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*A Genius from the Insane Asylum: Political Pathologies of a Nineteenth-Century Lunatic**

Daphne Rozenblatt

E se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?¹

1. Introduction to “our hero”

Giovan Virgilio A****i, the anonymized author of *Un Genio da Manicomio: Autobiografia d'un Alienato* (1877, *A Genius from the Insane Asylum: Autobiography of a Lunatic*), quoted verses from the thirty-third canto of Dante's *Inferno* three times throughout his autobiography. For educated Italians in the second half of the nineteenth century, the implications would have been clear. His three citations echoed the hendecasyllabic *terza rima* of the entire *Commedia*, in which the use of three and thirty-three invoked medieval Christian numerology. Furthermore, the canto told the story of Count Ugolino, who paid for the political intrigue and treason he committed during life both in death and thereafter. Ugolino died of starvation imprisoned in a tower in his hometown of Pisa together with his sons and grandsons, who, according to Dante, offered their bodies to their father to satiate his hunger. In the ninth and lowest circle of hell, Ugolino was buried up to his neck in ice, where he gnawed forever on the skull of the Archbishop who arranged his death. By referring severally to Ugolino's tale, the anonymized author of *Un genio da Manicomio*—later revealed to be a certain Giovanni Antonelli (1848–1918)—placed his own imprisonment and torture for his crimes within the traditions of the Italian literary and political imaginary. And like Dante's Ugolino, he narrated his own story. Describing his own hell, he asked for the reader's sympathy: “E se non piangi, di che pianger suoli?” (“And if not now, then when do you shed a tear?”)²

Ugolino was not the only historical-literary figure to which the Antonelli referred; indeed he wished to place himself within two literary canons. On the one hand, the author peppered the eloquent prose with which he described his upbringing, work, imprisonments, punishments, and political beliefs, and actions with references to Dante Alighieri, Ludovico Ariosto, and Torquato Tasso, and many other writers who memorialized the experience of madness. Their texts beg the reader to feel pity, affection, and even admiration for complex and mentally tortured heroes, whether tragic or triumphant. On the other, Antonelli also discussed and made reference to contemporary politics and politicians. In his concluding chapter, “Dimostrazione Conclusiva” (“Decisive Proof”), he proclaimed that his “storpia operetta autobiografica” (“little mangled autobiographical book”) would be the first of several volumes.³ Antonelli wanted to join in and improve upon the tradition of Silvio Pellico (1789–1854) and Felice Orsini (1819–1858) who both

*I originally presented this case study at a conference on historical epistemology held in honor of David Warren Sabean on the occasion of his retirement in 2018. I would like to thank him, Geoffrey Symcox, and Peter Baldwin for his commentary at that time.

¹ Dante Alighieri, *Inferno*, XXXIII, 42.

² Dante Alighieri, *The Inferno of Dante*, trans. Robert Pinsky (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), 355.

³ Enrico Morselli, ed., *Un Genio da Manicomio: Autobiografia d'un Alienato* (Sanseverino-Marche: Tipografia Editrice di C. Corradetti, 1877), 139. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are those of the author.

wrote political memoirs during their time imprisoned for nationalist and revolutionary politics.⁴ Through writing his future *I Misteri di mia VITA TRAGICO-ERRANTE* (The Mysteries of my TRAGIC AND MISGUIDED LIFE), the anonymized writer believed he would be “risorto,” and that his “vendetta civile sarà compiuta” (“resurrected, [and his] civil vendetta will be completed”). Unlike Alexandre Dumas’ Edmond Dantès, Giovan Virgilio claimed that he would be content in winning the public’s favor, when his “Febo sarà spuntato” (“Phoebus will break”), declaring that, “potrò unirmi ad Ovidio” (“I will be able to unite myself with Ovid”).⁵

Antonelli was not alone in seeing his tale as indicative of Italian politics and culture. He became the subject of acute interest for Dr. Enrico Morselli (1852–1949), who published his patient’s autobiography within six months of Antonelli’s arrival at the Santa Croce insane asylum, where Morselli had recently become medical director. The text consists of three parts: (1) an introduction entitled “Ragioni Della Pubblicazione” (“Reasons for Publication”), written by Dr. Morselli; (2) the autobiography, entitled “Breve Autobiografia di Giovan Virgilio A****i: Censo Diagnostico Raggiungiato a’ Misteri di Mia Vita Tragico-Errante” (“Brief Autobiography of Giovan Virgilio A****i: Nosography updated as to the Mysteries of my Tragic and Misguided Life”), written by the patient; and (3) a conclusion, entitled “Che cosa provi la nostra pubblicazione” (“What our publication proves”), written again by the doctor.⁶ In a kind of picaresque tale shared between a first-person and omniscient narrator, Giovan Virgilio presented readers with his story of misery and misadventure, disease and genius, while Morselli instructed readers as to how to interpret the tale of a reliable, but ultimately misleading narrator plagued by mental illness. But whereas Antonelli sought to vindicate himself, join in a literary canon, and win over the sympathies of his readers, Morselli aimed to demonstrate and explain the mental condition of “our hero,” as Morselli called him, who exemplified “political insanity.” But the definition of political insanity and how it could be detected were precisely the issues at stake.⁷

Morselli would not have the last word, however. Antonelli continued to write long after he left Morselli’s care and in 2016, Giometti & Antonello published *Il Libro di un Pazzo* (The Book of a Lunatic), which contains Antonelli’s memoir writing and poetry.⁸ Taken together, these two texts stand out in the history of psychiatry. *Un Genio da Manicomio* demonstrates the ways that psychiatrists involved themselves in the making of evidence, and also shows how expression, behavior, and script became evidence of mental illness. In addition to an introduction and conclusion, Morselli also footnoted Antonelli’s tale to explain to the reader how to interpret the latter’s mental illness. In *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, Antonelli not only recounts his own experiences at the Santa Croce asylum, he also responds to Morselli directly, commenting, critiquing, and praising Morselli’s own character, what we might call his “bedside manner,” and offering a self-assessment and diagnosis.

This article explores biography writing within psychiatric practice and the politics of mental disease through the case of Giovanni Antonelli, and how these processes took place. It considers the politics *of* diagnosis (how the medicalization of mental states was shaped by social, political and cultural context) as well as politics *as* diagnosis (or how certain political beliefs and practices were pathologized). At the core of any diagnosis is the interpretation of symptoms, but in the case

⁴ Silvio Pellico, *Le mie Prigioni* (Turin: Giuseppe Bocca, 1832); Felice Orsini, *Memorie Politiche* (Turin: Degiorgis, 1858).

⁵ Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 139.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 5, 31, 152.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 27.

⁸ Giovanni Antonelli, *Il Libro di un Pazzo: Note Autobiografiche e Rime* (Macerata: Giometti & Antonello, 2016).

of political insanity, we see explicitly how aberrant or strong feelings—especially if felt for the “wrong” party—presented an existential danger to the nascent Italian nation. While aiming to understand political feeling, psychiatrists such as Morselli also undermined them through their designation as disease. Political insanity was not only dangerous to the sufferer, it was also contagious. This article explores how patient narratives were shaped for psychiatric purposes, how politics was turned into symptoms, and how such symptoms came to define diseases that threatened the nation. It proceeds by describing the context in which Antonelli and Morselli composed their biography. It then goes on to describe both men and how their relationship shaped their biography as evidence. The fourth section of this article explores how Morselli attempted to train others to interpret Antonelli’s symptoms. Finally, the article concludes with a consideration of the political implications of this research with some broader discussion of the relationship between politics and insanity more generally.

2. Context

Morselli and Antonelli published *Un Genio da Manicomio* in an era when psychiatry was a definitively political discipline at the institutional, practical, and theoretical level. From its advent in the late eighteenth century, medical psychology was closely bound to the revolutionary struggles of the modern state and its subsequent establishment. In Italy, the expanding role of the state through the provision of social and medical services that formerly fell under the purview of the Catholic Church was part of the ideological and military struggle against the temporal powers of the papacy. Psychiatrists that came of age during the battles for Italian unification tended to be nationalists and often revolutionaries, articulating their professional aims through a patriotic rhetoric: they promised to heal and reform a sick or underdeveloped society by improving Italian citizenry.⁹ For psychiatrists such as Morselli, patriotic duty and fervor combined with scientific positivism and evolutionary Darwinism to validate bold new inquiries into the mind. The theory and practice of psychiatry were pursued within state institutions. Universities slowly increased their number of professorial chairs in psychiatry, training physicians in the science of the mind, and insane asylums were either founded or taken over from religious management with the promise of reform.¹⁰

The politics that helped forge psychiatry as a medical practice also shaped understandings of insanity. The history of diseases such as hysteria, trauma, degeneration, neurosis, mania, and drapetomania not only reflect the way that nineteenth-century psychiatrists tried to explain mental disease between soma and psyche, but the way that society and politics shaped disease pathology and treatment.¹¹ Degeneration, for example, reflected the fear of a loss of control in modern society. Though it pathologized society as a whole, degeneration found its greatest expression in “unwashed immigrants, criminals, genetically predisposed alcoholics, ‘mental defectives,’”

⁹ See Ada Lonni, *I Professionisti della Salute: Monopolio Professionale e Nascita dell’Ordine dei Medici XIX e XX Secolo* (Milan: F. Angeli, 1994); Maria Malatesta, *Professional Men, Professional Women: The European Professions from the 19th Century until Today*, trans. Adrian Belton (London: Sage, 2011), 62–72.

¹⁰ For more on nineteenth-century Italian psychiatry, see: Romano Canosa, *Storia del Manicomio in Italia dall’Unità a Oggi* (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1979); Valeria Paola Babini, et. al., *Tra Sapere e Potere: La Psichiatria Italiana nella Seconda Metà dell’Ottocento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1982); Elaine Murphy, “L’ottocento: Scienze Mediche, Psichiatria e Istituzioni,” in *Storia del Novecento* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009); Cesare Ajroldi, et. al., eds., *I Complessi Manicomiali in Italia tra Otto e Novecento* (Milan: Electa, 2013).

¹¹ See Bob Myers, “‘Drapetomania’: Rebellion, Defiance and Free Black Insanity in the Antebellum United States” (PhD diss., UCLA, 2014).

supposedly inferior racial groups, and the lower classes generally.¹² In contrast, neurasthenia reflected the “evils of ‘modern’ living on individual constitutions” and the pressures of modern life, which directly affected the nerves of the middle class, those who lived in cities and engaged in mental labor.¹³ While such diseases as well as medical approaches to their treatment crossed national borders, European nations still had their own specific preoccupations. In Italy, Cesare Lombroso (1835–1909) loomed large in both the medical and social sciences. Best known as the father of criminal anthropology, Lombroso’s theory of the born criminal both reflected and galvanized the medical preoccupations of his age with heredity, degeneration, deviance, mental disease and inferiority, and its bodily signs.¹⁴

Politics shaped the diagnoses of mental illness implicitly, but also explicitly. From its advent in the late eighteenth century, psychiatry conflated madness with the politics of the day. The patients of psychiatrist and asylum reformer Philippe Pinel (1745–1826) reflected the “democratic disease” sweeping France,¹⁵ for example, and many became examples of madness in Pinel’s seminal *Treatise on Insanity* (1801).¹⁶ Pinel’s student Étienne Esquirol (1772–1840) would later describe politics as the modern cause of insanity. While religious ideas had caused illnesses such as demonomania, in Esquirol’s day “the delirium of many insane persons runs upon politics.”¹⁷ Political events and “commotions” caused insanity by “arousing to greater activity all the intellectual faculties, by rendering more intense, the depressing and vindictive passions, fomenting the spirit of ambition and revenge, overturning public and private fortunes, and changing the circumstances of all men.”¹⁸ Specific symptoms, such as the belief that one was Napoleon, reflected how historical events—and particularly the mad ones—shaped the “etiology of delusions,” and with such symptoms and diagnoses came a surge of commentaries and discussion about the relationship between politics and insanity in the nineteenth century.¹⁹

In post-Risorgimento Italy, political movements which had both galvanized and threatened the new Italian state were also pathologized. Brigandage, anarchism, socialism, and Mazzinian republicanism could be connected with a variety of symptoms, such as an aggression to authority, mental disorder, irrational thought, or extreme passions. Like the dozens of phobias named in the nineteenth century, the spectrum of political insanities could be categorized, but unlike the latter, the political insanities of late-nineteenth-century Italy directly threatened the modern republic headed by the royal House of Savoy. The response of Italian psychiatrists to such movements was complex: a patriarchal tone could also combine with admiration. For example, the genius-insanity debate that Lombroso began in the 1860s focused on figures—often literary or political—whose

¹² Roger Cooter, “Medicine and Modernity,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Medicine*, ed. Mark Jackson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 100–116, 103.

¹³ Cooter, “Medicine and Modernity,” 102–103.

¹⁴ See Mary Gibson, *Born to Crime: Cesare Lombroso and the Origins of Biological Criminology* (Westport: Praeger, 2002).

¹⁵ See Laure Murat, *The Man Who Thought He Was Napoleon: Toward a Political History of Madness* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2014), esp. 182–184.

¹⁶ Philippe Pinel, *A Treatise on Insanity: In Which Are Contained the Principles of a New and More Practical Nosology of Maniacal Disorders Than Has Yet Been Offered to the Public*, trans. D. D. Davis (Sheffield: W. Todd, 1806), 30.

¹⁷ Étienne Esquirol, *Mental Maladies: A Treatise on Insanity* (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 243.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 44.

¹⁹ Murat, *The Man Who Thought He Was Napoleon*, 2–3.

extreme gifts or importance were directly explained through mental illness.²⁰ In this light, the biographies of Italian political icons became the subject of scientific investigation.²¹ For Morselli, Antonelli's biography was part of a longstanding Italian cultural current that intertwined insanity, brilliance, and politics, but was a case in which genius succumbed to disease.

3. Doctor and Patient

On 17 January 1879, Dr. Enrico Morselli commemorated the one year anniversary of King Vittorio Emanuele II's death with a public address in which he praised Italy's first monarch as "Salvatore, Re, Padre" ("Savior, King, Father"), and "veramente il nostro Cristo, il Verbo della nostra Redenzione, il Messia [...] vaticinato da Dante" ("truly our Christ, the Word of our Redemption, the Messiah... prophesied by Dante").²² He proclaimed that no one would "oserebbe [...] dubitare che la memoria sola di Vittorio Emanuele non basterà a reggere l'Italia nelle aspre prove del suo completo risorgimento politico e morale" ("dare to doubt that only the memory of Vittorio Emanuele would suffice to sustain Italy in its strident attempts at a complete political and moral resurgence").²³ For Morselli, the king was not only a political leader and an object of secular idolatry, he was a "uomo di genio" ("man of genius") whose talents and virtues were critical to the evolution of modern society.²⁴ Men of genius were an elevated expression of the species which "ha arrecato in tutta la sua vita alla causa della libertà e della civiltà, intese come evoluzione necessaria del pensiero umano" ("arise especially when a powerful stimulus is needed for the evolution of human thought").²⁵ While the pitch of Morselli's patriotic fervor was clearly tuned to the occasion—a public speech at the anniversary of the king's passing—what he had to say about political emotions is worth noting. For Morselli, the mental evolution that fueled Italy's political and moral resurgence was not a matter of thought alone; emotions and political passions were a crucial part:

[...] l'eredità degli affetti dovrebbe bastare al nostro orgoglio[...]. Havvi nulla di più nobile e di più sublime degli attestati di venerazione ed affetto, [...] che i posteri pagano alla memoria di coloro, che seppero colla virtù dell'ingegno o coll'energia della volontà sopravvivere al loro secolo? Egli è ben certo, o Signori, che il compiere a questo sacrosanto dovere noi ci sentiamo l'animo commosso e avvertiamo il risveglio della parte migliore di noi stessi, chi non riconosce i nostri morti, i cari e grandi morti, il di cui nome ebbe onorato sepolcro nella nostra memoria?

²⁰ See Cesare Lombroso, *Genio e Follia. Prelezione ai Corsi di Antropologia e Clinica Psichiatrica presso l'Università di Pavia* (Milan: Giuseppe Chiusi, 1864); Simon Kyaga, "Early Empirical Studies of Genius," in *Creativity and Mental Illness*, ed. Simon Kyaga (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 22–42.

²¹ See Danilo Raponi, "Heroism, Vice, and the Risorgimento," *The Historical Journal*, 54, no. 4 (2011): 1185–1195; Peter Becker and Richard F. Wetzell, eds., "Criminology as Scientific and Political Practice in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries," in *Criminals and Their Scientists: the History of Criminology in International Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

²² Enrico Morselli, *Vittorio Emanuele II nella Storia dell'Incivilimento. Discorso Letto dal Prof. Enrico Morselli* (Macerata: Tipografico Bianchini, 1879), 4, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*, 4.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 11.

([...]our pride is not enough for the *heredity of feelings*... There is nothing more noble or sublime than our declarations of veneration and affection [...] in completing this sacred duty we feel our spirit moved and perceive within us the most elevated sentiments awakening, the most uncompromising moral patriotic love.... In that tremor of feelings mixed with an indefinite sense of veneration, in that awakening of the best part of ourselves, who does not recognize our deceased, our dear and great dead whose names are honored in the sepulcher of our memory?)²⁶

What Morselli seems to be describing is a physical and spiritual experience of feeling—specifically love and devotion—through the performance and legacy of political action and ritual as a necessity and duty to the nation.

Morselli was born in Modena to an impoverished and politically active family. As a student, he excelled in Latin, grammar, rhetoric, philosophy, and Italian literature. His patriotism awoke in him early. When he read Vincenzo Gioberti's *Primato*, which “ci scaldava in cuore sentimenti d'italianità” (“warmed the heart with sentiments of Italianness”).²⁷ But at the University of Modena, his interests turned to politics and science. Inspired by Giuseppe Mazzini, Morselli became fervently anticlerical. After suffering a crisis of faith, he abandoned his plans to join the clergy and turned to the natural sciences, becoming “freddissimo in fatto di religione, ostile ai preti e al cattolicesimo in genere” (“extremely cold to the facts of religions, hostile to priests and Catholicism in general”).²⁸ Rejecting dogma and ritual, he came to let go of “un Dio creatore e di una Natura creata” (“God as creator and Nature as created”). He wrote:

Mi ero costruito un Dio senza preti e senza altari; di guisa che ero divenuto un deista puro, senza ancora sapere tutto il valore del mio atteggiamento religioso-filosofico. [...] Inoltre, meditando sui rapporti fra Dio, l'uomo e il mondo, fui condotto allo studio delle scienze naturali, e d'allora non le ho più lasciate: sono esse che hanno finito col farmi positivista.

(I fashioned for myself a God without priests and without altars, and in that way, I became a pure deist, still without knowing entirely the value of my religious-philosophical attitude. [...] Furthermore, meditating on the relationships between God, man, and the world, I was drawn to the natural sciences, from which I have never again left: these were the reasons I ended up as a positivist.)²⁹

He later studied with anatomist Paolo Gaddi (1806–1871), and trained with anthropologist Paolo Mantegazza (1831–1910), before moving to Siena where he met psychiatrist Carlo Livi (1823–1877). Under Livi's tutelage, Morselli specialized in psychiatry, and together with Augusto Tamburini (1848–1919), they founded the *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria e Medicina Legale delle Alienazioni Mentali* (Experimental Journal of Psychiatry and Legal Medicine in Mental

²⁶ Ibid., 4.

²⁷ Onorato Roux, ed., “Enrico Morselli,” in *Infanzia e Giovinezza di Illustri Italiani Contemporanei: Memorie Autobiografiche di Letterati, Artisti, Scienziati, Uomini Politici, Patrioti e Pubblicisti*, vol. 3, *Gli Scienziati* (Florence: Bemporad, 1910), 333.

²⁸ Ibid., 340–341.

²⁹ Ibid., 342.

Insanity) in 1875 at the insane asylum of Reggio Emilia. He was 25 years old when he became medical director of Asilo Santa Croce (Holy Cross Asylum), and he spent three years reforming Macerata's insane asylum before he became medical director of the Royal Insane Asylum of Turin, where he also held the university's chair of psychiatry. A decade later, Morselli moved to Genoa, where he worked as a professor and founded a private sanatorium and later directed the neurology department of Genoa's general hospital.³⁰ Throughout his long career, Morselli published important psychiatric treatises, including the most influential study on suicide prior to that of Émile Durkheim; a two-volume critique of spiritism; a two-volume critique of psychoanalysis; and the first Italian-language textbooks on anthropology and clinical psychiatry.³¹ Morselli's politics paralleled his science: both were intended to directly facilitate the moral and biological progress of Italy. His devotion was "Per la Patria, con la Scienza, verso l'Umanità" ("For the fatherland, with Science, toward Humanity").³²

Morselli and Antonelli were roughly contemporaries born to the middle and upper classes who shared an appreciation for Italian literature, but that seems to be where the similarities ended. In his introduction, Morselli narrated Antonelli's life as a list of arrests, political offenses, and penal sentences. When he was thirteen, Antonelli ran away from his family and began working as a ship hand in Ancona where he was repeatedly disciplined for insubordination. After he became a sailor, he was imprisoned for eight months for desertion in 1867. A year later in 1868, he deserted again, was arrested and then sentenced to six months of navy service. However, a tribunal shortened his sentence, having declared him "esaltato" ("a fanatic"). Again in 1869, he was transferred to another disciplinary unit in Portoferraio (on the island of Elba) to serve out a year's sentence after publishing a "most violent" article in the Genoese journal *Il Dovere*, for which he was declared "beyond correction."³³ While in the military penal unit, he was held in isolation, kept to a diet of bread and water, and punished corporally. Later, a military tribunal in Florence sentenced him to another two years in jail. After being transferred to Savona, he fought with Carabinieri officers and his sentence was extended. He finally returned to military penal service, where he was punished repeatedly and then placed on indefinite leave in 1873. That same year he was again arrested and detained for 40 days and then given a *foglio di via obbligatorio* (obligatory

³⁰ Ibid., 315–364. For longer discussions of Enrico Morselli, see Patrizia Guarnieri, *Individualità Difformi. La Psichiatria Antropologica di Enrico Morselli* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1986); Michele Schiavone, "I Fondamenti Scientifici della Psichiatria nel Pensiero di Enrico Morselli," in *Bioetica e Psichiatria* (Bologna: Pàtron, 1990), 83–154; Lino Rossi, *Enrico Morselli e Scienze dell'Uomo nell'Età del Positivismo*, vol. 6, *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria* (Reggio Emilia: Unità Sanitaria Locale, 1984).

³¹ See Enrico Morselli, *Il Suicidio: Saggio di Statistica Morale Comparata* (Milan: Dumolard, 1879); Enrico Morselli, *Manuale di Semeiotica delle Malattie Mentali*, 2 vols. (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1913); Enrico Morselli, *Psicologia e "Spiritismo": Impressioni e Note Critiche sui Fenomeni Medianici di Eusapia Paladino*, 2 vols. (Turin: Bocca, 1908); Enrico Morselli, *La Psicanalisi. Studio ed Appunti Critici*, 2 vols. (Milan: Bocca, 1926); Enrico Morselli, *Antropologia Generale: L'Uomo Secondo la Teoria dell'Evoluzione: Lezioni Dettate nelle Università di Torino e di Genova* (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1911). See also Patrizia Guarnieri, "Between Soma and Psyche: Morselli and Psychiatry in Late-Nineteenth-Century Italy," trans. Terri Philips, in *The Anatomy of Madness: Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, vol. 3, *The Asylum and its Psychiatry*, eds. William F. Bynum, Roy Porter, and Michael Shepherd (New York: Routledge, 1988), 102–124; Maria Teresa Brancaccio, "'The Fatal Tendency of Civilized Society': Enrico Morselli's Suicide, Moral Statistics, and Positivism in Italy," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 3 (Spring 2013): 700–715; Maria Teresa Brancaccio, "Enrico Morselli's Psychology and 'Spiritism': Psychiatry, Psychology, and Psychical Research in Italy in the Decades Around 1900," *Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, 48 (2014): 75–84.

³² Quoted in Giuseppe Portigliotti, "Il Maestro: la Vita, le Opere," *Quaderni di Psichiatria XVI*, nos. 1–2 (Jan.–Feb. 1929): 7–15.

³³ Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 23.

deportation order) before being arrested and detained another month. Thereafter he was transported to his hometown. He was then arrested and imprisoned in Morrovalle, and again in 1875 in Rome for *vagabondaggio* (vagrancy). After being detained without trial, he was deported. Later the same year, he was arrested for sending an insulting letter to the assistant prefect another town, and was incarcerated for 46 days, and then was sentenced to another six months under special surveillance. He was arrested again for idleness and vagrancy, and returned to jail. Once there he claimed he was ill and asked to be transferred to an insane asylum. His request was granted. After being interned, however, the asylum staff could not cope with him due to his “instigating behavior,” and his attempts to cause “disorder” and “turmoil” among the other patients. He was subsequently transferred to the asylum of Macerata in May 1877.³⁴ After his stay in Morselli’s care, he spent most of the rest of his life in various psychiatric hospitals.

Morselli and Antonelli had a perhaps begrudging but mutual respect for one another.³⁵ According to Antonelli’s recollections, when he arrived at the Santa Croce Asylum, Morselli treated him with curiosity and care. Morselli examined him “in minute detail,” and when Antonelli fainted sometime later and was carried to bed by four servants, Morselli rushed over to revive him.³⁶ While Antonelli described Morselli as a scrupulous and humane doctor, a “biblioteca ambulante bene ordinata” (“well-ordered walking library”),³⁷ Morselli described Antonelli as an intelligent and gifted patient, a “[b]ellissimo esempio di pazzo di genio, un vero genio [...] si eleva dall’operajo più umile al professore di Università” (“most beautiful example of an ingenious insane person, a true genius [who] had elevated himself from a most humble laborer to [the level of] a University professor”).³⁸ Morselli compared Antonelli with other writers who suffered from mental illness and wrote biographies, including Saint Augustine, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, sculptor Benvenuto Cellini, and more contemporary figures such as Count Vittorio Alfieri (1749–1803), as well as physician Maurizio Bufalini (1787–1875). Later, when Antonelli was transferred to another hospital, he managed to escape and was then returned to Santa Croce “legato come Cristo in croce” (“bound like Christ to the cross”). Moved by the sight, Antonelli wrote, Morselli protected him against the attending orderlies, yelling, “Guai [...] a chi gli torce un capello” (“There’s trouble for whoever twists a hair [on his head]”).³⁹

Despite the esteem they had for one another, the doctor and patient’s political differences were stark. When Morselli delivered a similar (if not the same) address honoring Vittorio Emanuele at the asylum a year earlier, Antonelli objected to his speech. The patient later wrote, “volevo confutarlo... ma egli mi fece chiudere nelle stanze dell’aiuto ... Ed aveva a ragione” (“I wanted to refute him... but he had me locked up in the rooms of [an] assistant.... And he was right [to do so]”).⁴⁰ A similar incident occurred during the commemoration of a local Risorgimento hero. Giovan Virgilio explained that Morselli had “Portatesi al manicomio le associazioni anticlericali colle rispettive bandiere per accompagnare all’ultima dimora la salma di Apollo Gemelli di Loreto, temendo ch’io mi eccitassi a tal vista, mi segregò. Ed aveva più ragione che mai!!” (“brought anticlerical associations to the insane asylum with their respective banners to accompany the

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 24.

³⁵ See Paolo Francesco Peloso, “Enrico Morselli e Giovanni Antonelli. L’alienista e il ‘suo’ genio,” *Rivista Sperimentale di Freniatria* (2019): 147–169.

³⁶ Antonelli, *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, 67.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 68.

³⁸ Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 21.

³⁹ Antonelli, *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, 74.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 67. Ellipses in original.

remains of Apollo Gemelli of Loreto to their final dwelling place. Fearing that I would become excited at the sight, he had me isolated. And he was righter than ever!!”).⁴¹

The clinical nature of *Un Genio da Manicomio* hides the personal relationship between doctor and patient which certainly shaped it. At the same time, both parties were invested in promoting Antonelli as a genius. Antonelli aimed to disclose with his biography “un cuor trafitto dai più atroci strali, il quale, a te aprendosi, totalmente in te confida” (“a heart pierced by the most dreadful arrows, which, in opening up to you, wholly confides in you”), and allow readers to “desumer [...] chiara una diagnosi” (“deduce a clear diagnosis”) from the “*precoce* tenor di mia vita” (“*precocious* tenor of [his] life”) and “incolto e vilipeso intelletto” (“wild and defamed intellect”).⁴² Likewise, Morselli wanted to offer a “Bellissimo esempio di pazzo di genio, un vero genio da Manicomio” (“most beautiful example of an ingenious insane person, a true genius from the Insane Asylum”) whose autobiography was a “modello del genere” (“model of the genre”).⁴³ Morselli encouraged Antonelli’s poetry, fiction, and his autobiography, supplied him with paper, and served as Antonelli’s “mecenate serio” (“trustworthy patron”), providing him with books and editorial suggestions as well as criticism which, Antonelli writes, “l’ accettavo sempre con deferenza” (“I always accepted with deference”). When Antonelli escaped from another asylum and returned to Santa Croce, he told Morselli about the hunger and abuse he had suffered. Years later Antonelli recounted that Morselli smiled and said “Domani verrete in ufficio per stendere questo nuovo capitolo della vostra autobiografia” (“Tomorrow you shall come to the office to write out this new chapter of your autobiography”). Desiring to “let off steam,” Antonelli wrote a fifty-page booklet. Antonelli’s writing may have been therapeutic, but it also supplied Morselli with evidence for his own research on the nature of genius and political insanity.⁴⁴

4. Stories into Symptoms

At the end of his autobiography, Antonelli felt the “impulse to reveal” the true nature of his disease, which he had kept a “mystery.” He wrote, “Il mio malore adunque riassunto in una proposizione è definibile in *una prostrazione di spirito profondissima, fino ad ora impercettibile mercè ad un MIRACOLO di ragione messa in campo da una temprà piucchè EROICA*” (“the summarized hypothesis for my illness [is]... a most profound prostration of the spirit until now imperceptible thanks to a MIRACLE of reason in place of a temperament that is above all HEROIC”).⁴⁵ Morselli believed his patient’s self-assessment was accurate. He commented, “Importantissima per la Scienza è questa auto-diagnosi di un malato, ove accanto alla coscienza d’essere pazzo sta il delirio di grandezza il più spiccato, ove la certezza ed il dubbio oscillano stranamente, ove infine non sai dove finisca la ragione e dove cominci la pazzia” (“This self-diagnosis of an ill person is of utmost importance for Science, where alongside the consciousness of being insane is the most pronounced delusion of grandeur, where certainty and doubt oscillate strangely, [and] where, in the end, no one knows where reason ends and madness begins”).⁴⁶ Antonelli exemplified the paradox of modern insanity that was most difficult for psychiatrists to explain to the public: he was one of those who “ragionano, pensano, sentono, vogliono, amano, odiano, come i savi, sebbene in un

⁴¹ Ibid., 67. Apollo Gemelli was incarcerated in 1853 for revolutionary resistance.

⁴² Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 31.

⁴³ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁴ Antonelli, *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, 68–69.

⁴⁵ Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 149.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

ordine patologico di idee [...] vi sono pazzi i quali hanno la coscienza di esser tali, ma non la forza di guarirsi spontaneamente il delirio” (“reason, think, feel, desire, love, [and] hate, like the sane, albeit within a pathological order of ideas [...] there are those who are conscious of being insane, but do not have the strength to spontaneously heal their delirium”).⁴⁷ By publishing Antonelli’s biography together with his analysis of symptoms and explanation of diagnosis, Morselli demonstrated “pazzia ragionante” (“reasoning insanity”) to the public, and specifically the danger it presented to Italian politics.

Reasoning insanity was one of several psychiatric diagnoses that uncoupled insanity and a lack of reason during the nineteenth century. Philippe Pinel first developed the notion of *manie sans délire*, and James Cowles Prichard (1786–1848) coined the term “moral insanity” in 1835.⁴⁸ In these diagnoses and others, the sufferer retained reason but suffered from chronic disorders of feeling, temperament, or morality. In Italy, psychiatrist Andrea Verga (1811–1895) explained that these were the most common characteristics of asylum patients, who, “born with a shrewd mind and who received an adequate education, sometimes make such fine remarks, express such epigrammatic concepts, make such curious comparisons that they would be worthy of the most rational people.”⁴⁹ This “mild degree of insanity” inherited and manifested in “sentimental or instinctual eccentricities.” Despite their exaggerations in character and feeling, they often appeared sane even to trained doctors and to the detriment of asylums who were accused of practicing faulty medicine. Along with demonstrating the “similarities of reason with insanity” and the difficulties in distinguishing the two states, reasoning insanity was also hard to explain outside of the asylum, where it could be confounded with folk notions of madness.⁵⁰ Morselli’s generally agreed with these descriptions, emphasizing reasoning insanity’s ties to degeneration, the difficulties in identifying a madness bearing the semblance of sanity,⁵¹ and the “exaggeration of passions and perversion of the intellect [which were] sufficient forces to elevate [someone] to the greatest heights.”⁵²

In addition to reasoning insanity, Morselli further diagnosed his patient as a *pazzo di genio* (insane genius). Lombroso’s theory that genius was a “special morbid condition”⁵³ and byproduct of degeneration gained increasing currency in the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁵⁴ The genius-insanity debate conflated the mentally gifted with the mentally vulnerable, not only proposing a biological explanation for talented and exceptional individuals, but also an explanation for mental illness among Italy’s leaders and icons. Lombroso captured the radical and subversive nature of his theory well when he acknowledged the objection that had been made: “How, in fact, can one suppress a feeling of horror at the thought of associating those individuals who represent the highest manifestations of the human spirit with idiots and criminals?”⁵⁵ Morselli embraced this theory but further stipulated that in addition to *genii alienati* (insane geniuses), there were also the

⁴⁷ Ibid., 23.

⁴⁸ See David W. Jones, *Disordered Personalities and Crime: An Analysis of the History of Moral Insanity* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

⁴⁹ Andrea Verga, “Sulla Pazzia Ragionante,” *Archivio Italiano per le Malattie Nervose e Più Particolarmente per le Alienazioni Mentali*, 4 (1867). Translated in *Anthology of Italian Psychiatric Texts*, ed. by Mario Maj, Filippo M. Ferro (Chichester: Wiley & Sons, 2002), 67–75, 68.

⁵⁰ Verga, “Sulla Pazzia Ragionante,” 72.

⁵¹ See Eugenio Tanzi, *Trattato delle Malattie Mentali* (Milan: Società Editrice Libreria, 1905), 247.

⁵² Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 7.

⁵³ Cesare Lombroso, *The Man of Genius* (London: Walter Scott, 1891), v.

⁵⁴ See Cesare Lombroso, *Genio e Follia*.

⁵⁵ Lombroso, *The Man of Genius*, v.

alienati di genio (ingenious insane).⁵⁶ Genius resulted from the “il soverchio sviluppo della ragione e dell’intelligenza è spesso una malattia del sistema nervoso” (“excessive development of reason and intelligence [which was] often a disease of the nervous system”).⁵⁷ While Antonelli was not the equal of insane geniuses such as “Socrates, Pascal, Tasso, [and] Rousseau” he still had significant mental gifts alongside mental disturbances.⁵⁸ What seemed like a “bisticcio” (“pun”) or “calembourg” (“word play”) was in fact a critical condition in which the patient retained much mental force, and sometimes “tanta forza di ragionamento da eludere qualche volta il medico, sempre poi i profani” (“a power of reasoning that sometimes eluded the doctor, and always even more so the layman”).⁵⁹

For Morselli, it was not only Antonelli’s ability to reason and his talent that set him apart; his focus on politics made him a patient of particular interest and concern for the nation. Morselli described Antonelli as a “mattoide politico” (“political lunatic”). Lombroso’s neologism *mattoidismo* applied mostly to men who were often successful professionals: bureaucrats, doctors, theologians, soldiers, professors, and counselors of state.⁶⁰ Showing few physical signs of degeneration, these intelligent men frequently passed for sane. However, they often had a “mania” for writing, were obsessed with politics, and were “morbidly exaggerated in their energy for work that lies outside their own field and beyond their own modest capabilities.”⁶¹ At the core of the *mattoidismo* diagnosis was an exaggeration of ethics or feelings, and Morselli argued that the foundation of Antonelli’s insanity was his emotional character.⁶² From a young age, Antonelli recalls that he had a “susceptibilità singolarissima, la quale rendeami or pio ed ora irascibile all’eccesso; ero molto proclive al pianto” (“most singular susceptibility which rendered me sometimes charitable and sometimes irascible in excess; I was very prone to crying”), which, according to Morselli, almost always developed into insanity.⁶³ Although Antonelli would later renounce the politics of his “derelitto giovane” (“derelict youth”), he continued to have extreme emotional reactions to politics and social order.⁶⁴ He suffered from a fear of persecution, “all’Autorità un sentimento d’odio” (“hatred toward Authority”), exaggerated patriotism, and an “antipatia per tutto ciò che riveli superiorità di condizione sociale” (“antipathy for those [of] superior social condition”). It was precisely his “esasperazione dei sentimenti” (“exasperation of sentiments”) of having a “missione sovraumana” (“superhuman mission”) which evidenced his mental illness.⁶⁵

Disordered politics reflected a disordered mind. According to Morselli, Antonelli’s exaggerated feelings made him susceptible to false beliefs, which led him to political dissent and

⁵⁶ Lombroso disagreed with Morselli’s assessment. Lombroso argued that Antonelli was a “grafoman[e] querelant[e], politic[o], o meglio criminal[e]” (“litigious, political, or better yet criminal graphomaniac”), but that Antonelli’s writings “non passino la mediocrità” (“did not pass mediocrity”), save his autobiography. Instead of genius, Antonelli’s poetry and prose reflected a pathological over-evaluation of his intellectual or artistic merits. Lombroso, *Genio e Follia in Rapporto alla Medicina Legale*, 314, 343.

⁵⁷ Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 10.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 158.

⁶⁰ Cesare Lombroso, *Criminal Man*, trans. Mary Gibson and Nicole Hahn Rafter (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 284.

⁶¹ See Trevor Calafato, “*Gli Anarchici* and Lombroso’s Theory of Political Crime,” in *The Cesare Lombroso Handbook*, eds. Paul Knepper and Per Jørgen Ystehede (New York: Routledge), 47–71, 54.

⁶² Morselli, *Un Genio da Manicomio*, 44–45.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 54, 55, 109, 63, 145.

social insurgence. When madness erupted in their “poveri ed anarchici cervelli” (“terrible and anarchical minds”),⁶⁶ the politically insane saw political office holders as well as members of the upper class as the enemy. Like other political mattoids who lived in “aperta ribellione” (“open rebellion”) against public morality, and who “dubitino del loro stato morboso, e anzi, ritenendoli come uomini superiori” (“doubting their own morbid state and even holding themselves to be superior”), Antonelli placed too much stock in his “forza di ingegno, ed energia di carattere” (“the power of [his] genius and energy of character”).⁶⁷ According to Morselli, Antonelli was “un politicante in senso rivoluzionario, un demagogo, un socialista, un utopista di prima forza” (“a petty politician in the revolutionary sense, a demagogue, socialist, and utopian of the first order”),⁶⁸ and an “odiatore delle classi agiate” (“hater of the upper classes”), who saw himself as a “un povero genio vilipeso” (“a poor defamed genius”) struggling against autocrats and abusers of political power.⁶⁹ However, Antonelli overestimated and exaggerated his capacities. Morselli argued that Antonelli was only able to maintain his convictions through “l’ignoranza della vera natura e scopo delle leggi sociali” (“the ignorance of the true nature and scope of social laws”).⁷⁰

Political insanity such as Antonelli’s not only presented a danger to the patient, but to the nation as a whole. Morselli lamented that Italy had become full of the politically insane from north to south:

[...] i professori politicanti ed intriganti; perpetui candidati alle elezioni politiche, e mai onorati di un voto solo; i deputati in cerca d’un collegio, e ricchi di programmi paradossali: gli uomini che volgono al volger del vento, e oggi monarchici, e domani repubblicani, posdomani costituzionali, vivono in continua lotta coll’autorità, colla disciplina, coll’ordine, scandalosi nella vita privata, pessimi nella vita pubblica.

([...] Petty political professors and schemers, incessant candidates in political elections who are never honored with a single vote; parliament members in search of a constituency and full of paradoxical programs; men that turn with the shifting winds who are today monarchists, tomorrow republicans, and the day after constitutionalists, they live in continual struggle with authority, discipline, order, are scandalous in their private lives and worse in their public life.)⁷¹

Convinced of their own merit, they spread their beliefs and ideas through popular print: “occupano i giornali di sè, sia colla stranezza delle teorie propuguate, sia coll’insistenza con cui nessuno dà un soldo, riforme che ciascuno crederebbe pazze se non fossero gettate a pascolo della profana pubblicità” (“they occupy the newspapers with their strange theories, with an insistence on reforms for which no one would give two cents, and which everyone would believe crazy if they were not put out to pasture by the profane public”).⁷² Morselli argued that by publishing “a centinaia i pubblicatori di giornali rivoluzionarii, di periodici deformi ed osceni, di libri senza scopo, di opuscoli spavaldi e deliranti” (“hundreds of revolutionary journals, misshapen and

⁶⁶ Ibid., 21.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 153.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 155.

⁷¹ Ibid., 18.

⁷² Ibid., 17.

obscene periodicals, books without a point, and arrogant and nonsensical pamphlets”),⁷³ the politically insane were responsible for the many of the bloody revolutionary conflicts, such as the Vendée of 1793 and the Paris Commune of 1871. Understanding and treating political insanity, therefore, was necessary to securing social and political order.

5. Conclusion

Autoritratto

(Self-portrait

Ampia e increspata ho fronte, occhi loquaci;
ispido e folto crin, semiante irato;
labbra grosse, sarcastiche, mordaci;
acceso capo e petto travagliato.

A broad and wrinkled brow, loquacious eyes;
a bristly and thick mane, seemingly irate;
thick lips, sarcastic, biting;
a passionate head and an afflicted breast.

Robuste membra; idee talvolta audaci,
talvolta dubbie; sempre concitato
il parlare, il gestir; tristi e tenaci
le rimembranze del fatal passato.

Brawny limbs; sometimes daring ideas,
sometimes doubts; always agitated
talking, managing; sadly and steadfastly
the memories of the deadly past.

Or lento e grave, or lungo e svelto il passo;
solo annoiato, in compagnia sdegnoso;
l'ingegno e il cor frementi, il braccio lasso.

Now slow and solemn, now a long, fast
stride; Only tired in disdainful company;
The genius, trembling heart, exhausted arm,

In strana guisa fatto procelloso!
Lotto congresso e contro i cor di sasso...;
e morte sol potrà darmi riposo.

What a strange guise — tempestuous fate!
I fight against it and hearts of stone...;
And only death can give me rest.)⁷⁴

Antonelli's stay in the Santa Croce Asylum came to an end in 1880 after he began showing signs of being “pazzo per amore” (“crazy for love”). He had begun to stare at Morselli's sister from afar and approach her at festivities at the asylum. But the only real “proof” that Morselli offered in a letter to Lombroso was that Antonelli suddenly gave his sister a hard slap out of the blue at a Carnival celebration when, Morselli believed, Antonelli had failed to get her attention.⁷⁵ Antonelli was transferred to the asylum in Fermo. Although they did not part on the best of terms, Antonelli later wrote, “Se mi lagnassi di Morselli sarei ingiusto. Egli è molto eccitabile, ma d'indole buonissima; è l'alienista più leale ch'io m'abbia conosciuto. Fatalità non ci fece andar d'accordo, perch'egli è troppo pieno di sé e della sua scienza; io son troppo pieno della mia sventura” (“It would be unjust for me to complain about Morselli. He is very excitable, but has a very good character; he is the most fair alienist I have ever known. Fate did not let us get along, because he is too full of himself and his science; I am too full of my own misfortunes”).⁷⁶

Antonelli spent the remainder of his life in and out of insane asylums after his stay at Asilo Santa Croce, and he continued to write poetry, prose, and autobiographical texts. As his poem

⁷³ Ibid., 18.

⁷⁴ Giovanni Antonelli, “Autoritratto,” in *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, 168.

⁷⁵ Letter from Enrico Morselli to Cesare Lombroso, August 24, 1880. This letter is archived at the Museo di Antropologia Criminale “Cesare Lombroso” – Università di Torino.

⁷⁶ Antonelli, *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, 68.

“Self-Portrait”—which echoes so clearly the physiological and emotional descriptions used by alienists—reflects, Antonelli’s self-understanding continued to be shaped by his psychiatric treatment and assessments. At the same time, Antonelli also resisted the control of the psychiatric gaze: even when Morselli had him photographed for Lombroso, Antonelli refused to sit in a manner he didn’t like.⁷⁷ While Antonelli never denied being insane, he continued to debate the diagnosis itself. Years later, Antonelli addressed Morselli’s assessment by retorting:

Caro Morselli, ora due parole a me: voi sapete ch’io sono un *alienato* che, a forza di starci insieme, ne so al pari de’ maestri alienisti e conosco a menadito tutti quei paroloni diagnostici ed anamnestici, di cui han sempre piena la bocca. Orbene, non offendetevi, se un vostro allievo di tal fatta vi dice in faccia: voi mi avete sbagliato la diagnosi [...]. Io non sono *delirante di grandezza*: anzi mi stimai sempre molto meno di quel che valgo.

(Dear Morselli, now a couple words from me: you know that I am a lunatic who, by persisting in keeping it together, I know no less than the master psychiatrists and I understand perfectly well all those big diagnostic and anamnestic words which they always have in their mouths. So don’t be offended if one of your pupils of that type says to your face: you have mistaken your diagnosis of my condition [...] I do not have *delusions of grandeur*: on the contrary I always esteem myself much less than I am worth.)⁷⁸

Instead, Antonelli presented a new self-diagnosis: “uno strano miscuglio di timido e di fiero colla smania di voler sembrare più fiero di quel che sono. La mia pazzia è il cretinismo ipocrita e malvagio altrui, Datemi un ambiente meno indegno di me, e mi troverete di lunga men pazzo degli altrui” (“a strange mixture of timidity and pride with the mania of wanting to seem prouder than I am. My insanity is a hypocritical cretinism and a wickedness toward others. Put me in a setting less unworthy of me, and you will find that I am much less crazy than the others”).⁷⁹

Morselli’s attempt to train the public to recognize political insanity did not succeed. He lived through a tumultuous period in Italian history in which the legitimacy and power of the royal family were questioned, through violent conflicts between right and left, and witnessed the rise of fascism. There is no evidence that Morselli ever questioned his own political allegiances and patriotism. In these moments, the political behaviors and characteristics that Morselli would likely have read as symptoms of madness were not tampered by science. The same fears that Morselli had—of political demagoguery, the spreading of unfounded ideas and extremism through print media, and the emotional extremism that he saw as evidence of mental disorder—had gained viability and legitimacy as political strategy.

For Morselli, the significance of the Antonelli case was wide-reaching, and the publication of Antonelli’s biography was one of many instances in which the psychiatrist explored the boundaries between political action and insanity. In the wake of Unification (for Morselli a legitimate and healthy political movement), the Italian nation was still in its infancy and vulnerable to the political chicanery and demagoguery of those figures whose genius and disease could delude

⁷⁷ Letter from Enrico Morselli to Cesare Lombroso August 24, 1880.

⁷⁸ Antonelli, *Il Libro di un Pazzo*, 69–70.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

the masses.⁸⁰ An examination of political insanity within *Un Genio da Manicomio* reveals the way in which political etiologies were developed, how psychiatrists evaluated the life histories of their patients, how diagnoses were negotiated or developed between doctor and patient, and how political moments of rupture and change reverberated in psychiatric practice. Furthermore, it demonstrates how political feeling and allegiance contributed to the symptomatology of insanities that were often virtually indistinguishable from beliefs and emotions of the sane, except in degree.

While nineteenth-century Italian psychiatrists may have tried to distinguish insanity from sanity, they did not necessarily presume them to be opposites. Morselli would have likely agreed with Michel Foucault's point that psychiatry itself reconfigured and sanitized our understanding of madness, which was previously "at the very heart of reason and truth."⁸¹ At the same time, Morselli adamantly denied any legitimacy to Antonelli's political beliefs: a man of genius with insights into the truth did not necessarily deserve a political voice or influence. The close relationship between madness and recent political history did not sit comfortably with Morselli, and his own psychiatric construction of madness was an earnest—almost desperate—attempt to purge Italian politics of its less-than-sane actors. For Morselli, Antonelli's biography offered an opportunity to elaborate and articulate the discourse between ideology and pathology, to use Laure Murat's phrasing.⁸² And while he reached very different conclusions in the end, for Antonelli, his biography offered the same.

⁸⁰ See Daphne Rozenblatt, "La Politica della Giustizia nel Processo Musolino del 1902," in *La Politica dei Sentimenti: Linguaggi, Spazi e Canali della Politicizzazione nell'Italia del Lungo Ottocento*, eds. Marco Manfredi and Emanuela Minuto (Rome: Viella, 2018); Ibid., "Scientific Expertise and the Politics of Emotions in the 1902 Trial of Giuseppe Musolino," *History of Human Sciences* 30, no. 3 (2017): 25–49; and Ibid., "Work: Disease, Cure, and National Ethos in Modern Italy," *Social History of Medicine* 31, no. 2 (May 2018).

⁸¹ Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage Books, 2013), 14.

⁸² Murat, *The Man Who Thought He Was Napoleon*, 4.