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BETWEEN CHARCOT AND BERNHEIM: THE DEBATE ON HYPNOTISM IN  
*FIN-DE-SIÈCLE* ITALY

by

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In the late 1870s, a small group of Italian psychiatrists became interested in hypnotism in the wake of the studies conducted by the French neurologist Jean-Martin Charcot. Eager to engage in hypnotic research, these physicians referred to the scientific authority of French and German scientists in order to overcome the scepticism of the Italian medical community and establish hypnotism as a research subject based on Charcot's neuropathological model. In the following years, French studies on hypnotism continued to exert a strong influence in Italy. In the mid 1880s, studies on hypnotic suggestion by the Salpêtrière and Nancy Schools of hypnotism gave further impetus to research and therapeutic experimentation and inspired the emergence of an interpretative framework that combined theories by both hypnotic schools. By the end of the decade, however, uncertainties had arisen around both hypnotic theory and the therapeutic use of hypnotism. These uncertainties, which were linked to the crisis of the neuropathological paradigm that had to a large extent framed the understanding of hypnotism in Italy and the theoretical disagreements among the psychiatrists engaged in hypnotic research, ultimately led to a decline in interest in hypnotism in Italy.

**Keywords: hypnosis; hypnotic suggestion; Italy; magnetism; psychiatry**

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INTRODUCTION

In the interest of science one should not deny a priori everything concerning animal magnetism, as many have done and still do . . . Our duty is to experiment with rigorous method and then judge . . .<sup>1</sup>

So wrote the Italian psychiatrist Giuseppe Seppilli in 1881, in response to the widespread scepticism of the Italian medical community towards the study of hypnotism. Like other positivist psychiatrists such as Augusto Tamburini, Gabriele Buccola,<sup>2</sup> Enrico Morselli and Cesare Lombroso, Seppilli became interested in hypnotism in the wake of the investigations conducted at the Salpêtrière Hospital by the French neurologist Jean-Martin

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Charcot on hysteria and hypnosis.<sup>3</sup> Eager to engage in the emerging transnational field of hypnotic research, Seppilli and Tamburini appealed to the scientific authority of French and German studies to demonstrate the respectability acquired by research on magnetism, demarcate the terrain of the new ‘scientific’ magnetism, and establish hypnotism as an experimental research field based on the neuropathological model established by Charcot. In the following years, French studies on hypnotism continued to have a strong influence on the Italian debate. In the mid 1880s, studies on hypnotic suggestion by the Salpêtrière and Nancy Schools of hypnotism gave further impulses to research and therapeutic experimentation and inspired the emergence of an interpretative framework that combined theories by both schools. At the end of the 1880s, the escalation of the controversy on the nature of hypnotic phenomena that opposed the Salpêtrière School to the Nancy School coincided with a decline of the Italian debate on hypnotism. The number of scientific publications, which in previous years had steadily increased, decreased sharply, and by 1890 the interest in hypnotism ‘proper’ seemed to have withered away.<sup>4</sup>

The influence of French studies on the Italian debate on hypnotism has been acknowledged by all the authors who have dealt with the history of hypnotism in Italy, and has been discussed especially in relation to the theoretical trajectories of prominent psychiatrists such as Lombroso and Morselli.<sup>5</sup> So far, however, the effects of transnational theories and practices of hypnotism on the emergence and the course of the Italian debate have not been the object of a systematic discussion. In order to address this gap in the scholarship, this paper aims to retrace the influence of the French debate in Italy during the 1880s and discuss how it combined with the professional and cultural Italian context to legitimize hypnotic studies, produce specific theoretical understandings and practices of hypnotism, and shape perceptions of successful and unsuccessful therapeutic use of the technique.

#### HYPNOSIS IN THE EARLY 1880S

At the end of the 1870s, a small group of Italian positivist psychiatrists became interested in hypnosis in the wake of Charcot’s investigations on hypnosis and hysteria.<sup>6</sup> In 1881, Augusto Tamburini<sup>7</sup> and his colleague Giuseppe Seppilli,<sup>8</sup> at the time both engaged in research on cerebral localization, started their first experimental study on hypnotism at the San Lazzaro asylum in Reggio Emilia. An institution that had been modernized during the 1870s, the Reggio Asylum was by then the psychiatric clinic of the University of Modena and the main training and research centre of post-unitary Italian psychiatry.<sup>9</sup>

Tamburini and Seppilli had, in fact, already started experimenting with hypnosis a few years earlier, after hearing about Charcot’s investigations by word of mouth.<sup>10</sup> They had, however, interrupted their study to avoid being misled by their hysterical subjects and associated with practices of animal magnetism, which, as they wrote, were known to be exploited ‘by all sorts of charlatans and deluded people’.<sup>11</sup> Embraced only by a small minority of physicians in the pre-unitary Italian States,<sup>12</sup> magnetism had lost scientific credibility in the increasingly materialist, positivist and evolutionist medical culture of the post-unitary decades.<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in the context of the difficult process of social and cultural unification of the country, the issue of magnetism had distinct political undertones. In late nineteenth-century Italy, psychiatrists were engaged in programmes of social hygiene and moral education of the population based on the positivist assumption that ‘scientific’ rational knowledge would promote social and civil progress.<sup>14</sup> From this

perspective, magnetism, as well as occultism and popular religious beliefs, was seen as a sign of the backwardness of the country, a backwardness that scientific knowledge was meant to eradicate.<sup>15</sup> Contemporaneous sources indicate that physicians who believed in the therapeutic virtues of magnetism felt obliged to conceal their practice in order not to compromise their careers.<sup>16</sup>

Eager to engage in the emerging transnational research on hypnotism, Tamburini and Seppilli went to great lengths to demonstrate the scientific respectability that the study of magnetism was acquiring abroad, to demarcate the boundaries of scientific magnetism and to establish hypnotism as an experimental research subject. Between 1880 and 1882, Seppilli tirelessly reviewed new French and German studies on the ‘so-called’ animal magnetism in the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria (Journal of Experimental Phreniatry)* edited by Tamburini.<sup>17</sup> In his first review in this journal of new studies on animal magnetism, Seppilli rhetorically framed the history of magnetism from Mesmer to his own time according to Comte’s law of three stages of knowledge.<sup>18</sup> He argued that the claim by the late eighteenth-century German physician Franz Anton Mesmer that animal magnetism was a universal panacea<sup>19</sup> was followed by a period in which magnetizers ‘exaggerated pretensions, mystical practices, and fantastic theories’ that had brought magnetism into scientific disrepute.<sup>20</sup>

Magnetism had finally reached its ‘scientific stage’ in the late 1870s, when German and French scientists had ‘rediscovered’ magnetic phenomena and disentangled them from the ludicrous theories of magnetizers by studying them with ‘most rigorous research methods’.<sup>21</sup> While magnetism or hypnotism (Seppilli initially used the terms as synonyms)<sup>22</sup> had become a relevant research field for the study of the nervous system, this did not imply that all phenomena vaunted by the magnetic tradition qualified as positive ‘facts’. In this regard, a discussion of the new French and German studies provided a guide to establish which phenomena had to be included in hypnotic research and which were not worthy of scientific attention. Aiming to demarcate the terrain of scientific hypnotism, in his reviews Seppilli mainly focused on somatic phenomena and on the physiological and anatomical hypotheses that could plausibly account for them.<sup>23</sup> As to marvellous occurrences such as intuitive and prophetic abilities of magnetized people, he argued that they were misinterpretations of physiological processes induced by hypnosis. Following the predominant physiological theory, he contended that the alterations produced by hypnosis stimulated the emergence of unconscious ideas and preoccupations that were already present in the mind of an individual. For phenomena that looked too far-fetched for a physiological interpretation, such as mental suggestion, he diplomatically suspended judgement, arguing that there was no solid evidence for their existence. His recommendation ‘to deal first with simpler phenomena and then with more complex ones’ conveyed the message that uncanny phenomena of the magnetic tradition should be excluded from hypnotic research.<sup>24</sup>

In presenting their first study to the Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere (Royal Lombard Institute of Sciences and Letters), Tamburini and Seppilli referred to the authoritative studies by Charcot, Paul Richer, Rudolf Heidenhain, Charles Richet and others to show that their own research was firmly located in neurophysiology.<sup>25</sup> They also indicated their theoretical allegiance to the Parisian School.<sup>26</sup> Their first study, for example, focused on sensory, motor, circulatory and respiratory phenomena induced by hypnosis, and their modification by ‘aesthesiogens’ (metals, magnets and electricity).<sup>27</sup> Conceived according to the strict standards of experimental methodology set by the positivist French physiologist Claude Bernard, Tamburini and Seppilli’s study was

intended as a contribution to the ongoing studies of the Salpêtrière Hospital.<sup>28</sup> In a similar vein, their second experimental study, conducted shortly after Charcot's description of the three stages of hypnosis (catalepsy, lethargy and somnambulism), investigated the physiological modifications that occurred during these three phases.<sup>29</sup> The two studies, published as a book in 1882, confirmed most observations by Charcot and his school.<sup>30</sup>

In the same year, Cesare Lombroso, professor of hygiene and legal medicine in Turin and renowned founder of the Italian school of positivist criminology,<sup>31</sup> also made his entry into the study of hypnotic phenomena with an article in the *Archivio di Psichiatria, Scienze Penali e Antropologia Criminale*.<sup>32</sup> His observations on the modifications of sensibility caused by metals in two hysterical adolescents and on the peculiar property of magnets to provoke and inhibit hypnosis reflected the conceptual continuity between his long-standing interest in the magnetic sensitivity of hysterical patients<sup>33</sup> and French studies on metalloscopy.<sup>34</sup> In the same article, Lombroso reported that he had observed the phenomena of 'transposition of the senses' and clairvoyance in one of his two patients, a 14-year-old girl prone to hysterical convulsions. When the girl was in a somnambulist (i.e. hypnotic) state, her senses 'wandered' across her body: she seemed able, for instance, to distinguish objects with the tip of her nose, read with the left ear and smell with her chin.

Although, as Lombroso wrote, the singular phenomenon of the transposition of senses was initially repellent to his scientific mind, his repeated observations and experiments left little doubt as to its reality. Furthermore, he argued, the phenomenon was already known, as it had been described by physicians in the first half of the nineteenth century. If contemporary scientists did not take the phenomenon into account, or dismissed it as an illusion, this was only because of their 'tendency . . . to admit only facts that could be scientifically explained'.<sup>35</sup> He contended that this tendency was in principle praiseworthy, but it narrowed the hypnotic research field and the latitude of scientific interpretation. The consequence was that a genuine phenomenon such as, for instance, the ability of somnambulists to read with closed eyes, was overlooked by scientists or (wrongly) interpreted as enhanced tactile sensibility in order to make it explicable on the basis of academic physiology. Lombroso argued that the phenomenon could instead be interpreted as a transposition of the sense of sight, on the basis of analogy with the newly discovered phenomenon of 'hypnotic transfer'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, since, according to Darwin, the sense of sight was a specialization of the sense of touch, this transposition could also be explained in atavistic terms as the re-emergence of ancestral characteristics, i.e. of undifferentiated functions of primitive nervous systems.<sup>37</sup>

As to phenomena of clairvoyance that he had observed in his young patient, Lombroso interpreted them as an enhanced cerebral activity during somnambulism – a hypothesis, he pointed out, which was backed by recent findings on 'cerebral hyperaemia' (i.e. augmentation of cerebral circulation) during hypnosis.<sup>38</sup> He stressed that excluding hypnotic phenomena from research because of their singularity was a myopic decision. After all, he pointed out, magnetism itself had been rejected by academics as 'unscientific' on the grounds of its singularity and despite the fact that magnetizers had observed and described magnetic phenomena for centuries. Lombroso concluded that the phenomena of transposition of the senses and clairvoyance were a demonstration that 'many of the old beliefs concerning hysteria and somnambulism that were considered false or absurd were instead true' and could be interpreted in materialistic and evolutionary terms as phenomena rooted in neuropathology.<sup>39</sup>

Lombroso's understanding of transposition of the senses and clairvoyance as 'singular facts' validated by vitalistic (and thus, according to positivist standards, 'unscientific')

medicine of the pre-unitary period and by popular opinion,<sup>40</sup> and his criticisms of orthodox positivist theories and methods, challenged the boundaries that Seppilli was trying to establish to demarcate scientific from ‘unscientific’ magnetism. Seppilli did not comment explicitly on Lombroso’s arguments, but the methodological warnings contained in his 1882 review of studies on hypnotic phenomena were addressed to Lombroso. Seppilli wrote:

We must never forget that...still many...do not believe in facts [that have been] exploited for a long time by charlatans... [B]efore reaching any conclusion we need to repeat our observations and experiences a great number of times and in well-determined conditions... If we do not want to thwart the efforts of those who, in recent years, have tried to put the study of animal magnetism in a positive light by making it the subject of serious scientific investigation, we must guard ourselves against falling into exaggerations and seeing and interpreting events through the prism of imagination.<sup>41</sup>

While Seppilli’s arguments were internal boundary work, his reference to medical scepticism towards hypnotic phenomena was not only a rhetorical move. A review of new studies on hypnotism by the psychiatrist Antigono Raggi showed that the number of Italian publications on hypnotism could literally be counted on one hand.<sup>42</sup> Along with the studies discussed above, Raggi mentioned an article on the transposition of the senses by the psychiatrist Lorenzo Ellero,<sup>43</sup> and a report by Achille De Giovanni, a prominent pathologist and professor at the University of Padua, who had used hypnosis to treat a few neuropathic patients.<sup>44</sup> If De Giovanni was the first to publish about the benefit of hypnotic therapy, there were also others, notably Antonio Tarchini Bonfanti and Enrico Morselli, who experimented with it.<sup>45</sup> It was common opinion, however, that the method might not be entirely safe for hysterical patients, and both De Giovanni and Morselli argued for a cautious use of it at the Fourth Congress of Italian Psychiatrists at Voghera in 1883.<sup>46</sup>

#### HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION

In the mid 1880s, research on and the practice of hypnosis received a new impulse from French studies on hypnotic suggestion. The reports by Auguste Voisin on his successful treatment of patients affected by acute mental illness at the Salpêtrière Hospital had a large resonance in Italy<sup>47</sup> and encouraged therapeutic experimentation within the asylum and the hospital.<sup>48</sup> In 1885, Lombroso and Castelli reported on their successful treatment of a young woman affected by *grande hystérie*, melancholy, agitation and delirious ideas.<sup>49</sup> In the same year, Francesco Vizioli, professor of psychiatry and legal medicine in Naples, reported on experiments with hysterical patients conducted by colleagues in Livorno and Naples that seemed to demonstrate the effectiveness of hypnotic suggestion in the treatment of a range of conditions, from insomnia and hypochondria to paralysis and persecution mania.<sup>50</sup> A well-known academic, Vizioli was part of a growing circle of physicians who, by the mid 1880s, were engaged in hypnotic research and practice in Naples.<sup>51</sup> While Charcot’s pathological model of hypnotism remained dominant – hypnotic suggestion therapy was practised uniquely with hysterical and neuropathic patients – psychiatrists started to include references to Bernheim’s work, *De la suggestion hypnotique dans l’état hypnotique et dans l’état de veille (On hypnotic suggestion in hypnotic and waking states, 1884)*.<sup>52</sup>

Beyond its therapeutic applications, hypnotic suggestion seemed to widen considerably the experimental research field, extending it to a study of psychic phenomena under controlled conditions. Seppilli significantly defined hypnotic suggestion as a cluster of different types of stimuli addressed to the senses through which the experimenter could provoke ‘an endless series of phenomena, from the simplest to the most complex ones, in every area of cerebral activity’ of an experimental subject.<sup>53</sup> In his review of new studies on suggestion (1885), along with a discussion of the work by Charcot and his school, Seppilli approvingly discussed Bernheim’s contribution on post-hypnotic suggestion and suggestion in the waking state. As to Bernheim’s theory on the role of suggestion in hypnosis, Seppilli did not entirely discard it, but argued that a hypnotic state seemed in most cases a precondition for the ‘genesis of suggestion’.<sup>54</sup>

The studies on post-hypnotic suggestion and the circulation of the theories by the Nancy School also revived the debate on the medico-legal implications of hypnosis. At the Eleventh Congress of the Italian Medical Association (1885), Vizioli presented his experiments on post-hypnotic suggestion with a hysterical man.<sup>55</sup> He respectfully acknowledged Charcot’s work on hypnotism, but in his discussion he combined theories of the Salpêtrière and Nancy Schools. He argued that his experimental subject had opposed no resistance to hypnotic suggestions that included theft, poisoning and even murder, despite the fact that he was a wealthy man of excellent morality and education. Taking a position close to that of the Nancy School, Vizioli concluded that, under hypnosis, even individuals with high moral standards could be prevailed upon by criminal suggestion.<sup>56</sup> Following the positivist school of criminology, Vizioli pointed out that individuals induced to commit criminal actions by post-hypnotic suggestion were in a condition comparable to that of alienated criminals and thus could not be considered legally responsible. This argument was further developed by the lawyer Giulio Campili, also close to Lombroso’s school, who based part of his discussion on Jules Liégeois, a lawyer close to the Nancy School.<sup>57</sup>

While the use of theories by the school of Nancy was functional to the arguments advanced by Vizioli and Campili to promote the medico-legal theory of the Italian positivist school in the emerging transnational debate on criminal hypnotic suggestion, it also reflected a trait that became characteristic of Italian debates on hypnotism during the mid 1880s, namely a combination of theories from the two opposed French schools of hypnotism.

Despite the widening of the theoretical and geographical map of hypnotic studies, Vizioli noted that a number of influential Italian physicians continued to deny the existence of hypnotism.<sup>58</sup> Ironically, it was especially because of a Belgian magnetizer that hypnotism would receive wider recognition in the Italian medical community.

#### DONATO IN ITALY

In the mid 1880s, theatrical shows based on magnetism were a popular form of entertainment. The celebrated couple Domenico and Emma Zanardelli, for instance, regularly attracted large audiences and benevolent press attention. In 1886, the programme of their show at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples included demonstrations of hypnotic and magnetic phenomena that culminated in the ‘ecstasy’ of the *somnambule*. In the second part of the programme, the magnetizer conducted experiments of ‘fascination and magnetization’ with voluntary members of the audience.<sup>59</sup> Some of these experiments were similar to those conducted by the Belgian magnetizer Donato (Alfred d’Hondt)

during his *tournée* in Italy in 1886. Yet, Donato's performances were immediately perceived as 'new' and 'different'.<sup>60</sup> As Gallini has suggested, this different perception was due, not to the actual content of the show, but to the different scenarios evoked by 'traditional' magnetic shows and by Donato's stage magnetism. Performers like the Zanardellis brought on stage the mysterious relation between the magnetizer and the *sommambule*, and their show retained connections with illusionism.<sup>61</sup> Donato, however, belonged to a new category of itinerant stage hypnotists who introduced their theatrical experiments in a way that replicated that of a scientific demonstration.<sup>62</sup> Using 'fascination', a self-devised technique based on visual fixation and suggestion, he selected the subjects responsive to his method among the members of the audience who volunteered, and induced them to accomplish a range of the bizarre actions in comic and dramatic scenes that surprised, amused and moved the audience.<sup>63</sup>

Donato's theatrical performances in Turin and Milan attracted large audiences, bringing hypnotism figuratively and literally to centre stage and monopolizing the attention of the press, which acted as a springboard for publicizing the magnetizer's feats.<sup>64</sup> Prominent positivist academics such as Enrico Morselli, professor of psychiatry at Turin,<sup>65</sup> and his assistant Eugenio Tanzi, Lombroso, and the psychiatrist Augusto Tebaldi attended Donato's show and were impressed by his method and mastery of hypnotic technique.<sup>66</sup> In an article in the major Turin newspaper *Gazzetta Piemontese*,<sup>67</sup> Morselli portrayed the Belgian magnetizer as a very skilled and experienced hypnotist whose fascination method was a relevant and inspiring contribution to hypnotic technique. In his overview of the physiological processes underpinning phenomena of hypnotism and fascination, Morselli pointed to the role played by suggestion in inducing hypnosis and described his own experience of 'Donatic fascination'.<sup>68</sup>

While Morselli was the only physician who acknowledged the role played by stage magnetism in the emergence of hypnotic studies and who even described his private seances with Donato, he was not the only one to express public appreciation for the magnetizer's fascination method.<sup>69</sup> However, other psychiatrists such as Lombroso, Tebaldi and Eduardo Gonzales developed an ambivalent attitude towards the magnetizer. On the one hand, they were impressed by his skills and eager to learn his effective hypnotic technique. On the other hand, they felt threatened by the fact that Donato demonstrated that the mastery of hypnotic practice had little to do with holding a medical degree.<sup>70</sup>

Barely a month after Donato's performances began in Italy, Lombroso, Tebaldi and Gonzales started an aggressive campaign against him in the pages of the *Corriere della Sera*, the major newspaper in Milan. They argued that Donato's incautious experiments endangered the physical and mental health of the more vulnerable groups of the population (the adolescent, the nervous, the impressionable), warned the public about the disproportionately high risk of physical and moral damage that the spreading of hypnotic practices among lay people might produce, and called for the public health authorities to intervene.<sup>71</sup> The Catholic press echoed and amplified the concerns on the moral dangers related to the spreading of lay hypnotism, giving further support to the campaign against Donato.<sup>72</sup>

The appeal launched by the three influential psychiatrists to the public health authority and the behind-the-scenes mobilization of Lombroso's school of criminology had an immediate result. The Provincial Health Council recommended the banning of public performances by Donato and other magnetizers in Milan and asked the government to intervene to regulate stage hypnotism. Within days, a commission appointed by the Italian Society of Hygiene,<sup>73</sup> which included eminent psychiatrists, issued a report that defined hypnotism as 'an integral part of medical research and therapy of neuropathies' and

indicated the hospital as the ‘natural site of hypnotic experiments’. Drawing on alarmist arguments similar to those advanced by Tebaldi, Lombroso and Gonzales, the commission also asked for government intervention.<sup>74</sup> The government swiftly responded and, shortly after, the issue was examined by the Superior Council of Health. Called on to decide whether stage performances of hypnotism endangered public health, the Council invited Lombroso, Vizioli, the physiologist Angelo Mosso and two physicians from the Provincial Health Council of Milan to contribute as experts.<sup>75</sup> Beyond the rhetoric and the arguments advanced to frame stage hypnotism as a threat to the population’s health and morality, the deliberations of the Provincial Health Council of Milan and the Society of Hygiene, and the formal opinion of the academy of medicine in Turin, all pointed in one direction. The Superior Health Council thus demanded that the government issue an immediate ban on public shows based on hypnotism.

While the mobilization of academic and political health bodies resulted in greater scientific legitimacy of hypnotism, it also fostered conflicts among psychiatrists engaged in hypnotic research. Morselli, who had been criticized by his colleagues for his article in the *Gazzetta Piemontese* and his defence of Donato, replied with a robust defence of the social function of scientific popularization and a pointed criticism of the authoritarian spirit and alarmist rhetoric that had informed the campaign against the magnetizer by Lombroso and his school (to which, incidentally, Morselli was close).<sup>76</sup> Included in a book for the general public, in which he discussed animal magnetism, fascination and hypnotic states and the physiological processes that accounted for them, Morselli’s polemical arguments reflected on the one hand the positivist rhetoric on the social function of science, and on the other his critical stance towards the pathological model of hypnotism that had been established by Charcot and his colleagues.<sup>77</sup> While Morselli acknowledged the contribution of both schools of hypnotism in his book, he sided with the Nancy School, arguing that the physiological modifications induced by hypnosis were produced by suggestion,<sup>78</sup> and that Charcot’s distinction between hypnotic stages was the result of autosuggestion of the renowned French neurologist and his school. Morselli, like Seppilli, did not draw a distinction between hypnotism and magnetism – he defined both as a set of processes aimed at provoking a special psychophysiological condition leading to an anomalous state of the nervous system, namely ‘a more or less deep artificial sleep in which some brain centres ... [were] as paralyzed, while others ... [were] extraordinarily excited’.<sup>79</sup> Automatism (i.e. the absence of spontaneous mental activity) and suggestion (i.e. the capacity of receiving and elaborating only certain external stimuli) characterized psychic activity during hypnosis and accounted for all the ‘marvellous’ and bizarre manifestations of stage magnetism and hypnotism in general.<sup>80</sup> Questioning the scientific status of metalloscopy, Morselli argued that the effects of the magnet and other substances on hypnotized subjects were due to suggestion.

As Seppilli had done, Morselli used the principle of scientific plausibility to evaluate which magnetic phenomena could be included in hypnotic research, and dismissed Lombroso’s observations on the phenomenon of transposition of the senses and clairvoyance as ‘more in line with the old stories of animal magnetism than with biological laws’.<sup>81</sup> On the phenomenon of mental suggestion (thought transmission), however, Morselli was less categorical than Seppilli. The experiments by Charles Richet and the fact that, as he observed, the phenomenon did not contradict physiology made him inclined not to rule out mental suggestion.<sup>82</sup> More generally, the growing influence of the imagery of nineteenth-century physics and the emergence of energy-based concepts to explain biological phenomena, made it considerably more complex to erect boundaries to demarcate scientific magnetism.<sup>83</sup>



Morselli's understanding of hypnotic phenomena as grounded in psychology led him, in collaboration with Eugenio Tanzi, to test experimentally the influence of suggestion on somatic phenomena of hypnotism. In their experiments, Morselli and Tanzi used methods similar to those adopted by Tamburini and Seppilli in order to show that suggestion could produce the same physiological modifications that Charcot attributed to the pathological modifications of the nervous system in hysterical subjects. The theoretical disagreement and the confrontation on experimental grounds created a tension between Tamburini and Morselli that lasted until the end of the debate on hypnosis.

Morselli's criticisms of Lombroso resulted in a similar tension between these two scholars. Lombroso had in fact become increasingly critical of the attitude of his academic colleagues. In his view, the strict application of the experimental method in psychiatric research had led to an unreasonable rejection of effective remedies of traditional medicine and to overlooking the relevance of the new emerging research on mental suggestion, psychic polarization and the effect of medications at distance. He pointed out that the study of the functions of the nervous system was still in its infancy; to deny credibility to empirical observations and new ideas only because they had not yet been corroborated by experimental physiological studies was, he stated, simply academic pedantry.<sup>84</sup>

#### PSYCHIC POLARIZATION

In the same period, another controversy emerged in the psychiatric community around the phenomenon of 'psychic polarization'. Described by Binet and Féré in the framework of their experimental work on hypnotic suggestion and the phenomenon of transfer, psychic polarization seemed to have implications for the study of complex mental phenomena.<sup>85</sup> Despite Binet and Féré's scientific authority, the phenomenon of 'psychic polarization' had a mixed reception among Italian psychiatrists. Lombroso saw it as a confirmation of his long-held belief in the powerful effects of the magnet on hysterics and epileptics. He argued that polarization provided the matrix to understand in simple materialistic terms phenomena that appeared complex or mysterious such as general thinking and thought transmission.<sup>86</sup> Leonardo Bianchi and Gustav von Sommer replicated Binet and Féré's experiments with a few hysterical subjects. Their results confirmed the phenomena described by the French scientists, but in their report they noted also that other aesthesiogens produced the same phenomenon in their experimental subjects. While they did not reject Binet and Féré's interpretation, they did not confirm the magnet's specific properties.<sup>87</sup> Tamburini, who a few years earlier had emphasized the power of the magnet on physiological phenomena,<sup>88</sup> after further experimentation had concluded that it was the magnet's thermic rather than intrinsic properties that were responsible for any effect on patients.<sup>89</sup> Tanzi, like Morselli, was critical of the concept of psychic polarization and preferred an explanation of the phenomenon in psychophysiological terms.<sup>90</sup>

The disagreements in the psychiatric community escalated into an open confrontation when, in 1887, Raggi claimed to have proved psychic polarization experimentally. To solve the controversy, a commission formed by Bianchi, Tamburini, Morselli, Tanzi, De Giovanni, Tebaldi, Lombroso and other prominent academics was entrusted with assessing whether Raggi's claims were confirmed by experimental evidence. After witnessing a series of experiments on psychic polarization conducted by Raggi and his assistants, the commissioners issued a report in which they stated that the phenomena of psychic

polarization could not be ascertained.<sup>91</sup> Given the growing disaffection towards metalloscopy in part of the psychiatric community and the scientific prominence of the commissioners, the report marked the decline of research on psychic polarization.<sup>92</sup>

#### HYPNOTIC SUGGESTION THERAPY IN THE ASYLUM

At the Fifth Congress of the Italian Phreniatric Society, held in Siena in September 1886, the discussion of a complex case of a young hysterical woman cured by hypnosis raised the Society's attention to the wider issue of the therapeutic use of hypnotism with asylum patients.<sup>93</sup> In principle, it was commonly held that the use of hypnotism with mentally ill patients was hardly possible. However, as mentioned above, the therapeutic success obtained by Voisin induced an increasing number of psychiatrists to experiment pragmatically with asylum patients suffering from severe hysteria, melancholy and mania.<sup>94</sup> The Phreniatric Society, concerned by the spreading of therapeutic practices that were not backed by 'scientific' hypnotic theories, decided that further investigation was needed to establish whether suggestive therapy could be 'seriously introduced in the asylum' for the treatment of mental alienation, and entrusted Seppilli, Paolo Funaioli and Leonardo Bianchi with the task of testing hypnotic suggestion therapy with asylum patients.<sup>95</sup>

The results of the experiments conducted by the three psychiatrists, presented by Seppilli at the Sixth Congress of the Italian Phreniatric Society (Novara, 1889), were disappointing.<sup>96</sup> Seppilli stated that, out of 55 patients at the Imola Asylum, he and his colleagues were able to hypnotize only a few hysterics and epileptics and one melancholic (all of whom were unresponsive to hypnotic suggestion). They found it nearly impossible to induce hypnosis in patients suffering from paranoia, severe melancholy or mania.<sup>97</sup> The experiments conducted by Funaioli and Bianchi gave similarly poor results. In addition, they reported that hypnosis provoked severe convulsions in two hysterical patients. The method seemed suddenly to have lost a large part of its therapeutic effect. In his concluding remarks, Seppilli stated that hypnotism was, in fact, a dangerous method even when used by physicians.<sup>98</sup> He argued for the adoption of suggestion in the waking state, a method long used by physicians, whose efficacy – he added – had recently been confirmed by Bernheim's studies.

#### THE CONGRESS OF NOVARA: BETWEEN PARIS AND NANCY

While the disappointing therapeutic results obtained by Seppilli, Bianchi and Funaioli might be attributed to their theoretical stance—the neurological model that had shaped their understanding of hypnotism hardly implied therapeutic benefits—this does not entirely account for the more general decline in therapeutic optimism and hypnotic research. To understand the changing trend in the debate on hypnosis it is therefore necessary to contextualize the discussion that took place in Novara and the changing attitudes of physicians who had long been engaged in hypnotic research within a wider perspective. The Sixth Congress of the Italian Phreniatric Society took place a month after the First Congress of Experimental and Therapeutic Hypnotism in Paris, in which the theoretical disagreement between the two French schools of hypnotism had escalated to a harsh confrontation.<sup>99</sup> In the late 1880s, as a consequence of the struggle between the two French schools, the understanding of hypnotism was increasingly challenged by the decline of the

neuropathological model that had underpinned much of the Italian debate on hypnotism. As a consequence, a number of Italian psychiatrists adopted an eclectic interpretative model that coupled Bernheim's theory of suggestion with a pathological model of hypnotism.<sup>100</sup>

The theoretical uncertainty produced by the controversy between Paris and Nancy induced Tamburini to present his 'conciliatory theory' at the Congress of Novara. Convinced that 'objective' somatic phenomena of hypnotism (neuro-muscular hyperexcitability) could not possibly be produced by suggestion, he argued that the somatic phenomena attributed to hypnotism were actually manifestations of severe hysteria. The hypnotic process, he contended, simply had the effect of making evident pre-existing morbid phenomena in hysterical and neuropathic subjects. In healthy subjects, in contrast, hypnosis produced an uncomplicated hypnotic sleep.<sup>101</sup> While this theory enabled Tamburini to defend his earlier hypnotic studies (he and Seppilli had indeed argued that hysterics manifested somatic hypnotic phenomena in the waking state as well), it also refuted the main tenets of Charcot's theory. As Tanzi observed, in the discussion that followed Tamburini's presentation, if hypnotism had nothing to do with neuropathology, then Tamburini's conciliatory theory was more in line with Bernheim's theory than with that of Charcot.<sup>102</sup>

Tamburini's theory seemed mainly aimed at safeguarding his scientific authority in a changing theoretical scenario. In its hybrid version, in fact, hypnotism had lost much of its previous scientific appeal. Furthermore, by the end of the 1880s, the studies on mental suggestion by Charles Richet and by the Polish psychologist Julian Ochorowicz, the growing interest in the scientific study of mediumistic phenomena, and the influence of new energy-based hypotheses to explain biological phenomena were transforming the transnational field of hypnotic research in a direction that (at least initially) prominent Italian psychiatrists such as Tamburini and Seppilli could not reconcile with their scientific approach.<sup>103</sup> After the Congress of Novara, hypnotism was no longer discussed in the meetings of the Italian Phreniatric Society and, in the years that followed, the number of scientific publications on the topic decreased sharply.<sup>104</sup> While the practice of hypnotic suggestion therapy in hospitals continued to some extent, it was scarcely acknowledged as a proper therapeutic method in psychiatry.<sup>105</sup>

## CONCLUSION

In the late 1870s, a small group of Italian psychiatrists became interested in the phenomenon of hypnotism in the wake of the studies conducted by Charcot and others at the Salpêtrière Hospital. The reference to the authority of Charcot enabled them to redefine magnetism – a theory and a practice considered disreputable by a large part of the Italian medical community – as a subject of neuropsychiatric research. By defining the new scientific magnetism as the experimental study of 'objective' (somatic) hypnotic phenomena, Tamburini and Seppilli, two of the most active members of the group, attempted to inscribe the study of hypnotism in the strict positivist and experimentalist framework adopted by Italian psychiatrists in the 1870s, and to draw a demarcation line between the new research field and 'marvellous' phenomena and theories of the magnetic tradition. However, Tamburini and Seppilli's definition was challenged by Lombroso, who argued for the inclusion in hypnotic research of 'marvellous' phenomena, reasoning that repeated observations by magnetizers validated their 'factual' existence.

Whereas in the early 1880s the persistent scepticism of the medical community towards hypnotic studies and the competing definitions of the boundaries of scientific magnetism within psychiatry ensured the fragile status of the emerging field, by the middle of the decade the interest in hypnotism had begun to increase steadily, especially because of new impetus provided by the French studies on hypnotic suggestion. The therapeutic use of hypnotic suggestion by the French psychiatrist Auguste Voisin at the Salpêtrière Hospital encouraged therapeutic experimentation with hysterical and neuropathic asylum patients, while the theory of the Nancy School of hypnotism was increasingly (and selectively) combined with the dominant neuropathological model by those involved in hypnotic suggestion. Still confined to limited sectors of the scientific community, hypnotism became an object of wider medical and public interest in 1886, with the appearance of the renowned Belgian magnetizer Donato on Italian stages. Styled as experimental demonstrations of hypnotism, Donato's successful theatrical performances impressed physicians engaged in hypnotic studies, but they were soon perceived as a threat to medical authority over hypnotism. A campaign on the alleged health and moral threats posed by stage hypnotism, fuelled by Lombroso and others, led to the mobilization of political and scientific public health bodies and the prohibition of stage hypnotism.

While the public debate about lay hypnotism resulted in a stronger scientific legitimation of medical hypnotism, it also sharpened existing tensions on the theoretical understanding of hypnotism within the psychiatric community. Morselli – who was the only academic psychiatrist who argued against the prohibition of stage magnetism — attacked the pathological model of hypnotism espoused by Charcot and his school and embraced Bernheim's theoretical position. Morselli's critical stance towards Charcot resulted in further divisions in the interpretations of the nature of hypnotic phenomena and their implications within the field of hypnotic research.

In the second half of the 1880s, the initial optimism concerning the therapeutic potential of hypnotic suggestion with asylum patients gradually diminished, while new potential research directions were considered controversial and pursued only by Lombroso and a few others. By the end of the 1880s, largely as a consequence of the theoretical struggle between the two French schools of hypnotism and the crisis of the neuropathological paradigm that had framed much of the understanding of hypnotic phenomena in Italy, hypnotism had lost its scientific attractiveness. In the same period, with the merging of the transnational debate on hypnotism with the debate on mental suggestion and mediumistic phenomena, the interest in hypnotism 'proper' declined.

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#### NOTES

- 1 G. Seppilli, 'Gli studi recenti sul così detto magnetism animale. Rassegna', *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria* 7, 106–140, 308–329 (1881), at p. 140.
- 2 The psychiatrist and psychologist Gabriele Buccola was among the first Italian scholars to argue for the scientific relevance of hypnotic studies. At the Third Congress of Italian Psychiatrists

- (1880), he stated that the experimental study of the hypnotic process could advance the understanding of the physiological laws that governed the production of consciousness in healthy and ill people; see G. Buccola, 'La legge fisica della coscienza nell'uomo sano e nell'uomo alienato', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose* **18**, 82–99 (1881). See also G. Buccola, 'Sui fenomeni e sulla natura dell'ipnotismo: rivista sintetica', *Rivista di filosofia scientifica* **1**, 201–207 (1881). On Buccola, see G. Cimino and R. Foschi, 'The gestation of Italian "scientific" psychology between philosophy, anthropology, and psychiatry', in *The Oxford handbook of the history of psychology: global perspectives* (ed. David B. Baker), pp. 307–346 (Oxford University Press, 2012), at pp. 315–318.
- 3 See A. Gauld, *A history of hypnotism*, 2nd edn (Cambridge University Press, 1995; first published 1992), pp. 339–340.
- 4 As Stefano Ferrari has pointed out, after 1890 the debate on hypnotism merged with the debates on thought transmission and psychical research; see S. Ferrari, 'Gli studi sull'ipnotismo e la suggestione tra scienza e misticismo', in *L'età del positivismo* (ed. Paolo Rossi), pp. 121–152 (Il Mulino, Bologna, 1986), at p. 137.
- 5 Ferrari, *op. cit.* (note 4); Gauld *op. cit.* (note 3); C. Gallini, *La sonnambula meravigliosa. Magnetismo e ipnotismo nell'Ottocento italiano*, 2nd edn (L'Asino d'Oro, Rome, 2012, first published 1983); P. Guarnieri, 'Theatre and laboratory: medical attitudes to animal magnetism in late-nineteenth-century Italy', in *Studies in the history of alternative medicine* (ed. Roger Cooter), pp. 118–139 (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1988).
- 6 In the decades immediately following Italian unification, positivism had a dominant position in psychiatry and in other branches of science and culture. Fostered by the secular and anticlerical orientation of the cultural and political elites engaged in the unification process, positivism was seen as the theoretical matrix that would finally place Italy in the circle of modern European nations. Physicians who advocated major changes in theoretical and practical approaches to mental illness during the 1850s and the 1860s (notably Andrea Verga, Serafino Biffi, Carlo Livi and Cesare Lombroso) shared a strong positivist orientation and a keen interest in French, German and British scientific culture. The statute of the Italian psychiatric society established in 1873 indicated that its members were committed to the positivist experimental method and to an understanding of mental illness as an organic phenomenon. See A. Tagliavini, 'Nineteenth-century Italian psychiatry', in *The anatomy of madness*, vol 2: *Institutions and society* (ed. W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd), pp. 175–196 (Routledge, London, 2004; first published 1885), at pp. 178–179.
- 7 Augusto Tamburini was professor of psychiatry at the University of Modena and director of the San Lazzaro Asylum. On Tamburini, see V. P. Babini, 'Augusto Tamburini (1848–1919)', in *Anthology of Italian psychiatric texts* (ed. Mario Maj and Filippo Maria Ferro), pp. 145–159 (World Psychiatric Association, Washington, DC, 2002).
- 8 Giuseppe Seppilli was head physician of the asylum in Imola and a member of the network of researchers of the San Lazzaro Asylum.
- 9 During the 1870s the San Lazzaro Asylum went through dramatic transformations that reflected the long-held aspirations of the alienists who campaigned for the establishment of psychiatry as an autonomous medical speciality, namely to reform the asylum as a key therapeutic instrument, establish academic training for psychiatrists, and enhance the scientific profile of the discipline by promoting experimental research. Under the direction of Carlo Livi (1873–77) the teaching of psychiatry at the University of Modena was established in the premises of the institution, together with facilities for study and research. Tamburini, who became director on Livi's death, further developed the institution's research facilities and scientific network. Gabriele Buccola's definition of San Lazzaro as 'the most active and prolific centre for the study of physiopathology of the nervous system' reflected an opinion that in the early 1880s was widely shared in Italian scientific circles. G. Buccola quoted in M. Filippi, 'Il magnetismo psichico e la sua misura', *Rivista di filosofia* **90**, 17–38 (1999), at p. 27 (note 30). On the

- history of the San Lazzaro Asylum, see A. Tamburini, *Il frenocomio di Reggio Emilia* (Calderini, Reggio Emilia, 1880).
- 10 The first Italian translation of the lectures delivered by Charcot at the Salpêtrière appeared in 1880; see M. Charcot, *Lezioni sulle malattie del sistema nervoso fatte alla Salpêtrière da J. M. Charcot. Raccolte e pubblicate da Bourneville* (trans. Angelo Scambelluri) (Riccardo Marghieri, Naples, 1880).
- 11 A. Tamburini and G. Seppilli, 'Prima comunicazione. Contribuzione allo studio sperimentale dell'ipnotismo. Ricerche sui fenomeni di senso, di moto, del respiro e del circolo nell'ipnotismo e sulle loro modificazioni per gli agenti estesiogeni e termici', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **7**, 261–300 (1881), at p. 262.
- 12 Discussing the controversial medical status of magnetism between 1840 and 1860, the Milanese psychiatrist Antonio Tarchini Bonfanti wrote: 'The majority of scientists professed [incredulity] to the point of disdaining even to study the topic'. A. Tarchini Bonfanti, 'Estasi e ipnosi', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose* **20**, 299–315 (1883), at p. 300. For an overview of the diffusion of animal magnetism in Italy, see Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp. 86–93.
- 13 On the reform of medical training after Italian unification see, for instance, Paolo Frascani, 'Between the state and the market: physicians in liberal Italy', in *Society and the professions in Italy 1860–1914* (ed. Maria Malatesta), pp. 145–174 (Cambridge University Press, 2002), at pp. 151–152.
- 14 See Tagliavini, *op. cit.* (note 6).
- 15 On the diffusion of magnetic cabinets in Italy in the second half of the nineteenth century, see Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp. 139–140.
- 16 For instance, in the 1880s, the distinguished psychiatrist Antonio Tarchini Bonfanti revealed that he had practised medical magnetism since the early 1850s, but that, like other scholars of magnetism, he had concealed his practice for fear of being ridiculed by his colleagues. See Tarchini Bonfanti, 'L'ipnotismo nell'indagine nei processi penali', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose* **26**, 109–117 (1889), at p. 113. See also L. Verati, *Trattato pratico di magnetismo animale* (Sgariglia, Foligno, 1869), p. xiii. It is noteworthy that the hidden practice of magnetism by physicians was a phenomenon that occurred in France as well, before Charcot managed to give scientific legitimacy to hypnotism. See H. F. Ellenberger, *The discovery of the unconscious: the history and evolution of dynamic psychiatry* (Basic Books, New York, 1970), p. 85.
- 17 The *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria e di medicina legale in relazione con l'antropologia e le scienze giuridiche sociali* (*Journal of Experimental Phreniatria and Legal Medicine in Relation to Anthropology and the Juridical and Social Sciences*) was founded at the San Lazzaro Asylum by Carlo Livi and his assistants Augusto Tamburini and Enrico Morselli in 1875. The journal's title mirrored the modernization aspirations of reformist psychiatrists: see Livi, 'Del metodo sperimentale in freniatria e medicina legale', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **1**, 1–10 (1875).
- 18 G. Seppilli, 'Gli studi recenti sul così detto magnetismo animale. Rassegna', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **6**, 337–344 (1880), at pp. 337–338.
- 19 On Mesmer's theory of 'animal magnetism', see Ellenberger, *op. cit.* (note 16), pp. 57–69.
- 20 Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 18), pp. 337–338.
- 21 *Ibid.*, p. 338.
- 22 *Ibid.*
- 23 See, for instance, Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 1), p. 322.
- 24 G. Seppilli, 'Delle nuove ricerche sull'ipnotismo. Rassegna', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **8**, 123–136 (1882), at p. 133.
- 25 See A. Tamburini and G. Seppilli, 'Ricerche sui fenomeni di senso, di moto, del circolo e del respiro nell'ipnotismo e sulle loro modificazioni per gli agenti estesiogeni: comunicazione preventiva', *Rendiconti del Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere* 2nd ser. **14**, 393–400 (1881).

- 26 Their experimental subject, they wrote, was a patient of the Reggio Asylum who was ‘a typical case of *hysteria major*’ and displayed ‘all the characteristic phenomena of this affection as described by Charcot, Bourneville and Regnard in the *Iconographie photographique de la Salpêtrière*’. Tamburini and Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 25), pp. 393–394. It is, however, noteworthy that Seppilli did not entirely subscribe to Charcot’s hypnotic theory. Following German authors, in particular the German neuropsychiatrist Rudolf Heidenhain, he argued that ‘a neuropathic condition is not always a necessary [pre-requisite] for psychic hyper-excitability, which is undoubtedly one of the conditions that favour hypnosis’. Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 18), p. 339.
- 27 The investigation on the effects of aesthesiogens on hypnotic phenomena also built on studies conducted by Seppilli and others in the wake of the experiments conducted by Victor Jean-Marie Burq at the Salpêtrière. In the late 1870s, Seppilli, Buccola and Dario Maragliano investigated the effects of electrical currents, metals and magnets in hysterical anaesthesia: see D. Maragliano and G. Seppilli, ‘Studi clinici a contributo delle azioni delle correnti elettriche dei metalli e delle magneti in alcuni casi di anestesia’, *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **4**, 36–55 (1878); G. Buccola and G. Seppilli, ‘Sulle modificazioni sperimentali della sensibilità e sulle teorie relative’, *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **6**, 107–125 (1880). Research on metalloscopy also drew on the work of the physician Carlo Maggiorani, who conducted extensive research between the late 1860s and the early 1880s on the diagnostic and therapeutic use of magnets and published a number of studies on the topic. See Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 311.
- 28 Tamburini and Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 11).
- 29 A. Tamburini and G. Seppilli, ‘2. Contribuzione allo studio sperimentale dell’ipnotismo. Ricerche sui fenomeni di moto, di senso, del respiro e del circolo nelle così dette fasi letargica, catalettica e sonnambolica, della ipnosi isterica’, *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **8**, 268–307, 392–414 (1882).
- 30 See A. Tamburini and G. Seppilli, *Contribuzione allo studio sperimentale dell’ipnotismo nelle isteriche* (Vallardi, Bologna/Milan/Naples, 1882). A few years later, the book appeared in German translation: *Anleitung zur experimentellen Untersuchung des Hypnotismus* (Bergmann, Wiesbaden, 1885). Tamburini and Seppilli’s work was reviewed in the French scientific press and was extensively quoted by Alfred Binet and Charles Féré in *Le Magnétisme animal* (Félix Alcan, Paris, 1887).
- 31 The Italian positivist school of criminology supported the thesis articulated by Lombroso that criminals were biologically predisposed to commit crime, a predisposition that, as Lombroso put it in 1876, originated from a physical and mental organization that was different from the normal one. On this basis, the positivist (or scientific) criminological school attacked the main tenets of the so-called ‘classical’ school of penology, namely that crime was an act of free will and that punishment had to be proportional to the crime. It argued instead that punishment had to be proportional to the dangerousness of the offender and that, consequently, medical examination of the criminal was a fundamental part of the legal process. For a discussion of Lombroso’s theories, their relations to the cultural and political Italian situation, and their influence on the late nineteenth-century transnational debate on crime, see D. Pick, *Faces of degeneration* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 109–152. For a brief discussion on Lombroso’s ‘criminal anthropology’, see Cimino and Foschi, *op. cit.* (note 2), p. 214.
- 32 In this paper, I rely on a reproduction of the article that Lombroso included in his *Studi sull’ipnotismo* as an appendix; see ‘Due casi di grande isterismo’, in C. Lombroso, *Studi sull’ipnotismo*, 3rd edn, pp. 50–66 (Bocca, Turin, 1887; first published 1886). The original article has a different title: see Lombroso, ‘Sull’azione del magnetete e sulla trasposizione dei sensi nell’isterismo’, *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali e antropologia criminale* **3**, 221–237 (1882). The *Archivio* was founded and edited by Lombroso.

- 33 See C. Lombroso, 'Sull'azione dei perturbamenti magnetici sugli alienati negli anni: 1866–67–68', *Rendiconti del Reale Istituto Lombardo di Scienze e Lettere* **7**, 588–591 (1874), p. 591. Lombroso became acquainted with magnetism in the 1850s, during his medical training at the University of Pavia. In his diary (1854–57), he wrote that Bartolomeo Panizza, a renowned anatomist and physiologist and one of his teachers, believed 'in magnetism as well as in somnambulism, clairvoyance, the invisible, etc.' Although, like other materialist and positivist scholars, he expressed scepticism towards animal magnetism, it is arguable that his interest in magnetic phenomena was, at least in part, related to the cultural environment of his university years. See F. Pesoli, 'Aspetti della ricerca scientifica sullo spiritismo in Italia (1870–1915)', PhD thesis, University of Milan (1999), pp. 91–92.
- 34 A. Harrington, 'Hysteria, hypnosis and the lure of the invisible: the rise of neo-mesmerism in *fin-de-siècle* French psychiatry', in Bynum *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 226–246, at p. 229.
- 35 Lombroso, *op. cit.* (note 32), p. 63.
- 36 The concept of hypnotic transfer was developed in France by Charcot's school in the framework of research on hypnotism and metalloscopy. It referred to the 'shifting' of sensory and motor functions from one side of the body to the other under the effect of aesthesiogens (i.e. substances that could alter a subject's sensibility). For a discussion of the origin of the concept of transfer, see Harrington, *op. cit.* (note 34), pp. 227–232.
- 37 Atavism was a key concept in Lombroso's criminal anthropology. It referred to the reappearance in an individual of characteristics of remote ancestors. For a discussion of Lombroso's notion of atavism, see S. A. Cole and M. C. Campbell, 'From subhumans to superhumans: criminals in the evolutionary hierarchy, or what became of Lombroso's atavistic criminals?', in *The Cesare Lombroso handbook* (ed. Paul Knepper and P. J. Ystehede), pp. 147–170 (Routledge, London, 2012), at pp. 155–157.
- 38 See G. Salvioli, 'Alcune ricerche sul così dello sonno magnetico', *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali e antropologia criminale* **2**, 414–418 (1881).
- 39 Lombroso, *op. cit.* (note 32), p. 66.
- 40 See T. F. Gieryn, 'Boundary-work and the demarcation of science from non-science: strains and interests in professional ideologies of scientists', *Amer. Sociol. Rev.* **48**, 781–795 (1983), at p. 789.
- 41 Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 24), p. 133.
- 42 See A. Raggi, 'De' piu recenti studi intorno all'ipnotismo', *Annali universali di medicina e chirurgia* **69**, 328–352 (1883).
- 43 Ellero described the case of a young female patient who, when in a somnambulist state, was able to recognize colours and letters by touch and move about with eyes closed. De Giovanni expressed doubts about the reality of the phenomena observed by Ellero, and this led to a controversy between the two. Beyond its immediate content, the controversy exemplified the different conceptualizations of the boundaries of hypnotic research among physicians engaged in hypnotic studies. See L. Ellero, *Sopra un caso di ipnosi con fenomeni della cosiddetta trasposizione dei sensi. Lettera del dott. Lorenzo Ellero al Prof. Achille De Giovanni* (Prosperini, Padua, 1882).
- 44 De Giovanni attended Charcot's lectures at the Salpêtrière Hospital in the early 1880s. In his hypnosis research and practice, he combined the neurological model of hypnosis with a constitutionalist approach based on the assumption that different morphological constitutions are predisposed to specific pathologies. See A. De Giovanni, 'Alcune risultanze terapeutiche ottenute mediante l'ipnotismo', *Gazzetta medica italiana—Province Venete* **25**, 343–344 (1882).
- 45 On Antonio Tarchini Bonfanti, see Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 239. On Enrico Morselli, see E. Morselli, *Il magnetismo animale, la fascinazione e gli stati ipnotici* (Roux e Favale, Turin, 1886), pp. 27, 368, 396. See also Guarnieri *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 128. Belfiore and Gallini mention two other academic physicians, Gaetano Rummo and Enrico de Renzi, who practised hypnotic therapy in Naples. See G. Belfiore, *L'ipnotismo e gli stati affini*, 2nd edn (Perro, Naples, 1888; first published 1887), pp. 44, 179; Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 242.



- 46 Hypnotism was a marginal topic at the Congress in Voghera. De Giovanni's presentation was followed by remarks by Morselli and Lombroso, but no other psychiatrist mentioned hypnotism. See U. Maccabruni, 'Il Congresso Freniatrico Italiano', *Annali universali di medicina e chirurgia* **70**, 1–46 (1884), at p. 35.
- 47 Auguste Voisin stated that verbal suggestion during hypnosis had proven effective not only to improve the condition of a severely agitated hysterical patient, but also to treat patients suffering from melancholia and other conditions. See A. Voisin, 'De l'hypnotisme employé comme traitement de l'aliénation mentale et des névroses et comme agent mobilisateur', in *Association française pour l'avancement des sciences. Compte rendu de la 13<sup>e</sup> session* (Au secrétariat de l'Association, Paris, 1884), p. 233; 'Observations d'aliénation mentale aigüe traitée par l'hypnotisme', in *Association française pour l'avancement des sciences, Congrès de Nancy 1886* (Au secrétariat de l'Association, Paris, 1887). See also Belfiore, *op. cit.* (note 45), p. 183.
- 48 See Lombroso, *op. cit.* (note 32), p. 37.
- 49 A. Castelli and C. Lombroso, *Follia isterica guarita coll'ipnotismo. Paralisi per suggestione e suggestione negativa. Nota* (Tipografia Cenniniana, Florence, 1885).
- 50 See F. Vizioli, *Del morbo ipnotico (ipnotismo spontaneo, autonomo) e delle suggestioni. Contribuzione clinica e ricerche medico-legali. Lettura fatta presso le sezioni di medicina e psichiatria nel 11 Congresso dell'Associazione medica italiana in Perugia (settembre 1885)*, (Vallardi, Bologna/Milan/Naples, 1886), pp. 93–95.
- 51 The *Giornale di neuropatologia* (*Journal of Neuropathology*), founded by Vizioli in 1884 and edited by him, regularly published articles on hypnotism. On the study and therapeutic practice of hypnotism in Naples, see Belfiore, *op. cit.* (note 45).
- 52 See H. Bernheim, *De la suggestion hypnotique dans l'état hypnotique et dans l'état de veille* (Doin, Paris, 1884). A good illustration in this regard is an article by Pietro Petrazzani on hypnotic suggestion therapy with a hysterical patient. A psychiatrist of the San Lazzaro, Petrazzani borrowed the title of his article from Bernheim and included Bernheim's work as one of his main references; see P. Petrazzani, 'La suggestione nello stato ipnotico e nella veglia', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **12**, 153–206 (1886).
- 53 See G. Seppilli, 'I fenomeni ipnotici nel sonno e nella veglia. Rassegna', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **11**, 325–350 (1885), at p. 325.
- 54 *Ibid.*, p. 332.
- 55 Vizioli stressed that his patient was affected by 'hypnotic illness' (*morbo ipnotico*), a spontaneous neurosis that he claimed to have discovered and that reproduced the hypnotic stages described by Charcot. It is noteworthy that the concept of hypnotic illness extended and modified the perception of hypnotism in so far as the illness could develop spontaneously in hysterical and healthy individuals alike. See F. Vizioli, *Del morbo ipnotico (ipnotismo spontaneo, autonomo) e delle suggestioni* (Vallardi, Bologna/Milan/Naples, 1886).
- 56 As Ruth Harris has noted, according to the Parisian school, 'a consciousness of "self" continued to subsist' in hypnotized subjects and they 'would fail to realize commands that were repugnant to . . . [their] inner nature'. See R. Harris, 'Murder under hypnosis', in Bynum *et al.*, *op. cit.* (note 6), pp. 197–241, at p. 207.
- 57 See G. Campili, *Il grande ipnotismo e la suggestione ipnotica nei rapporti col diritto penale e civile* (Bocca, Turin, 1886).
- 58 Vizioli, *op. cit.* (note 55), p. 19.
- 59 The programme of the Zanardellis' show at the Teatro del Fondo in Naples, on 18 March 1886, published in the newspaper *Il Napoli*, read: 'Part One: Hypnotism – Emma Zanardelli and Prof. Zanardelli. a) Hypnosis; b) Transmission of sensations; c) Catalepsy and tetanic rigidity; d) Thought transmission; e) Sympathy and antipathy; f) Phrenology applied to hypnosis; g) Musical ecstasy; h) Return to the normal state. Part Two – Fascination and magnetization of voluntary members of the audience. Experiments that Professor Zanardelli will attempt with the public:

1. General hypnotization of all members of the audience who volunteer. 2. Transposition of the senses. 3. Strange and various sensations. 4. Catalepsy and rigidity. 5. Mental suggestions. 6. Man reduced to an automaton. 7. Man glued to a wall or to a chair. 8. Man changed into a woman. 9. Cold. 10. Intense heat. 11. Hunger and thirst. 12. Return to life. Part Three – Exhibition of the Giant Magical Lantern.’ See Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), pp. 123–124.
- 60 See, for instance, E. Nervi, ‘Il magnetizzatore Donato’, *Corriere della Sera*, 29 April 1886, pp. 2–3.
- 61 See Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 126.
- 62 See H. Wolfram, ‘“An object of vulgar curiosity”: legitimizing medical hypnosis in imperial Germany’, *J. Hist. Med. Allied Sci.* **67**, 149–176 (2012), at p. 157; A. Mayer, *Sites of the unconscious: hypnosis and the emergence of the psychoanalytic setting* (University of Chicago Press, 2013), pp. 98–99.
- 63 See ‘Le esperienze del signor Donato’, *Gazzetta Piemontese*, 21 April 1886, p. 3.
- 64 As the psychiatrist Clodomiro Bonfigli put it, ‘from the Alps to Lilybaeum [in Sicily] everyone is talking about fascinators and the fascinated . . . Whoever is a physician is annoyed by people who ask him what is true in the sensational facts reported in the press’. Bonfigli, quoted in Gallini, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 218.
- 65 Morselli, like Tamburini, trained in psychiatry under Carlo Livi at the San Lazzaro Asylum in Reggio Emilia in the mid 1870s. Professor of psychiatry since the 1880s, and founder and editor of the renowned *Rivista di filosofia scientifica*, by the mid 1880s Morselli was a leading representative of Italian scientific positivism. On Enrico Morselli, see P. Guarnieri, ‘Between soma and psyche: Morselli and psychiatry in late-nineteenth-century Italy’, in *The anatomy of madness*, vol. 3: *The asylum and its psychiatry* (ed. W. F. Bynum, Roy Porter and Michael Shepherd), pp. 102–124 (Routledge, London, 1988); C. Bartolucci and G. P. Lombardo, ‘Evolutionary monism in the study of mental phenomena: the clinical differential psychopathology of Enrico Morselli, scientist and philosopher (1852–1929)’, *Hist. Phil. Psychology* **14**, 11–21 (2012).
- 66 Donato’s ability to hypnotize healthy young men did not surprise physicians engaged in hypnotism. Since the early 1880s, the circulation of German studies, in particular those of Heidenhain’s, had introduced the idea that hypnosis could be provoked in healthy people as well, especially when they were in a state of nervous excitation. In addition, the argument that neuropathic people were morbidly inclined to search for experiences that excited their nervous system implied that Donato’s subjects were mostly neuropathics. See, for instance, the discussion of ‘Donatic fascination’ in the framework of Charcot’s model by the physician Arnaldo Usigli, ‘La fascinazione del sig. Donato’, *Corriere della Sera*, 21 May 1886. See also Raggi, *op. cit.* (note 42), pp. 328–329.
- 67 Shortly after the first of Donato’s theatrical performances in Turin, the liberal-progressive *Gazzetta Piemontese*, the city’s major newspaper, asked Morselli to provide a scientific explanation of magnetism, hypnosis and fascination for the wider public. Morselli’s article was published in the *Gazzetta letteraria artistica e scientifica* (a supplement to the *Gazzetta Piemontese*), on 1 May 1886.
- 68 As Guarnieri has noted, Morselli’s ‘audacious’ description of his experience of ‘Donatic fascination’ provoked a great deal of reaction from his colleagues. See Guarnieri, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 128.
- 69 *Ibid.*, p. 135, note 7.
- 70 Augusto Tebaldi, professor of psychiatry and director of the asylum in Padua, repeated Donato’s experiments in the premises of the *Corriere della Sera* for a small audience of journalists. See ‘Donato a Milano: la seduta d’ieri sera’, *Corriere della Sera*, 20 May 1886, pp. 2–3, at p. 3. Eduardo Gonzales, director of the provincial asylum in Milan (Mombello) experimented with Donato’s technique with a hysterical patient of the asylum. His colleague Giovanni Battista Verga, head physician of the asylum, reported on the experiment in a letter published

- on 22–23 May 1886 in the newspaper *L'Italia*. See G. G. Franco, 'L'ipnotismo tornado di moda', *La civiltà cattolica* **37**, 129–149, 513–529, 665–678 (1886), at p. 140 and p. 673.
- 71 See A. Tebaldi, 'Avvertenza al pubblico circa gli esperimenti di Donato', *Corriere della Sera*, 24 May 1886, p. 2; C. Lombroso, 'I danni dell'ipnotismo', *Corriere della Sera*, 25 May, 1886, pp. 2–3; E. Gonzales, 'I pericoli dell'ipnotismo', *Corriere della Sera*, 26 May 1886 p. 2.
- 72 See Guarnieri, *op. cit.* (note 5), p. 120; Franco, *op. cit.* (note 70), p. 673.
- 73 Founded in 1879 by the Milanese committee of the Italian Medical Association, the Italian Society of Hygiene became increasingly influential in the health policy of the 1880s. See R. Alibrandi, *In salute e in malattia. Le leggi sanitarie borboniche fra Settecento e Ottocento* (Angeli, Milan, 2012), pp. 154–155.
- 74 The commission included 'founding fathers' of the Italian psychiatric society such as Andrea Verga and Serafino Biffi, as well as psychiatrists engaged in hypnotic research such as Tebaldi, Gonzales, Raggi, G. Verga, Tamburini and Seppilli. See 'L'ipnotismo e l'igiene', *Annali universali di medicina e chirurgia* **72**, 385–386 (1886).
- 75 The following discussion is based on the report of the work on the Commission by Vizioli. See F. Vizioli, 'Donato e il Consiglio Superiore di Sanità', *Giornale di neuropatologia* **2**, 134–151 (1886).
- 76 E. Morselli, *Il magnetismo animale, la fascinazione e gli stati ipnotici* (Roux e Favale, Turin, 1886).
- 77 For an extensive discussion of Morselli's understanding of hypnotism, see Guarnieri, *op. cit.* (note 5).
- 78 Morselli nonetheless held that hysteria was fertile terrain for hypnotism because of the morbid suggestibility that allegedly characterized the disease. He wrote that 'hysteria in all its varied forms is... an inexhaustible source of the marvellous in all ages, probably because of the constitutional fragility of the nervous system in hysterical women'. Morselli, *op. cit.* (note 76), p. 36.
- 79 *Ibid.*, pp. 30–32.
- 80 *Ibid.*, p. 92.
- 81 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
- 82 As Harrington has pointed out, the vision of the nervous system and nervous energy in late nineteenth-century French neurophysiology did not exclude the possibility that nervous energy could 'radiate' out of the body. See Harrington, *op. cit.* (note 34), p. 237.
- 83 *Ibid.*
- 84 C. Lombroso, 'Sui vantaggi dei nuovi studi ipnotici e la loro relative certezza', in Belfiore, *op. cit.* (note 45), pp. 3–7.
- 85 In 1885, Binet and Féré claimed to have demonstrated experimentally that the application of the magnet after hypnotic suggestion produced the phenomenon of transfer not only on physical and sensory phenomena (such as hemi-anaesthesias, paralyses, hallucinations and auditory stimuli) but also on psychic phenomena (such as ideations, emotions and mental representations). They argued that the concept of 'polarization' (a term that they borrowed from physics) was better suited than the term 'transfer' to indicate the inversion of a functional state under the influence of aesthesiogens. The term 'polarization', they wrote, was vague enough to describe the phenomenon without linking it to a specific causal hypothesis. See A. Binet and C. Féré, 'La polarisation psychique', *Revue philosophique de la France et de l'étranger* **19**, 369–402 (1885), at pp. 372–373. On the subsequent meaning acquired by the term 'polarization', see Harrington, *op. cit.* (note 34), p. 234.
- 86 Lombroso, like other contemporary medical researchers, was inspired by the world of the 'new' physics. He held that the phenomenon of psychic polarization was based on the magnet's effect on the orientation of the brain's ganglion cells. He explained it by analogy with the phenomenon occurring in magnetized iron molecules that changed their polarity when electrical current was applied to them. From this perspective, the action of the magnet as thought-modifier showed that

- the phenomenon of thinking could be explained as the product of molecular movements or vibrations of cerebral cells. As thought was movement, thought transmission could be explained as a radiation of the nervous force out of the brain. See Lombroso, *op. cit.* (note 32), pp. 35–37.
- 87 Bianchi and Sommer argued that the application of the magnet (as well as of other aesthesiogens such as metals or the warm hand of the experimenter) after hypnotic suggestion acted as a stimulus that provoked the emergence of opposite or complementary ideas, images, sensations and emotions that were latent in the unconscious. Bianchi also investigated the effect of the magnet on the bioelectrical head current. He reported that in somnambulist subjects the application of a magnet greatly increased the head current, but that the same effect occurred with a verbal suggestion that raised a strong emotional response. See L. Bianchi and G. Sommer, 'La polarizzazione psichica nella fase sonnambolica dell'ipnotismo', *Archivio di psichiatria, scienze penali ed antropologia criminale* **7**, 386–395 (1886), reproduced in Lombroso, *op. cit.* (note 32), pp. 40–49.
- 88 In their experimental investigations, Tamburini and Seppilli measured the effects of magnets on muscular, motor, respiratory and circulatory functions during the lethargic state. Binet and Féré emphasized that the muscular contraction induced by magnets described by the Italian authors could be interpreted as a phenomenon of polarization because contraction was the inverse state of muscle relaxation. See Binet and Féré, *op. cit.* (note 85), p. 373.
- 89 See Filippi, *op. cit.* (note 9), at p. 28.
- 90 E. Tanzi, 'La così detta "polarizzazione cerebrale" e le leggi associative', *Rivista di filosofia scientifica* **6**, 548–558 (1887).
- 91 See E. Tanzi and A. Cantani, 'Relazione della Commissione al Congresso medico di Pavia sui fenomeni di "polarizzazione psichica"', *Rivista di filosofia scientifica* **6**, 556–557 (1887); Filippi, *op. cit.* (note 9).
- 92 Lombroso, however, continued to experiment with the effects of the magnet on hypnotic phenomena. See, for instance, S. Ottolenghi and C. Lombroso, *Nuovi studi sull'ipnotismo e sulla credulità* (Stamperia dell'Unione tipografico-editrice, Turin, 1889).
- 93 A. Raggi, 'Il V Congresso Freniatico Italiano', *Annali universali di medicina e chirurgia* **72**, 290–333 (1886).
- 94 See Belfiore, *op. cit.* (note 45), p. 182.
- 95 See Raggi, *op. cit.* (note 93), p. 306.
- 96 See G. Seppilli, 'Atti del Sesto Congresso della Società Freniatica Italiana. La terapeutica suggestiva delle malattie mentali', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose* **27**, 231–255 (1890).
- 97 Seppilli also mentioned other experiments with asylum patients (notably those conducted in Italy by Francesco Vizioli and Giovanni Algeri) that had given disappointing results: *ibid.*, pp. 239–241.
- 98 In 1889, Lombroso similarly argued that hypnotism was a potentially dangerous therapeutic method that had to be used as a last resort with hysterical and neuropathic patients. C. Lombroso, 'L'ipnotismo come mezzo curativo', *Lo sperimentale* **63**, 632–641 (1889).
- 99 See, for instance, F. Guérmonprez, *L'Hypnotisme expérimental et thérapeutique. Argumentes présentés par le Dr. Fr. Guérmonprez* (Quarré, Lille, 1889).
- 100 For instance, in his presentation at the Congress of Novara, Seppilli stated: 'After all the discussions about the interpretations of hypnotic phenomena, *it is general opinion that their explanation can be found in suggestion*. Paralysis, anaesthesia, catalepsy, hallucinatory states, modification of ideation, memory, feelings, personality change and even the hypnotic state itself would only be the result of suggestion'. A few lines below, however, he added that in healthy individuals hypnosis and suggestions 'provoke genuine artificial psychopathological states, namely deep perturbation of intelligence, personality and character change, hallucinations . . .'. Seppilli, *op. cit.* (note 96), p. 234, emphasis in original.

- 101 A. Tamburini, 'Atti del Sesto Congresso della Società Freniatrica Italiana. Sulla natura dei fenomeni somatici nell'ipnotismo', *Archivio italiano per le malattie nervose* **27**, 276–295 (1890).
- 102 *Ibid.*, p. 294. The discussion that followed the presentation by Tamburini was transcribed and published in the Acts of the Sixth Congress at the end of Tamburini's article.
- 103 See, for instance, A. Tamburini, 'Spiritismo e telepatia', *Rivista sperimentale di freniatria* **18**, 411–434 (1892). On the different intellectual trajectories that led to Lombroso's and Morselli's engagement in psychical research, see Guarnieri, *op. cit.* (note 5); M. T. Brancaccio, 'Enrico Morselli's psychology and "spiritism": psychiatry, psychology and psychical research in Italy in the decades around 1900', *Stud. Hist. Philos. Sci. Part C: Stud. Hist. Philos. Biol. Biomed. Sci.* **48**, 75–84 (2014).
- 104 See Ferrari, *op. cit.* (note 4), p. 137. In 1899, Salvatore Ottolenghi, professor of legal medicine at the University of Siena, argued that, despite all the work that had been done in previous years, hypnotism had remained unknown even to many physicians, and scientists who were still engaged in hypnotic research were 'surrounded by apathy and opposition'. S. Ottolenghi, 'Il Pickmanismo e la resurrezione del Donatismo', *Corriere della Sera*, 19 June 1899, p. 2.
- 105 In 1894, for instance, at the 11th International Congress of Medicine held in Rome, Fienga, a clinical psychiatrist, discussed several cases of patients suffering from nervous illnesses that had been successfully treated with hypnotic suggestion. While he talked enthusiastically of the method's therapeutic effectiveness, he also referred to the scepticism of his colleagues towards hypnotic suggestion therapy. See A. Fienga, 'La suggestion ipnotica nella cura delle malattie nervose', in *Atti dell'XI Congresso medico internazionale. Roma, 29 marzo–5 aprile 1894*, pp. 98–10 (Tipografia della Camera dei Deputati, Rome, 1895).