3
Laughing at Lombroso: Positivism and Criminal Anthropology in Historical Perspective

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Introduction

In the late 19th century, Cesare Lombroso claimed to have discovered the existence of a "born criminal" type of human being left over from an earlier stage of evolutionary development. He said he had proved this "scientifically" in studies of soldiers' tattoos, the artwork of prisoners, and the skulls of murderers. But no one today takes his science of criminal anthropology seriously. Popular science writer Stephen Jay Gould characterized Lombroso's argument in the opening pages of *L'uomo delinquente* as "the most ludicrous excursion into anthropomorphism ever published" (Gould, 1981, pp. 153–154).

In fact, even when Lombroso first proposed the idea, few thought it worth much. In 1889, at the Second Congress of Criminal Anthropology in Paris, Léonce Manouvrier dismissed it as nothing more than a variation of the "demolished science of phrenology" (Wilson, 1891, p. 625). At the Fourth Congress in Geneva, the Russian Senator Ignac Zakrewsky was inclined to "laugh at the whole thing," and openly ridiculed Lombroso (Griffiths, 1896, p. 11). Gino C. Speranza, advisor to the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology, characterized Lombroso's work as "a mixture of facts and nonsense" and "scientific fiction" (1901, p. 477). In Britain, Charles Whibley, editor of *Blackwood's Magazine*, denounced criminal anthropology as a "false science" and "absurd thesis" (1909, pp. 843–844). Sir Robert Anderson, who directed criminal investigations at Scotland Yard during the time of the Jack the Ripper case, joked that anyone following Lombroso could not spot the difference between Napoleon of Crime and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Anderson, 1907, p. 93; see further, Gould, 1889; Ireland, 1892; Laslett Brown, 1895; Tarde, 1897).

Yet Lombroso was, and remains, the most influential criminologist who ever lived; the individual who perceived the study of crime as a distinct science and inspired the pursuit of criminology. There is nowhere on the planet with criminology in place today that did not start with the Italian professor: Europe, including Russia, North and South America, from Chile to Canada; in the Philippines and the Pacific; the Mediterranean, including Turkey; in Asia, notably China and Japan (Becker & Wetzell, 2006; Knepper & Ystehede, 2013). Criminologists have continued to debate his work and role as founder of scientific criminology. Each generation has had its encounter with Lombroso (Lindesmith & Levin, 1937; Mannheim, 1936; Sellin, 1926; 1958; Wolfgang, 1961). David Garland (2002) and Jonathan Simon (2006) argue that the "Lombrosian project" continues to influence perceptions of crime and punishment in the 21st century. We are left with the contradiction between the silliness of Lombroso's statements and the astonishing scope of his influence. It raises a serious question

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that has never really been answered: How does someone with the most laughable ideas about crime ever published initiate a worldwide movement for the study of criminology?

To find the answer, we need to take a historical view. Rather than start in the present, with what Lombroso means today and look backward to how he began, we need to start in the 19th century looking forward, with what he thought he was doing and what others thought about him at the time. As Gibson and Rafter (2006) point out, many students of criminology have read Lombroso through the prism of bad English translations, and this has interfered with understanding his life and legacy. Lombroso pursued historical science when intellectuals were trying to work out the meaning of “deep time.” There were multiple Lombrosos in the sense that he wrote about a variety of subjects, including anarchist violence. He promoted his ideas in a tactile way that has never really been duplicated: exhibitions and museum displays. Lombroso’s work appealed to the literary imagination; authors of fiction, composers of operas, and newspaper writers gave him celebrity status. In attacking his celebrity, critics in criminology established his credentials and made his theory into a school of thought. Specifically, this chapter is organized around five aspects of his work: (1) his earliest autopsy research in Calabria; (2) his theory of the atavistic criminal type; (3) the invention of the Positive School; (4) his work on anarchism and political crime; and (5) the establishment of the criminal museum.

Historical Science

Cesare Lombroso claimed to have invented his theory of atavistic criminality while working as a military surgeon. In 1859, he completed his medical degree and volunteered for the army. He served in various posts, including a stay in Calabria, where he had time for exploratory autopsy research. He noticed differences between “honest” and “evil” soldiers. To begin with, some soldiers advertised their evil desires with indecent tattoos (Caplan, 2006).

Much has been made of Lombroso’s military service, anthropometric research, and subsequent theory of crime. Daniel Pick (1989) explains how Lombroso “volunteered for the new national army” and conducted his anthropometric research into the “ethnic diversity of the Italian people.” The “problem of criminality was part of the problematic of ‘making Italy’” (pp. 110–119). The implication of this is that given Lombroso’s view as an intellectual from the “advanced” industrialized north of Italy, he was interested in how to incorporate the “backward” agrarian South, and so he was eager to put his racialized science to work in the service of the emerging Italian nationstate. Criminal anthropology appears as a positivist science in the service of statebuilding (D’Agostino, 2002; Salvatore, 2006).

But we are thinking here about Lombroso as an Italian intellectual but Lombroso was an ItalianJewish intellectual. He was born into a Jewish family in Verona in 1835, a city ruled by the Hapsburg Kingdom of Venice. The Catholic authorities allowed Jews to attend the gymnasium, and for a time, Lombroso studied at the public school controlled by the Jesuits. He supported the emerging Italian state for the same reason many Jews did: the *Risorgimento* held the promise of emancipation from the centuriesold restrictions on Jewish life. Emancipation

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had come to Jews first in the Piedmont and extended to other areas, as Piedmont became the basis for the emerging Italian state (Knepper, 2007, p. 357). Further, positivist science as a tool of state formation derives from the view of how it was developed by others, such as Salvatore Ottolenghi, later on (see Gibson, 2002, pp. 135–137). In the 1860s, criminal anthropology as a teachable and practical technology for the national police remained in the future. To figure out what Lombroso thought he was doing in Calabria at the time, we need see what has happened *before*.

During the first half of the 18th century, the buried cities of Pompeii and Herculaneum were uncovered near Naples. Many artists and connoisseurs began to argue that ancient art was superior to work by contemporaries, and Greek and Roman civilizations became the object of admiration and inspiration. An aesthetic revolution took place, led by connoisseurs and collectors. It coincided with the new phenomenon of tourism to archeological sites, museums, and collections, and a flood of publications to celebrate the new artistic discoveries. Visitors took an interest in the Greek and Roman history of the Mediterranean, but also a discussion of linguistic, ethnic, historical, and political features of Calabria, and especially Sicily.

During the second half of the 18th century, scientists, historians, and travelers produced well illustrated descriptions, treatises, and pamphlets on the ancient remains, shrines, and temples. At the very end of the 18th century, European visitors and local intellectuals became conscious of the Arab period in Sicilian culture. A very important aspect was research into the language spoken by the Arabs in Sicily and its remnants in modern place names (Freller, 2001, pp. 3–10).

This glimpse into "ancient history" allows us to understand Lombroso's earliest writing and the framework in which his bestknown work would appear. Wolfgang (1961, p. 362) mentions that Lombroso produced his first research papers when he was 15 years of age: "Essay on the History of the Roman Republic" and "Sketches of Ancient Agriculture in Italy." He also wrote a review of Paola Marzolo's *An Introduction to Historical Monuments Revealed by Analysis of Words*. The review attracted the attention of the author, Marzolo, who became Lombroso's mentor. It was Marzolo, the physician and philosopher, who encouraged Lombroso to pursue medicine, and shaped his thinking early on (Gibson, 2006, p. 140). Lombroso did not set out to build a new science for a future state, but was interested in vestiges of ancient civilizations. He saw these traces in a highly racialized view of history as he wrote *L'uomo bianco e l'uomo di colore* (1871) [The White Man and the Colored Man]. In *L'uomo delinquente* (1878), Lombroso looks back to the Arab period when he suggests that the "anatomical types, customs, politics, and morality [of Sicily] retain a clear Arab imprint" (Lombroso, 2006, p. 118). Lombroso says that Arab blood must play a part in brigandage and insurrection in Sicily, although even within Sicily, variations in criminality have less to do with ethnicity than variations in standards of living, climate, and levels of culture.

For Lombroso, Darwin's theory confirmed his intuition that criminals were atavistic "black sheep" on the evolutionary scale. In the third edition of *L'uomo delinquente* (1884), Lombroso aspired to transform thinking about the origin of criminality along the lines of what Darwin had done for biology (Lombroso, 2006, p. 377). Lombroso imported not only a concept of

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development from evolutionary theory, but also a method of scientific inquiry. Darwin had staked his theory of evolutionary development on “historical science,” a second form of scientific inquiry derived from the physical evidence left by passage of deep time (Hull, 2003). Thomas H. Huxley outlined this aspect of Darwin’s work in his essay “On the Method of Zadig” (1880). The task of the historical sciences, including biology, paleontology, geology, and astronomy, is “retrospective philosophy”: the reconstruction of causes that took place long ago from traces that survive in the present. Nature furnishes clues to what must have happened at some earlier point in deep time. Natural history implies that human behavior originates in events other than human agency, and these can be found in uncovering the common cause behind similar effects (Huxley, 1880).

It was out of a science applied to a concept of the past, not the future, that criminal anthropology was born. The inventory of physical and psychological traits that Lombroso develops from his studies—craniums, tattoos, lefthandedness, handwriting, artwork, etc.—represents effects or traces of a natural process that has occurred in the remote past. They point to a common origin; to atavism or what Lombroso later referred to as degeneration.

The Criminal Type

Lombroso claimed to have discovered the “criminal type” of human being, or the “born criminal” as Enrico Ferri put it, originating in the process of evolutionary development. Ferri invented the term in an article on the implications of criminal anthropology he contributed in 1880 to Lombroso’s *Archivio di Psichiatria* (Sellin, 1958, p. 485). In Lombroso’s mind, the criminal type was one of the great scientific discoveries of the age. It was an age of scientific discovery and Lombroso wanted to assure his place in it. He continued to insist it was real, that he had been first to identify it, and that no one could take that away from him. Lombroso preserved this idea through five editions of *L’uomo delinquente*, even while he expanded his ideas about crime in society (Gibson, 2006).

Lombroso told the story of how he had discovered the criminal type in different ways; it takes place at different times and contains various elements (Gibson, 2006). Near the end of his life, Lombroso said that his “fundamental idea” had not come from a single breakthrough moment but a series of intuitions. The first inkling occurred to him in 1864, working on his studies of Italian soldiers, in trying to distinguish the honest soldier from his dishonest colleagues. He developed the idea further in 1866 as he began his study of insanity at asylums. By the time he made his autopsy of Villella in 1870—or was it 1871?—he had more than an “idea.” It was a “revelation.” On that cold, gray November morning, cutting open the base of the neck to expose the skull where it is attached to the spine:

> I seemed to see all of a sudden lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky, the problem of the nature of the criminal—the atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primate humanity and the inferior animals.
>
> (Lombroso, 1911, pp. xxiv–xxv)

As an explanation for violent criminality, atavism was not an original idea. Although

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Lombroso has been remembered for it, he was not the only person to present it, nor even the first (Davie, 2005). It had occurred to the English barrister Luke Owen Pike who got it into press in 1873–1876 with his twovolume *A History of Crime in England*. “The history of crime,” Pike wrote, “taken in connexion with the history of criminal law, is a history of the everincreasing restraint placed upon savage impulses, and the everincreasing encouragement to the wider play of sympathy.” While inherited tendency was not the only source of criminal motivation, it had to be considered when accounting for the antecedents of criminality. The origin of criminal acts, against the person and also against property, was found, not in the growth of towns and development of civilization, but in the “propensities of the savage, which had been handed down from generation to generation.” It was, Pike thought, a simple and direct relationship: “the more violent the robbery, the more is the past to blame for it” (1876, p. 510).

The significance of Lombroso’s flash of insight at the sight of Villella’s skull—if that is what it was—had less to do with any breakthrough concerning criminality, but with what Garland (2002) characterizes as the “Lombrosian project.” Unlike others who theorized about atavism as a source of behavior, Lombroso promoted criminal anthropology as a specialist science of the criminal (Garland, 2002, p. 25). With the assistance of family and colleagues, he produced some 30 books and hundreds of articles. Many became available in English, German, and French. Few of Lombroso’s contemporaries—even those whom he regarded as friends—actually believed that Villella’s skull offered scientific proof of the biological origins of criminal behavior. Lombroso’s mistakes are easy to spot not only because he produced his material quickly, but also because his methods do not work and his conclusions do not adhere to a coherent argument. His writings display contradictions, inconsistencies, and mistakes (Gatti & Verde, 2012).

Lombroso made frequent references to literature in his writing and his name appears in literature alongside such characters as Count Dracula, Sherlock Holmes, and Inspector Maigret. These references built Lombroso’s celebrity, often at the expense of his credibility. Georges Darien’s *Le Voleur* [The Thief] (1898) tells the story of Georges Randal, who, when cheated out of his inheritance by a dishonest uncle, decides to become an international criminal. In one scene, Randal meets a prominent criminologist who tells him *à la* Lombroso about the criminal mind and physiognomy. Randal impresses the criminologist with his own theory and receives an invitation to contribute to a new journal, *La revue pénitentiaire*. He accepts, and submits an article entitled “The Influence of Tunnels on Public Morals,” in which he argues that the character of citizens in various European countries follows from the number of tunnels on national railway lines. Darien’s tale laughs at criminologists in general when he writes that the article wins universal praise from the journal’s readership. But the bigger laugh occurs at Lombroso’s expense because the criminologist meets Randal, accepts his theory, and invites him to publish it, without ever recognizing from the physical and psychological signs that he is a professional thief (Bell, 2005, p. 18).

Lombroso expressed his ideas in dramatic emotional language characteristic of Italian opera (Gibson, 2013; Rock, 2007). When translated into English and separated from Italian style, Lombroso’s ideas are as believable as the plot of an opera. Translations of his work, such as

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Crime: Its Causes and Remedies (1911) can be compared to an English summary of Puccini's *La Bohème* (1896); it is possible to name the characters and describe their actions, but it is not really possible to match the sights and sounds of the Italian stage production. Lombroso attracted readers because he delivered monstrous characters with a scientific provenance and framed his empirical evidence for this science in narratives. Not only was such material inspired by opera, it became opera. Hiller (2013) observes that following Lombroso's rise to prominence, the Italian musical theater changed from costume dramas, noble sentiments, and Romanticism, to unsavory themes afforded by criminal anthropology. He notes several examples of operas built around crimes of passion, degenerate prostitutes, the low life found in cities, and "Oriental" characters (Hiller, 2013, p. 243).

No one who read Lombroso's work, or heard him speak, took very long to realize that his simplistic data, naïve comparisons, and sweeping conclusions contained mistakes. But his celebrity did not really depend on his science. He crossed from being a researcher in science to a character in literature, and it was this wider literary reputation that made him an obvious target for anyone who wanted to do serious criminology. To make criminology legitimate, it was necessary to dispense with Lombroso. But as so many of his opponents discovered to their frustration, Lombroso proved impossible to kill. Critics shot his work full of holes, but his reputation continued to spread.

The Positive School

Lombroso made his first reference to positivism, Gibson and Rafter (Lombroso, 2006) point out, in *L'uomo delinquente* in a passage about criminals and religion. He denied that positivism, despite its opposition to religion, encouraged criminal behavior. As he develops later on, positivism held that even if criminals lacked free will, they needed to be punished to assure "social defense" (Lombroso, 2006, p. 378). Gibson and Rafter explain that positivism is associated with the emergence of the social sciences in the late 19th century, and that Lombroso accepted this approach enthusiastically. His naïve positivism maintained that facts existed independent of their creator, and supported observations about them that compared to laws in the physical world (Lombroso, 2006, p. 407).

Within the Italian context, Lombroso contributed to a generation of reformers who identified in some way as "positivists." The *positivisti* expressed philosophical materialism and strident anticlericalism. Many came from medicine, physicians eager to apply scientific solutions to social problems. They campaigned to improve the diet, hygiene, and education of peasants and sought to refute the superstitions responsible for vendettas, wifebeating, and *omerta* (distrust of government) (Grew, 2000, pp. 230–231). These positivist reformers were linked to wider networks of cosmopolitan intellectuals outside Italy. Positivists generally had privileged status in their countries, knowledge of several languages, and had the resources for libraries and to travel. They came from the liberal portion of uppermiddleclass intellectuals, who had the expectation of influencing government policies, and initiating progressive reforms in health, education, and law. Their designs for remaking society tended to rely on technology, and many were drawn to the pseudoscientific character of Marx and socialism (Rodriguez, 2004, p.

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392).

In criminology, Lombroso led “the Positive School.” As Ferri explained, it emerged with the second edition of *L’uomo deliquente* (1878), Ferri’s *La Teorica dell’imputabilità e la negazione del libero arbitrio* (1878) [The Theory of Imputableness and Negation of Free Will], and Garofalo’s *Di un criterio positive della penalità* (1880) [From a Positive Criterion of Penalty]. Lombroso saw himself as the leader of the school, and by 1884, claimed that his ideas had developed into a “new school of thought” that had spread from Italy to Germany, Russia, France, Belgium, Hungary, and England. Scholars in these countries “filled the lacunae of my original conception and have developed legal applications for my ideas” (Lombroso, 2006, p. 162). A number of Italians—Ferri and Garofalo, along with Laschi, Sergi, and Marro—did not deny association with Lombroso. But many of the scholars Lombroso counted as colleagues refused to accept his “fundamental ideas.” The refusal of Alexandre Lacassagne, Gabriel Tarde, and Paul Topinard to be identified as members of *La scuola Lombrosiana* led to their being represented as members of a rival school. In 1893, O.F. Hershey wrote a pair of articles in the *Criminal Law Magazine* in which he explained the theories of Lombroso and the Italians (Hershey, 1893a), along with its rival, the “socalled French School” of Léonce Manouvrier, Lacassagne, and Tarde in 1893 (Hershey, 1893b). References to rival Italian and French Schools within criminology begin in descriptions of the Congresses.

Cultural historian Robert Nye (1976; 1984) did much to reify the claims to rival schools within his account of French criminology. Nye proposed that the French School of social milieu defeated the Italian School of the criminal body. His work fits in with the framework we have developed for theoretical criminology: to offer portraits of discrete “schools” in competition with each other, and “movements,” one replacing another in the course of intellectual struggle. But the idea of an Italian School concerned with the body and a French School focused on social milieu does not really hold up to historical scrutiny. Ferri insisted that the *La scuola positiva* was never really a school, especially in the sense in which it was characterized vis àvis the French. The Italians had incorporated the social environment from the beginning. By 1880, Ferri had already published his studies of criminals in France in which he outlined three orders of explanation: anthropological, physical, and social. He emphasized the social factors. Further, Italian socialists—Turati, Colajanni, and Battaglia—published a series of pamphlets in 1882–1884 arguing that crime was an exclusively social phenomenon (Zimmern, 1898, p. 384). At the Geneva Congress of Criminal Anthropology, a resolution was passed to defeat claims that there was a French School. The congress resolved that crime was a phenomenon with biological *and* social origins. This was the “final conclusion” of the Italian School, which had proclaimed it from the beginning of its existence (Zimmern, 1898, p. 384).

In marshalling their opposition, Lombroso’s critics made him into more of a coherent and substantive force than he really was. There is no better example than the British response. Major Arthur Griffiths objected to Lombroso’s views of crime. He published an intense critique of Lombroso’s conception of the female criminal. When Lombroso presented the female criminal as having ample, coarse, black hair, he had misrepresented a category of Italian women as a universal criminal type. Such a description could not possibly describe all women in prison across Europe. The traits Lombroso said characterized the “born criminal”

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were also found among the "occasional criminal." Lombroso could not distinguish one from the other using his own anthropometric method (Griffiths, 1895). Nevertheless, Griffiths thought Lombroso merited further study. Following his return from the Geneva Congress, he decided it was time for the English to weigh in. "It might be productive of good," he wrote in his report, "to make some medical experiments … and to collect data on which a decisive opinion as to the value of theories put forward" could be made (1896, p. 12).

About this time, Charles Goring took over. Goring, a medical officer attached to various English prisons, completed his medical degree in 1903. With the assistance of other prison medical officers, he recorded numerous anthropometric and psychological measurements of some 3,000 prisoners. He also took the measurements of university students, hospital residents, and officers with the Royal Engineers. As the scale of the work mushroomed, he contacted Karl Pearson for advice on preparing tables, and after secondment to Pearson's laboratory at University College London, completed his report in 1913. His systematic and comprehensive study had exposed Lombroso's "scientific" research as a fraud (Goring, 1919, pp. 20–25). Lombroso had founded criminology as a "superstitious study" derived from preconceived notions of criminal behavior. To prove that "Lombroso's doctrine" amounted to nothing more than "superstition," Goring compared his prisoner statistics with skulls unearthed in 1893 at Whitechapel. He found none of the "extraordinary number of anomalies" that Lombroso claimed to have observed. By introducing historical persons, such as that of Charlotte Corday, Lombroso had made criminal anthropology into an "impossible science." The Italian professor routinely confused "technical criminals," i.e., those who happened to be in prison, with "anthropological" or "real" criminals who existed solely in his imagination (Goring, 1919, pp. 84–85).

It was always going to be the case that a study commissioned by the Home Office dedicated to Lombroso would attract attention. Goring had submitted his report two years after the American Institute of Criminal Law and Criminology released Henry P. Horton's English abridgement of Lombroso's work, *Crime: Its Causes and Remedies* (1911). John H. Wigmore, Dean of Law at Northwestern University, who founded the institute, became one of the leading forces for the diffusion of Lombroso's work in the USA. He recalled that in 1909, the year of Lombroso's death, "we knew and cared nothing for criminology—the very name was unknown." From 1910 to 1917, the institute produced the 'modern criminal science series'—English translations of European works of criminal anthropology and these books were "eaten up by all groups of persons concerned with crime repression" (Millar, 1955, p. 8). The legend of Goring having produced the definitive refutation of Italian criminal anthropology began early. The *New York Times* (1913) offered a lengthy description of Goring's report under the headline "'THERE IS NO CRIMINAL TYPE,' SAYS PRISON EXPERT."

Piers Beirne (1993) rightly points out that Goring's refutation of Lombrosianism should be regarded as a failure; most of Goring's points in favor of environmental influences over bodily characteristics had already been made in the late 19th century by Alexandre Lacassagne, and Goring challenged aspects of atavistic theory that Lombroso himself had abandoned years before (Beirne, 1993, pp. 211–212). In other words, Goring had tried to destroy a school of thought that, like the criminal type, never really existed.

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Lombroso’s Other Theories

Lombroso has been regarded as the founder of biological determinism in criminology (Gibson, 2002; Rafter, 1997). Critics of biosocial criminology can see a chain of thought from criminal anthropology to criminal biology and eugenics to explanations featuring genetics. It is a claim that the advocates of biosocial criminology firmly deny. Biosocial criminologists, who are committed to studying the criminal body, distance themselves from Lombroso (Ellis & Walsh, 1997; Walsh & Beaver, 2009; Wright & Cullen, 2012). Lee Ellis and Anthony Walsh declare that recent work research in genetics, evolutionary theory, and criminal behavior has “gone far beyond Lombroso” and bears “only a faint resemblance” to his work (Ellis & Walsh, 1997, pp. 231, 255). Ellis and Walsh are right to deny Lombroso a central place as founder of biological criminology in the sense that there was more than one Lombroso.

Although Lombroso persisted in his claim to have discovered a criminal type of human being, he also produced theories inconsistent with atavistic criminality. His work on anarchists departed significantly from his research on atavism, and it led to the study of “political crime” within criminology. Havelock Ellis added a discussion of political assassination to the fourth edition of *The Criminal* (1910). Arthur MacDonald, who wrote one of the first American textbooks of criminology, published an article on anarchist assassins (MacDonald, 1911). Willem Bonger included a chapter, much of it a critique of Lombroso and Laschi, in his work on criminology (Bonger, 1916). Ricardo Campos and Rafael Huertas (2013) explain that Lombroso had enthusiasts in Spain, such as Rafael Salillas—“the little Spanish Lombroso.” It was Lombroso’s work on anarchists that had the greatest social impact (Campos & Salillas, 2013, pp. 317–318).

The 1870s and the 1880s brought a wave of anarchist violence across Europe and the United States, and by the 1890s and 1900s had brought assassinations of heads of state. There were bomb blasts; plots and rumors of plots; assassinations using knives, guns, and bombs. Anarchist criminals detonated bombs in cafés and railway stations, in theaters and public buildings; they targeted police, judges, and other authorities. Assassins murdered, under the banner of anarchism, Sadie Carnot, President of the French Republic in 1894, King Umberto I of Italy in 1900, and US President William McKinley in 1901. Italians came out badly. One contemporary observer calculated that at least a third of 150 political assassinations that had taken place across Europe and the United States had been carried out by Italians (Fiamingo, 1900, p. 234). In the United States, the 1890 murder of the New Orleans police chief by Italians led to the association of Italianness with violent criminality. Then, in 1900, an Italian American, Gaetano Bresci, traveled to Italy to murder King Umberto I.

In the 1880s, Lombroso began a study with Rodolfo Laschi, a lawyer in Verona, of anarchist criminals. From the 1860s, anarchists or “internationalists,” became visible in southern Italy where Russian revolutionary Mikhail Bakunin attracted a number of followers. In the 1870s, demonstrations took place in Tuscany, Romagna, and Naples, and anarchists attempted to convert these to anarchist movements. In Florence and Pisa, anarchists tossed bombs into crowded streets, and in 1878, Passanante attempted to murder King Umberto I. Lombroso and Laschi presented their findings at the Rome Congress of Criminal Anthropology in 1885. They

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made another presentation at the Second Congress, held at the Palais du Trocadéro in Paris in 1889. These culminated in a book, *Il delitto politico e la rivoluzione* (1890) [Political Crimes and Revolution]. A French translation appeared that same year, and a German translation in 1891. No English translation was made, which explains in part why this aspect of Lombroso's work has been neglected.

Lombroso had a theory, extensive research, and a message for politicians. He urged the government to avoid the execution of assassins, which he argued, would only make them martyrs and serve to promote their cause. Lombroso produced his work on anarchist criminality during a period of rule in Italy of Francesco Crispi, who served as prime minister during 1887–1891 and 1894–1896. Crispi achieved his popularity through an aggressive foreign policy in which he sought to expand control into the Mediterranean. He sought to establish Italy as a great imperialist nation and began a program of rearmament. He pursued an alliance with Germany, which Lombroso's associate, Helen Zimmern, was keen to prevent. In 1894, he introduced anarchist/socialist laws modeled on those introduced by Bismarck in Germany (Ystehede, 2008).

Lombroso's view of anarchist criminality weaves in some standard concepts, such as epilepsy and *mattoidism*. He also made use of the "usual suspects." He compares the physiognomy of Turin anarchists with Chicago anarchists using anthropometric measurements from photographs (Lombroso, 1890). But, he also managed some substantive analysis. Why, Lombroso asked, did Italy produce more anarchists than Sweden, England, and Switzerland? There were hysterical people and epileptics in all these countries. But, Lombroso reasoned, economic conditions did not compel them toward despair and misery. Along with this, Lombroso added lack of justice in the courts, and a political regime that diverted money from the poor into military pursuits. He added "excessive individualism" and "adoration of violence" that characterized the Latin races, but insisted the first cause to be addressed in tackling the anarchist problem was "excess of the capitalistic idea" (Lombroso, 1898).

Lombroso opposed the death penalty for anarchists because it would produce martyrs and strengthen the anarchist cause. "I am an extremist in my partisanship for the death penalty … but we have to do a very different thing here …" (1890, pp. 342–343). Richard Bach Jensen points out that had the Spanish government followed Lombroso's advice, there would have been far less bloodshed (Jensen, 2001). Lombroso said that within the ranks of political criminals, there was greater evil than found within the ordinary population, but it was capable of taking an altruistic turn. If properly directed, the energy that produced death and destruction could be channeled into service to humanity. Lombroso even opposed the death sentence for Luigi Luccheni, who, in 1898, had stabbed to death Empress Elizabeth of AustriaHungary with a rusty file. "The idea of conquering anarchy by killing anarchists is not valid," Lombroso declared. Because so many anarchists like Luccheni represented cases of mental instability, aggravated by personal and family histories of poverty, alcoholism, and misfortune, the execution of one would only be filled by another. Breaking up the large estates and improving conditions in agriculture was the policy that needed to be undertaken. If the government did not do this, the disease would engulf them. Execution of anarchists was an "imbecile idea" comparable to "putting down the doctors who propose remedies" (Lombroso, 1899, p. 207).

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Lombroso's ideas did not find a favorable reception among government authorities and practitioners of justice. G.M. Fiamingo criticized the Italian culture for the toleration, if not the glorification, of political crime. Lombroso and Laschi had contributed to this mistaken support for anarchist violence as they "raised this popular sympathy for political crime to the rank and dignity of a scientific theory" (Fiamingo, 1900, p. 234).

In fact, Lombroso found support among anarchist political circles. *The Commonweal*, an anarchistcommunist journal published by English anarchists, praised Lombroso. An article by John Murdoch denied the absence of government would unleash natural brutality and castigated social democrats and trade unions for conceding the necessity of government. The penal law, Murdoch said, was not a deterrent to crime. To support this, he drew on "modern science" and a "well known scientistprofessor Lombroso" who "fitly said that 'each society has the criminals it deserves'." The phrase, as quoted, seems more from Lacassagne, but Lombroso frequently used similar language, including the microbe analogy, in his writings on anarchists. Murdoch wrote that the statement was true of modern society; it was a fact that "threefourths of the socalled crime today is a direct outcome of the present organization of society." Murdoch went on to qualify Lombroso's expertise: "By the way, [Professor Lombroso] is no Anarchist, but a mere bourgeois scientist" (Murdoch, 1893).

The range of subjects on which Lombroso commented meant that he represented more than a criminologist preoccupied with the criminal's body. He wrote about anarchist violence and other topics. His audiences had their own reasons for citing him. His name could be used for multiple purposes. And even Lombroso the criminologist meant different things. To a wider readership who knew Lombroso through newspapers and novels, he became a composite of an emerging discipline, the most recognizable name among a generation of intellectuals who studied crime.

The Criminal Museum

David Garland and Jonathan Simon have emphasized the role of the prison in the "Lombrosian project." Garland argues that while prison authorities rejected Lombroso, they formulated an approach to crime out of which British criminology developed. The prison served as laboratory for the production of knowledge and an institutional base out of which the new field of criminology would emerge (Garland, 1985; 1988; 2002). Simon observes that Lombroso enjoyed particular success in the United States. Lawyers gave positivist science a warm reception, but it had particular resonance in prisons and asylums. The legacy of Lombroso was "linking the institutions of incarceration with scienceinfused cultural assumptions about dangerousness through the resources of an expansive administrative state" (Simon, 2006, p. 2172).

A failed science encouraged the success of prisons—"success" in the sense of justifying resources for this expansion of technology of state control. As Simon (2006) phrases it, the ghost of Lombroso continues to haunt American crime policy, which has been preoccupied with a conception of dangerousness, leading to mass incarceration and the continued practice

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of execution. Certainly the prison was Lombroso's laboratory. He made autopsies of cadavers, took anthropometric measures of prisoners, and interviewed criminals in confinement (Gibson, 2006; 2013). But the institution Lombroso himself had in mind for collecting and promoting the knowledge of criminal anthropology was not the prison, but the museum.

Lombroso started his collection of criminal artefacts with skulls obtained from the Piedmontese Army while he was a surgeon. He added to his collection working at prisons and asylums. Essentially, the skulls of inmates who died wound up in Lombroso's hands. He continued to add to the collection from skulls obtained from students and friends in Turin and Pavia, including skulls of brigands from the South of Italy. From the governor of Bombay, Lombroso acquired the skulls of "normal" and "criminal" Indians; from Professor Tarnovskaia in Russia, he got Russian and Tartar skulls. Lombroso confessed to the *New York Times* that his enthusiasm for bones led to criminal behavior in the form of grave robbing in the Piedmont (Lombroso, 1907). Although, as Ystehede (2016) points out, most of the bones likely came from the streets of Turin.

Lombroso revealed his collection to the public for the first time in 1884 as part of the anthropology exhibition at Turin's *Esposizione Generale Italiana*. The organizers framed it as a celebration of the results achieved by Italian unification, and Lombroso happily contributed the idea of using scientific theory to represent the modernization of government. Turin was going to host the inaugural Congress of Criminal Anthropology, but there was an outbreak of cholera (Montaldo, 2013, p. 100). When the Congress of Criminal Anthropology met in Rome a year later, Lombroso brought his collection. He filled the main hall of the Palazzo delle Belle Arti with the material culture of criminality: skulls arranged on display tables, body parts floating in alcoholfilled jars, faces revealed in photographs and death masks. The exhibit contained some 70 skulls of Italian criminals, an entire skeleton of a thief, and sections of skin with tattoos. He displayed aspects of the criminal body in 300 photographs, lifesized sketches, and handwriting samples (Starr, 2011, p. 127).

In 1892, Lombroso learned that the DirectorGeneral of Prisons, BertramiScalia, had a collection of skeletons stored at Regina Coeli and was thinking of starting a museum, and it was just the thing Lombroso had in mind (Lombroso, 1910). In 1899, Lombroso was able to set up his Museum of Criminal Psychology at the University of Turin. It included a corridor of skeletons, including those of notorious brigands from Southern Italy. The largest room contained in the center a scale model of the Eastern State Penitentiary in Philadelphia, surrounded by portraits on the walls of criminals and epileptics. Lombroso displayed "criminal types" obtained from government authorities in Spain, Mexico, Portugal, Chile, and Australia. Underneath, he filled a glass case with daggers used by Camorra, complete with violent messages. Next to it, another glass case, with crucifixes of prisoners seeking redemption. Another collection was criminal ceramics—pottery pieces containing the messages of robbers or murderers. Other prisoners used clay to memorialize court scenes, or sketched scenes of shootouts with carabinieri. The most curious collection in the museum, Lombroso surmised, were those artefacts produced by those with "religious mania," which he suggested overlapped with homicidal mania (Lombroso, 1907).

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There were other crime museums—Berlin, Graz, Hamburg, Prague, and London—but Lombroso's museum remained the oldest and largest. In size and contents, Lacassagne's museum in his Institute of Legal Medicine at the University of Lyons was the only rival. Lacassagne offered colorcoded maps showing levels of crime across France, arranged to show correlations with season, alcohol consumption, and the price of bread. He displayed paper swatches with some 2,000 tattoo designs. He had display cases with bone fractures typical in infanticide cases, and skull fractures caused by knives, hammers, and bullets. One cabinet contained cartridges from firearms, another vials of poisons, another fabrics stained with blood and other body fluids. He created exhibits from photographs of criminal faces arranged according to type of offences, and various body organs with wounds alongside the weapons that created them (Starr, 2011, p. 43). Lacassange organized a museum of crime; Lombroso a museum of criminal anthropology. The Lombroso Museum was intended to display the natural history of the "criminal man."

It is unlikely the public understood what Lombroso wanted to say. His daughter, Gina Lombroso Ferrero, proclaimed the first Congress of Criminal Anthropology in Rome a tremendous success. More than 17,000 visitors had paid to see the exhibition, which "powerfully showed … the alliance of the theory with the facts" (quoted in Montaldo, 2013, p. 100). Lombroso himself had his doubts. He believed that the displays of criminal anthropology had entertained the public, but could be understood only by those who knew the theory of criminal atavism. For those unable to "read" the skulls, brains, and death masks, the exhibits conveyed as much meaning as ancient Assyrian inscription (Montaldo, 2013, p. 101).

Following the death of Lombroso in 1909, Mario Carrara, his soninlaw, took over directorship of the museum. Carrara served as a Professor of Forensic Medicine at the University of Turin until 1932 when he was expelled from the university for refusing to pledge allegiance to the fascist regime. Four years later, the government abolished professorships of criminal anthropology at all universities in Italy. Although the Lombroso and Carrara families managed to preserve the collections, the museum largely disappeared from public view until the 1990s when a reorganization of the university departments prompted the cataloging of the exhibits (Montaldo, 2013).

The reopening in 2009 of the Lombroso Museum at the University of Turin renewed questions about its purpose. Protestors insisted the museum embodied Northern Italy's oppression of the South, a perennial theme in Italian politics. In 2012, a judge ordered the museum to hand over one of its prized possessions, the skull of Villella, to the mayor of Motta Santa Calabria, for burial at the site where he was said to have been born. The University of Turin appealed the court order. The Director of the museum, Silvano Montaldo, argued that the skull is protected under Italian Cultural Heritage law as an important object for the history of science. "It is difficult to consider Villella's skull scientifically irrelevant and thus unworthy of display in a museum," Montaldo has explained, "That is, unless one believes that science must destroy the traces of its past" (quoted in Ystehede, 2016).

Regener (2003) says that the positivist theory of crime, and specifically the biological scientific view, established a coherent rationale for the collection and imbued the individual

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items on display with meaning. Drawing on Pick (1989), she discusses the usefulness of the collection in defining a unified nation. The function of the museum was to express the contemporary vision of "making Italy"; to express symbolically the meaning of being Italian by cataloging blemishes on the social body that signaled abnormality and otherness (Regener, 2003, p. 4). She suggests that after Lombroso's death, the collection disintegrated into a "confusing mixture" of artefacts documenting various outsiders. This view, however, assigns too much order, too much clarity to a mind that did not display such order or clarity of thought in any other way. Lombroso was a disorganized, absentminded individual, who relied on others to organize his life. The strange collection of objects may reveal only Lombroso's confused and contradictory thought, the jumble of items he accumulated in the course of his career.

Alejandra Bronfman (2012) emphasizes that the diverse items in the Museum of Legal Medicine at the University of Havana fit awkwardly together. There is no unifying logic. Some, such as tattooed mulatto skin, illustrate the efforts of criminological science to grasp criminality. Others, such as a flying donkey built from bread crumbs by a prisoner, suggest a chamberofhorrors approach intended to reveal the tangible products of the criminal mind. Bronfman observes that the bewildering assortment of items—grotesque, banal, and sinister—reveal no hidden logic of state power, but a space of the illogical, places where coherence falls apart. The material culture of criminality is not displayed with a clear narrative, whether the affirmation of national authority or the triumph of criminological science, but the opposite; the failure to contain, the inability to categorize and catalog.

Lombroso wanted his museum to document his great scientific discovery concerning the origins of criminality. While the eccentric collection of materials had some entertainment value, and promoted the concept of criminology as a scientific study, it failed to provide convincing, tangible evidence for the existence of the criminal type in evolutionary development that Lombroso had hoped it would. The criminal museum has not become as integrated into crime policy as the prison, although the recent surge in "dark tourism" raises new questions about its role in the culture of crime control.

Conclusion

How does someone with the most laughable ideas about crime in print initiate a worldwide movement for the study of criminology? There is a simple answer: although today, given modern understanding, we find his ideas laughable, "back then" people took him seriously. But this answer is not quite accurate, because many people in the 19th century had the same reaction to Lombroso as people do today. Lawyers, doctors, police, and other professionals of Lombroso's era thought he was full of nonsense.

To find the answer, we need to set aside the images of what Lombroso became. Rather than start with current ideas of scientific criminology, biological positivism, and so on, and look back to their origins in criminal anthropology in the 19th century, we need to search for the historical Lombroso. We need to get a sense of what he thought he was doing at the time, and

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how this relates to the way in which his work was interpreted and used by others. The point of the exercise is not to excuse Lombroso for his imperialism, racism, or sexism, nor to suggest that, despite his eccentric ideas and curious research, he managed to argue for sensible policies. Rather, the point is grasp how such an unreliable witness managed to convince so many people that crime could be studied in a serious way. The fact that Lombroso has few redeeming qualities makes it that much more important to understand his role in the founding of criminology.

There are several answers. Lombroso proposed his theory of atavistic criminality at a moment when concepts of historical science based on "deep time" gained prominence. Lombroso did not really seek experimental science, but a narrative approach that operated in the realm of plausibility rather than reality. It was not so much his admirers who made his reputation, but critics who, in devoting attention to his proposals, established his credentials as the founder of a new science. While we remember Lombroso for the "born criminal," in his day, he was known for many theories, including explanations of political crime and anarchist violence. There were multiple Lombrosos; each had something to say to various audiences who found something of use to their cause. Lombroso also appealed to the public. He became a literary character. His articles appeared in multiple languages; and his museum provided an imaginative and evocative approach to crime.

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