personal experiences underlying his references to dreaming, neurosis, and mental insanity. A thread running through Svevo's writings is the fact that all of his main characters are constructed around their ineptitude, awkwardness, social failure, and incapacity for success in professional and personal terms—features that become more apparent when they are contrasted with their more successful and efficient rivals.[47] When reviewing *La coscienza di Zeno* for a French magazine, for instance, one of Svevo's first enthusiastic critics compared Zeno to Charles Chaplin's Charlotte because of his acrobatic clumsiness—today perhaps we could think of him as of a piece with many of Woody Allen's characters.[48] Svevo explicitly acknowledged that his three novels were unified by the ineptitude of his characters—and indeed he originally wanted to title his first novel "Un inetto" [An Inept]. Most of his writings introduce protagonists with parallel traits: a marginal worker who commits a murder to get some money and is caught

[46] Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo,* 70-83.

[47]There is a deep analysis of the dynamics of symbiosis and dependence between Svevo's weak and strong characters in Giuliana Minghelli, *In the Shadow of the Mommoth. Italo Svevo and the Emergence of Modernism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

[48] See Benjamin Crémieux, "Un 'riche amateur' in letteratura" in Enrico Ghidetti (ed), *Il caso Svevo. Guida storica e critica* (Bari: Laterza, 1984),p. 21. The article appeared originally in the French journal Le Navire d'Argent on February 1, 1926,

(*L'Assassinio di Via Belpoggio*), discontented clerks (*Una vita*), frustrated artists (*Senilità*, *Una burla riuscita*), old men unable to act their age (*Le confessione del vegliardo*, *Un Contratto*, *La Novella del buon vecchio e della bella fanciulla, La rigenerazione*), and unsatisfied middle-class businessmen (*La coscienza di Zeno*, *Corto Viaggio sentimentale*). In every case, these men are pushed into tragedy because of an imbalance between their ambitions and their actual conditions, or they live in a parallel oneiric reality that protects them from anxiety. In none of the cases do they achieve their expectations or successfully perform their social roles.

Svevo's literary focus on ineptitude, sickness, and maladaptation relates to a particular way of commenting on circumstances linked to his social environment. Throughout his life, Svevo experienced contradictory allegiances and frustrated expectations that shaped his mindset. Coming from a middle-class family, he received a commercially oriented education in Germany, as his father wanted his children to become successful businessmen. Svevo's taste for literature and art, which manifested itself very early in his youth, did not exactly fit into this design. His father's bankruptcy, which obligated Svevo to work as a clerk in the Triestine branch of the Viennese Unionbank, thwarted his ambition to pursue a literary career even further. [49] His youth was therefore consumed in dreams of a literary glory that never materialized while he mixed his bohemian life with his job as an administrative clerk: probably a constraining, unchallenging, and alienating experience. His self-representation as sick, lonely, frustrated, and discontented with himself and others seems to have been born in these years, as the first page of his diary, written on his twentieth birthday, suggests:

> My discontent with myself and with the others could not be deeper (…). The financial issues grow worse and worse, I am neither happy with my health, nor

[49] Ghidetti,51-53.

> with my job, nor with all the people around me. It is understandable that when I am not satisfied with my work I cannot demand others to be so. But considering the incommensurable ambitions I nourished at this time, not finding anyone, but anyone, who shares an interest in what I think and do and finding myself always forced to act as though I were interested in others' business because it is the only way to earn a little of that consideration I aim at (…) My strength was always my hope and the problem is that it is also fading.[50]
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> [Il malcontento mio di me e degli altri non potrebbe essere maggiore. (…) La questione finanziaria va divenendo sempre più acuta, non sono contento della mia salute, non del mio lavoro, non di tutta la gente che mi circunda. Sta bene che non essendo io stesso soddisfato del mio lavoro non posso esigere che altri lo sia. Ma con le smisurate ambizione che a suo tempo si nutrirono non avere trovato nessuno *ma nessuno* che pigli interesse a quanto pensi e a quanto fai; trovarsi sempre costretto di fare come se si pigliasse interese alle cose altrui perché l'unica via di guadagnarsi un po' di quella considerazione cui volere o volare si ambisce. (…) La mia forza era sempre la speranza e il male si è che anche quella va affievolendosi].

The anxiety concerning his unfulfilled ambitions, his misrecognition, and his constraining economic situation was only one aspect of the experiences that framed his writing. Equally significant were the overlapping national and regional allegiances articulating his identity. Despite receiving an education in Germany and living in a city that was part of the Habsburg Empire, Svevo considered himself Italian and sought cultural recognition in Italy. His

[50] Italo Svevo, "Pagine di diario. Entry of December 19, 1889," *Racconti*, 731.

pseudonym Italo Svevo was indeed a way of integrating both backgrounds, since the last name Svevo pointed to the German origins of his education.[51] In cultural terms, in fact, Italy acted as the educative cradle and destiny to most Triestine artists writing in Italian. Had he had the opportunity, Svevo would have travelled to Florence or Rome in order to rid himself of his Triestine regional accent, get familiar with classic Italian culture, and become updated regarding the latest artistic trends and currents. Most Italian-oriented Triestine writers and critics, such as Scipio Slataper, Giani and Carlo Stuparich, Umberto Saba, Silvio Benco, and Alberto Spaini, travelled to Florence at some point in order to "have a bath in the Arno" and Italianize themselves. [52]

Without the opportunity to reinforce his Italianness, Svevo remained in a difficult situation. His cultural background did not include the Italian classical canon, since his influences were more generally European. Moreover, his writing did not adapt to the criteria of beauty of form and correction that ruled official Italian literature. The commentaries to his stories and novels emphasized that they were "badly written" and lacked of the elegance and eloquence of the Tuscan Italian, not to mention their incapability to elicit patriotic sentiments. As Svevo's wife recalled in her memoirs, Svevo actually "suffered from not being in perfect command of the Italian language, partly because he had been educated in a foreign school, and partly because of the constant use of dialect, spoken at home even by cultured families in Trieste."[53] As a citizen of the Habsburg monarchy his German background was insufficient, yet as a Triestine he was too

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[51] See P N Furbank, "Preface," in Livia Veneziani Svevo, *Memoir of Italo Svevo* (New York: New Directions, 1950), p. xiii.

[52] See Gatt Rutter, *Italo Svevo,* 221-222; Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo,* 16, and Moloney, *Italo Svevo*, 4-5.

[53] Livia Veneziani, *Memoir of Italo Svevo*, p. 9.

European or regional to be culturally recognized in his Italian fatherland. Thus Svevo figured as a double outsider, which fueled his sense of awkwardness and ineptitude.

The frustration of his literary ambitions and his situation as a double outsider might have been psychologically suffocating for Svevo, but some of his life decisions nonetheless reveal a deliberate attempt to remain along the margins of overlapping or conflicting allegiances. The tensions between his Socialism and his social immersion illustrate this point. In the 1890s, Svevo became a Socialist, although neither the extent of his orthodoxy nor the depth of his militancy is clear. What we know, however, is that in 1897 he published a short story, *La tribù* [The Tribe], in the journal of Italian Socialism *Critica Sociale*—the story dealt with issues concerning the debate between supporting radical change or gradual transition to Socialism.[54] The event is significant in that it shows the way in which Svevo browsed conflicting associations and identities. Becoming a Socialist was perhaps not the best way to please the Italian Triestine intellectual and cultural establishment, since—as we will see below—the Socialist international was deeply scorned by the Italian-speaking cultural circles in the city. As Ghidetti observed, however, Svevo's publication in the journal of "Italian" Socialism is a good example of how he dealt with this issue. It allowed him to expose his credentials as an Italian while also maintaining his left-wing inclinations abroad. He therefore maintained both his conviction and his "conscience and reputation as an irredentist."[55]

Keeping the equilibrium between Socialist conviction and irredentist reputation was just one of the ideological tensions of Svevo's life. His most conspicuous Socialist years coincided with the courtship of Livia Veneziani, whom he married in 1896 and who was the daughter of

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[54] Italo Svevo, "La tribù," *Racconti,* 51-58. The short story appeared in Critica Sociale on November 1, 1897.

[55] Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo*, 161-162.

Gioachino Veneziani, one of the richest industrialists in the city. Svevo ended up working for the family business, a decision thatcoincided with his abandonment of literature. To the duality in his life between clerk and artist, Germand and Italian, Svevo added the split between bourgeois and Socialist. Tensions surfaced sporadically. When a series of bread riots exploded in Italy in the wake of rising bread prices, Svevo became extremely anxious for his wife, who was at a spa in the region close to where the troubles took place. As he wrote to her, "I assure you I have never felt so little Socialist as now. Rascals: they ruin Italy without profit."[56] The picture suggests a man caught in a series of conflicting positions: too petty-bourgeois to join the ranks of the capitalist class un-reluctantly, too nationalistic and middle-class to be a perfectly committed Socialist. Moreover, it also reveals a pattern of unwillingness to be absorbed by a single loyalty, and therefore a recurrent strategy of multiplying allegiances and inhabiting overlapping identities.

Cleavages between his artistic ambitions and his administrative work, and tensions regarding his national and regional attachments, his ideological loyalties, and his social mobility might have been important for stimulating a sense of social inferiority and estrangement. Svevo's relationship to Jewishness is clearly at the center of these feelings and responses. The way in which Svevo processed the experience of assimilation into non-Jewish society—so fundamental to many other Western European Jews of his generation—is perhaps the most important factor shaping his writing and frame of mind. Italo Svevo's actual full name was Aron Hector Schmitz, and both his parents were Jews. His father was active in the Triestine Jewish community through diverse philanthropic activities; the youngest members of the family learnt Hebrew; some

[56] [ti assicuro che non mi sono mai sentito tanto poco socialista ome ora. Canaglie; rovinano l'Italia senz'alcun frutto], *Epistolario*, May 10, 1898 p. 79.

Yiddish was also spoken at the Schmitz's; and most marriages within Svevo's family were with other members of the Jewish community, a pattern followed by all of Svevo's brothers and sisters. The strong Jewish identity of the Schmitz family, however, did not translate into a strong segregation from the rest of Triestine society. Like many other Jewish families there, the Schmtizes seem to have balanced an Italian national identity and a strong integration in the city life with the active practice of Judaism.[57]

According to all accounts, Svevo was not a religious person, and his conversion to Catholicism was not due to conviction, but rather to pressures from his wife Livia, who was a devout Catholic, even though the Veneziani family was also of Jewish origin (it is worth noting that when the Italian racial laws were enacted in the 1930s, Livia had to hide since she was not recognized as Aryan). Although there is not much documentation about the issue, conversion must have been traumatic for the couple, and some evidence suggests it was the outcome of long discussions and tense negotiations.[58] Svevo's baptism, in a Catholic church located in a working-class area of the city, took place months after the formal wedding, and only after Svevo exhausted all possible delays and pressures. Growing anti-Semitism was also in the background during this episode since, along with the impact of the Dreyfus affair, the appointment of Karl Lueger as mayor of Vienna could not have passed unnoticed to Svevo.

Though Svevo was reluctant to talk openly about his Jewishness, the few pieces related to the issue are crucial. Svevo's breakthrough in publishing, in December 1880, was in fact

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[57] For Svevo's Jewishness see Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo,* 30-36; Mahler-Schachter, *Origin and Identity,* 37-64; and Moloney, *Italo Svevo,* 1-4. For general characteristics of the Jewish community in Trieste, see Anna Millo, *L'Elite del potere a Trieste. Una biografia colletiva, 1891-1938* (FrancoAngelli, Milan, 1989), pp. 55-70.

[58] See for instance Ghidetti, *Italo Svevo,* 138-139.

connected to debates in Trieste about performing Shakespeare's *Merchant of Venice* in the Teatro Comunale. Some people thought that the play would offend the city's Jewish community, and rumors spread about its cancellation—which never did happen. Amidst these polemics, Svevo wrote an article titled *Shylock* denying Shakespeare's anti-Semitism, quoting the Jewish poet Heinrich Heine in his defense, and supporting the performance.[59]This initiative started his long-lasting relation with the journal *L'Independente,* which was home to his first steps into literary criticism and for many years his principal intellectual activity.

Svevo's explicit references to his Jewishness only appear sporadically in the letters to his wife, betraying what the literary critic Elizabeth Schächter perceives as a "sense of bitter regret at his own denial of Jewish identity." Svevo refers to himself as a Jew in several occasions in his correspondence, and a couple of times uses the expression "repentant as a baptized Jew" [pentito come un ebreo che si battiza].[60] In his published writing, in contrast, he appears intentionally to omit mention of his or his characters' Jewishness. His pseudonyms –Italo Svevo, E. Samigli— could be mentioned as examples of his willingness to efface his Jewish background, although some hide-and-seek could be at stake since, according to Brian Moloney, the last name Samigli was somehow reminiscent of Jewishness.[61] A draft of an unpublished preface to *Senilità* included a reference to the protagonist's Jewishness that was finally omitted. Moreover, Svevo's official self-presentation written in the late 1920s only mentions his father as "already assimilated."[62] The expression refers to Jewishness only elusively since it is intended to make the point that Svevo's father was a proud first-generation Italian, since Svevo's paternal grandfather was

[59] "Shylock," in *Saggi,* 969-971. For a reference to these circumstances see See Brian Moloney, *Italo Svevo narratore. Lezioni triestine* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 1998) pp. 33-34.

[60] Mahler-Schachter, *Origin and Identity,* 54-56.

[61] Moloney, *Italo Svevo narratore, 39,* 45.

[62] "Profilo autobiografico," 799.

Hungarian. In other cases, Svevo made his characters speak in veiled reference to his own Jewishness, offering reflections on assimilation. In *Corto Viaggio Sentimentale*, for instance, Aghios refers to his Greek background as a virtue since, according to him,

> It is comfortable (…) to belong to another race. That way it is as if one was always travelling. Thought is freer that way. And that way, when I try to see the Italian way I disagree, as I also disagree with the Greek way of seeing.[63]
>
> [È comodo (…) di appartenere ad un'altra razza. Così è come se ci si trovasse sempre in viaggio. Si ha il pensiero più libero. È così che quando si tratta di modo di vedere il italiano io non sono d'accordo e non sono d'accordo neppure col modo vedere greco.]

Aghios's Greek background could perfectly work as a substitute for Svevo's Jewishness. His Jewishness was therefore one more layer in his experience as an outsider and as a constant foreigner—yet Aghios's statement suggests an inversion by which exclusion becomes an enriching and insightful modality of being in the world. The metamorphosis from Jewish into traveller might have been a pleasing compromise for Svevo. As he wrote to his wife during one of his business trips to England, when starting his new profession for the Veneziani family: "I have been so long with foreigners! Give a kiss to Titina [his daughter] and remind her that her father might not be, as she says, a Jew anymore, but he is more wandering than ever." [Sono stato tanto con gente straniera! Bacia a la mia Titina [Letizia] e ricordale suo padre che può essere –come dice essa—che non sia più ebreo ma che è più che mai errante."[64] Jewishness as a form of exile and alienation from the community might have been therefore suppressed but

[63] Italo Svevo, "Corto viaggio sentimentale," *Racconti,* 566.

[64] *Epistolario*, 357.

maintained by his transformation into a travelling businessman. Accounts of James Joyce's life in Trieste seem to confirm this point. The relationship between Joyce and Svevo was fueled by common interests, reciprocal admiration, and mutually enriching influences. Among the many issues both writers discussed during their years of friendship, Jewishness seems to have been a topic of constant inquiry by Joyce, an inquiry reciprocated in Svevo's curiosity about Ireland. The issue of the wandering Jew was a long-lasting interest for Joyce, finding expression in *Ulysses* in the figure of Leopold Bloom. According to many accounts, Joyce based himself on Svevo to compose the character, as some similarities suggest: the age gap between Stephen Daedalus and Bloom is the same as that between Joyce and Svevo, and both Svevo and Bloom were businessmen with a Jewish background and Hungarian ancestry. They both converted to Catholicism without conviction.[65]

Scholars have often commented on the particular ways in which Jewishness was effaced but also elusively present in Svevo's writings. Beginning in the 1920s, critics have pointed to the relationship between Svevo's non-recognized Jewishness and his literature and, more specifically, the issue of maladaptation and ineptitude. The Italian critic Giacomo Debenedetti, who was one of Svevo's earliest enthusiastic readers, was the first in observing that he could be considered "the artist of a certain moment of the semite soul" [l'artista di un certo momento dell'anima semita].[66] By this statement he meant that his writings conveyed the sense of insecurity, anxiety, self-effacement, and strangeness accompanying the experience of assimilation into non-Jewish society by Western European emancipated Jews. Other observers identified that Svevo's characters' tendencies toward introspection, to contemplation rather than

[65] Gatt Rutter, *Italo Svevo,* 233-234; Furbanks, "Preface," xiii.

[66] Giacomo Debenedetti, "Svevo e schmitz," in Ghidetti, *Il caso Svevo*, p. 59.

action, and to the constant analysis of the motives underlying their deeds are related to the experience of assimilation and life in an adopted culture.[67]

Succesive cohorts of commentators have provided more outlook into Svevo's Jewishness. Giuseppe Camerino, for instance, has proposed to read Svevo against the background of other Central European writers of Jewish origin, such as Joseph Roth, Hermann Broch, Arthur Schnitzler, Stefan Zweig, and Franz Kafka. Although Svevo had no major relation to these authors –except for Kafka, who captured his interest toward the end of his life—they were all united by the experience of assimilation in a similar historical setting. Camerino shows that most of the writers' common features emerged in their responses to their parents' jealousy regarding assimilation. The ineptitude and maladaptation of many of Svevo's characters, and especially Zeno's complicated relationship to his father, can therefore be understood as a variation on this common theme.[68] More recently, Brian Moloney has proposed an even more specific thesis. For Moloney, Svevo's Jewishness manifested itself in that he took inspiration for Zeno from a character from the Jewish and Yiddish tradition, the *Schlemiel*—who became incorporated into German literature through Adalbert von Chamisso's 1814 *Peter Schlemihls wundersame Geschichte.* In the Jewish tradition, the *Schlemiel* is a comic figure who is always humiliated or fails in his purposes, yet protects his self-esteem because his ineptitude is such that he never realizes what is going on. The humor surrounding the character and a pervading irony allowing for detachment from the events of his life permit the narrator to reflect on tragic situations related

[67] Eugenio Levi, "Italo Svevo e l'anima ebraica," in idem, 77-81.

[68] Camerino, *Italo Svevo e la crisi della mitteleuropa*, 1-118.

to the place of Jews in Christian society while avoiding despair or a paralyzing sense of tragedy.[69]

Some commentators have also explained Svevo's relationship to psychoanalysis along similar lines. In his memoirs of Trieste's intellectual life during the interwar years, for example, Giorgio Voghera explains that those most drawn to psychoanalysis in Trieste were Jews and suggests that, in the case of Svevo, his relationship to Freud was the result of a harsh psychological realism combined with an ironic and comic self-reference –all elements emerging out of the experience of assimilation.[70] More recently, Elizabeth Schächter has traced a parallel between Svevo and Freud in order to highlight their different responses to a similar reality.[71] According to her, Svevo and Freud were in many ways united but also distanced by their different ways of experiencing the "anguish of assimilation"—consisting of the tensions and pressures related to the struggle for acceptance in gentile society and the loosening of ties to their parents' religious community. Freud and Svevo were in this sense intimately related: they both were part of the first generation—Freud was born in 1856 and Svevo in 1861—growing up after the official emancipation of Jews in Austria in 1867, and they both tried to move beyond the commercial activities of their parents and gain recognition in the arts or sciences. Moreover, they shared a lay spirit that moved them away from religious allegiances. Yet the similarities stop there; as Schächter observes, whereas Freud was more explicit with his Jewish identity and, especially after the rise of anti-Semitism, defended it with pride, Svevo converted to Catholicism, kept a self-effacing attitude regarding his Jewishness, and sought for assimilation to

[69] Moloney, *Italo Svevo narratore,* 33-46.

[70] Voghera, *Gli anni della psicoanalisi*, 4, 139-140.

[71] Elizabeth Schächter, "The anguish of assimilation," in Barrotti, Lepschy with Bond (eds), *Freud and Italian Culture*, pp. 65-81 .

eradicate his difference.[72] We can speculate that these similarities and differences might have fueled both Svevo's interest and his concerns regarding psychoanalysis. Along with psychological insight, Svevo might have recognized in Freud some of his own ambitions and frustrations, as well their common generational experience. By the same token, his remark that "it is dangerous to explain to a man how he is made" might be precisely linked to his resistance to emphasize his difference, and to a method of assimilation rooted in the hiding and dissimulation of conflicting allegiances. If social integration is an unstable achievement based on dodging tensions and crossroads, all conclusive definitions of one's identity are highly problematic.

It is tempting to attribute Svevo's responses to psychoanalysis directly to the way in which he processed his Jewishness and its differences and similarities to Freud's. Yet we don't need to single out the religious dimension as exclusive and isolated from the rest of the other conflicts associated with his background. His experience of Jewishness complemented the frustration and ambivalence surrounding his class position and national and regional identity. Pieced together, all these issues created what Gatt Rutter referred to as the "elusive self" underlying Svevo's narrative, a self inhabiting in the intersection of multiple identities, expressing itself through irony and deception, and whose main motivations and feelings can be decoded through complex readings and interpretations.[73] By the same token, the most recent comprehensive reading of Svevo's work has underlined that "Svevo's man (…) defines himself against a humanity that strives for 'success,' for adaptation to a given social environment in the

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[72] We should note, however, that Freud's responses to Jewishness were more complicated and translated also into his biological conception of Jewishness as well as his perceptions on gender. See Sander Gilman, *Freud, Race and Gender* (Princeton,NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993) especially pp. 13-48.

[73] Gatt-Rutter, *Italo Svevo*, 1-6.

same way the animals adapted themselves to the natural one."[74] As I will reveal in the second part of this chapter, focusing on adaptation, assimilation, and the striving for social recognition is a very effective way of reading Svevo's characters and exploring his appropriation of psychoanalysis. The sense of social inferiority found in Svevo's characters, which leads them to indulge in compensatory wishes of supremacy and revenge; their silent resentment accompanied by guilty feelings; their sense of estrangement; their perception of community as an artificial and precarious achievement; irony and humor as ways of facing frustration; and the relationship between the self and others as a game of hiding and disclosure are all issues that I think are related to Svevo's own interpersonal experiences. These experiences were embedded in specific circumstances whose historicization contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between Svevo and psychoanalysis.

Trieste, from the Habsburgs to Fascism

Svevo's biography offers a window into the complexities of the search for recognition and assimilation in the multi-cultural setting of Trieste. In examining the history of Triestine society from the late nineteenth century to the consolidation of Fascism, it becomes apparent that his attempt to navigate multiple allegiances became increasingly and dramatically difficult over the course of his lifetime. One of Trieste's characteristics was that its cosmopolitanism and openness to multiple ethnic influences coexisted with latent nationalist and class tensions that exploded abruptly after the Great War and fueled the political and ideological struggles that followed. The

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[74] Giuliana Minghelli, "In the Shadow of the Mammoth: Narratives of Symbiosis in La Coscienza di Zeno," MLN, 109, 1 (January 1994), p. 50. See also idem, *In the Shadow of the Mammoth: Italo Svevo and the Emergence of Modernism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002).

Great War, in addition, affected Trieste directly because the city was close to the front line, and it underwent a transition from being part of the Habsburg Empire to being under Italian control in the war's aftermath. These changes brought to Trieste an unprecedented eruption of violence, migration, ethnic hatred, class warfare, and street fighting. Moreover, when Italian Fascism made substantial inroads into the region, it adopted a particularly brutal form, especially with regard to its repressive actions against Socialist and Communist workers as well as its policies against national minorities such as the Slavic-speaking groups.[75] For nineteenth-century-minded people such as Svevo, the transition from the pre-war world to what came later appeared as a revelation of potentialities for violence and destruction that had previously remained hidden and dormant. Moreover, the deepening of class, ideological, and ethnic tensions forced Svevo to make choices and commitments that, perhaps, he might have preferred to avoid.

One of the most crucial aspects for understanding Triestine society during the late nineteenth century was the growing impact of ethnic and nationalist tensions. As was the case for other national identities under the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Italian-speaking journalists and different kinds of associations fueled expressions of cultural nationalism or a silent distrust toward the German national majority. One expression of this sentiment was the current called *irredentismo*, which claimed the annexation of Trieste, along with many other territories, into Italy. The Triestine irredentists and nationalists gained an emblematic martyr in 1882 in the

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[75] For the history of Trieste during this time period, see Elio Apih, *Trieste* (Bari: Laterza, 1988); and idem, *Italia. Fascismo e antifascismo nella Venezia Giulia 1918-1943*(Bari: Laterza: 1966); Glenda Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste and the Italo-Yugoslav Border. Difference, Identity, and Sovereignty in Twentieth-Century Europe* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2001) pp. 1-62; Maura Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian, 1918-1954* (Rochester, NY: Boydel Press, 2005) 1-103; Dennison I. Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage, 1919-1946* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 20-31, 84-151, 185-212; AngeloVisintin, *L'Italia a Trieste. L'operato del governo militare nella Venezia Giulia, 1918-1919* (Gorizia: LEG, 2000); Lucio Fabi, *Trieste, 1914-1918. Una città in guerra* (Trieste: MGS Press, 1996); and Anna Millo, *L'elite del potere.*

figure of Guglielmo Oberdan, a student who was shot by the police after being accused of attempting to assassinate the Emperor. Although the episode provided a deeply emotional symbol for the cause of Italian nationalism, it bears noting that the local political leaders in the Italian community remained rather moderate through most of the nineteenth century.[76]

The Italian National Liberals dominated Trieste's political life. This party embraced the cause of Italian nationalism and presented candidates for both the city council and the National Diet in Vienna. Most of its leaders came from the local cosmopolitan elite, and since they knew that the economic interest of the city was tied to the Austro-Hungarian Empire they kept their Italian nationalist claims in check. The two main journals for the Italian-speaking community, the moderate *L'Indipendente* (1877-1915) and the more nationalist *Il Piccolo* (1882-1915), were basically oriented toward reinforcing a nationalist agenda in school policies and cultural issues while compromising and limiting the demands for "redeeming" Trieste.[77] During the 1890s, Svevo collaborated with *L'indipendente* and worked for *Il Piccolo*'s international news section, despite his Socialism and his pro-German pseudonym. This suggests that, no matter how intense the nationalist sentiment, there was still room for tolerance and coexistence between diverse allegiances—especially when Triestines, like Svevo, were skillful at dodging these tensions.

Two important phenomena complicated the political landscape during the 1900s. First was the growth of a network of mutual societies, clubs, political parties, and credit cooperatives that asserted the social presence and even the national identity of Slavic-speaking groups such as

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[76] For general approaches to *irredentismo* in Italy, see R J B Bosworth, *Italy, the Least of the Great Powers: Italian Foreign Policy before the First World War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 46-50, and 201-203. For a more specific regard on *irredentismo* in Trieste, see Apih, *Italia,* pp. 7-12; and Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian,* 13-15.

[77]See Apih, *Trieste,* p. 63-66; Anna Millo, *L'elite del potere,* 20-38.

Slovenes and Croats. Second was the expansion of working class agitation and Socialism, especially after the 1907 elections allowed for male universal suffrage in the Habsburg territories. For Italian nationalists, Slavs and Socialists represented a double and combined threat, since they disputed their political hegemony in the city and were therefore accused of being allied to the Austrian government. Italian nationalist politicians and ideologues in Trieste had a long tradition of scorn and contempt for the Slavic population, and Italian hegemony in the city council was on many occasions oriented toward monopolizing resources in favor of Italian neighborhoods and schools rather than the Slavic ones. Moreover, many Slavs were sympathetic to the Socialist Party, since there was an important presence of Slavic-speaking groups among the local working class. The tradition of Austro-Marxism that influenced Triestine Socialists, in addition, allowed for a flexible and egalitarian politics regarding the "national question" and a desire lay out the Habsburg territory as a federation of nationalities. Many Slavs considered that this perspective could enforce their national cause and improve their situation within the Habsburg monarchy.[78]

The fusion of Slavs and Socialists as a combined threat fueled Italian nationalism's turn to the right in Trieste during the immediate pre-war years. Many Italian employers, in fact, created squads to combat what they considered the hostile organization of labor by Socialists and pro-Slav associations. Many historians consider this initiative as foreshadowing Fascist violence.[79] Previously, Italian nationalism in Trieste was associated with opposition to the Habsburgs and sympathy for the more radical currents in the process of the unification of the

[78] For the transition from a mild Italian nationalism to a more aggressive one, see Hametz, *Making Trieste, 13-15;* and Apih, *Trieste,* 70-95 who also describes the growth of Socialism and Slavic associations. The existence of a long Italian tradition of scorn for Slavs in emphasized in Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste,* 11-38.

[79] Bosworth, *Italy,* p. 202, and Apih, *Italia,* 15.

Italian state. Many Jews, for instance, were intense Italian nationalists since they apparently perceived the Italian national minority as open and tolerant.[80] Toward the beginning of the new century, however, Italian nationalism lost this progressive character as ethnic and social tensions grew. The Great War and the consequent dismembering of the Austro-Hungarian Empire proved a crucial turning point by further intensifying antagonisms and hostilities that had remained contained until then. Italy's intervention against the Central Powers in May 1915, ten months after the War started, exacerbated national hostilities in Trieste, since it brought war and consequent economic disruption to a city that had already been deeply altered.

In his diary entry for May 23, 1915, Svevo gave a vivid image of the mood of the day Italy declared war on Austria-Hungary. His description starts by focusing on an Italian woman who knew about the launch of the war through a young Austrian couple she had met in the tramway. The Austrian man was an officer who was heading for the front, and since the Italian woman's young son could also be drafted, an intense empathy united the two women:

> The two women talked during the whole trip and the official also participated in the conversation. They talked Italian discretely and neither of them said a single word against Italy. So, our friend [congiunta] saw in the eyes of the young woman, at the moment of saying goodbye, the desire to kiss her. No one dared. It would have been almost a demonstration against the war (…)The Italian woman, besides, felt the burden of her conscience before this war. She had really desired this war from her first youth! She had desired it until ten months ago. These last ten months of her not-short existence had given her a more precise notion of the war. Now—that she did not dare to invoke it anymore—the war came. But how

[80] See Millo, *L'elite del potere*, 65-67.

could she scorn it? The two women looked at one another's tearful eyes and split.[81]

[Le due donne parlarono durante tutto il tragitto ed alla loro conversazione partecipò anche l'ufficiale. Parlavano l'italiano discretamente e da loro non fu detta una sola parola contro l'Italia. Anzi la nostra congiunta vide negli occhi della giovane donna al momento di dividersi il desiderio di baciarla. Nessuna delle due osò. Sarebbe stata quasi una dimostrazione contro la guerra. (…) L'italiana poi davanti a questa guerra sentiva pesare la propria coscienza. Se l'aveva desiderata dalla prima gioventù questa guerra! L'aveva desiderata fino a dieci mesi addietro. Quegli ultimi dieci mesi della sua non breve esistenza le avevano data una nozione più precisa della guerra. Ora –che non osava pù invocarla—la guerra veniva. Ma come avrebbe potuto meledirla lei? Le due donne si guardarono negli occhi lagrimosi e si divisero].

By focusing on the Italian woman in the tramway, Svevo represents the coming of the war as the fulfillment of long-treasured desires that, once materialized, provoke a mix of guilt, regret, and anxiety. In addition, the situation Svevo describes also captures a last flash of empathy and community among people who shortly thereafter would become enemies. Svevo thus poignantly invokes the passage from an age when hostility was hidden under a surface of civility, to a new time in which brutality and violence appear in unveiled forms. The second part of his diary entry, in fact, concentrates on the riots that erupted in downtown Trieste that same day. Furious crowds rioted and looted property associated with Italy: among other landmarks, they set fire to the offices of *Il Piccolo*, many *cafés* where Italian nationalists used to gather, and

[81] Italo Svevo, "Pagine di diario," 749-750.

the statue of the Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi. Many versions of these riots, especially those attributed to Italian nationalists, describe them as organized and manipulated by the Austrian authorities as an attempt to punish the Italian population.[82] Svevo's diary, instead, offers a more nuanced picture. In Svevo's perception, the riots were the result of spontaneous anger against Italy for pushing the city into war, thus aggravating the drafts of men and the economic crisis the city had experienced since the beginning of the war. His description of the riots, in addition, are deeply influenced by ideas taken from the psychology of the crowd, and his picture fluctuates between focusing on an out-of-control crowd ruled by changing instincts and capricious moods and on poor women seeking to profit from the situation in the midst of war scarcity:

> Later on, the crowd also got rid of the instigators, as evidenced by the fact that not only the establishments belonging to the *regnicoli* [pro Italian groups], but also those belonging to Austrian groups whose commodities were at hand, were attacked. It is known that the crowd is such situations soon looses certain instincts and acquire others. It is the damnation of whoever cries in the street to gather a crowd to follow him (…) Violence lasted until the accomplishment of the destruction of the store-windows. Then, a world of women pacifically divided the looting that some passed through the doors and windows. It seemed like a peaceful distribution in a bazaar.[83]
>
> [Più tardi la folla poté anche fare a meno dei direttori e se ne ebbe la prova quando non si presero più di mira gli stabilimenti appartenenti ai regnicoli [those

[82] See Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian,* pp. 14-15, who observes the nationalist biases of such interpretation.

[83] Svevo, "Pagine di diario," 753.

supporting an Italian Trieste] ma si colpì anche degli austriaci di cui la roba fosse a portata di mano. Si sa che la folla in frangenti simili perde presto certi istinti per acquistare degli altri. È la maledizione di chi grida per la via per adunare una folla che lo segua […] La violenza durava fino al compimento della distruzione delle saracinesche. Poi un mondo di donne si divideva pacificamente il bottino che alcuni passavano per le porte e le finestre infrante. Pareva una distribuzione pacifica in un bazar].

The intensification of national hostility, the unleashing of riots, the looting due to the misery that the war elicited: all these traits appeared as a break with the past and the beginning of a new and threatening time. Even the end of the war and the coming of peace, in fact, did not imply a return to the previous order. This was partially due to the fact that the incorporation of Trieste into Italy confirmed the local elites' former predictions: under the Italian State the city lost its commercial position, and Trieste entered into economic stagnation.[84] Moreover, the disintegration of the Austro-Hungarian Empire exacerbated all the factors of distress in Trieste, resulting in intense social agitation and violent repression. Once Trieste became Italian, the region felt under military control and the authority of centrally-appointed military governors. One of their first acts of authority was the severe repression of striking workers who had seen their living conditions deteriorate during the war. Social conflict intensified as news about the revolutions in Russia, Budapest, and Munich spread, resulting in further unrest in Trieste. In April 1919, the Triestine section of the Socialist Party replaced its leadership with a new radical and pro-Bolshevik faction, which became increasingly popular among workers, soldiers, and some university students. That break with the more moderate and reformist currents of the

[84] See Rustinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage,* 112-114.

Socialist Party had also a generational component, since supporters of the new trends of revolutionary socialism were mostly young people whose political experience had started in the new post-war situation.[85]

It did not take long for Fascist squads and anti-Socialist violence to make their way in Trieste, intensifying the anti-labor violence that the Triestine elites had practiced before. The city, in fact, played a crucial role in the beginnings of Fascism in Italy, and historian Adrian Lyttelton has observed that "Trieste, the birth place of *squadrismo,* had one of the strongest Fascist movements before the March on Rome."[86] The military governors, the local commercial and industrial elites, and the irredentist and nationalist tradition combined to finance and provide logistical and political support to the local Fascists.[87] Squadrist violence had a first appearance in August 1919, in an attack on the offices of the Socialist Party following a general strike that had been launched in July. The seizure of the neighboring city of Fiume led by Gabriele D'Annunzio in fall of that year was also a factor in the creation of irregular military units, whereas the mobilization of the Fascist squads, with the calculated complicity of the local authorities, was crucial in crushing a series of strikes during 1920. Finally, in July 1920 the Fascists burnt down the Hotel Balkan, the headquarters of one of the Slovene nationalist groups, in one of their most notorious actions. Although the Fascists had their own local newspaper—*Il popolo di Trieste*—the nationalist press was also an ally when it came to many of their positions. The 1921 national elections give us a glimpse into the Triestine political mood. The block of conservatives,

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[85] For these issues, see Apih, *Italia*, 49-55; and L'Italia a Trieste, passim.

[86] Adrian Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power. Fascism in Italy, 1919-1929* (London and New York: Routledge, 2004) p. 275. For fascist violence in Trieste see also R.J.B Bosworth, *Mussolini's Italy. Life under the Fascist Dictatorship, 1915-1945* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005) pp. 153-158.

[87] Lyttelton, *The Seizure of Power,* 53-54; Apih, *Italia,* 69-112.113-190.

nationalists and Fascists obtained 47% of the vote in Trieste, in contrast with the 22% it obtained nationally .[88]

Social tensions fueling the rise of Fascism in Trieste were only one aspect of the new social landscape. The second crucial innovation involved the new status of nationalism and new ways of dealing with ethnic difference in post-war Europe. In the years of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, national identities were not necessarily associated with State authority. As a result, the Habsburg dynasty was supposed to rule over heterogeneous cultural and linguistic groups. Under these circumstances, even Socialist claims for an egalitarian federation of nations appeared as both fair and realistic, since they sought to solve problems of a de-facto situation. After the war, with the dismembering of the Habsburg State, this status quo changed radically both in Europe and Trieste. The principle of the nation-state became a general rule for Europe after the peace treaties, and this implied that each national identity claimed its own state and, vice versa, that each state should reinforce a national identity.[89] The immediate postwar period, in this respect,

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[88] Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian,* 21; Apih, *Italia,* 157-158.

[89] For the status of nationalism and the nation before and after the War see Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 131-162; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities.Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London/New York: Verso, 1992), pp. 113-140; and Mark Mazower, *Dark Continent. Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Knopf, 1999), pp. 41-75. When referring to literature about the irruption of nationalist violence in Central Europe, it is important to consider the recent approaches emphasizing "national indiference" as an important phenomenon in multi-linguistic, pluri-cultural regions of the Habsburg Empire. According to these approaches, in multi-linguistic and pluri-cultural areas of the Austro-Hungarian Empire considerable layers of the population remained reluctanct to use national categories as a device of self-identification, even in the aftermath of the Great War. See Pieter M. Judson, *Guardians of the Nation. Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge, Mass: Cambridge University Press, 2006), pp. 1-18; and "Introduction," in Pieter M Judson, and Marsha L. Rozenblit (eds), *Contructing Nationalities in East Central Europe* (New York/ Oxford: Berhahn Books, 2005), pp. 1-18, for a general reflection on issues around the nation and nationalism under the Habsburgs.

brought to Trieste the loss of the city's cosmopolitanism. Populations with German background associated with State bureaucracy and Austrian companies migrated, while the situation of Slavic-speaking minorities became difficult due to increasing anxieties concerning the homogenization of the population and the "Italianization" of Trieste by the new authorities.[90]

The Italian State and the nationalist press reinforced the impression of Serbs, Slovenes, and Croats in Trieste as foreigners with dubious allegiances whose national loyalty had to be constantly tested. Starting with the last governments of liberal Italy, but even more aggressively with the formal assertion of the Fascist dictatorship since mid-1920s, policies prohibited the use of Slavic languages in the administration, the press, and the schools. Slavic-related associations were also closely monitored, instructors teaching in Slavic were deported to other regions, fierce repression was applied to Slovene nationalist and anti-Fascist groups, and harassment, provocation, and discrimination multiplied. The Italianization of the region was also observable through the policy of renaming streets and monuments, which was later gradually extended to the family names of the population. According to one historian, the goal of destroying a national consciousness and a sense of cultural difference among the Slavic-speaking population could be considered a project of "cultural genocide" on the part of the Fascist authorities.[91] This nationalistic aggression had two sources. First, it came as a compensation for economic frustrations: since the new order failed to regain the city's commercial vigor, the local Fascists figured Trieste as a spearhead of the Italian imperial influence toward the east in order to convince Italian-speaking Triestines that the city was the vanguard in their plans for the region.[92] Second, and paradoxically, the aggressive ethnic policy was a consequence of the city's multi-

[90] Hametz, *Making Trieste Italian*, 16-24.

[91] Apih, *Trieste,* 129-130.

[92] Rusinow, *Italy's Austrian Heritage,* 114-115.

culturalism and of its character of a contested border terrain between Italy and Yugoslavia. Fascist rhetoric and policy adopted a tone of cutting-edge expansionism and claims of territorial rights based on the "Italianness" of the region. Ethnic minorities were therefore targeted as "enemies within" and as foreign influences debilitating the rights of the national community.[93]

Such was the socio-political situation in Trieste when Svevo was writing *La coscienza di Zeno*. Although the novel does not reflect the political context explicitly, the tumultuous social environment did affect Svevo's writing. Yet before moving to this issue, it is worth noting that Svevo's politics over these years were almost as intriguing and contradictory as his Socialism and his statements on psychoanalysis. At first glance, much of his political commitment appears predictable for a man of business and industry in Italian-speaking Trieste. Svevo had clearly renounced his Socialism by this time, and he participated in the launching of the journal *La Nazione* and the movement *Il rinnovamento* [the renewal], a group linked to the old Liberal Nationals hoping to enforce their influence in the new political conditions.[94] Most accounts consider this group a combination of conservative Italian nationalists who became fellow travellers with the Fascists out of hostility to labor unrest and Slavic influence. Fascism in Trieste cultivated a sort of informal alliance with them, until little by little they displaced them and took control of the political situation.[95] Svevo's involvement with this group is apparent in his decision to contribute to *La Nazione*. In the second half of the 1920s he also published an

[93] Apih, *Italia*, 142; Sluga, *The Problem of Trieste,* 39-47.

[94] Gatt Rutter, *Italo Svevo,*pp. 292-298

[95] Apih, *Italia*, 57-60.

article on James Joyce in *Il popolo di Trieste*, the local Fascist daily whose director, Giulio Césari, was a close friend—in fact, Svevo's *Autobiographical Profile* was co-written with him.[96]

The post-war political situation in Trieste acted as a stimulant to Svevo's writing. In fact, he returned to publishing articles and writing fiction in a way that resembles his situation in the 1880s and 1890s. Most of Svevo's writings, however, seem to reproduce the same ambiguous commitment found in his Socialist years. Svevo wrote a series of humorous and colorful snapshots of urban life in Trieste that avoided political comment, or dilluted it with doses of humor and irony. The result was in many cases unfortunate, and some of his jocular comments on violence can be read as highly cynical, especially if we consider the setting in which he was writing them.[97] In contrast, a series of articles on England he wrote for *La Nazione* between December 1920 and January 1921, along with other unpublished texts on the issue, are more successful and revealing of his politics.[98] They reveal that Svevo was influenced by, and knowledgeable of, English politics and society, especially as a result of his constant business trips to London. Even though he was critical about British imperialism and the handling of the Irish question, he was enthusiastic about English good manners and the general spirit of tolerance and politeness he perceived in London.

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[96] See I[talo].S[vevo], "Triestinità di un Grande Scrittore Irlandese," op cit, originally published on May 1, 1926; and "Mezzo secolo di letteratura italiana" in *Saggi,* 1175-1179, originally published on May 20, 1928.

[97] See his five articles "Noi del tramway di Servola," in *Saggi, 1096-1105*, published between August 1919 and February, 1921. And also "Storia dello sviluppo della civiltà a Trieste nel secolo presente," in *Saggi,* pp. 1151-1160, published on August 2 and 11, 1921, all of them in *La Nazione*.

[98] Svevo's writing on England, including published and unpublished articles as well as his letters from his business trips to London, have been gathered and commented in John Gatt Rutter and Brian Moloney (eds), *This England is so Different…Italo Svevo's London Writings,* op. cit.

His writings during these years also show his sympathy for the British Labour government and reveal that his optimism for gradual change and reform was strong. All in all, his articles condemn political extremism, ethnic hatred, and nationalist narrowness while also praising cosmopolitanism, free trade, tolerance, and a firm belief in the capacity of democratic political institutions and the market to regulate conflicting interests. Also in the same direction, an unpublished essay he wrote immediately after the war sketched a "theory of peace," showing his confidence in the League of Nations and the conditions for long-lasting peace in Europe.[99] The most significant aspects of Svevo's politics, however, were not what we could consider his "progressive liberalism," but the fact that he was supporting it in the journal of a circle of property owners and nationalist journalists who were radically departing from any sort of liberal or progressive politics. Svevo's writings also reveal that he was moving against the general direction of politics in Europe and Italy, not to mention Trieste. Some observers at the time left a vivid picture of how Svevo lived in a surprising anachronism. An acquaintance of Svevo's family visiting them in the immediate post-war period described the general tone of the house in very eloquent terms:

> It struck me that the adults had shrugged off the experience of the war with frightening casualness, and, with alarm and horror, I watched them tying together the strands of the present to the outworn values of the prewar era. As if everything had not changed radically.[100]

[99] The text has been posthumously titled "Sulla teoria della pace," in *Saggi,* 859-877.

[100] The visitor was Aurelia Benco, the daughter of the critic and writer Silvio Benco. Quoted in Gatt-Rutter, *Italo Svevo,* 293.

Svevo’s anachronism vis-à-vis the new post-war world could be considered one more of his multiple mis-adaptations. To his sense of outsidedness fueled by his multiple and conflicting allegiances, we could add that now he was a man inhabiting two worlds: a pre-war world and the one that emerged after 1918. We should not exaggerate, however, Svevo’s denial of the new realities, or his inability to understand the situation in Trieste. On the contrary, his most famous writing during this period, *La coscienza di Zeno*, is precisely a description of how denial works, and it deals with the conflict between a man’s self-understanding and his resistance to admitting his most reprehensible qualities. In addition, his previously-shaped insights about ineptitude, sickness, and maladjustment provided him with a unique framework through which to dramatize and describe the cultural and historical transformation brought about by the war and the subsequent crisis. His long experience of struggle and his comprehension of the multiple forms of maladaptation and foreignness marking his own life had made of him a privileged observer for these kinds of psychological and social phenomena. The next part of this chapter, then, will focus precisely on this itinerary.

Part Two: Writings

The Two Models

After this long detour through Svevo’s biography and Triestine politics, I expect to have provided a background that allows for a better understanding of the significance as well as the particularities of Svevo’s appropriation of psychoanalysis. I contend that focusing on the problems of social integration and the ways in which Svevo coped with them is the best way to understand his interest in and his use of psychoanalytic insights in his work. In Svevo’s

narrative, I argue, those social phenomena transpired in the construction of filial relationships. Svevo used two models to relate his characters' psychology to their social and interpersonal contexts. In the texts written mainly before the war, Svevo mostly deployed what I call a "mother-centric" model, in which the relation between the male protagonist and his mother becomes a crucial component underlying his actions and motivations. After 1919, and especially in *La coscienza di Zeno*, in contrast, Svevo moved toward a more clearly Oedipal model, in which the conflicted relationships between fathers and sons become crucial to portraying the main dramas of the protagonist and, metaphorically, of contemporary Italian society.

Each model responds to dissimilar historical situations as well as to different forms of narrating them. In the first model the protagonist desires to obtain, either by force or cunning, a better social position, and this intense craving is interwoven with the desire to please his mother, or to appear under a positive light before her eyes. This craving for recognition, in addition, is part of a "double bind" in which the character is trapped in contradictory injunctions that ultimately lead him to catastrophe. It is my contention that this situation should be read against the background of Svevo's multiple exclusions and conflicting allegiances, as well as in relation to the complexities of social integration in multicultural Habsburg Trieste. Moreover, this mother-centric model also connects with the issue of family romance and the daydreaming of many of his characters. In most of his mother-centric writings, in fact, Svevo uses a recurrent theme: the dream or fantasy on the part of the protagonist of being a "great man" or of achieving glory and success. In these unfinished pre-war texts, Svevo directly or indirectly blends three basic elements: a precarious and conflicted social integration, a complicated relationship between the protagonist and his mother, and the emergence of corroding fantasies and ambitions. Svevo's interest in psychoanalysis fueled, but also reinforced, these interrelated topics.

After World War I, and especially in *La coscienza di Zeno*, Svevo shifted his writing toward an Oedipal model. In his most famous novel, Svevo focuses on the protagonist's discovery, or recovery, of hostile and violent desires, especially towards his father. This perspective amounts to a radical departure from the previous theme because, now, the protagonist does not pursue glory and recognition, but instead escapes from wishes and impulses considered reprehensible. In this new framework, Svevo makes extensive use of ideas of ambivalence, guilt, obsessive neurosis, and transference and resistance, which he took from psychoanalytic texts and which allowed him to present a more sophisticated portrait of interpersonal relationships. Despite these changes, however, I argue that the main topic underlying Svevo's narrative remains the same: the problems of assimilation. In his early writings, maladapted people overcompensate for their marginality by ambitious desires for success. In Svevo's last novel, this issue is treated in terms of health and disease, which permits Svevo an ironic twist: the true neurosis consists of an intense desire for health, strength, and hyperactivism.

Motherhood and Assimilation: Double Bind and the Nation

The mother-centric model is particularly important in three of Svevo's "pre-Freudian" pieces: *L'assassinio di Via Belpoggio* [*The Murderer of Via Belpoggio*, hereafter *L'assassinio*], which Svevo published in *L'Indipendente* in October 1890; *Lo specifico del dottor Menghi* [*Dr Menghi's Antidote*, hereafter *Lo specifico*], published posthumously and usually dated as written in 1904; and in his first novel *Una Vita* [1892].[101] Though they are formally different, the three stories share a series of common elements. First, the protagonists are unhappy with their lives

[101] Italo Svevo, "L'assassinio di via Belpoggio," in *Racconti,* pp. 21-47; "Lo specifico del dotto Menghi," idem, 59-92; and "Una Vita," *Romanzi,* 3-396.

and social situations due to their intense cravings for status, prestige, money, or professional recognition. Second, their relationships with their mothers actually fuel the characters' ambitions, since they believe that social improvement and recognition are what their mothers want. Whereas the fathers in these narratives are absent or weak characters, the mothers are crucial in all of the cases. Third, in order to achieve their desired glory, prestige, and wealth, the main characters partake in criminal, reprehensible, or otherwise risky behavior censured by society and not fully approved by their mothers. Fourth, all stories are tragic, and the final unity between the characters, their achievements, and their mothers' approval never occurs. In part, this is because all three mothers die precisely at the moment when the protagonists are about to reach their goals. More deeply, however, tragedy is a result of protagonists trying to follow conflicting paths.

Through this mother-centric structure Svevo located his protagonists in settings remarkably similar to the "double binds" described by Gregory Bateson's group.[102] In Bateson's theory of schizophrenia, the victims of double-bind situations inhabit an interpersonal environment in which they have to deal with two contradictory injunctions. On the one hand, they are threatened with punishment if they commit or do not commit certain acts, or if they follow specific rules of behavior. These are clearly stated injunctions taking the form of "do such and such or I will punish you" or "don't do such and such." On the other hand, they face a more abstract, more commonly non-verbal injunction, which is shaped through gestures, bodily expression, and other alternative sanctions. This second injunction contradicts the former one. It happens, for example, when the parents regularly contradict one another in their instructions to

[102] See Gregory Bateson, Don D Jackson, Jay Haley, and John Weakland, "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," Behavioral Science, 1:4 (1956: October), pp.251-264; and "Double Bind, 1969," in Gregory Bateson, *Steps to an Ecology of Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), pp. 271-278.

their children, or when a mother demands love from her child but rejects him when he becomes too close and affectionate. Since they grow up in environments where nothing actually means what it is said to mean, the victims of double-bind situations develop deep difficulties in communication and adopt unconventional behavior. Precisely because of these adaptation problems, however, Bateson observed that people in a double bind develop innovative responses. Play, humor, ritual, poetry, and fiction are thus strategies for communicative confusion that allow individuals to sidestep psychosis and cushion or overcome the hardship of the double bind.[103] Stressing the indeterminacy of responses to double-bind situations, Bateson noted that their victims might become "a clown, a poet, a schizophrenic, or some combination of these."[104]

All three protagonists in Svevo's stories live in environments and have interpersonal relations that present the basic form of a double bind. They are trapped in no-win situations when they seek to accomplish two contradictory goals. On the one hand, they follow an intense inner demand—personified as and reinforced by their mothers—for social acceptance and recognition. On the other hand, they can only achieve this goal through actions of which society—taking the form of their mothers or the law—disapproves. If they remain law-abiding, predictable, and passive, they stay poor, unnoticed, and marginal, whereas if they try to gain wealth, notoriety, and status, they have to break the rules or run great risks. They cannot afford to be conventional, and as a result their main options are crime, geniality, unhappiness, or madness. By positioning his characters in such complicated psychological environments, Svevo approached a series of topics related to degeneration, disease, and mental pathology that had been an obsession of Naturalist literature and positivist psychiatry during late nineteenth century. Instead of searching

[103] "Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia," p. 261.

[104] "Double Bind, 1969," p. 272.

for their causes in biology and heredity, however, Svevo's originality rested on tracing them back to interpersonal relations.

Svevo's originality spread in the three stories. In *L'assassinio*, the protagonist, Giorgio, is a porter [facchino] who kills a co-worker, Antonio, in order to rob him of some money. The act first appears as absurd, compulsive, and unexplainable, yet Giorgio's background helps to explain it. Coming from a lower middle-class family, he always pretended and aspired to be of a superior status than his happy and satisfied fellow proletarians. His mother, indeed, pushed him to dream of social advancement and become a "cultivated bourgeois," but once he failed to do so, he had even to abandon his mother since he could not maintain her. After he commits the crime, he goes back to his mother and offers her the money, thus justifying his robbery as an altruistic act. The strategy fails because his mother had died four days before, and once Giorgio receives the news, he makes a series of mistakes that lead to his capture. In *Una Vita*, Alfonso Nitti presents a symmetrical but milder situation. Coming from a rural middle-class family, his ambitions seem to materialize when he seduces the daughter of the owner of his firm. When facing the crucial decision of marrying her, he visits his ill mother to tell her the news. His mother, however, disproves of his marriage immediately before dying. The situation propels Alfonso into a series of false steps ending with his suicide. In the last story, *Lo specifico*, a general scorn for his colleagues underlies Dr Menghi's invention of a drug to regain youth, which he names Annina, after his mother. The woman's inspirational role is made clear in Dr Menghi's confession: "I abandoned myself to the pleasure of making my mother feel the greatness and originality of my idea" [mi abbandonai tutto al piacere di far sentire a mia madre la grandezza e l'originalità della mia idea].(69). Unfortunately, Dr. Menghi's mother suffers a heart stroke precisely when he is completing his invention, and when he gives her the drug to save her,

he ends up killing her. As in the previous cases, his acts would only have achieved meaning and fulfillment had they been recognized by his mother, but such recognition never materializes.

Criminality, flight, and creativity are the basic ways by which Svevo's characters cope with their injunctions. Giorgio represents the most unfortunate case, falling into the first category—a situation to which Svevo also added hints of mental insanity. A split of personality after his murderous act and the strong schism between his actions and his feelings suggest schizophrenia. Giorgio feels neither anxiety nor remorse for the murder, and experiences no tenderness for his mother. His search for her approval is motivated by an obsessive image that dominates his mind and prevents him from thinking of anything else: he sees himself before a judge that condemns him for his action.[105] Svevo endowed Alfonso with similar traits, especially insofar as he is also depicted as a gray character with shadowy sentiments. But he belongs to the second group: he flees. Alfonso withdraws into his daydreaming as a response to his frustrations, not to mention his suicide. Dr Menghi is also of the dreamer type, and much of his life is consumed in distractions and great designs that prevent him from pursuing practical matters. However, he is by far the most fortunate case, and had been close to achieving glory and pleasing his mother through his medical talent. The tragedy behind his discovery reserved a sadder destiny for him, and he survived as a depressed, frustrated, and unrecognized genius.

Paraphrasing Bateson's remarks, we could say that Svevo's characters are criminals, madmen, dreamers, geniuses, or a combination of all of them. Crucial to their stories are their relationships with their mothers and the overlapping of the mother-son relationship with desires

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[105] L'assassinio, p. 41

for social acceptance.[106] The mother-son relationship has therefore a double character in Svevo's writings, since it is both a metaphor and a theory. Metaphorically, the mother represents assimilation, community, belonging, social recognition, and adaptation. In addition, the relationship to the mother explains and permits description of the characters' psychological traits—this is its theoretical function. This function is key for tracing the ways in which Svevo began to incorporate psychoanalytic elements into his writings, and how they complicated his initial mother-centric model. Yet before moving to this point, I would like to analyze a short fable in which the mother's metaphoric function appears unambiguously, and that moves to the foreground the issue of assimilation as the consideration dominating Svevo's literary imagination.

Svevo started to write the short fable *La madre* [The Mother] during 1910, and published it twice in the 1920s—the versions of the story differ according to Svevo's corrections for these editions.[107] The story focuses on a group of artificially grown chicks that find out that other animals have mothers. One of them, called Curra, decides to walk to a nearby farm where he finds a big hen and runs to embrace her. He expects the "mother" to caress him, but she brutally attacks him in order to protect her actual sons. Disconcerted, Curra asks, "but who are you and why you made me so much harm?" [ma tu chi sei e perché mi facesti tanto male?] The hen answers, "I am the mother" [Io sono la madre] and turns her back to him (125). The last lines of

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[106] The notion of "attachment to the mother" in Svevo has been mentioned many times, but the analysis tends to go in the direction of Svevo's psycho-biography, and of his specific relationship to his mother. See for instance Norbert Jonard, *Italo Svevo et la crise de la bourgeoisie européenne* (Paris: Societeté les Belles Lettres, 1969)pp. 10-37; and G Rosowsky, "Théorie et pratique psychanalytiques dans 'La coscienza di Zeno,'" in <u>Revue de etudes italiennes,</u> XII, (1970), pp 49-70.

[107] Italo Svevo, "La madre," *Racconti,* 121-125, and see 883-898 for the explanation of its different editions and versions.

the story focus on Curra as a grown-up cock who talks with other animals about their mothers. After listening to them talk about their pride for their mothers, the story closes with these lines:

> Admiring his own strange, atrocious destiny, he said with sadness: my mother, instead, was a horrible beast, and it would have been better for me that I had never met her (125)
>
> [Ammirando il proprio raro, atroce destino, egli disse con tristezza: -La madre mia, invece, fu una bestiaccia orrenda, e sarebbe stato meglio per me ch'io non l'avesse mai conosciuta.]

The fable lends itself to multiple readings. Some classic interpretations emphasize the way in which Svevo used it to refer to his lack of recognition by critics and readers in his motherland Italy—the rejection of the mother being the indifference of the audience. Others have read the fable as a representation of irredentism and Triestine Italians hoping to be incorporated into the motherland. Still other readings focus more literally on Svevo's vision of the conflicting traits of motherhood. Literary critic Mario Fusco, for example, centered his interpretation on the mother and on the duality between the beloved and the cruel mother, and proposed to explore these issues in connection to Svevo's own problematic relationship to his mother. Finally, Edoardo Saccone has pointed to the treatment of desire in Svevo, and the ways in which the story's characters are extremely fixated on egoistic desires, thus failing to see reality properly.[108]

Although all these interpretations are possible and not mutually exclusive, I contend that the fable is a commentary on assimilation, which affected the multiple realities concerning nation

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[108] See *Racconti,* 886 for a reference to the main interpretations. See also Saccone, *Commento a 'Zeno,'* pp. 223-238; and Mario Fusco, *Italo Svevo. Coscienze et réalité* (Paris: Gallimard, 1973) pp. 401-405.

making and nationalism that Svevo experienced while writing. A seemingly absurd sentence, because of its mere absurdity, is particularly meaningful in this respect. When introducing Curra, Svevo refers to him as “the only one in the farm who had been baptized” [il solo che nel pollaio fosse battezzato]. (123) After learning the significance of baptism in Svevo’s own life, the sentence suggests a straightforward—but fleeting—reference to Jewishness. Approaching the fable through this interpretation, then, sheds light not only on one specific historical issue, such as irredentism, but on the many overlapping issues converging around assimilation. The story reveals the intense over-determination surrounding the mother: it represents the audience’s rejection of Svevo; Triestine Italians hoping to be incorporated into the motherland; Jews pursuing assimilation; national communities aspiring to have their own State; or déclassé intellectuals seeking a containing ideology. Several other elements within the fable favor assimilation as an interpretative key. Most of its descriptions focus on the intense desire for the mother among the chicks, and how this intensity can become asphyxiating or dangerous. The fable cautions against the sublimation of the mother, a warning that proves particularly dramatic if we underscore the interchangeability between “mother” and a series of terms such as nation, assimilation, belonging, integration, or community. Some passages are especially eloquent in this regard,

> The desire for the mother soon infected the whole farm [pollaio] and it became more vivid, a cause of more unrest in the minds of the older chicks. So often infantile illnesses attack adults and become for them more dangerous; sometimes the same is true of ideas. The image of the mother as it had been shaped in little heads heated by the spring, developed incommensurably, until all the goodness was called mother, the good weather, the abundance, and whenever the chicks,

> [anitroccoli?], and little cocks suffered, they became brothers because they whispered for the same mother. (123)
>
> [Il desiderio della madre presto infettò tutto il pollaio e si fece più vivo, più inquietante nella mente dei pulcini più anziani. Tante volte le malattie infantile attaccano gli adulti e si fanno per loro più pericolose, e le idee anche, talvolta. L'immagine della madre quale s'era formata in quelle testine scaldate dalla primavera, si sviluppò smisuratamente, e tutto il bene si chiamò madre, il bel tempo e l'abbondanza, e quando soffrivano pulcini, anitroccoli e tacchinucci divenivano veri fratelli perché sospiravano la stessa madre]

In a similar fashion, the motives underlying Curra's quest for his mother are also an occasion for Svevo to comment on the vanity and the narcissism surrounding the desire for the mother/assimilation: the young cock, Svevo writes, "demanded the mother first of all in order to be admired: the mother, about whom it was said she knew how to provide sweetness, and precisely for that also the satisfaction of ambition and vanity" (123) [esigeva la madre prima di tutto perché lo ammirasse: La madre di cui si diceva che sapesse procurare ogni dolcezza e perciò anche la soddisfazione dell'ambizione e della vanità.] Svevo reinforces the same idea when Curra finds his mother:

> 'this is the mother' –thought Curra with delight. 'I found her and now I won't leave her anymore. She will really love me! I am stronger and more powerful than all of these. And then it will be easy to be obedient because I already love her. How beautiful and majestuous she is.'(124)

[‘questa é la madre’ pensó Curra con gioia. ‘L’ho trovata ed ora non la lascio più. Come m’amerà! Io sono più forte e più bello di tutti costoro. Eppoi mi sarà facile di essere ubidiente perché già l’amo. Com’è bella e maestosa!]

In this fable, Svevo expresses his main concerns about the problems with intense desires for assimilation. It highlights the narcissistic and egoistic structure fueling such desires: the chicks love themselves through the mother—they want to love and obey her because they want to be loved by her. Their sublimation and exaggeration of the benefits of having a mother prevent them from seeing that, far from being a solution to all problems, the intense desire for the mother/assimilation is in fact the result of egoism and vanity. The fable is therefore a comment on nationalism—and a very critical one, indeed—and integration coinciding with increasing nationalistic tensions in Europe and Trieste during the years when the story was written, that is, between 1910 and the 1920s. Equally significant, it confirms the way in which, to Svevo, filial relations are metaphors for the social, as well as commenting on other political and ideological issues.

From Double Bind to Oedipus: the Great Man Phantasy

Throughout his “years of silence”—the time period when he stopped publishing, between the late 1890s and the 1920s—Svevo wrote a series of unfinished stories insisting on a mother-centric structure. Relevant for this study, these pieces show how Svevo began to incorporate psychoanalytic elements into his writing, and how those incorporations took place in connection with the above-mentioned “theoretical” role of the mother trope, insofar as each protagonist’s connection to his mother determines the genesis of his psychology. But throughout the pre-war years, Svevo complicated his mother-centric model with Freudian elements that ultimately led

him toward a whole new subject. The short story *Marianno*, which Svevo apparently wrote in 1912 or 1913, illuminates this transition.[109] Marianno spends his early childhood in an orphanage, until he is adopted by a family in order to work in their barrel workshop. Marianno's feelings in his new home are split: his stepfather, Alessandro, is protective, friendly, indulgent, and encouraging, but he is a weak figure, who is often drunk and holds little authority within the family. Mother Berta, in contrast, is strict and severe toward Marianno, punishes him unfairly, and makes apparent the differences between her adopted son and Adele, her daughter, who apparently is not adopted. Marianno's family situation stands as a metaphor for precarious and conflicting social assimilation. As in the other stories, Marianno finds himself in a double bind situation marked by a complex dynamic of attraction and repulsion. As an adopted son with fewer rights and a lower position than his sister, he is integrated and excluded, thus inhabiting an environment of mixed messages and conflicting injunctions. Svevo connects Marianno's situation with his ambivalence toward his family. He feels gratitude for being adopted and being cared for, yet at the same time Berta's unequal treatment and hostility incites resentment and hate toward the family.

Marianno is one of the first of Svevo's pieces to include some Freudian insights, such as its focus on childhood experiences, its approach to dreams, its use of the idea of "fleeing toward disease," its references to infantile sexuality, and the attention it pays to incestuous feelings. Paradoxically, though, the Freudian influence does not lend itself to easy integration into the still powerful mother-centric model and its main characteristics, particularly in the case of the weak father and the strict, controlling, or disciplining mother. The punishing agent, and the source and

[109] Italo Svevo, "Marianno" in *Racconti,* 327-363, and 1049-1077 for the editorian notes. The story was originally untitled by Svevo.

target of Marianno's explicit resentment is in fact Berta, not Alessandro. The Oedipal elements of Berta's harsh treatment toward Marianno were probably the reason that Svevo decided to split her as a character. Indeed, he uses an ingenious strategy to introduce incestuous attachments, displacing them onto Berta's daughter, Adele. As Marianno's elder sister, Adele fulfills the role of the mother figure in both the conventional and the Freudian modes. First, she is protective and shows uninterested love and care for Marianno, to the point that he refers to her as *mammina*—a diminutive for mother. (347) Second, she is Marianno's romantic and erotic companion, as well as his first sexual choice. Some explicit references to infantile sexuality do emerge when describing the two children at play and, later on, Marianno's intense romantic feelings to her (349). In this sense, Svevo was able to add an Oedipal dimension to his mother-centric model by providing Marianno with two mothers. Adele accomplishes the role of the incestuous attraction–complicated by the brother-sister relationship and its concomitant rivalry and envy—while Berta fulfills the role of the Freudian father, who punishes Marianno and appears as the repressive figure in the house.

Although the story is unfinished, the preserved fragments suggest that Svevo was steering the plot toward known ground. Marianno shares his lot with Giorgio, Alfonso, and Dr Menghi: he, too, is shaped by a corroding dissatisfaction with his actual condition and a desire to perform great actions and achieve remarkable goals. Unlike the other characters, however, this feeling originates as a response to being abandoned by his natural father, who becomes a more logical target for his hatred than the weak and permissive Alessandro. At this point, the "family romance" and the dreams and fantasies of success reappear in Svevo's writings. Those themes had appeared early, for example, with Alfonso's daydreaming in *Una Vita.* In *Marianno*, the issue comes back with some differences. While still an early teenager, Marianno reads a book

about a rebellious son who quarrels with his father, leaves home and, after regretting it, invents a successful machine, makes a fortune, and returns to earn his father's recognition and gratitude. Svevo vividly describes the story's impact on Marianno, and the way in which his eyes shined "as if he attended to the events of the heroe." [come se asistesse alle vicende dell'eroe] (353). Moreover, his identification with the hero moves him to resent his life, and especially his abandonment by his biological father:

> He loved that man [the hero of the story], whose adventures he had read, more than Alessandro and even Adele. Why could he not go to his father's, and loaded with millions, allow himself to be loved and received as a celebrity? It was due to this book that he, for the first time, learned to lament his destiny. It seemed to him that the only obstacle to his fantasizing with the position of his hero was the fact that he did not know his own father. How could he imagine his own father? (354)
>
> [quell' uomo di cui aveva lette le avventure egli lo amava più che (…) lo stesso Alessandro o persino Adele. Perché non avrebbe potuto andare da suo padre, e carico di millioni farsi amare e ricevere con feste? Fu da quell libro ch'egli per la prima volta apprese a dolersi del propio destino. Gli pareva che l'unico ostacolo per fantasticarsi con qualche fondatezza nella posizione di quell suo eroe era il fatto che'egli non conosceva il proprio padre. Come faceva a immaginare quel padre?]

Marianno's incipient ambition becomes apparent as he begins to fantasize about inventing a barrel-producing machine that would make him rich and famous. In his fantasy, his success would pave the way for his reunion with his natural father, who would be redeemed from

his vices through Marianno's providential aid (354-55). We don't know how Svevo might have developed this point further had he finished the story. Moreover, we can only speculate about the extent of psychoanalysis's influence on the story, especially because, as I noted earlier in this chapter, Svevo's description of daydreaming and fantasies, though they are similar to Freudian theories, preceded the writer's involvement with psychoanalysis. What is clear, however, is that the "great man fantasy" was at the center of his writings during this period, when he worked to incorporate Freudian insights into the structure of his mother-centric model.

A second unfinished story, apparently written between 1913 and 1918, confirms this. *Il malocchio* is pervaded by Freudian references to the point that it resembles an exercise in re-writing crucial topics of Freudian theory and texts.[110] The story focuses on Vincenzo, a young man from a little town who suffers from "malocchio" or "evil eye," which in popular culture refers to the superstition that certain people have the capacity to bring disgrace to the persons they resent or envy. The story brilliantly combines folk and psychoanalytic motives. First, Vincenzo's *malocchio* is analogous to Freud's insights into neurotics: they take the form of "omnipotence of thought" that, as in the cases of children and the "primitive mind," leads them to behave as if their hostile or reprehensible feelings could become true.[111] As a result, most of the neurotics' symptoms are reactions to fears of their own thoughts. Second, Svevo invents episodes that are clearly based on Freudian references. In the peak of his despair, for instance, Vincenzo visits an optometrist and conveys his authentic desire to end his *malocchio*. As he tells the doctor, "I am a good man and I would not like to harm my equals" [Io sono un uomo buono e

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[110] Italo Svevo, "Il Malocchio," in *Racconti,* 375-393, and 1084-1101 for editorial notes. Like the previous story, Il malocchio was originally untitled by Svevo.

[111] See Sigmund Freud, "Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis," in Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud. Vol X* (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 233; [Hereafter "Rat Man Case"] and also Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, in idem, vol. XII, pp. 83-91.

non vorrei fare dell'altro male ai miei simili] (392). The doctor's response is an unambiguous reference to the Oedipus myth: "If you are as good as you say sit here in this chair and allow me to remove those two evil eyes" [Se siete tanto buono come dite sedete su questa seggiola e permettetemi di straparvi i due occhi malvaggi.] (392).

In addition, Svevo locates the "great man fantasy" at the center of this story. Since very early in his life, Vincenzo has been corroded with dreams of success and glory, living "absorbed in the contemplation of his own future greatness," [assorto nella contemplazione della propria grandezza future] (378). He devours biographies of Napoleon, embracing deep in his heart the mandate to become a man of power and authority. Yet his ambition and lack of humbleness provoke his disgrace. Despite being an excellent student, he drops out school and enrolls in the army, "the shortest way to displace the king from the throne and put himself in his position" [la via più breve per sbalzare il re dal trono e mettersi al suo posto] (378). He was soon ousted, however, after disrespecting a lieutenant, and even when he returns to the University, he drops out again because he cannot stand to study alongside younger classmates (379). Vincenzo's character is defined by a deep internalization of his ambition: he cannot tolerate people with more authority or more success than him. His *malocchio* emerges out of this situation. When embarking upon a political career, his arrogance led him to provoke a local politician, who then challenges him to a duel. The man, however, dies before the event, and Vincenzo starts to wonder whether he had something to do with the man's death. His suspicion is confirmed when a Zeppelin visiting his town generates collective enthusiasm and cheering crowds, who salute it in amazement. Vincenzo turned envious at this spectacle, and contemplates with horror as the aircraft collapses before, and because of, his very eyes. Vincenzo starts to realize that, no matter his conscious efforts against it, he is invaded by an uncontrollable hatred and envy toward people

and objects with power and popularity. The fact that Vincenzo’s eye has an autonomous existence apart from his conscious life is explicitly stated by Svevo, in what seems to be the first reference to the unconscious in his writings:

> Vincenzo tried to stop the activity of his eye and looked to the sky trying to think in the wives and mothers of those heroes in order to provoke benevolence in himself. But then he saw those wives and mothers waiting triumphally for their beloved ones. And then the dark destiny reemerged in his memory and the eye became homicidal. Therefore the activity of that eye did not depend on him, and it was true that it was directed by an intimate “I” which to him appeared as distant from himself. (390)
>
> [Vincenzo provava di frenare l’attività del suo occhio e guardava in alto forzandosi di pensare alle mogli e alle madri di quegli eroi per costringersi a benevolenza. Ma poi vedeva tali mogli e tali madri come aspettavano per portare in trionfo al loro ritorno i loro cari. E allora il proprio destino oscuro risorgeva nel suo ricordo e l’occhio subito diventava micidiale. Dunque non dipendeva dal suo arbitrio l’attività di quell’ochio ma era certo che la dirigeva il suo animo intimo un suo “io” che a lui pareva distante da sé]

The links to Freud are straightforward especially when the story partakes ~~in~~ of a still deeper conversation with psychoanalysis. In *Il malocchio* Svevo redefines the issue of the “great man fantasy.” Now, the central subject is not only the struggle for recognition, prestige, and status, but Vincenzo’s terror of his own impulses and desires as well as the conflict between how he would like to be and how he actually is. Vincenzo’s fatality is not only that he brings disgrace

to those around him, but also that he cannot hide his most intimate impulses from his eyes. In the figure of Vincenzo, Svevo thus imagined a character unable to disguise his evil feelings because he has no censorship. Vincenzo is an individual dealing with a naked unconscious, without the ability to hide his reprehensible traits from himself. When describing Vincenzo's deep regret after the Zeppelin tragedy, Svevo writes: "the agitation that closed his throat was not a result of the remorse for the poor victims, as his wife believed; he saw himself as perverse and evil." [La sua agitazione che gli chiudeva la gola non era prodotta dal compianto per le povere vittime come la moglie credeva; egli vedeva se stesso perverso e malvaggio] (384). Vincenzo's mourning does not relate to the death of others or to his guilt. He suffers because he finds out that he is not what he would like to be. Much of Svevo's effort in the story lies in portraying Vincenzo as struggling with his conscience and trying to conciliate his high self-esteem with his evident resentment, envy, and hate.

In *Il Malocchio*, Svevo changed his way of portraying the mother-son relationship, especially because the story focuses more prominently on Vincenzo's refusal to accept his evilness. Vincenzo's mother lengthens the list of his victims, and the basic reason was that she is obscene: she makes him note his repressed feelings. The episode echoes many of the previous stories: Vincenzo's mother is described as "an ambitious woman" [una donna ambiziosa] who pushed her son into politics in order to increase his power and prestige. When she finds out that Vincenzo has lost a career in local politics because he thinks too highly of himself, his mother angrily aims to harm him where he is most sensitive:

> She wanted to harm and could easily do it because she was the only one to whom, since childhood, Vincenzo had revealed his intimate desire (…) In her rage she revealed her deep scorn for the vanity she knew so intimately and that in other

moments, even seeing him like that, she would have known how to share and console. (386)

> [Voleva ferire e lo poteva facilmente perché era la sola cui fino dall'infanzia Vincenzo avesse rivelato l'intimo desiderio (…) Nell'ira essa manifestava l'intimo disprezzo per il vanesio ch'essa tanto intimamente conosceva e che in altri istanti, pur sempre vedendolo fatto così, avrebbe saputo compatire e consolare].

Vincenzo's mother dies a few moments after this episode, and Vincenzo clearly understands the death as a result of his eyes. By including this event in his story Svevo continued to insist on the centrality of the mother and to relate it to the "great man fantasy" and the internalization of ambitious designs and projects. Yet in this case the usual motive takes on new meaning, since what is at stake in the dynamic of attraction and rejection between mother and son is Vincenzo's resistance to face his feelings. This fact is illustrated in an episode between the doctor and Vincenzo, when the doctor uses a talisman to protect himself from the patient's responses when he makes him note his true feelings,

> The doctor, before answering, took an object which he held strongly in his hand in order to be protected from Vincenzo's eye and talked fearlessly: you cannot be a good person from the moment you have under your eyebrows those two instruments! You are a little envious person and fabricated the guns you needed— Vincenzo's eye brightened, but this time it did not work because the doctor was protected. And the doctor smiled: Did you realize that I knew how to unload your guns? It is enough to touch a certain point and you do harm (392).

> [Il dottore prima di rispondere andò a prendere un oggetto che strinse fortemente in mano per essere protetto dall'occhio di Vincenzo poi parlò senza paura: -Voi non potete essere buono dal momento che avete sotto le ciglia quei due ordigni! Voi siete un piccolo invidioso e vi fabbricaste l'arme che faceva al caso vostro-. L'occhio di Vincenzo scattò ma questa volta non servì a nulla perché il dottore s'era premunito. E il dottore sorrise:- Avete visto come ho saputo scaricare la vostre arme? Basta sapervi toccare in un dato punto e voi ferite!]

Simplistic as it seems in its mix of tragedy and fantasy, *Il malocchio* reveals Svevo's complication of a mother-centric structure through psychoanalytic insight. In this story, Svevo strove to mix his "great man phantasy" with Freudian ideas concerning resistance. As a result, Vincenzo's corroding ambition and desire for recognition becomes a secretly treasured impulse whose disclosure becomes painful and motivates complex responses. Svevo thus inverted the terms of his thus-far-prevalent narrative strategy. After reading Freud, the Svevian main character turns into a man who fears and escapes from his own desires. The main conflict is no longer between the character's intense desire and the social forces that frustrate or censor his deeds. The character internalizes the conflict, and his tragedy goes beyond his failure to obtain what he wants. Like the woman in the tramway Svevo described the day Italy entered into the war, the main tragedy takes place when a person sees his or her wishes realized. This is the psychological landscape of Zeno Cosini as well

Fathers and Sons

In his clinical story of the Rat Man, Freud refers to an event during his patient's childhood, which allegedly provided the key yet remote cause of the man's illness. When still a little boy,

before he was six years old, the patient was being beaten by his father for some naughty action, and suddenly resisted the punishment, "flew into a terrible rage," and protested against his father's blows. Facing the vigorous challenge of his son, the father stated: "The child will be either a great man or a great criminal!" –to which Freud added in a footnote the other possible outcome of such "premature passions": "neurosis."[112] This episode did not escape Svevo's attention, and he paraphrased it in one of his pieces. In *Corto Viaggio Sentimentale*, when Aghios meets a phobic child on the train, he concludes: "he could become a great man, or a sad and depraved one, or, in sum, a very common man like himself, Mr Aghios" [poteva diventare un grand'uomo oppure un tristo depravato o infine un uomo comunissimo come lui stesso, il signor Aghios].[113] Taken as a whole, the sentence reveals that, after the war, most of the Freudian influence on Svevo was connected to his re-working of the mother-centric model and the double-bind setting, toward a father-centric use of the Oedipus complex. Svevo's post-war appropriation of psychoanalysis shaped his understanding about the centrality of the hidden hostility between fathers and sons as the fuel propelling his characters to act.

In Svevo's most famous novel, the protagonist Zeno Cosini differs from previous characters in that he is neither marginal nor a social climber, and certainly not a genius. On the contrary, he is an upper-middle-class family man in an enviable if conventional social position. Despite his comfortable situation, Zeno is discontented with his life. His dissatisfaction, however, does not arise from an intense desire for social acceptance, as in the other cases. Zeno is haunted instead by a suffocating and pervading guilt, which is related to episodes of his adult life but whose deeper origin traces back to his childhood. At the request of his psychoanalyst,

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[112] Freud, "Rat Man Case," p. 205.

[113] Italo Svevo, "Corto viaggio sentimentale," p. 545. The connection between Freud's and Svevo's texts is mentioned by the editorial notes.

Zeno writes his autobiography, which is basically an attempt to demonstrate his innocence and to prove his noble and altruistic feelings before his psychoanalyst and himself. Within this basic formula, Svevo achieves a remarkable and original result. He describes the psychological and interpersonal world of a middle-class man through a strange mix of comically and tragically sad situations. Moreover, this strategy allows Svevo to make a further claim. By looking at Svevo's use of psychoanalytic ideas it is possible to grasp his parody of concepts of strength, force, and over-activity. In *La coscienza di Zeno,* Svevo was able to critique sublimated notions of health and social achievement and a claim for tolerance and difference, which the novel portrays as ineptitude and disease.

La coscienza di Zeno is a novel divided into three parts. In the brief preface, "doctor S," the psychoanalyst, explains that he had recommended his patient Zeno write an auto-biography as a warm-up before starting analysis and that, due to Zeno's abandoning of treatment, he has decided to publish it as revenge –although he would be willing to share the revenue should the patient resume therapy. Next is Zeno's biography, constituting the longest part of the novel; it is topically organized into chapters on his compulsive smoking, the death of his father, his marriage, his life as an unfaithful husband, and his commercial association with his friend and rival Guido Speier. Although the chapters about his smoking and the death of his father are crucial for our picture of Zeno, the narrative is mainly based on the other chapters, in which Zeno tries to seduce the beautiful Ada Malfenti and, after failing, marries her sister Augusta. In turn, Ada marries Guido, who appears much more attractive and skillful than Zeno. Despite this frustration, and even after recognizing his intense desire for Guido's death, Zeno denies any hostility toward him and even helps him initiate a commercial undertaking, which ends up being disastrous and ultimately drives Guido to suicide.

The autobiography is interrupted at this point, and is replaced by the third and final part, which is called "psychoanalysis." The novel takes the form of a diary written between May 1915 and March 1916, refers to episodes of his treatment, and describes how Zeno, now a man in his late fifties, came to his decision to finish his treatment. The diary is also interlinked with the war, since its dates coincide with Italy's entering into the conflict and the arrival of military action to the region. Svevo exploited this coincidence in the final pages, when Zeno gets trapped on the borderline between Italy and Austria at the exact moment when the war starts and is unable to reunite with the other members of his family at the other side of the border. This experience, however, revitalizes Zeno. The novelty of the situation replaces the routine and inertia of everyday life, and upon returning to Trieste he takes advantage of the situation to speculate on scarce basic goods, which leads him to the first commercial success of his life. This achievement elevates his self-esteem to the point that he declares himself cured without the need for psychoanalysis due to the new vigor infused by the war into his life–although he also subtly suggests a second reading: it is not that he is cured, but the world around him is so sick and corroded by destruction and death that he appears healthy.[114] His self-celebration as a new man, in fact, is ultimately obscured. The novel's final paragraph, a much-commented apocalyptic image, consists of Zeno's describing the end of the world as a result of an explosion provoked by the struggle for survival among sick men.

A crucial axis articulating the novel revolves around Zeno's asphyxiating feeling of guilt, which translates into exculpation when he organizes his biography. Significantly, Zeno's biography ends with the word "innocence." The word appears in connection with his sister-in-law's accusation regarding his hostility toward her husband Guido and his still-existing love for

[114] Italo Svevo, "La conscienza di Zeno," *Romanzi,* 1070-1071, 1082.

her. Svevo finished the second, biographical part of the novel by describing Ada leaving Trieste and Zeno's painful note: "And so she abandoned us and I could never prove to her my innocence." [Ecco ch'essa ci abbandonava e che mai più avrei potuto provarle la mia innocenza] (1047). Zeno's psychoanalytic treatment offers another glimpse of his desperate attempts to free himself from guilt. Zeno's materials for analysis, largely consisting of dreams and deeply emotional memoirs of his childhood, are attempts to flee toward his infantile innocence, and they reveal a need to "relive a day of innocence and ingenuity" [poter rivivere un giorno d'innocenza e d'ingeniutà] (1050).

Unfortunately for Zeno, instead of his early innocence, what psychoanalysis showed him was an Oedipal rivalry tracing back to his early childhood, such an unbearable result that Zeno ended up abandoning treatment. But before we consider his resistance to analysis, however, it is worth further examining his guilt in the novel. Zeno dramatically seeks to prove his innocence because his guilt suffocates him. As he confesses to his wife: "I had the feeling of guilt in each one of my thoughts, in each one of my breaths." [il sentimento della colpa io l'avevo ad ogni mio pensiero, ad ogni mio respiro] (880). The reference to breathing is highlighted in a recurrent image that prevents him from starting to write his biography: "I see strange images that cannot have any relationship with my past: a train that steams up a hill, pulling many wagons; who knows from where it comes or goes, and why it is now here?" [intravvedo delle immagini bizzarre che non possono avere nessuna relazione col mio passato: una locomotiva che sbuffa su una salita trascinando delle innumerevoli vetture; chissà dove venga e dove vada e perchè sia ora capitata qui!] (627). As his story progresses, it turns out that the "train that steams" [locomotiva che sbuffa] has everything to do with his past. The image returns when Zeno describes his father's death, and how during the last days the old Cosini "had a short breath which I, almost

unconsciously, mimicked" [aveva una respirazione frettolosa, che io, quasi inconsciamente, imitavo] (668). It is immediately after this observation that Zeno associates the image of the train with his past:

> Writing, putting down on paper such painful memories, I find out that the image that obsessed me during my first attempt to see my past, the train that steams while pulling a series of wagons up a hill, was something I saw for the first time listening from the sofa to the breath of my father. Trains pulling enormous burdens go like that: they steam regularly, then speed up, and finish in a slope, even a threatening slope, because anyone who listens can fear seeing the train end up at the precipice of the hill. Truly! The first effort at remembering had brought me back to that night, to the most important hours of my life. (669)
>
> [Scrivendo, anzi incidendo sulla carta tali dolorosi ricordi, scopro che l'immagine che m'ossesionò al primo mio tentativo di vedere nel mio passato, quella locomotiva che trascina una sequela di vagoni su per un'erta, io l'ebbi per la prima volta ascoltando da quell sofà il respiro di mio padre. Vanno così le locomotive che trascinano dei pesi enormi: emettono degli sbuffi regolari che poi s'accelerano e finiscono in una sosta, anche quella una sosta minacciosa perchè chi ascolta può temere di veder finire la macchina e il suo traino a precipizio a valle. Davvero! Il mio primo sforzo di ricordare m'aveva riportato a quella notte, alle ore più importanti della mia vita.]

The image dramatically conveys the overwhelming burden of guilt that Zeno carries on his shoulders—nothing less than a train carrying its wagons over a slope. Moreover, it illustrates

that Zeno's relationship to his father is at the core of his guilt—while also working as a framework for other relationships similarly haunted by hidden rivalry. The chapter on his father's death, moreover, is full of references to Freudian texts, starting with Zeno's confession that his father's death was "the most importat event of my life," echoing Freud's remarks in the preface to *The Interpretation of Dreams.*[115] Svevo used Freud very instrumentally in this chapter. The setting, for instance, is very Freudian. Freud usually described the sick-nursing of beloved ones as a particularly intense experience both in the formation of neurotic symptoms and in responses to ambivalent feelings.[116] In the case of the Rat Man, for example, the patient tells Freud that his tormenting self-reproach is connected to the idea that he failed to assist his father in the moment of his death, which made him feel like a "criminal." Freud then relates his patient's self-reproach and sense of guilt with ambivalence and hostile, unconscious thoughts concerning his father.[117]

Svevo appropriated these ideas: Zeno's extreme and torturous remorse is intended to be evidence of his ambivalence and his unconscious rivalry with his father. Any hint of his hostility to his father devastates him. Like in *Il malocchio*, in *La coscienza di Zeno* there are characters that make Zeno notice his unconscious hostility—people inciting his contempt and scorn while also eliciting a flash of terror and anguish. The clearest example is Zeno's reaction to his father's

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[115] [l'avvenimento più importante della mia vita] "La coscienza di Zeno," 653. See Freud, *The interpretation of dreams,* in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953) p. xxvi. The preface is to the second edition of 1908.

[116] Anthony Wilden has convincingly pointed to a dream Freud comments in *The Interpretation of Dreams* as a possible source of inspiration for Svevo on this chapter. This connection reinforces that what is at stake in the episode is the ambivalence around sick-nursing of beloved ones. Wilden, "Death, Desire, and Repetition: Commentary on Svevo's *Confessions of Zeno,*" in *System and Structure. Essays in Communication and Exchange* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1972)," p. 80. See Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams,* p. 430.

[117] Freud, "Rat Man Case", 174-186.

physician, Dr Coprosich, described in the most unfavorable terms. Coprosich's name is in fact significant since its Greek etymology connotes the abject, such as excrement, filth, or taint—a detail that James Joyce detected when commenting the novel.[118]This eschatological association is not coincidental, since the role of the doctor is the same than the optometrist in *Il malocchio*, the mother in *Il malocchio*, or the psychoanalyst in the final part of the novel: they are obscene characters who expose the protagonist's repressed side.

Dr. Coprosich provokes Zeno's hate when he recommends a series of painful treatments for his terminally ill father, including the application leeches and, were Zeno's father to regain consciousness, putting him in a straitjacket because the man would likely be close to madness. Zeno opposes the treatment on the basis that it is an "unheard-of cruelty not to let die in peace someone who is already condemned." [una crudeltà inaudita di non lasciar morire in pace che era definitivament condemnato] (673). Wishing for his father's death is already traumatic for Zeno, and Coprosich's reply does not make things easier for him: he accuses him of not using the resources that still might keep his father alive. Not only does the accusation unleash Zeno's fury toward the physician but it also opens him up to the uncanny and thrilling feeling of facing his repressed desires. As he explicitly observes when Coprosich makes evident he is not taking care of his father properly, "the evidence of my guilt terrorized me." [l'evidenzia della mia colpa m'aterrò] (672). His masochism is also related to this ambivalence, since it appears as a need to self-punish before the evidence of his death wishes. Following one episode during his sick nursing when he finds himself wishing for his father's death, he flees in despair:

> I walked for some minutes in the street, in the cold, with my head uncovered, burying my feet in the high snow. I don't know, however, whether such rage was

[118] See letter from Joyce to Svevo on February 20, 1924, in *Carteggio,* p. 31.

> directed toward the doctor or myself. Above all, it was directed toward myself, to me, who had wished my father dead and had not dared to say it. My silence transformed my desire, inspired by the purest filial affection, into a true crime that weighted on me horribly.[119]
>
> [Camminai per qualche minuto per il viale, nel freddo, a capo scoperto, pestando irosamente i piedi nella neve alta. Non so però se tanta ira puerile fosse rivolta al dottore o non piutosto a me stesso. Prima di tutto a me stesso, a me che avevo voluto morto mio padre a che non avevo osato dirlo. Il mio silenzio convertiva quel mio desiderio ispirato dal più puro affetto filiale, in un vero delitto che mi pesava orrendamente.]

Things do not improve when Zeno decides to follow the doctor's recommendation. His father does get better, but this leads Zeno to fill a repressive role over his father by holding him tight to the bed in an effort to prevent him from moving. This results in a devastating event that Zeno carries on his conscience for the rest of his life and that he calls "the terrible scene that I will never forget and that threw its shadow very, very far, and obscured my courage and my enjoyment."[la scena terrible che non dimeticherò mai e che gettò lontano lontano la sua ombra, che offuscò ogni mio coraggio, ogni mia gioia]. While being restrained by his son to the bed, the old Cosini gets angry and, right before dying:

> With an enormous effort he could stand, raised his hand very high (…) and let it fall on my face. Then he returned to his bed, and from there to the floor. Dead! (682)

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[119] La coscienza, 675. See the similitudes with the "Rat Man Case," pp. 184-186, where Freud comments on how he enjoys his self-punishments because they are forms of dealing with unconscious wishes.

[Con uno sforzo supremo arrivò a mettersi in piedi, alzò la mano alto alto, come se avesse saputo ch'egli non poteva comunicarli altra forza che quella del suo peso e la lasciò cadere sulla mia guancia. Poi scivolò sul letto e di là sul pavimento. Morto!]

Svevo also made use of Freud's theory of dreams in writing this episode. After describing the whole episode in his biography, the old Zeno dreams that he is back in at the sick bed with Coprosich, assisting his father. Yet he inverts the roles in his dream, and while the physician considers his father a lost cause, Zeno furiously insists in an intensive treatment. "Instead, I banded my fist on a medicine book and cried 'the leeches!' 'I want the leeches! And also the straightjacket!" (676) [Io invece battevo il pugno su un libro di medicina ed urlavo: 'le mignatte! Voglio le mignatte! Ed anche la camicia de forza!']. The dream lends itself to multiple readings, certainly revealing Svevo's sophisticated appropriation of psychoanalysis. But on a very basic level, the dream inverts the terms of his past, allowing Zeno to save his father and assist him. Moreover, while keeping intact his role as his father's defender, an undercurrent of hostility is also present, since Zeno is also punishing him by using the leeches and the straitjacket. Finally, the dream can also be interpreted as a "transference dream;" Coprosich substitutes Dr S, and Zeno's intense craving in the dream has to do with his wish to use the treatment to prove his innocence and release him from guilt.

Patriarchy and Guilt

In *La coscienza di Zeno* Svevo made instrumental use of psychoanalytic ideas –and certainly more use than the "two or three" ideas he confessed to have borrowed.[120] This technical

[120] *Soggiorno londinense,* 894.

appropriation, however, should not prevent us from focusing on a more general point: the novel not only takes Zeno's guilt as a drama but also shows that his adoption of a conventional "father role" is associated with the "atonement of guilt." By exploring this dynamic, two relevant issues emerge. First, *La coscienza di Zeno* narrates fundamentally Zeno's crooked and guilt-ridden path to becoming of a patriarch. Even when there are some key glimpses of his childhood, the novel concentrates on Zeno's life from his days as an erstwhile college student to his life as the ascendant bread-winner of the Cosini-Malfenti family. Crucial episodes indicate movement toward this goal: his father's death; his approach to his father-in-law, Giovanni Malfenti, and his later death; his marriage; and finally Guido's failure and death. Second, the novel enters into a significant dialogue with Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, which sheds light on some of the novel's most fundamental claims. In particular, it permits us to perceive the novel's robust conception of social relationships, and the undercurrent of hidden violence and repressed hostility underlying key institutions of civilization, especially the family. In addition, focusing on these textual interchanges helps us see Svevo's use of concepts such as ambivalence, guilt, patriarchy, identification, mourning, and projection in order to capture the full complexity of interpersonal bonds.

Freud's hypothesis in *Totem and Taboo* indicates that the emergence of totems–which, according to the anthropologists of the time, were the first forms of legal and moral systems—was related to a collective murdering that a band of brothers performed to rid themselves of an over-powerful and despotic father. Drawing on anthropological works on ritual banquets and Darwin's studies on the earliest stages of human society, and complementing this information with his perspectives on obsessive neurotics and children, Freud concluded that the first rebellious sons likely devoured their dead father, given that they were cannibals: "in the act of

devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength."[121] Liberating themselves from the despotic leader of the primitive horde, however, did not entail the end of problems for the "tumultuous mob of brothers." The "affection which had all this time been pushed under" started to appear in the form of guilt and remorse, which led to the emergence of a series of rituals and internalized rules as a form of atonement for the guilt emerging from the parricidal act (142).

In Freud's interpretation, the assertion of patriarchy and the authority of father figures are integral to questions of guilt. Through the mechanism of "deferred obedience," the band of brothers invested a totem—the animal that substituted for their father and came to identify the clan—with sacred dimensions, thus constructing taboos, such as prohibitions from destroying the totem or from possessing the women of the clan. As a further step in this process, the sacred totem developed into forms of religion in which the father figure was divinized. As a consequence, what had so far been the result of obedience to an external power—the tyrannical father imposing his will upon the sons and monopolizing the women—became the effect of internalized rules, prohibitions which had the force of religious or moral commands. As Freud ironically concluded: "The dead father became stronger that the living one had been" (143). The creation of the first social institutions and internalized discipline was therefore a result of the interplay of ambivalence, guilt, and identification. Or, in Freud's terms: "Society was now based on complicity in the common crime; religion was based on the sense of guilt and the remorse attached to it; while morality was based partly on the exigencies of this society and partly on penance for one's sense of guilt" (146).

[121] Freud, *Totem and taboo,* 142.

Some specific episodes of *La coscienza di Zeno* reveal the effect that Freudian ideas had on Svevo's portrayal of patriarchy and father-son relations. Identification and guilt, in fact, are staples in Zeno's life and especially in his relation to his father. In referring to his father's breath as he is dying, Zeno makes this identification quite clear, especially when he observes that his father "had short breath that I, unconsciously, mimicked." [aveva una respirazione frettolosa, che io, quasi inconsciamente, imitavo] (668). This imitation is not an isolated episode. At the beginning of his autobiography, Zeno focuses on his most conspicuous symptom: his smoking. When tracing the origins of his addiction to cigarettes, Zeno remembers his childhood and how he had started to smoke when an older friend began to provide cigarettes for him and his brother. Since he thought his brother was receiving more cigarettes than him, Zeno sought to compensate by stealing money from his father in order to buy cigarettes. This fact was at the origin of his habit since he had to chain-smoke an entire box of ten cigarettes "in order to avoid conserving for long the compromising fruit of the robbery." [per non conservare a lungo il comprometente frutto del furto] (629).

Zeno's smoking started as a little, secret crime against his father. Svevo, however, added some more layers of complexity into Zeno's initiation to smoking. After an episode in which he was almost caught in the act of stealing from his father, Zeno changed his strategy. He started to take the cigarettes his father left, working under the assumption that the old Cosini was actually discarding them. The connection between his smoking and his identification with his father is reinforced: Zeno puts himself in his father's position by smoking his cigarettes—and therefore acts in a similar fashion to the primitive band of brothers who eat their father.[122] A further

[122] We should also mention that a couple of dreams by Zeno have a cannibalistic content. See La coscienza, pp. 825, and 1055.

development in the story of the origins of Zeno's smoking confirms the association between his smoking and straightforward Oedipal reference. One day, Zeno had returned from school very tired and soaked with sweat, and that gave way to a certain intimacy with his mother. As Zeno remembers, his mother "had helped me undress and, wrapping me up in a blanket, had put me to sleep on a sofa, on which she also sat, busy with a sewing job." [m'aveva aiutato a spogliarmi e, avvoltomi in un accappatoio, m'aveva messo a dormire su un sofà sul quale essa stessa sedette occupata a certo lavoro di cucito]. (629). Lying naked on a sofa next to his mother, Zeno learned of his "crime": his father was desperately searching for the leftovers of the cigarettes he had smoked. The old Cosini then confesses to his wife: "I think I am becoming crazy (…) I am worse than usual. Things escape from me" [Io credo di diventar pazzo (…) Sto peggio del solito. Le cose mi sfuggono] (630). Thus, Zeno knew he was still smoking at his father's expense—and the connection between his wrongdoing and his father's "madness" is significantly close to the old Cosini's madness during the last days of his life. The episode, in addition, still lends itself to one more Oedipal reference,

> I half-opened my eyes and looked at my mother. She had resumed work, but was still smiling. Certainly, she did not think my father was becoming crazy if she was laughing at his fear. That smile impressed me so much that I found it one day again on the lips of my wife (631).

> [Io apersi a mezzo gli occhi e guardai mia madre. Essa s'era rimessa al suo lavoro, ma continuava a sorridere. Certo non pensava che mio padre stesse per ammattire per sorridere così delle sue paure. Quel sorriso mi rimaste tanto impresso che lo ricordai subito ritrovandolo un giorno sulle labra di mia moglie].

Through smoking, Zeno negotiates two basic impulses: an act of defiance against his father as well as a self-punishment for his unconscious hostility—as Dr S explicitly observes toward the end of the novel (1059). No wonder he confesses that "I did not know if I loved or hated the cigarette and its flavor" [allora io non sapevo se amavo o odiavo la sigaretta e il suo sapore.] (631). The symptom connects to his guilt-ridden identification with his father. Svevo provides still another episode in which Zeno's identification with his father is deeply marked by the emergence of symptoms and psychological complexities. A few months after the death of the old Cosini, and after a complicated and frustrating courtship, Zeno gets married. After the wedding trip the couple moves to Zeno's house, which once belonged to Zeno's father (676). The wedding trip constitutes a liminal moment, marking Zeno's passage toward patriarchy, and toward occupying his father's place. At first, the assumption of a father role seems reassuring to Zeno and he describes this trip in very optimistic terms, viewing himself as in "full convalescence" [piena convalescenza] (790) and showing surprise at his remarkable well-being. His new role as family man, in fact, starts to be associated with a sense of mission, purpose, and responsibility which he associates with health: "I was taking part in the construction of a patriarchal family, and becoming the same patriarch I had hated, which now appeared to me as the summit of health." [Stavo collaborando alla costruzione di una famiglia patriarcale e diventavo io stesso il patriarca che avevo odiato e che ora m'appariva quale il segnacolo della salute.] (789). That Zeno describes his recently acquired family position suggests a Freudian influence, since he confesses that during the trip "I assumed sometimes willingly the attitude of an equestrian statue" [assunsi talvolta volontieri l'attegiamento di statua equestre](789)—the

equation between a father figure and a horse is probably a consequence of Svevo's reading of Little Hans clinical case.[123]

As the story goes on, this remarkable improvement vanishes, as Zeno beings to suffer from persecutory fantasies clearly associated with his sense of guilt. As he visits places crowded with strange people, he starts to feel that "many of the unknown people among whom we moved, were my enemies. It was a ridiculous fear, but I did not know how to vanquish it" [a me parve che molti degl'ignoti fra cui ci movevamo, mi fossero nemici. Era una paura ridicola, ma non sapevo vincerla]. (791) His fear and insecurity increased as he felt he could be "assaulted, insulted, and, basically, slandered, and who could have protected me?" [assaltato, insultato e sopra tutto calomniato, e chi avrebbe potuto protegerme?] (791). Svevo exploits Zeno's paranoia by imagining circumstances that mix his knowledge of projective mechanisms with a good deal of humor:

> I used to take almost all the journals I was offered in the street. Stopping before a news kiosk, I started to doubt that its owner, out of hate, might have caused me to be arrested as a thief because I had only bought one from him but had a lot under my arm. I ran away followed by Augusta, to whom I did not mention the reason for my hurry (791).
>
> [Usavo prendere quasi tutti i giornali che m'erano offerti sulla via. Fermatomi un giorno davanti al banco di un giornalaio, mi venne il dubbio, ch'egli, per odio,

[123] Freud, "Analysis of a phobia in a Five-Year Old Boy," in *The Standard Edition,* Vol. X, op cit, 3-152. Svevo's references to fear of horses as significant symptoms suggesting unconscious hostility to the father can also be read in: "Corto viaggio sentimentale," *Racconti,* 545, and even more clearly in "Umbertino," *Romanzi*, p. 1163-1164.

avrebbe potuto facilmente farmi arrestare come un ladro avendo io preso da lui un solo giornale e tenendone molti, sotto il braccio, comperatti altrove e neppure aperti. Corsi via seguito da Augusta a cui non dissi la ragione della mia fretta.]

Along with this episodic paranoia, during his wedding trip Zeno also suffers "a little disease from which I never recovered" [una piccola malattia da cui non dovevo più guarire.] (792). That is the way he introduced one of his main manias: "the fear of getting old and, mainly, the fear of dying" [la paura d'invecchiare e sopra tutto la paura di morire] (792), to which he also adds an obsession with the idea of his wife marrying another man immediately after his death. The obsession is self-torturing, although he manipulates it in such a manner to involve also the poor Augusta, who weeps and cries when Zeno insists that he will be abandoned and, of course, promises him her loyalty. This does not relieve Zeno's obsession, and indeed he becomes very graphic in describing his possible death while still not neglecting to mention his new role as a family man,

> In order to better explain myself I described to her my eventual form of dying: my legs, in which the circulation was certainly already poor, would incancrinate and the cancrene, expanded, expanded, would achieve any organ indispensable to have the eyes opened. And then I would close them, and good bye patriarch! It would be necessary to print another one (793)
>
> [Per spiegarmi meglio le descrissi un mio eventuale modo di morire: le mie gambe, nelle quali la circolazione era certamente già povera, si sarebbero incancrenite e la cancrena dilatata, dilatata, sarebbe giunta a toccare un organo

> qualunque, indispensabile per poter tener aperti gli occhi. Allora li avrei chiusi, e addio patriarca! Sarebbe stato necessario stamparne un altro].

Svevo drew on multiple sources of inspiration in constructing these symptoms. When reading Svevo's diary and his letters to his wife, for instance, we realize that Zeno's heavy smoking was clearly autobiographical, while his obsession with death, aging, and jealousy was a favorite way of tormenting his wife, especially during their courtship and early years of marriage. Even if Svevo's personal experience was the immediate inspiration for these ideas, his explicit references to patriarchy in Zeno's novel point to Freudian influences and betray the connection between the novel and *Totem and Taboo*. In particular, the imagination of Zeno's wedding trip has significant resemblance to Freud's descriptions of the breach of a taboo in totemic clans—an idea that is also intimately connected to his ideas on obsessive neurosis.

In his chapter on "taboo and emotional ambivalence" Freud traces an analogy between violating a taboo and the compulsive rituals of obsessive neurotics. In each case, the performance, or lack of performance, of a specific action is connected to a fear that evil—usually death—will visit upon the person responsible for that action or upon someone beloved by the obsessive patient. Whereas the violator of a totem would be punished for his crime by spirits or demons, the obsessive neurotic is assailed by intense fears of disgrace upon failing to carry out one of his compulsions. By combining paranoid projective mechanisms and an obsession with death in the description of Zeno's wedding trip, Svevo might have been using psychoanalytic ideas in a very general way. A particularly significant link between *La coscienza di Zeno* and *Totem and Taboo* is the role of mourning. As Freud explains, the threat of punishment by

demons in taboo violation follows an analogous mechanism than mourning. The unconscious hostility to the dead person returns in the form of punishing spirits. In modern civilized cultures, that same unconscious hostility adopts the form of intense self-reproaches and remorse. Zeno's transition from torturing self-reproach following his father's death to paranoid fantasies seems to be a creative adaptation of these ideas.[124]

Obsessive Neurosis, Sickness, and Transference

Zeno's tortured and conflicted assumption of his role as the family patriarch instantiates Svevo's ongoing preoccupations with assimilation and ineptitude. In *La coscienza di Zeno* assimilation is expressed in terms of health and disease and processed through specific psychoanalytic or Freudian ideas. Svevo used insights on obsessional neurosis, resistance, and transference to ironically describe attitudes toward disease. The novel ultimately blurs the divide between health and disease, chiefly by parodying over-activity and social success as disguised forms of neurosis. Svevo conveys that Zeno's main problem is not his disease but his furious desire to be healthy, strong, independent, and self-sufficient, which is precisely what generates his unhappiness. Since the novel presents a parallel between disease and ill-assimilation, the ironic erasure of the divide between disease and health has an important ideological and political implication. Like the fable

[124] Zeno's obsession with his *own* death might also betray a closer relationship to *Totem and Taboo* than to other descriptions of these cases such as the one in the Rat Man case. In the latter, Freud observes that most obsessions with death are connected to a threat to a beloved person of the patient. In *Totem and Taboo*, in contrast, Freud makes clear that "at the beginning of the illness, the threat of punishment applied, as in the case of savages, to the patient himself; he was invariably in fear for his own life; it was not until later that the mortal fear was displaced on to another and a loved person." (72) That seems to be Zeno's case in his wedding trip.

La madre, Svevo's last novel acts as a warning against intense and homogenizing forms of social integration and as a celebration of unfitness, difference, and ineptitude.[125]

Throughout the novel, Zeno refers to "his disease" in very general terms, never giving any clear diagnosis—except toward the end of the novel, when Dr. S makes him notice the Oedipal root of "his disease." Some of the general comments on his illness, however, reveal Zeno's heterogeneous accumulation of different symptoms. Some of them fit into what Freud defined as conversion hysteria, since he presents different kinds of somatizations emerging from apparent psychological problems. A limp that started when he was courting the Malfenti daughters, and a pain in his body connected to a humiliating episode with Guido, exemplify this (728-732, 767-769). However, as many commentators have pointed out, Zeno's other attitudes and symptoms coincide with what Freud describes as obsessional neurosis. [126] Fixed ideas concerning death; compulsions, such as smoking; distractions (731); the privileging of thinking over acting; and a sense of doubt and insecurity related to his jealousy and his incapability to decide and to finish or achieve anything (686) illustrate this coincidence. Freud had put all these issues under the category of obsessional neurosis and indeed some sentences from the "Rat Man case" call to mind Zeno,

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[125] As Minghelli summarized: "The final recognition that the disease is the cure introduces a potential reversal of the meaning of the sickness. The desire to heal, whether pursued through capitalist enterprise, a faith in progress, Social Darwinism, or psychoanalysis, is the very expression of modern sickness." *In the Shadow of the Mammonth,* p. 196

[126] See for instance Fusco, *Italo Svevo,*366; Anthony Wilden, "Death, Desire, and Repetition," pp. 63-87; and Saccone, *Commento a 'Zeno,'* pp. 73-126. Saccone and Wilden refer to Zeno's obsessive symptoms, but they analize them through Lacanian categories. As a result, they don't cross the Svevian text with Freudian ones but with Lacanian ideas around repetition, desire as lack, and obsession with death as a fear for the extinction of desire. For other studies on sickness and disease in Svevo, see Gian-Paolo Biasin, *Literary Diseases. Theme and Metaphor in the Italian Novel* (Austin and London: University of Texas Press, 1975), pp. 63-99.

> These neurotics [obsessional neurotics] need the possibility of death chiefly in order that it may act as a solution for conflicts they have left unsolved. Their essential characteristic is that they are incapable of coming to a decision, especially in matters of love (…) Thus in every conflict of their lives they are on the look out for the death of someone who is important to them, usually of someone they love—such as one of their parents, or a rival, or one of the objects of their love toward which their inclinations are wavering.[127]

Zeno's lack of firm intentions and decisions, his passive attitude toward his ends, and the way in which he approaches his goals in oblique, inhibited, and fearful ways fit into this description. Zeno always shows disengagement from decisions affecting his life and presents the main events of his biography as though things had happened first, and then he had adapted–he marries the woman the Malfenti decided for him; he has a lover and while he is deciding whether to keep her or leave her, she gets engaged to another man and so decides for him; his business is basically determined by his father's last will.[128] Zeno's lack of a clear and committed attitude combines with the fact that all crucial transitions in his life happen basically as a result of deaths –of his father, his father-in-law, his rival Guido. Zeno is obsessed with the deaths of others, to

[127] Freud, "Rat Man Case," 236. For the systematic description of obsessive neurosis, see 221-249. Freud also expanded on obsessive neurosis in *Totem and taboo*, when tracing comparison with primitive thought and children. His references there on thefixed ideas on death by obsessive neurotics might have surprised Svevo, due to Freud's reference to his favorite philosopher: "Schopenhauer has said that the problem of death stands at the outset of every philosophy; and we have already seen that the origin of the belief in souls and in demons, which is the essence of animism, goes back to the impression which is made upon men by death." *Totem and taboo,* p. 87.

[128] The most illustrative example of this is his description of his marriage: he arrived late to the wedding, and then said yes in the altar while distracted with inventing an excuse for his delay. *La conscienza di Zeno,* 783.

the point that he devotes much of his biography to describe the transitions of others from health to death. This of course adds to Zeno's obsession with his own death. The centrality of death in his thinking appears explicitly. As he half-jokingly observes in the middle of a conversation:

> I insisted and asserted that death was the true organizer of life. I thought always of death, and that was why I had only one pain: the certainty of having to die. (703)
>
> [M'ostinai e asserii che la morte era la vera organizzatrice della vita. Io sempre alla morte pensavo e perciò non avevo che un solo dolore: La certezza di dover morire].

Svevo combined obsessive neurosis with his entrenched interest in ineptitude and maladaptation. Zeno's insecurity, doubt, and dissatisfaction contrasts with the calm and security that predominate in what he calls healthy people. The best example of this is the contrast between him and his wife, Augusta. As Zeno describes her in the chapter on their marriage, Augusta represents for him "health personified"[la salute personificata],(786) an attribute which has to do with her attachment to everyday concerns and her lack of paralyzing worries about death or transcendence. As Zeno describes her with surprise and admiration:

> From each of her acts it transpired that she believed life was eternal. Of course this was not explicit: one time she was surprised when I reminded her about life's brevity. She knew that everybody had to die, but that did not stop her from believing that now that we were married, we would be together for ever and ever (…). I understood what perfect human health meant when I realized that the

present for her was a tangible truth in which one could repose and remain warm. (787)

[da ogni suo atto risultava che essa credeva la vita eterna. Non che la dicesse tale: si sorprese anzi che una volta io (…) avessi sentito il bisogno di ricordargliene la brevità. Essa sapeva che tutti dovevano morire, ma ciò non toglieva che oramai ch'eravamo sposati, si sarebbe rimasti insieme, insieme, insieme. (…) Compresi finalmente che cosa fosse la perfetta salute umana quando indovinai che il presente per lei era una verità tangibile in cui si poteva segregarsi e starci caldi].

What strikes Zeno is that Augusta perceives life and the world as dynamic, changing, and ultimately fleeting. But she does not despair: "even if the earth turned, that did not mean we'd have to get dizzy! The earth turned, but all other things remained at their post."(787) [se anche la terra girava non occorreva mica avere il mal di mare! La terra girava, ma tutte le altre cose restavano al suo posto]. Moreover, Zeno contemplates with amazement Augusta's performance of everyday routines:

And these immobile things had a huge importance: the wedding ring, all the jewels and dresses, the green one, the black one, the one to go out, which had to be put in the closet when we arrived home, and the night one which in no case could be worn during the day (…) And the eating hours were held rigidly and also those of sleep. They exist, those hours, and they were always in their due place. (788)

> [E queste cose immobili avevano un'importanza enorme: l'anello di matrimonio, tutte le gemme e i vestiti, il verde, il nero, quello da passegi che andava in armadio quando si arrivava a casa e quello di sera che in nessun caso si avrebbe potuto indossare di giorno, nè quando io non m'adattavo di mettermi in marsina. E le ore dei pasti erano tenute rigidamente e anche quelle del sonno. Esistevano, quelle ore, e si trovavano sempre al loro posto.]

Zeno's obsession with death combines with his inability to perform everyday tasks and duties, which he views as meaningless vis-à-vis the ultimate tragedy of death. Svevo emphasizes Zeno's estrangement in order to show that his disease is both a form of maladaptation and a perspective. On the one hand Zeno fails to actually engage in the routines of social life with the same regular attitude as Augusta and other healthy people. On the other hand, Zeno–and Svevo—attribute an insightful dimension to this inability to adapt: "Health does not analyze itself, and neither looks itself at the mirror. Only we, the sick ones, know something about ourselves." (793) [La salute non analizza se stessa e neppur si guarda nello specchio. Solo noi malati sappiamo qualche cosa di noi stessi.] People fully absorbed in everyday activities do not see themselves performing them, neither do they analyze the ultimate reasons why they do them. Zeno, in contrast, cannot find that same blind spontaneity in his interaction with the world, which is the root both of his illness and his distinction. A graphic example of the relationship between failure and self-analysis emerges in Zeno's comments on how he plays violin. Despite his recognition that he "will never be able to play in such a manner as to please those who listen to me," [io mai arriverò a sonare in modo da dar piacere a chi m'ascolta], he observes that,

If I still continue to play I do it for the same reason I continue to cure myself. I could play well if I were not ill, and I run after health even when I study the equilibrium of the four strings. There is a light paralysis in my organism, and on the violin it reveals itself entirely, and is as a result more easily curable. Also the lowest being when he knows what triplets, quatrains, or sixplets are, knows how to move from one to the other with rhythmic precision, as his eye knows how to move from one colour to the other. Instead, when I have finally made one of those figures, it sticks on me and I cannot release myself from it anymore, and so it inserts itself into the figure and deforms it. In order to put the notes in their right place I must mark the rhythm with my feet and my head, but then goodbye spontaneity, goodbye serenity, goodbye music. The music that comes from an equilibrated organism is itself the time it creates and exhausts. When I can do that, I will be cured. (742)

[Se tuttavia continuo a sonare lo faccio per la stessa ragione per cui continuo a curarmi. Io potrei sonare bene se non fossi malato, e corro dietro alla salute anche quando studio l'equilibrio sulle quatro corde. C'e una lieve paralisi nel mio organismo, e sul violino si rivela intera e perciò più facilmente guaribile. Anche l'essere più basso quando sa che cosa sieno le terzine, le quartine o le sestine, sa passare dalle une alle altre con esattezza ritmica come il suo occhio sa passare a un colore all'altro. Da me, invece, una di quelle figure, quando l'ho fatta, mi si appiccica e non me ne libero più, così ch'essa s'intrufola nella figura seguente e la sforma. Per mettere al posto giusto le note, io devo battermi il tempo coi piedi e con la testa, ma addio disinvoltura, addio serenità, addio musica. La musica che

proviene da un organismo equilibrato è lei stessa il tempo ch'essa crea ed esaurisce. Quando lo farò così, sarò guarito.]

The "lowest being" or the "equilibrated organism," thence, can play with virtuosity and skill and become part of the music itself, immersed in the time that music imposes. Zeno, in contrast, stumbles with the rhythm and performs the melody mechanically, without grace. His paralysis and his disease thwart a perfect execution and instead mirror himself and his disease in the process. His disease and his failure are precisely what prevent him from disappearing in the act of performing. Some pages later, when narrating how his rival Guido plays the violin exquisitely before the Malfenti family, thus gaining one more victory over him in the struggle for seducing Ada, he notes about the brilliant performance: "'In order to do that it is enough to have a rhythmic organism, a firm hand, and imitation skills; all things I have not, which is not an inferiority but a disgrace.'" (756) ['Per saper fare ciò, basta disporre di un organismo ritmico, una mano sicura e una capacità d'imitazione; tutte cose che io non ho, ciò che non è un'inferiorità, ma una sventura.'] His bitter reflection becomes more transparent in the final chapter of his autobiography, when Guido, who was always a more virtuosic performer and effective seducer than Zeno, kills himself. This destiny demonstrates the complicated balance between disease and health that is one of the novel's overarching themes. Zeno is ill, and fails to make big achievements, but precisely because he is constantly watching himself and analyzing his acts, he survives and lasts longer than the stronger and healthy Guido.

Along with Svevo's original perceptions on health and disease and his appropriation of Freud's description of obsessive neurosis, *La coscienza di Zeno* uses other psychoanalytic

technical concepts in a very straightforward manner. The notions of resistance and transference, in fact, are crucial to an understanding of the end of the novel and some of its deepest claims. As Freud notes in his *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* –a book that I assume Svevo read—a common phenomenon in psychoanalytic therapy consists of the fact that, despite the patient's willingness to be cured, he or she resists the treatment by multiple strategies and tricks.[129] This resistance emerges out of the same repression and censorship that causes the neurosis, and manifests itself in attitudes such as holding information from the doctor, failing to make obvious associations, rejecting the doctor's interpretations, or challenging his authority by trying to grow familiar with psychoanalytic theory in order to better contest his or her suggestions. Freud explicitly indicates that obsessive neurotics are particularly rich in developing "special tactics of resistance," and points to an aspect that seems to reproduce Zeno's case: the patients usually let the treatment proceed and produce rich material for analysis, yet they do so in such an uncommitted fashion that they emotionally detach from it and therefore do no progress.[130] As Freud observes, "things can proceed like this for a long time, till finally one comes against this uncommitted attitude itself, and the decisive struggle then breaks out."(290).

The way in which Zeno engages with Dr S follows Freud's analysis of resistance and transference. Zeno's biography provides plenty of memories related to his neurosis, and his diary

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[129] Svevo mentioned he read Freud's "prelezioni" in 1916, which might be the Introductory Lectures –a text his brother-in-law helped to translate together with Weiss. Other possible sources for Svevo's familiarity with resistance and transference is Freud's article "Remembering, Repeating and Working Through (further recomendations on the technique of psychoanalysis II)," *The Standard Edition, Vol. XII*, pp. 146-154, which was originally published in 1914. Finally, Elizabeth Schächter has also pointed to reading of texts by Stekel as another possible venue by which Svevo got familiar with issues of technique. See Schächter, *Origin and identity,* 50-58.

[130] Freud, *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis,* in *The Standard Complete Psychological Works,* Vol. XVI, p. 289.

also reveals that his dreams and talks with the doctor also generated relevant material for analysis. This general attitude coincides with Freud's observation that obsessional neurotics access episodes linked to their pathologies, but disengage them from meaning and significance.[131] The way in which Zeno introduces the chapter on his father's death illuminates this process: "I remember everything, but I don't understand anything." (654) [Ricordo tutto ma non intendo niente.]This observation permeates his entire narrative, which despite all of its sensitive material, fails to move forward with conclusions and interpretations. As a consequence, Zeno falls into a sort of ambush, since Dr S uses the biography, dreams, and other memoirs he so naively provided in order to arrive at the conclusions that Zeno was precisely trying to avoid. Things come to a head after Zeno describes one of his dreams, which moves Dr S to suggest an Oedipal interpretation, paving the way to all the connections Zeno is failing to make. Dr S therefore makes the point that Dr. Coprosich and Ada were right in pointing out Zeno's hostility toward his father and Guido; he refers to the fact that his smoking is a form of self-punishment for his unconscious hostility to his father and, fundamentally, he makes him notice that his rivalry with him has framed all of his other relationships, which are always marked by a hidden hostility. In doing so, Dr S also celebrates, claiming that Zeno is basically cured as long as he accepts this part of himself and learns to live with it (1049, 1056-1060).

Commenters on the novel usually refer to Dr S as an extremely direct and aggressive physician, who plays his cards poorly.[132] Emphasizing Freudian ideas concerning obsessive

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[131] The way Freud described this phenomenon in the Rat Man case might have also called Zeno's attention: "The waiters who used to serve Schopenhauer at his regular restaurant 'knew' him in a certain sense (…) but they did not 'know' him in the sense in which we speak today of 'knowing' Schopenhauer." Freud, "Rat Man case," 196. The example illustrates how obsessive neurotics don't assign the due significance to the contents they deal with.

[132] See Saccone, *Commento a 'Zeno,'* p. 90; and Schächter, *Origin and Identity*, 143-144, who asserts that the novel is a parody of psychoanalysis showing all what a psychoanalyst should not do.

neurosis and resistance, though, Dr. S's attitude seems reasonable in one point: his extremely direct way of conveying his diagnosis is aimed at shaking things up, since Zeno deploys a consistently passive and self-exculpatory attitude in all his relationships. Moreover, Zeno's biography as well as his dreams and memories during treatment anticipate Dr S's conclusion, giving them credibility. The tension in the resolution of the novel lies in Zeno's reaction to Dr S's conclusion, where Svevo played with humor and an irony in inverting health and disease. Zeno's responses to Dr S blend comedy and the repertoire of psychoanalytic resistance. When Dr S announces Zeno's Oedipal attachments, his first reaction is one of of detachment and indifference:

> I did not get angry at all! I was enchanted to listen. It was a disease that elevated me to the highest nobility. Certainly conspicuous this disease, whose ancestors reach back to the mythological age (…) I laugh at it. The best proof that I don't have this disease lies in the fact that I am not cured. This proof should convince the doctor. If this gives him peace: his words could not alter the memories of my youth: I close my eyes and I suddenly see pure, infantile, ingenuous, my love for my mother and my respect and greatest affection for my father. (1049-1050)
>
> [Né io m'arrabbiai! Incantato stetti a sentire. Era una malattia che mi elevava alla pù alta nobiltà. Cospicua quella malattia di cui gli antenati arrivavano all'epoca mitologica! (…) Ne rido di cuore. La miglior prova ch'io non ho avuta quella malattia risulta dal fatto che non ne sono guarito. Questa prova convincerebbe anche il dottore. Se ne dia pace: le sue parole non poterono guastare il ricordo

della mia giovinezza. Io chiudo gli occhi e vedo subito puro, infantile, ingenuo, il mio amore per mia madre e il mio rispetto ed il grande mio afetto per mio padre.]

Zeno embraces his disease as a way to demonstrate that Dr S had created a false image of him, and that "it was absolutely not true—as he thought—that each of my words, each of my thoughts, was that of a criminal." (1056) [non era mica vero –com'egli lo credeva—che ogni mia parola, ogni mio pensiero, fosse di delinquent]. Other comic moves go in the same direction. At a certain moment, for instance, Dr S states that there is nothing wrong with Zeno's smoking, and that if he is troubled by it, it is just because he is punishing himself for his unconscious hostility to his father. Zeno then spends the following days chain-smoking in order to get bronchitis to prove to Dr S that smoking is actually damaging, as evidence that he had been wrong to give such advice. Similarly, Zeno decides to consult a physician who suggests a diagnosis of diabetes. Zeno then feels released from Dr S's accusatory conclusion, embracing his new "sweet disease" as a blessing. (1063) When the same doctor finally rejects that initial diagnosis, Zeno has to hide his feeling that "now that diabetes had abandoned me I felt really lonely" (1063) [ora che il diabete m'abeva abbandonato mi sentivo molto solo].

Zeno also enacts other forms of resistance. He notes, for example, that since his biography was written in Italian rather than in dialect, it cannot be taken seriously: Triestines like him, he writes, "lie with each of our Tuscan words" (1050)[con ogni nostra parola toscana noi mentiamo!] (1050). He also stops offering material for analysis and starts instead to invent dreams in order to prove the lack of reliability of the treatment (1056-1057). Finally, he undermines the analyst's authority by countering his arguments. Zeno's stupefied reaction to his

psychoanalyst's incapacity to understand the obvious comically examplifies this. After discussing about his infidelity, he rejects Dr S's comments by observing that he "might be the only person in this world who, hearing that I wanted to go to bed with two very beautiful women, wonders: 'let's see why do you want to go to bed with them?" (1060). [sia il solo a questo mondo il quale sentendo che volevo andare a letto con due bellisime donne si domanda: Vediamo perché costui vuole andare a letto con esse].

Gradually, however, the resistance gives way to a more aggressive posture, and so after feigning indifference Zeno finally abandons himself to rage against that "ridiculous man (…) and his presumption that allows him to group all the phenomena of this world around his big, new theory." (1049) [uomo ridicolo (…) e quella sua presunzione che gli permette di aggruppare tutti i fenomeni di questo mondo in torno alla sua grande, nuova teoria.] As he also observes about after another of Dr S's painful observations: "Who knows why he hates me so much? He must also be a hysterical who, having desired his mother in vain, becomes vengeful against he who has nothing to do with it." (1061) [Chissà perché si sia preso di tale odio per me? Anche lui dev'essere un istericone che per aver desiderata invano sua madre se ne vendica su chi non c'entra].

Svevo comically uses psychoanalytic texts to depict Zeno's multiple modes of resistance, including disengagement, taking refuge in other diseases, and undermining of the authority of the doctor. In the last part of the novel, though, transference pervades Zeno's attitudes above all. Transference is, according to Freud, both a crucial technical tool and one of the tricks and strategies of resistance. It consists of the patient's repetition of events connected to the causes of his illness, which are not properly remembered—this is why it is helpful for treatment. One of the effects of transference is that the patient puts the doctor in the place of a relevant figure in his

or her life—in strict terms, transference means that he or she displaces onto the doctor emotions and feelings connected with another person. This is relevant for Svevo's model, as through transference the patient may reproduce hostile feelings that he won't otherwise accept. In the *Introductory Lectures* we find a description of this process that resembles Zeno and Dr S's relation,

> If the patient is a man, he usually extracts this material [resistance] from his relation to his father, into whose place he fits the doctor, and in that way he makes resistance out of his efforts to become independent in himself and in his judgments, out of his ambition, the first aim of which was to do things as well as his father or to get the better of him (…) Thus at times one has the impression that the patient has entirely replaced his better intention of putting an end to his illness by the alternative one of putting the doctor in the wrong, of making him realize his impotence and of triumphing over him.[133]

By closely comparing Freud's description to Zeno's remarks on his relationship to his father and on what led him to abandon treatment, it becomes apparent that Svevo made use of Freud's theory of transference in the novel. In the previous chapters, in fact, Zeno depicted his relationship with his father in terms that betray rivalry and hostility. He is insistent, for instance, in that "between both of us, I represented strength and he weakness" (655) [fra noi due, io rappresentavo la forza e lui la debolezza], while also making clear that the contrast between him and the old Cosini was crucial for Zeno in order to find purpose and meaning in life. His death

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[133] Freud, *Introductory Lectures,* p 290.

was a catastrophe precisely because it eliminated Zeno's capacity to gain perspective on himself and to confirm his energy and strength: "At his side, I represented the force, and sometimes I feel that the disappearance of that weakness, which elevated me, was diminishing." (657) [io, accanto a lui, rappresentavo la forza e talvolta penso che la scomparsa de quella debolezza, che mi elevava, fu sentita da me come una diminuzione]. These sentences seem to be written to coincide with Dr S's comment toward the end of the novel, when Zeno notes that he was constantly searching for father figures to stabilize himself and as an outlet for his hostility. As Zeno says of the doctor: "according to him, I (…) lost my equilibrium if I lacked a certain hatred." (1060)[io (…) secondo lui, perdevo l'equilibrio se mi mancava un dato odio]."

Zeno's insistence on proving his superiority and strength over his father is precisely proof of his own insecurity and rivalry. Zeno's relationship with his father has many elements in common with the mother-centric model, since having others see one's success is crucial in both models. As he observes at the beginning of the chapter on his father's death, "the success to which I aspired would also entail my vanity before him, who had always doubted me, but also his consolation." (669) [Il successo cui anelavo doveva bensì essere anche il mio vanto verso di lui, che di me aveva sempre dubitato, ma anche la sua consolazione.] A central component in Zeno's relationship with his father, in fact, was the old man's explicit disappointment with his son, to the point that in his will he mandated that his fortune be administered by an employee, Olivi, who becomes one of the substitute father figures during the novel and, of course, the target of Zeno's resentment. Zeno experiences the situation as a tragedy, since he lives trying to assert his supremacy over his father while depending on the terms of this final decision. As he says at a critical moment in the chapter: "I will behave in such a manner that you will have to change your last will" (659) [io saprò comportarmi in modo che tu ti troverai indotto a cambiare le tue ultime

volontà]. Zeno's attitude, even after his father's death, is precisely this: to show that his father was wrong, something that brings him anxiety and makes him need constantly to gather evidence of his success, while also resulting in his ambitions for independence, commercial achievement, and social triumph.

All this anxiety explodes in the last pages of the novel, with Dr S as Zeno's target. After Zeno exhausts all his other strategies of resistance, he finally gets rid of Dr S and his judgments by proclaiming himself cured, and so he sends him his diary in order to show to him "the description of a solid, perfect, health, at least as much as my advanced age can permit," (1082) [la descrizione di una salute solida, perfetta quanto la mia età abbastanza inoltrata può pemettere]. Even though he recognizes that he suffers from some pain, and even if he introduces the possibility—by denying it—that he might be healthy just because the war made him feel "a privileged among so many martyrs" (1082) [un privilegiato in mezzo a tanti martiri], the assertion of his health is "a conviction": "I am healthy, absolutely." (1082) [io sono sano, assolutamente].The proof of his "absolute health" is his commercial success. As he observes,

> I admit that in order to be persuaded of my health, my destiny had to change and warm up my organism with fight and, mainly, with triumph. It was my commerce that cured me, and I want Dr S to know it (1082)
>
> [Ammetto che per avere la persuasione della salute il mio destino dovette mutare e scaldare il mio organismo con la lotta e sopratutto col trionfo. Fu il mio commercio che mi guarì e voglio che il dottor S. lo sappia].

Zeno then describes how he made money by investing in goods that became expensive as a result of the war, and how "the moment that I put that money in my pockets, my breast expanded with the feeling of my strength and my health." (1083) [nel momento in cui incassai quei denari mi si allargò il petto al sentimento della mia forza e della mia salute]. Aside from revealing Zeno to be a war profiteer, the event articulates notions of health, strength, and commercial achievement. By finally achieving something his father thought he was incapable of, Zeno views himself as cured, and as a healthy and "strong" person. Svevo therefore portrays Zeno's alleged "cure" as a form of what Freud calls "acting out": to carry out different initiatives or calls to action as forms of dodging treatment. When read against the background of resistance and transference, it is clear that Svevo was actually parodying Zeno's health and underlining that his celebration of over-activity and success was actually the most problematic of his reactions. This interpretation leads us to one of the few pieces in which Svevo made a clear statement about psychoanalysis. In his letter to Valerio Jahier, dated in 1927, Svevo emphasizes the opposition between health and disease, favoring disease:

> And why cure our disease? Do we really have to deprive humanity of the best of it? I believe that the true success that has given me peace is constituted by this conviction. We are living protests against the ridiculous conception of the superman that swindled to us (especially us the Italians). [134]
>
> [E perché voler curare la nostra malattia? Davvero dobbiamo togliere all'umanià quello ch'essa ha di meglio? Io credo sicuramente che il vero successo che mi ha

[134] *Carteggio*, 859-860.

dato la pace è consistito in questa convinzione. Noi siamo una vivente protesta contro la ridicola concezione del superuomo come ci è stata gabellata (sopratutto a noi italiani).]

Although written four years after the publication of *La coscienza di* Zeno, Svevo's letter insists on the same conclusion. After Zeno declares himself cured, indeed, he reaches a final reflection that becomes part of an apocalyptic image. In a struggle among ill men for the world's scarce resources, a fight will take place in which the contenders will escalate the use of destructive devices, thus culminating in the total destruction of the world: "there will be an enormous explosion that no one will hear, and the earth, returned to its cloudy form, will wander in the skies free from parasites and diseases" (1085) [Ci sarà un'esplosione enorme che nessuno udrà e la terra ritornata alla forma di nebulosa errerà nei cieli priva di parasiti e di malattie]. With these final and sudden apocalyptic words, Svevo makes a more universal claim. He then moves away from the specific case of Zeno, and makes the point that the anxiety of assimilation and supremacy among the unfit will lead to utter destruction. The image is perhaps pessimistic, but the last words are crucial: obsession with health is dangerous, because the definite end of disease is in fact the end of life.

Conclusion

Well before becoming familiar with Freudian texts, Svevo had developed an interest in the relationship between maladaptation, megalomaniac attitudes, and assimilation and recognition. Crucial in articulating these features was his use of filial relationships, and especially the mother-

son bond, as devices for representing a conflicted dynamic of social attraction and repulsion. Even though his encounter with Freudian texts deepened his interest in wish-fulfilements and daydreaming, his immersion in psychoanalytic theory led him in slightly different directions. Focusing on father-son hostility moved to the foreground a character's incapacity to recognize reprehensible thoughts. His use of ambivalence, guilt, and resistance, as well as his involvement with texts such as Freud's *Totem and Taboo*, helps us understand Svevo's last novel as a poignant commentary on post-war society: his portrait suggests a view of social and interpersonal relations as intrinsically violent and hostile, while proposing that obsession with health, strength, and a sublimated emphasis in autonomy and supremacy make the problems worse. In his treatment of disease as maladaptation, the novel reacts against authoritarian and homogeneizing notions of adaptation, achievement, and success.

Svevo's literature is difficult to label or frame. For decades, critics have compared his writing to that of authors such as Flaubert, Proust, Kafka, Joyce and have argued about the difficulties of attaching him into any general trend—naturalism, realism, decadence. His position on the literary map of his time seems as complex as his social identity: always excluded, never fully inserted into any particular group or loyalty. Different readers have found different formulas by which they try to make sense of the Svevo-Freud relationship. Anthony Wilden, for instance, defined Svevo's novel as "a psychoanalytical novel written *against* psychoanalysts."[135] He argued that Svevo's use of psychoanalytic ideas allowed him to blur the lines between health and sickness and to show that they do not align themselves along the doctor-patient divide. For Elizabeth Schächter, the novel is instead a "parody of psychoanalysis" that exposes everything

[135] Wilden, "Death, Desire and Repetition," p. 68. The sentence concludes: "especially against the promotion of the 'real' or 'authentic' (unconscious) self constantly invoked by the therapists—a novel which offers and independent and considerable more subtle psychoanalytical interpretation of its own."

psychoanalysts should not do.[136] In a very bitter polemic with Italian psychoanalyst Cesare Musatti in the early 1970s, Eduardo Saccone pointed out that the psychoanalytic dimension in Svevo's writings lies in his conception of the subject as not transparent to itself. This provides the signifiers in his text with a particular status that opens them up to complex semantic operations, which led Saccone to read Svevo's texts through Lacanian notions of desire as lack, to detect the different forms of repetition through which Zeno constitutes himself in the narrative, and to focus on the unconscious as an interrupted relationship between signifiers and signified.[137] For Musatti, in contrast, the novel was the product of Svevo's ambivalence and his deep resistance to psychoanalysis. In addition, he proposed a traditionally Freudian reading of the novel: Svevo had disguised his most visceral unconscious material, giving it an artistic shape.[138]

In this chapter, I aimed at connecting Svevo's texts with specific historical circumstances. Moreover, I also have tried to show that psychoanalysis was integral to Svevo's work, and that along with a highly important appropriation of Freudian ideas, his relationship to psychoanalysis relied on his need to portray the complexities of social adaptation. My intention has been to show that a historical reading of Svevo's text is possible and that it helps to illuminate his appropriation of psychoanalysis, longlasting tropes and concerns in his writings, and fundamental personal experiences connected to social processes. Ideas such as ambivalence, obsessive neurosis, identification, and transference permited Svevo to represent the "wrong way" of working out maladaptation and "disease" in post-war society. By emphasizing the ills tied to

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[136] Schächter, *Origin and Identity,* 140-148.

[137] Saccone, *Il poeta travestito,* 241-271.

[138] Cesare Musatti, "Svevo e la psicoanalisi," Belfagor, March, 1974. Freud's ideas on artistic creation are expressed in Freud, "Creative Writers and Daydreaming." In The Standard Edition, Vol XI, 143-153.

obsessions with assimilation, adaptation, and strength, I contend that Svevo's narrative and his use of psychoanalysis stake out specific political and ideological territory.

Conclusion

In this thesis I have explored the history of psychoanalysis in Italy during the interwar period. Using different kinds of sources and archival material, my research has focused on the rather heterogeneous realities of my subject in the hopes of elucidating its multiple dimensions. Looking at the initiatives and organizing strategies instituted by the pioneers of Italian psychoanalysis has allowed me to better locate the main obstacles and opportunities, while also framing their relationship with Fascism. Considering the institutional context of the Italian mental health system has been crucial to my understanding of the responses of various profession-builders in the psy-disciplines. Re-constructing literary debates concerning modern narrative and the novel has allowed me to locate an area of cultural circulation that took psychoanalysis seriously. Finally, my reading of Italo Svevo's stories and the focus on his Triestine context has made it possible to relate his appropriation of psychoanalytic insights to specific personal and political issues.

One of my claims throughout these pages has been to stress that, despite many obstacles, Italy did have a relevant psychoanalytic culture. In the first place, debates about psychoanalysis involved important intellectuals such as Alberto Moravia, Elio Vittorini, and Italo Svevo, who also exhibited original uses of Freudian notions or theories. Second, the impact of the psychoanalytic movement and psychoanalytic theories was rather expanded. As I explained in the introduction to this thesis, my use of the term "psychoanalytic culture" is certainly more restricted than that of historians who study places in which psychoanalysis penetrated more deeply into everyday life. Despite not being hegemonic or socially or statistically apparent, what is clear is that psychoanalysis' cultural impact was significant. I contend that especially between the late 1920s and the early 1930s there was a "spring" of psychoanalytic campaigning and

activism. Psychoanalysts had at least three journals –*Rivista di Psicoanalisi*, *Il Saggiatore*, and *Archivio Generale di neurologia, psichiatria e psicoanalisi*—in which they published their ideas; they maintained a high ideological profile in public debates (as Perrotti's articles showed); and they produced books, such as Edoardo Weiss' *Elementi di psicoanalisi*, that went through many editions. In fact, even as late as 1938, when psychoanalysis was suffering from censorship, Enzo Bonaventura's book on psychoanalysis was a best-seller title prior to its disappearance from the libraries.

While claiming that psychoanalysis was a relevant cultural reality, this thesis also makes a series of implicit methodological contentions. First, it recognizes the difficulties with simply pointing to Positivism, Fascism, Catholicism, or Idealism as the main reasons for psychoanalysis' marginality –as some histories of psychoanalysis in Italy do. Although influential representatives of these trends did react with hostility toward psychoanalysis, a deeper reading reveals that the responses from these quarters were more heterogeneous. Positivism, in particular, allowed for a gray area of conceptual overlap that permitted the psychoanalyst Marco Levi Bianchini to think of himself as a proud disciple of both Cesare Lombroso and Sigmund Freud. The responses to psychoanalysis by the psychiatrist Enrico Morselli might be another face of the same process, since his intention was to re-invent Italian Positivism to show that it had anticipated psychoanalysis. Second, I contend that we should be more careful in separating rejection or opposition to psychoanalysis from appropriation of it. Moreover, we must also notice that in many cases opposition to psychoanalysis was not so much a rejection of its theories as evidence of anxieties about the psychoanalytic movement and its members' predominantly Jewish background, alleged sectarian sociability, or supposedly left-wing leanings.

We may be able to obtain a good general picture of psychoanalysis in interwar Italy if we describe the realms of mental health and cultural criticism as exposing symmetrical concerns. Important representatives of the psy-disciplines were anxious about psychoanalysis as a threat to their professional respectability. As I show in the case of Morselli and other neurologists, psychoanalytic therapy implied drastic changes in the doctor-patient relationship, a commercialization of their practices that appeared offensive or suspicious to many professionals, and a way of dealing with hysteria that raised deep concerns. By the same token, cultural critics also viewed psychoanalysis as a challenge to deeply internalized conceptions of culture. Representing characters as conditioned by the disturbances of their inner life, for instance, was offensive for those who thought of literature as an opportunity to portray more heroic models. Introducing psychopathological concepts to literature or, even worse, conceiving of art as a compensation for unfulfilled wishes, was non-admissible for critics who wished to defend the autonomy of the aesthetic realm from scientific intrusion, or who wished to view artistic creativity as unconstrained lyrical expression. Finally, the erasure of the borders between the pathological and the normal was another alleged reason for the discomfort with Freudian insights. A parallel concerns with psychoanalysis permeated both mental health professionals and men of letters, who defended conceptions of their work in ways hardly compatible with psychoanalytic assumptions. Rather than pointing to specific currents or ideologies, it may be useful to focus on these symmetrical assumptions in the psy-disciplines and literary criticism. Psychoanalysis could only circulate in the margins of, or in negotiation with, the consensus by which intellectuals and mental health professionals established their roles.

My thesis shows the relevance of Italian psychoanalytic culture during the interwar years, while also pointing to its obstacles and opportunities. While focusing on specific events

and names, there are many other issues that have remained unexplored and that might be productive to consider in future work on this topic. First, some names and experiences should appear more prominently. Though a crucial name in Italian post-war psychoanalysis, Cesare Musatti is mentioned only briefly in my thesis, which does not consider his experience in the Laboratory of Psychology at Padua University. The same can be said about the child psychiatrist Sante de Sanctis, who is mentioned very briefly in this thesis even though he was more straightforward than Morselli in seeking to lend psychoanalysis more professional respectability. In the cultural realm, the experience of Umberto Saba, a famous poet during the period who was a patient of Weiss and a public defender of psychoanalysis, deserves more exploration. Second, a panorama of the transnational circulation of psychoanalysis among intellectuals would also provide interesting results. As I mention in chapter 3, most of the attention to psychoanalysis in Italy came from Paris, especially due to the influence of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*. However, recent research has found close contacts between psychoanalysis and culture in Weimar Berlin, and other studies have even pointed to intellectual interest in psychoanalysis in Mexico.[1] My impression is that we need to construct a map of the cultural circulation of psychoanalysis and consider the ways in which cultural journals constituted intellectual networks that were perhaps more influential than the Freudian movement in spreading the psychoanalytic influence internationally.

Although looking more closely into specific issues of the interwar period can be productive, I think that we can get a better general sense of the history of psychoanalysis if we move beyond those years. A wider chronological approach might provide more perspective

[1] See Veronika Fuechtner, *Berlin Psychoanalytic. Psychoanalysis and Culture in Weimar Republic Germany and Beyond* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011); Rubén Gallo, *Freud's Mexico: Into the Wilds of Psychoanalysis* (Cambridge, Ma: MIT press, 2010).

regarding the long-term obstacles for psychoanalysis in Italy. One primary question should concern the immediate post-war period and the crisis of the paradigm of degeneration, heredity, and racism that sustained these notions. How did the relationship between psychoanalysis and mental health change after Positivism lost its grasp on Italian psychiatry? Other issues should point to more general social processes. Focusing on the spread of consumerism and the influence of American culture on postwar Italy might have been crucial to provide psychoanalysis with re-invigorated meaning. I think a crucial cultural change occurred when psychoanalysis moved from being associated with Jewishness to being considered an element of the newly Americanized culture. Finally, I think it is important to explore the Catholic world along lines similar to those used in this thesis. Whereas I think that the psychoanalysis-Catholicism relationship can certainly be narrated as a hostile one, my impression is that it is possible to complicate and nuance such a negative image. As the example of father Agostino Gemelli shows, relevant figures in the Catholic world might have preferred to selectively appropriate rather than outright oppose psychoanalysis.

In conclusion, I want to return to what is perhaps the most crucial element of my thesis. By showing that Italy actually had a psychoanalytic culture in the interwar period, this thesis also shows that Italian psychoanalysis came to life through compromises and agreements with Fascism. However, I think this fact should not prevent us from seeing the catastrophic impact of the Italian dictatorship for psychoanalysis. Censoring psychoanalytic publications, dispossessing psychoanalysts of their institutional positions, preventing new psychoanalysts from settling in Italy, destroying a liberal public sphere that had allowed a non-hegemonic current to campaign and organize freely, and provoking the exile of the only Freudian psychoanalyst trained in Vienna are, ultimately, the main legacies of Fascism when it comes to psychoanalysis; this

legacy would have consequences within Italian culture more broadly. The separation of Italian psychoanalysis from the Central European psychoanalysis and its active sociability was certainly one effect of Fascism. The cost of such a loss is one of the many questions to consider when studying the post-war years.

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