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The legacy of Cesare Lombroso and criminal anthropology in the post-war Italian police: a study of the culture, narrative and memory of a post-fascist institution

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Abstract

The article examines the employment in post-war Italy of positivist scientific policing originally inspired by the work of the criminal anthropologist Cesare Lombroso at the end of the nineteenth century and subsequently developed at the scientific policing institute (*Scuola Superiore di Polizia*) in Rome. It analyses how the post-war police addressed the fascist regime's employment of scientific policing for oppressive purposes and how far post-war scientific policing reflected the legacy of fascism. The article argues that post-war police narratives stressed the international importance of Lombroso and Italian criminal anthropology in order to 'normalize' the activities of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* during the fascist period and legitimize its work after the Second World War. Positivist criminological theories continued to influence police repression and criminal investigations in post-war Italy. However, the extent to which police officers and officials working outside the *Scuola Superiore* were convinced by such theories is questionable.

Keywords: Cesare Lombroso, criminal anthropology, police, fascism, post-war period

Introduction

In February 1950, a police official, Giorgio Florita (1950a), contributed an article about the causes of crime to the journal of the Italian Public Security Guard (*Agenti di Pubblica Sicurezza*), *Polizia moderna*. The article questioned the validity of the theories of the nineteenth-century criminal anthropologist, Cesare Lombroso, famed for the discovery of the 'born criminal', theories which from the start of the twentieth century had influenced Italian scientific policing. Florita presented Lombroso's theories as arguing that crime was largely determined by the constitutional degeneracy of the criminal and thus a biological phenomenon. Referring to his personal experience as a young official during the 1920s, Florita claimed, with some irony, that:

I remember the deep impression with which the lectures of Prof. Ottolenghi [a disciple of Lombroso] left me long ago in 1925 at the Scuola Superiore di Polizia in Rome (...): only Raffaello's madonnas and Della Robbia's putti could be spared from the accusation of showing clear traces of physical degeneration. Besides true and proper physical defects, a light facial asymmetry, a prognathism of the lip, or thick hair covering a normally exposed forehead were sufficient (...) to reveal a definite element of degeneration and therefore a fatal predisposition to delinquency. In those days I had much respect for science (1950a, 12).

Florita went on to explain how whilst working for the Milan police encounters with numerous criminals allowed him to ascertain that external rather than biological factors caused crime. He added that if 'Lombrosian' criminologists discovered degenerative characteristics among the prison population, such somatic and constitutional traits belonged to the lowest social classes 'who live in poor housing without air, without light, who do not have enough bread, who are without clothes, who are without medicine, who do not have the opportunity to receive an education' (1950a, 12). On the above grounds, Florita concluded that crime was not an 'abnormal' phenomenon, but recommended that readers of the article should not be frightened by such a statement. Whoever was born with a normal healthy constitution 'also possesses a natural and, therefore, innate tendency towards crime. Thus is affirmed the complete opposite to the teachings of criminal anthropology' (1950a, 12). Florita followed this up the following month with an article published in the same journal which emphasised the need to identify the causes of crime in society rather than in individuals (1950b).

Though presenting a rather simplified interpretation of Lombroso's theories, Florita's article challenged the positivist criminology which Lombroso's disciple Salvatore Ottolenghi had developed at the scientific policing institute, the *Scuola di Polizia Scientifica* (re-named the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* in 1919), in Rome during the early decades of the twentieth century. In the post-Second World War period, in which the Italian police emerged from twenty years of fascism, Florita's stance might have been expected, given that under the fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, criminal anthropology had often provided theoretical support for the repressive action of the police. Moreover, the international community had recently learnt of the extent of atrocities committed by the Nazis; criminal-biological and genetic theories had helped to inspire the indefinite isolation and elimination of criminals, as well as the murder of Jews, gypsies and the disabled (see Wetzell 2006, 411-12; Wagner 1996, 265-78).

Yet, a survey of Italian police literature (journals, manuals, etc.) during the late 1940s and the 1950s suggests that after the Second World War scientific policing continued to draw on Lombroso's theories, and elaborations of such theories subsequently undertaken at the *Scuola Superiore*, and that these continued to inform the outlook and worldviews of police personnel, with Florita's position representing only a minority of officials (see, for example, Pervilli 1955). Moreover, indicating an element of continuity between the fascist regime and the newly constituted democratic Italian Republic, key exponents of post-war scientific policing had made their careers during the fascist period.

This article examines the narratives and application of scientific policing originally inspired by the work of Lombroso and subsequently developed by his disciples, during the twenty years which followed the end of the fascist dictatorship in Italy. It focuses on employment by the police of criminal anthropology for understanding and treating criminals and particular social 'groups', notably male homosexuals, whilst questioning the extent to which scientific policing was applied with conviction by representatives of law and order beyond the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia*. The article analyses how far post-war Italian scientific policing should be considered a legacy of fascism, rather than only belonging to a longer criminological tradition dating back to the end of the nineteenth century. This is considered against the background of the ambiguous and complex relationship between police scientists and the fascist regime, and can be related to a more general examination of the nature of post-fascist policing and police culture in Italy, and specifically of how (and how far) the experience of twenty years of fascist dictatorship influenced police behaviour and outlooks, in the context in which research on this theme has to-date mainly focused on the policing of politics and protest (see especially della Porta and Reiter 2003).

Moreover, given the nature of many of the primary sources consulted for this analysis (police journals, official reports and treatises, and personnel files), characterised by a notable element of institutional and individual self-representation, the article pays equal attention to the nature of post-war criminological narrative in the police, a narrative which stressed the historical legacy of Lombroso in Italian policing techniques and minimized their employment at the service of fascism. It argues that this represented a strategy to 'normalize' the role of positivist scientific policing (and policing more generally) during the dictatorship and to legitimize the continuation of activities which had been employed under the fascist regime.¹ This speaks to the broader question of how the Italian police, alongside juridical and penitential institutions, overcame recent fascist associations and how they 'negotiated' themselves into the new democratic order and re-positioned themselves within the

international criminological community. It also relates to the question of how the institutional memory of the policing of fascist Italy was constructed after the Second World War. In undertaking this part of the analysis, the article also focuses on figures in the Italian police, both within the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* and in other sections of the *Pubblica Sicurezza*, who were employed during the fascist period and who after the war either continued their careers as police officials or influenced policing in other ways. In some cases their writings contributed to the post-war narratives of ‘normalization’ and legitimization referred to above. Moreover, analysis of staff from the School also serves to illustrate how their treatment by the policing hierarchy reinforced the ‘normality’ and legitimacy of scientific policing during the fascist years.

Background: Criminal anthropology in the liberal and fascist police

Before focusing on the post-war period, an outline of the development of Italian police science in Liberal and fascist Italy, and of the application during these periods of criminal anthropology inspired by Lombroso, is warranted. As Mary Gibson notes, though Lombroso invented the term ‘scientific police’ and advocated the application of positivist theories to the work of the Italian Interior Ministry police (*La Pubblica Sicurezza*), Salvatore Ottolenghi, trained in medicine and an assistant to Lombroso at Turin University, elaborated the concept of ‘scientific police’ and put it into practice, creating a new scientific policing institute in 1903 in Rome, the *Scuola di Polizia Scientifica*, for the training of high-ranking police officials. Positivist criminology constituted ‘the central focus of education at the school’ (Gibson 2002, 135-8). Ottolenghi also developed new categories for classifying criminals, notably psychological ones, which according to Gibson, ‘typified a general trend among Lombroso’s successors to emphasize the mental rather than the physical anomalies of born criminals’ (2002, 138). Students at the School were influenced by Lombroso’s belief that prostitution was the female equivalent of male crime, and that many females were ‘born prostitutes’ (Gibson 1999, 122-3). They were also taught that homosexuals were among those ‘degenerate’ individuals who were pre-disposed to crime (Benadusi 2005, 195).²

The rise of fascism was seen by staff from the School as an opportunity to increase the influence of scientific policing. They stressed, for example, the relevance to fascism of the biographical dossier (*cartella antropo-biografica*), developed by Ottolenghi and his staff from the start of the century to allow the police and prison authorities to determine and record the nature and personality of criminals, in the hope that its use would be expanded (Gibson 2002, 149-50). There is evidence that during the early years of the dictatorship the Interior

Ministry tried to enforce more systematic and accurate use of the dossier.³ While the Fascists, in their refutation of determinism, opposed criminal anthropology in principle, Gibson argues that the regime, encouraged by staff from the School, accepted scientific policing because parts of its theories could be adopted for fascist ends, notably the disciplining of ‘dangerous’ individuals. They also appreciated the national prestige of Italian scientific policing (as exhibited by Ottolenghi’s reputation in the international criminological community), and Ottolenghi’s public admiration of Mussolini and fascism (Gibson 2002, 140-44; 150-51).

The relationship of the trainers to the fascist regime was ambiguous to say the least. While Ottolenghi himself was vocal in his support of fascism (Gibson 2002, 141), there is little evidence that all staff at the School were animated by fascist ideology. However, according to Gibson, ‘they had created a “scientific” rationale for the identification and surveillance of all “dangerous” individuals and were willing to let fascism use it to destroy civil liberties’ (Gibson 2002, 151). Teachings at the School and publications produced by its staff may have encouraged the regime’s persecution of particular ‘groups’. In this regard, the 1931 *Manual of Criminal Anthropology and Psychology*, written by Benigno Di Tullio, professor of criminal anthropology at Rome University who taught at the School, stressed, for example, the pre-disposition of homosexuals, prostitutes and political ‘offenders’ towards crime, often as a result of ‘physio-psychic anomalies’, which, while partly influenced by environmental factors, were still rooted in ‘a mixture of affective dispositions and clearly abnormal tendencies, which are always the expression of an abnormal individuality, precisely like a delinquent constitution’ (1931, 225-6). As a result of his examination of ‘true’ (as opposed to ‘occasional’) homosexual inmates in the prisons of Rome, Di Tullio noted that whilst above all they committed moral crimes, they were also capable of every kind of crime, including theft, fraud and murder, ‘as a consequence of their psycho-physical abnormality and relative predisposition to crime in general’ (1931, 227).⁴ In a similar vein, ‘true’ prostitutes were predisposed to crime as a result of an ‘abnormal, defective and irregular constitution’ (Di Tullio 1931, 230-33). Among political ‘offenders’, Di Tullio mentioned ‘revolutionaries’, among whom there were always ‘atavistic criminals, the weak-minded, the paranoid and fanatical, etc.’, who posed the ‘highest level of dangerousness’ (1931, 237).

If such teachings had their origins well before the rise of fascism, and are, therefore, difficult to label as specifically fascist, their exponents evidently understood that the police and other institutions of the regime could use them to separate (but not necessarily ‘cure’) ‘dangerous’ individuals from the rest of society. This was largely enforced through measures of internal exile (*domicilio coatto* – denominated *confino* from 1926 onwards), which

dramatically increased after Mussolini came to power (Gibson 2002, 159-60). According to Gibson, in 1931 Di Tullio noted in the School's *Bulletin* that the regime was not providing the correct treatment for specific categories of individuals sent to *confino*, but 'skirted the delicate topic of political prisoners and muted his criticism of Ventotene [penal colony] with tactful praise of Bocchini [the Chief of Police] and the fascist regime' (2002, 160). Yet, how convincing scientific policing was to representatives of law and order on the ground is questionable. As Lorenzo Benadusi argues, they were not always able to diagnose with certainty, for example, whether cases of pederasty they encountered were congenital or a consequence of illness, rather than resulting from 'acquired depravity', and they considered homosexuals as generally responsible for their behaviour, whatever the causes.⁵

Di Tullio's ideas about the treatment of criminals also indicates a tendency among positivist theorists 'to eliminate serious discussion of sociological and economic causes of crime' (Gibson 2002, 219). According to a US criminologist and observer in Italy at the time, Ottolenghi reduced the causes of crime above all to 'biological principles' (Monachesi 1936, 401), when in fact Lombroso 'did not ignore the importance of psychological and sociological factors' (Monachesi 1936, 397). Consequently, Ottolenghi's biographical dossier 'places emphasis upon the biological factors' (Monachesi 1936, 401). As evident in the following section, this is significant when we come to analyse the post-war employment of criminological discourse in the police, discourse which, as during the fascist period, constantly cites and venerates Lombroso, whilst ignoring certain aspects of his theory.

The treatment of positivist criminological theory in the post-war Italian police should be considered against the historical background outlined above. However, we need to analyse this in the broader legal environment, in which positivist solutions to the threat of crime continued to be held largely in disrepute. Paul Garfinkel (2016, Chapter 6) argues that although before the First World War positivist criminology enjoyed modest support in the police, in prisons and in mental asylums, it was never widely accepted in Italian public administration; nor was it a compulsory element of Law training. Moreover, in the early 1920s criminal anthropology was discredited further, in the wake of the drafting, and subsequent rejection, of a radical and highly contested new penal code under the auspices of Lombroso's disciple Enrico Ferri. Opposition to Ferri's project, led by the University of Naples law professor, Arturo Rocco, focused above all on its proposal to entirely redefine the nature and purpose of sanctions as theoretically 'non-punitive' and individualized. Garfinkel emphasizes that such opposition reinforced the principles of 'moderate social-defence' jurisprudence, as reflected, for example, in a desire to protect society from 'dangerous'

individuals by increasing the intimidating nature of penal sanctions. These principles would be written into the 1930 'Rocco' criminal code, named after Arturo's brother and Minister of Justice, Alfredo Rocco.

'Normalizing' and Legitimizing Post-War Italian Scientific Policing: the Narrative of Ugo Sorrentino

In November 1947, Ugo Sorrentino, Director of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* in the post-war period, delivered a paper at the first international congress on 'Social Defence', organized by the newly founded *Société Internationale de Défense Sociale*, which took place at San Remo (Italy).⁶ In the course of the paper, Sorrentino, who had been employed at the School throughout his career,⁷ reminded his audience that:

all the Italian police have been unequivocally in favour of the new criminological doctrines since when, around 1902, Salvatore Ottolenghi, a disciple of Lombroso, ignoring the initial scepticism of the majority, and as desired by the General Directorate of Public Security, created the *Scuola di Polizia Scientifica* which received, elaborated, applied and divulged studies relating to anthropological, psychological and biographical knowledge of the criminal, placing the Italian police at the helm of progress (1955, 221).

Sorrentino went on to claim that the 'biological orientation which the Italian police gave to all of its functions spread to police forces abroad', and the 'important practical results achieved' also drew the attention of magistrates, jurists and penitential experts alike to 'Lombrosian doctrines' (1955, 222). Moreover, he argued, if an international congress like the one he was speaking at was possible, this was also thanks to the Italian police which from the start of the century demonstrated how biological doctrines on criminality, more than any other doctrine, were a guiding force for understanding criminals and crime (1955, 222). Sorrentino also named Di Tullio as 'one of the major exponents of criminal anthropology', stressing that he was a previous pupil of the *Scuola di Polizia Scientifica*, who elaborated his studies and was enabled to perfect his doctrines there (1955, 221-2).

What appears evident in Sorrentino's discourse is an attempt to legitimize the work of the Italian police in the international criminological community in the light of Italy's discredited status following its aggressive alliance with Nazi Germany against the democratic world. This is also mirrored in publications about the School. In the preface to the first edition of Sorrentino's treatise, *La scienza contro il crimine* (1946), the Chief of Police, Luigi

Ferrari, emphasized the recognition which the Allied police had given to Sorrentino (1946, 7). In the main text, Sorrentino explains how the Allies entrusted him with the re-organization of the School and its affiliated centres throughout liberated Italy (1946, 153). Placing this role in a broader 'anti-fascist' frame, Sorrentino explained how in July 1944 the School's expertise was employed for the identification of the remains of victims of the 'Nazi-fascist' Ardeatine Caves massacre, which had taken place the previous March (1946, 161-4).

Returning to Sorrentino's San Remo paper, he distances the work of the Italian police from the machinations of the dictatorship (which is not actually mentioned) by stressing how Public Security officials had strongly disapproved of the 'hybrid accommodation between [juridical] classicism and positivism' which had inspired the [Rocco] criminal code. This had on the one hand led to recognition of the biological causes behind the 'dangerous' nature of criminals, but only resulted in the administering of severer punishments (1955, 222-3). Such a statement ignored the fact that staff from the School had courted the fascist regime in spite of its intensified punishment of 'dangerous' individuals, which Sorrentino now claimed had been unjust.

Sorrentino's participation at the San Remo conference should be considered in the broader context in which Italy was allegedly rehabilitated within the international criminological sphere after the defeat of fascism. In this regard, the Bulletin of the *Société Internationale de Défense Sociale*, cited the speech of the Prosecutor General, Leon Cornil, to the Court of Cassation at Brussels in September 1951, which, commenting on the development of the social defence movement, noted that:

Italy is the cradle of criminal law and of modern criminal science. Italians are rightly proud of this and certainly do not expect their glory to be allowed to pale. Thought, repressed by fascism, has strikingly taken its revenge in Italy since the liberation ('Le mouvement de défense sociale' 1952, 6).

The above words somewhat distort the reality in which the 1930 Rocco criminal code had enabled fascist Italy to offer a new penal model beyond her borders (Marques 2013, 61-3). In any case, the participation after the war of Italian criminal anthropologists at international conferences and their presence on transnational networks allowed them to legitimately claim their roles as professionals in the broader context of an Italian criminological tradition which pre-dated fascism.⁸ In this regard, during the late 1940s, both Sorrentino and Di Tullio were on the advisory committee of the *Rivista di Difesa Sociale*, the journal of the *Société*

Internationale de Défense Sociale, while Di Tullio led the Italian delegation at the International Conference on Juvenile Delinquency, which took place at Geneva in April and May 1947 ('La Conferenza Internazionale sulla Delinquenza Minorile' 1947, 209).

However, Sorrentino almost certainly overstressed the influence of Lombroso beyond Italy, ignoring the fact that his impact upon criminal justice at the end of the nineteenth century and during the early years of the twentieth century had subsequently diminished. Moreover, the biological aspects of Lombroso's theories, which Sorrentino stressed as important, had met the widest criticism.⁹ An overview of police and criminology journals in Germany during the Allied occupation and the early years of the Federal Republic suggests that the influences of Lombroso and criminal biology in determining the causes of crime and nature of criminals were treated with caution. Lombroso was recognised as a major historical figure in criminology, whose theories, however, were never sufficiently verified.¹⁰ While this suggests a dissociation from the biologically-oriented police measures of the Nazi period, which had distant roots in Lombroso's ideas (see Wagner 1996, 267-80), it also reflects the broader historical context of German criminology dating back to the end of the nineteenth century which was characterized by a notable tension between hereditary and environmental explanations for criminal behaviour (see Wetzell 2006). Nevertheless, there is some evidence that in police circles beyond Italy Lombroso's influence survived into the post-Second World War period. A book which an inspector of the Paris *Police judiciaire* wrote on criminal tattoos in 1950, for example, which compared criminals with primitive peoples, 'made no reference to the controversial nature of the Italian's theories, beyond noting in passing that Lombroso's ideas had been "somewhat wide of the mark"' (Renneville 2013, 288-9).

Sorrentino's writings are fairly emblematic of the ambiguity underlining the attitude of staff at the School to fascism. In his personal case, he could make convincing claims to exonerate himself from possible accusations of *faziosità fascista* (fascist leanings) in the aftermath of the defeat of the dictatorship. He joined the Fascist Party in 1932, the year in which membership became obligatory for state personnel, though his membership was backdated to 1925 because he had been a combatant in the First World War. In November 1943, during the Nazi occupation, Sorrentino requested not to be transferred, alongside large numbers of state personnel, from Rome to the North to serve Mussolini's puppet regime, the Italian Social Republic (RSI). This effectively amounted to disassociation from the RSI, which retired him from service in February 1944. After the war, his bosses stated that he had not wanted to be transferred to the North because he had always opposed fascism and that he had deliberately provoked his retirement in order to avoid having to swear an oath to the RSI.

They also stated that he had protected Jewish citizens during the Nazi occupation and that he had been involved in the partisan Resistance.¹¹ If we should not doubt such claims, Sorrentino's position is equally representative of how state personnel were also able to wash their hands of any suggestion that they had supported fascism, by treating their professional activities as if they had been detached from the ideological aspects of the regime or its more sinister machinations. In this regard, there is no evidence that the activities of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* during the fascist period were ever called into question by the post-war purge commission and this facilitated the process of 'normalization' of such activities.

'Normalization' is evident in the 4th (1955) edition of Sorrentino's treatise, *La scienza contro il crimine*, which refers to the history of Italian scientific policing without by-passing the fascist period, which, however, is not specifically named, while the broader ideological implications of this type of police service under a dictatorship are overlooked. Hence, Sorrentino praised Italian scientific policing from its birth in 1902 until the start of the Second World War as being in many respects among the most advanced when compared to other countries (1955, 15-16). He specified that:

During the decade before the Second World War every year around 25,000 people were registered with the central identity service [*Casellario centrale di identità*], around 300 technical inspections were undertaken, around 200 criminological laboratory investigations took place, around 1000 biographical dossiers were completed for the most dangerous criminals (1955, 16).

Similar to his reference to the fascist criminal code at the 'Social Defence' congress in 1947, in Sorrentino's 1955 treatise, a dissociation from fascism is implied in his claim that the Italian criminological tradition and scientific policing were inspired by highly humanitarian aims, which did not correspond perfectly with 'the present legislation [which was the very legislation in force in fascist Italy from 1930], which treats the most dangerous [delinquents] with greater severity without taking account of the fact that the more dangerous a delinquent is, the more abnormal s/he is'. Thus, Sorrentino continued, if from the perspective of social defence the need to place the 'dangerous' delinquent in a situation in which s/he could cause no harm was understandable, in terms of social justice it was opportune not to forget the hereditary and environmental factors determining his/her 'dangerousness' (1955, 189).

Sorrentino's narrative reflects more generally the 'normalization' of the School's activities during the fascist years within the post-war policing sphere. This epitomizes an

official police memory which erased the more controversial aspects of the institution's service to fascism and presented police officials as having remained ideologically detached from the regime, if not opposed to it.¹² It is significant, for example, that the head of Personnel at the Interior Ministry Police should in February 1947 recommend the promotion of Pietro Bianconi, a key figure in the School during the fascist period, to *Vice Questore*, emphasizing the role he played during the Resistance, but adding that his professional profile was 'just as brilliant'. He noted that Bianconi had joined the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* in 1925, and had contributed his passion for the study of the physical and psychological defects of individual criminals to the School's activities, organizing numerous training courses for officials and officers of the *Pubblica Sicurezza*.¹³ That Bianconi had fought in the Resistance, as stressed by his commanders, does not detract from the fact that he had previously been prepared to serve fascist interests, as demonstrated by his promotion of a biographical dossier 'for racial purposes' to be employed by the fascist colonial police (Gibson 2002, 151; Bianconi 1940).

It is not easy to ascertain clearly Bianconi's ideological position. There is evidence, for example, that he might have tried to use 'fascist merits' for career purposes. In 1938 a photograph of a letter dated 19 May 1923 from the Fascist Party headquarters of Palazzuolo di Romagna was deposited in his file, now kept at the Central State Archive in Rome. The letter thanked Bianconi for his 'patriotic' services in his capacity as prefectural commissioner (*commissario prefettizio*) for the town council. This hardly constitutes definitive proof of fascist zeal in the context in which many state officials went to notable lengths to demonstrate fascist 'qualities' in the hope that this would facilitate career advancement. Conversely, Bianconi's participation in the armed Resistance during the Nazi occupation is not untypical of previous supporters of the fascist regime.¹⁴

While the fascist period is covered in post-war reports on police personnel, direct references to fascism are often unmentioned in the scenario in which many policing procedures during the dictatorship were not treated as deviations from standard practice. In the light of this, it should come as no surprise that Bianconi's file also contains a set of publications on various aspects of criminal anthropology dating between 1929 and 1962 (including his paper promoting the use of the biographical dossier for racial purposes), which he presented to the Chief of Police, Angelo Vicari, in November 1963, shortly before he retired.¹⁵ The broader political context of the fascist dictatorship in which many of these publications were produced does not appear to have posed any kind of issue.

The development and application of criminal anthropology after 1945

How far did criminal anthropology developed at the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* during the Liberal and fascist periods continue to be applied in the repression of crime and treatment of criminals in post-war Italy? Sorrentino's promotion of criminal anthropology in the post-war period appeared in part to reflect concerns about the fate of the School in the light of the impoverished state in which it had emerged from the Second World War. In an article published in January 1950 in the journal for police officials and magistrates, *Rivista di Polizia*, he stressed the biological orientation which Italian scientific policing had given to all police functions, and the need to rebuild the School, after the work of Ottolenghi and his successor, Giuseppe Falco, had, he claimed, almost been cancelled by the war (Sorrentino 1950).

There is evidence that scientific policing activities notably expanded during the post-war period and that criminal anthropology continued to be central to this. In the 1955 edition of his treatise, Sorrentino noted that since the start of the Second World War scientific policing services had not worked efficiently, though he admitted that improvements had been made between 1945 and 1953 (1955, 16-17). Indeed, after the war, the anthropological-biographical identification service had been re-organized on a more practical basis (1955, 38). Between 1 January 1945 and 31 December 1953, 36,279 biographical dossiers had been completed at various police stations, of which 3,461 had been inspected by the School (1955, 39). This marked a major increase in activity since the fascist period, when, according to Sorrentino, around one thousand dossiers were completed annually for the most 'dangerous' criminals during the decade preceding the Second World War (Sorrentino 1955, 16).

The 1958 edition of the *Enciclopedia di polizia*, a manual for police personnel, magistrates, lawyers and municipal leaders, written by Luigi Salerno, a police official during the fascist period,¹⁶ reveals the continued employment of a revised version of the biographical dossier which had been introduced in 1925 (Salerno 1958a). The related entry, which provided detailed instructions on how to fill out the dossier, is almost identical to that of Salerno's original edition of 1938 (Salerno 1938a), apart from the removal of direct references to the fascist regime. It clearly implied the importance of the fascist period for establishing a more thorough use of the dossier, mentioning the circulars of the (fascist) Interior Minister, Luigi Federzoni, regarding this. The entry also continued to underline the importance of biological factors determining criminal behaviour. Though it recognised, for example, the role of education in limiting dispositions towards crime and antisocial

behaviour, it noted that education on its own could not transform an 'evil and brutal' man into a 'good and virtuous' one (Salerno 1958a, 165).

Between 1945 and 1953, 57 training courses ran at the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia*, while numerous lessons and lectures on scientific policing were delivered at other police schools (Sorrentino 1955, 39). Training courses included the study of legal medicine, psychology and criminal anthropology (Sorrentino 1955, 40). According to Sorrentino, the period also saw closer collaboration between the organs of scientific policing and other police services, the introduction of new techniques and the purchase of modern optical, photographic and cinematographic instruments for the School and affiliated offices, as well as the appointment of specialized personnel and the acquisition of suitable equipment for the more peripheral offices (Sorrentino 1955, 16-17). In 1957, according to a published report of the Interior Ministry, the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* was transferred to a new headquarters in the E.U.R. district of Rome where it enjoyed advanced facilities, while several scientific policing laboratories at provincial police headquarters were enlarged (Ministero dell'Interno 1959, 11-12).

Sorrentino suggested in his treatise that in spite of post-war achievements, the long-term intentions underlying the work of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* had only partly been fulfilled, since, owing to the enormous expenses, the police were unable to perform all criminological tasks on their own. He recommended that this could be solved by the creation of special laboratories under the direct control of the judiciary, as Ottolenghi himself had augured. This would, moreover, end the scenario in which policing experts influenced the decisions of magistrates, which effectively amounted to the interference of an executive body of the state over the judiciary (Sorrentino 1955, 19-20). During this period, there were also calls from beyond the School for greater application of criminal anthropological theory within the judiciary. In November 1950, for example, a high-ranking police official, Chief Commissioner Luigi Carta, wrote an article for the *Rivista di polizia*, which praised the work of Lombroso and Ottolenghi and stressed the need for closer collaboration between magistrates and police officials in the use of the biographical dossier (Carta 1950b).

As during the fascist period, criminal anthropology continued to be tempered by the fascist criminal code which in regard to the treatment of dangerous individuals focused on the use of security measures to protect society from them. Nevertheless, there is evidence that the ultimate objective of personnel of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* to 'cure' criminals began to be fulfilled during the 1950s, though this took place beyond the sphere of the police. Under the leadership of Di Tullio, lecturer at the School and key figure in criminal anthropology

during the fascist period discussed earlier, in 1956 an Institute of Criminal Anthropology was set up at the Rebibbia prison at Rome. This led to the creation in 1958 of the National Observation Institute (INO) at the prison for the purpose of detailed study by a psychiatrist, a psychologist, social workers, educators, and other professionals, alongside the prison guards, of a group of inmates with a view to establishing individual treatment programmes. At the turn of that decade, institutions were created at Rebibbia and the prison at Civitavecchia for the purpose of treating young-adult inmates, most importantly through education, work, religious instruction and leisure, under the constant observation and evaluation of professionals (De Vito 2000-2001, esp. 277-80). Yet, such treatment was hardly representative of the prison system as a whole (De Vito 2000-2001, 280, 282). As Christian De Vito argues, surgical or chemical treatment began to be envisaged for some categories of individuals whose behaviour was deemed to be wholly determined by biological and physical factors. While this mainly remained theoretical, there is evidence of the experimental application of techniques, such as electro-shock, on ‘anti-social subjects’ at a private clinic directed by Di Tullio (De Vito 2000-2001, 289-90).

Beyond the confines of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* and special penitentiary institutions, a survey of publications of the 1950s suggests that criminal anthropology continued to be prominent in narratives of the regular police. The entry for ‘tattoos’ in the 1958 edition of the *Enciclopedia di polizia*, for example, focused on their significance as indicators of the ‘degenerate’ nature of individuals, and drew in detail on the identification by Ottolenghi and Falco of eight different categories of ‘symbolic’ tattoos as a means of aiding knowledge of the ‘psychic personality’ of criminals (Salerno 1958d). Reading such publications, one is struck by continued evidence of criminological notions which appear out-dated for their time. In an article of February 1958 published in the *Rivista di polizia*, against the background of parliamentary debate on the ‘Merlin’ white paper, which proposed the closure of Italy’s tolerated brothels and, thereby, an end to police regulation of prostitution,¹⁷ Chief Commissioner Guglielmo Di Benedetto not only continued to define ‘true’ prostitution as a bio-sociological phenomenon originating from ‘a state of physical, psychic and moral hypo-evolution, not rarely a consequence of hereditary causes’ (1958, 58); he opposed the proposal in the ‘Merlin’ white paper, that a new force of female police officers should be employed to fight prostitution on the grounds that: ‘this seems truly naive to us because the nature of woman is such that it makes her a natural prostitute [‘prostituta in partenza’], as a result of which, if she is not supported by a healthy and conscious moral education and by innate decency, she will easily fall prey to skirt chasers and Don Giovannis.’ The

employment of female officers, Di Benedetto argued, would thus lead to an increase in prostitution, because the officers themselves would risk falling into the trade (1958, 63).

The final part of this analysis will consider the legacy of criminal anthropology in the Italian police's treatment of homosexuality in post-war Italy. The significance here lies not so much in the repressive action itself – bearing in mind that homosexuality was often prosecuted in post-war democratic societies, whether they were traditionally liberal, as in the UK, or had recently emerged from dictatorial rule, as in the Federal Republic of Germany.¹⁸ Of greater concern is how far and in what ways post-war police action against homosexuals was influenced by the particular homophobic climate of the fascist years and by the manner in which scientific theories had been applied or exploited for their repression during that period. There is little evidence of a major change in the way in which homosexuality was treated by the police after 1945. The provisions of the 1930 criminal code remained unaltered. Homosexuality, though not specifically named as an 'offence',¹⁹ could still be punished on the grounds of indecent behaviour or corruption of minors, while the police maintained powers to harass homosexuals through temporary arrests and repatriation, though they did not act as vehemently as they had done during the fascist years (Pini 2011, 14-15, 123). While male homosexual activity no longer led to *confino* sentences, there were still cases in which transvestites and transsexuals were subjected to such measures (dall'Orto 1987, 47; Benadusi 2008, 38).

During the 1950s, the provincial police headquarters maintained registers (*schedari*) of different 'criminal' categories, which included homosexuals, alongside corruptors of minors, rapists of minors, rapists of adults, Italian prostitutes and foreign prostitutes (Sorrentino 1955, 218-19). This clearly represented a continuation of the practice of identifying and registering homosexuals in each province, which the fascist regime had introduced (see Benadusi 2005, 140). In their actions the post-war police also appeared to be motivated, as during the fascist period, by the desire to separate homosexuals from the rest of society because they were perceived as 'socially dangerous'. An Interior Ministry directive to the police, dated 30 April 1960, indicated that homosexuality was to be considered a phenomenon from which the public (especially minors and young adults) needed to be protected, and ordered that beyond repressing those external manifestations which qualified as offences, the police should 'identify and subject to constant vigilance persons affected by homosexuality' (Salerno 1961).

Post-war police literature continued to employ criminal anthropological theory, or simplified notions of such, to justify the above measures. Hence, the 1958 edition of the

Enciclopedia di polizia, which illustrates a very superficial re-editing after the demise of fascism, included an examination of the psychiatric, hereditary and atavistic characteristics of homosexuals (Salerno 1958b). The same manual undertook a fairly lengthy analysis of pederasty, including a description of the physical signs and markings of ‘pederasts’ (including – citing Lombroso - lack of facial hair, atrophy, and genital anomalies) which was almost identical to that published in the 1938 edition (Salerno 1938b; Salerno 1958c). Such literature did not necessarily take account of more nuanced interpretations of homosexuality by criminological experts. Interesting in this regard is Di Tullio’s 1951 publication on the medical and social causes of criminality, in which he appears to place less stress on the predisposition of homosexuals to crime than in his 1931 *Manuale di antropologia e psicologia criminale*. Notably, he stated that an individual with a sexual abnormality was not necessarily a criminal, adding that if a homosexual committed a serious crime, this was usually the consequence of a contemporaneous predisposition to crime (Di Tullio 1951, 96-9).

Carmelo Camilleri’s memoirs of his life as a police official are a significant example of post-war police memory of fascist repression in regard to the treatment of male homosexuals, alongside other ‘criminal’ categories, which merits consideration at this juncture. Published in 1958, they were intended as a guide to ‘the psychology and the bio-physical and psychic characteristics of delinquents, their personalities and their behaviour, taking these from real-life episodes which I experienced’ (Camilleri 1958, 7). A whole chapter in Camilleri’s memoirs was concerned with male homosexuals, reflecting upon his experiences of policing them in Turin during the 1920s. Suggesting a somewhat simplified adoption of criminal anthropological notions, he presented them as a major social ill, with ‘pederasts’ in particular representing a serious danger towards society because they were ‘always’ pre-disposed to committing violent crimes. On these grounds, Camilleri argued, severe measures which ‘are not contemplated by our penal legislation should strike this shameful activity’. Above all, ‘inverts’ (homosexuals) should be locked up and segregated in special institutions rather than in common prisons (Camilleri 1958, 35-7).

There is some suggestion in Camilleri’s writings of an underlying contrast between the imperative to repress homosexuality more effectively as demanded by criminal anthropological theory and the fascist regime’s alleged failure to do this. Camilleri noted that, when stationed in Turin during the 1920s, because the (fascist) law did not provide him with adequate powers of repression, he subjected the meeting places of homosexuals to constant surveillance, and carried out systematic arrests on public security grounds, as well as

the repatriation of non-residents (Camilleri 1958, 38). Camilleri's words should be considered in the broader context of a career which was cut short by fascism.²⁰ Nevertheless, fascism is presented more generally in Camilleri's memoirs as having inhibited the prevention of crime, representing a further example of that process of 'normalization' of the role of the police during the fascist years analysed earlier. In a similar vein, in an article in the *Rivista di polizia*, published in the spring of 1950, Chief Commissioner Carta, in calling for more decisive police action to be taken against homosexuals, noted that: 'The fascist regime certainly did not repress pederasty through *confino*, which, if anything, had the function of spreading such vice through the internment camps.' (Carta 1950a, 160).

The legacy of fascism in the post-war treatment of homosexuals by the police lies above all in the fact that a notable proportion of policemen entrusted with the repression of homosexuality in the post-war period would have undergone their training during the fascist regime, becoming accustomed to the intensive practices of homophobic oppression characterizing the dictatorship and, hypothetically, learning and applying theories developed at the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia*, theories which may have been encouraged by the fascist regime's hostility towards homosexuals during that period. Yet, the basic theories underpinning such policies pre-dated the fascist period. Certainly, many post-war publications originally appearing during the fascist period with limited re-editing may have reflected the mood of the fascist years, and in the case of Camilleri's memoirs, the experiences of policing during the dictatorship. It appears possible to identify in the register and choice of language in these texts the emotionally exasperated and hyperbolic rhetoric of the fascist years. Moreover, the language of criminal anthropology in these publications was often accompanied by, or lent itself to, rather less scientific considerations. Hence, in both the 1938 and 1958 editions of the *Enciclopedia di polizia*, pederasty is introduced as 'one of the most detestable forms of sexual filthiness' (Salerno 1938b, 700; Salerno 1958c, 632). On the other hand, such language was not absent from earlier police writings if we consider, for example, the 1905 testimony of the Police Chief of Avellino, Giuseppe Damiani, in which he described 'passive' 'pederasts' as 'despicable and repugnant' (quoted in Benadusi 2005, 139-40). Beyond the sphere of the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia*, criminal anthropology undoubtedly served to bolster police hostility against male homosexuals, but how genuinely convinced or understanding police officers were of the theories which helped to justify such hostility is questionable.²¹

Conclusion

If the activities of the post-war *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* were inspired by criminal anthropological theories which had developed in Liberal Italy, it is difficult to detach them from the School's more recent involvement with the fascist dictatorship. Yet, by stressing the more deep-rooted historical legacy of criminal anthropology in Italian policing techniques and its importance in criminological spheres beyond Italy, post-war criminological narrative was employed as a strategy to 'normalize' the role of positivist scientific policing (and policing more generally) during the dictatorship and to legitimize its activities in the aftermath of the defeat of fascism. While the post-war director of the School, Ugo Sorrentino, implied that, owing to the provisions of the Rocco criminal code, fascism had prevented the fulfilment of the criminal anthropologists' goal of 'curing' rather than punishing criminals, there is scarce evidence in the narrative of any willingness to take responsibility for complicity in fascist oppression.

The post-war narrative of criminal anthropology mirrors a tendency in post-fascist police institutions to detach activities carried out during the fascist regime from the broader ideological context in which they happened. Yet, in practice, the legacy of fascism was tangible in post-war policing and police culture. As suggested by the content of police literature, criminal anthropological theories, combined with the experience of the dictatorship, continued in notable measure to influence the ideas driving post-war police repression and criminal investigations. However, it remains to be clarified how thoroughly or believably police officers and officials outside the *Scuola Superiore di Polizia* applied criminal anthropological theory to their work. In regard to both post-war Italy and earlier periods, it is possible that more than anything else they appreciated simplified 'Lombrosian' notions, which gave support to more instinctive sentiments about criminals and about social groups which they saw as 'criminal'.

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¹ This interpretative approach was originally inspired by Mulcahy's research on the Royal Ulster Constabulary (see 1999 and 2000).

² According to Woods (2015, 136-40), the definitions which Lombroso himself gave to male homosexuals shifted from that of atavistic criminal types in the first edition of his most popular work, *Criminal Man* (1876), to that of 'insane criminals' produced by both mental illness and atavism in the fourth edition (1889).

³ This was stressed in Luigi Salerno's *Enciclopedia di polizia* (1938a, 160). According to Gibson, the fascist Interior Minister, Luigi Federzoni, gave his name to the revised dossier of 1924 (2002, 150).

⁴ For data illustrating the School's registering, between 1927 and 1939, of over a thousand 'homosexual offenders' among inmates of the Regina Coeli jail in Rome, see Ebner (2004, 144).

⁵ Benadusi (2005, 149-51). Benadusi's study also highlights (148-9) how the fascist police showed greater indulgence towards 'active' male homosexuals who publicly behaved like 'normal' men, as opposed to 'passive' male homosexuals. According to Benadusi (208-16), some homosexuals were confined to mental asylums. This was principally to separate them from the rest of society because of their 'dangerousness' and there is evidence that psychiatrists at these institutions doubted the effectiveness of 'treatment'.

⁶ Sorrentino (1955, 221). On the congress, see also Christian De Vito (2000-2001. Vol. 1, 247-49).

⁷ Born in 1891, Sorrentino started his career at the School in 1917, where he was promoted to the rank of *Vice-Questore* in 1938, then *Questore* in 1943. He retired from the police in 1956. See Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Ministero dell'Interno, Direzione Generale della Pubblica Sicurezza, Divisione Personale di Pubblica Sicurezza, Fascicoli Personale Fuori Servizio (henceforth ACS, FPFS), versamento 1963, b. 124, f. Sorrentino Ugo.

⁸ I am grateful to Christian De Vito for stressing this point to me.

⁹ For Lombroso's reception outside Italy, see essays in Paul Knepper and P.J. Ystehede (eds) (2013) and Becker and Wetzell (eds) (2006).

¹⁰ See, for example, Finke (1947); Kern (1948); 'Führende Kriminalisten' (1952).

¹¹ See various papers in Sorrentino's personal file: ACS, FPFS, versamento 1963, b. 124, f. Sorrentino Ugo.

¹² For further analysis, see Jonathan Dunnage (2015).

¹³ ACS, FPFS, versamento 1973, b. 152 bis, f. Bianconi Pietro, Direttore Capo Divisione Personale di Pubblica Sicurezza to Consiglio di Amministrazione del Personale della Pubblica Sicurezza, 3 February 1947.

¹⁴ Documents in Bianconi's personal file: ACS, FPFS, versamento 1973, b. 152 bis, f. Bianconi Pietro.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ For Salerno's career in the police, see Dunnage (2012, 147-9; 193-4).

¹⁷ For details of the law, sponsored by the socialist senator Lina Merlin, which passed successfully, see Gibson (1999, 207-14).

¹⁸ For the prosecution of male homosexuals in the UK, see Higgins (1996). Regarding the Federal Republic of Germany, Roth (2009, 579-80) argues that in the 1950s the *Kriminalpolizei* discriminated against homosexuals, alongside prostitutes, juvenile delinquents and other groups, partly as a result of the practices they had adopted against 'enemies' of the 'national community during the Third Reich'. For the prosecution of

homosexuals in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s, see also Herzog (2005, 88-95).

¹⁹ See Ebner (2004, 140-42) for an analysis of why an article on homosexual acts was eventually omitted from the final version of the Rocco criminal code.

²⁰ According to Mimmo Franzinelli (1999, 77-81), Camilleri was expelled from the police after he had tried to prevent communists from being tried for the bombing at the Milan trade fair in April 1928, which had killed eighteen people, in his belief that the bomb had been planted by fascists. This is also referred to in the Chapter of Camilleri's book entitled *Un eccidio deliberatamente impunito*.

²¹ Ebner (2004, 146), notes, for example, with reference to the fascist period, that: 'Stereotypes and a visceral disgust for the behaviour, appearance and mannerisms of homosexual men drove police commissioners to persecute them.'