Ralph Waldo Emerson Prize 2001

SCANTY GOATEES AND PALMAR TATTOOS: CESARE LOMBROSO'S INFLUENCE ON SCIENCE AND POPULAR OPINION

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> [Lombroso's] thoughts revolutionized our opinions, provoked a salutary feeling everywhere, and a happy emulation in research of all kinds. For 20 years, his thoughts fed discussions; the Italian master was the order of the day in all debates; his thoughts appeared as events.[1]
>
> —Dallemagne, a prominent French opponent of Lombroso, 1896

If crime is scary, then it is reasonable to fear criminals. But how does one identify whom to fear? In nineteenth-century Europe, a new kind of science emerged that tried to answer this question, as well as many others. It assumed that disciplined observation, careful measurement, and detailed classification could provide credible answers to any properly posed question. Darwin's theory of evolution, with its startling conclusions and careful classification systems, based on detailed physical descriptions of dozens of finch beaks and sea-turtle carapaces, is a prime example of this new science. Following Darwin, Cesare Lombroso's systematic study of criminal physiognomy sought to aid society by identifying criminals. Lombroso's work influenced many other scientists and captured the popular imagination; although today

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largely discredited as a science, the ideas Lombroso wrote about retain a hold on popular culture.

Broad acceptance of Darwin's *The Origin of Species*, published in 1859, signaled that most people regarded humans as connected to evolutionary processes, exempting them from neither nature nor its forces. This meant that nineteenth-century intellectuals believed free will alone did not determine one's personal evolution; instead, scientific law did. Leslie Stephen argued that "self-command was an evolutionarily valuable trait"[2] and that it represented higher evolution and moral progress. For example, "born criminals" were not in self-command and thus were a lower order of humans. Darwin's theory of evolution and natural selection suggested that the changes which cause evolution are random, and so every generation will have some people who are better and some who are worse. The word "degeneration," meaning going down or back in evolutionary development, became a household term for lower-order humans. People feared this constant downward trend of human development as a "return to the beasts."[3] For example, when Sir Francis Galton visited Africa in the 1850s, he saw the Hottentots, an African tribe, raid another African tribe. Although Galton described himself as civilized, he discovered "fearful passions"[4] in himself as he watched. These primitive passions caused Galton, who considered himself quite the opposite from the primitive and naturally savage Hottentots, to believe that even higher order humans could revert to primitive impulses under the right circumstances. This kind of thinking may have motivated Galton to start the eugenics movement: he wanted to strain all the lower-order and primitive genes out of the gene pool.

Within this nineteenth-century intellectual context, Cesare Lombroso's work greatly influenced how Europe's criminologists and jurists perceived criminals. *L'Uomo Delinquente* ("The Criminal Man"), published in 1876, was the most influential of his many publications. It was so popular and well regarded that it grew from two hundred pages in its first edition to over three thousand in its fifth.[5] A later work, *Le Crime, Causes et Rémédies,* "Crime, Its Causes

and Remedies," published in 1899, was also highly influential. By the 1880s he had gained world renown through his studies and theories in the field of characterology, the relation between mental and physical characteristics, criminal psychopathy, the innate tendency of individuals toward sociopathy and criminal behavior. Lombroso's conclusions stimulated debate among academics, lawyers, judges, prison directors, all those interested in public policy, as well as the general public. In fact, criminal anthropology, the field Lombroso created, received such attention that it was the focus of an international conference every four years for over three decades before World War I.

Extraordinary amounts of documentation in the form of pages of statistics and illustrations strongly influenced readers to believe "that many of the characteristics found in savages and among the coloured races are also to be found in habitual delinquents."[6] Lombroso used statistics so well that many scientists accepted his conclusion that criminality is biological. Although Lombroso's theories have now been discredited, they had mass appeal at the turn of the century.

While his ideas were widely popular, Lombroso's many credentials helped to establish his influence with professional colleagues. Cesare Lombroso, born on November 6, 1835, in Verona, Italy, studied at the universities of Padua, Vienna, and Paris (1862-1876). In 1876 he became a professor of psychiatry, forensic medicine, and hygiene at the University of Pavia. Moving to the University of Turin, he held professorships in psychiatry from 1896 and in criminal anthropology from 1906. He also directed a mental asylum in Pesaro, Italy. Lombroso died on October 19, 1909, in Turin, Italy.

Originally, Lombroso became involved with the classification of criminals after being assigned to do a post-mortem on a criminal named Vilella, who had died in the insane asylum in Pavia. While examining Vilella's skull, Lombroso discovered an abnormality common to lower apes, rodents, and birds. Lombroso named this abnormality the "median occipital fossa." Later, Lombroso recognized the importance of his discovery:

> This was not merely an idea but a revelation. At the sight of that skull, I seemed to see all of a sudden, lighted up as a vast plain under a flaming sky the problem of the nature of the criminal—an atavistic being who reproduces in his person the ferocious instincts of primitive humanity and the inferior animals.[7]

This was the start of a whole new field of science, criminal anthropology, which classified criminal physiognomy in order to predict different kinds of criminal behavior. Lombroso concluded that the criminal type was a specific form of epilepsy and that "the criminal is a slave eternally chained to his instincts."[8] Thus, the criminal type is "knowable, measurable, and predictable, largely on the basis of cranial, facial, and bodily measurements."[9]

Lombroso's classification system places criminals into two categories, each of which has three subcategories. The first category includes three main types of criminals and their characteristics: the born criminal, the insane criminal, and the epileptic criminal. Lombroso explained that these criminals could be spotted in a crowd because they were "biological freaks,"[10] "atavistic," physically looking as if born out of their time (they would be normal if they had been born in an earlier time) and "[p]hysically, emotionally, and behaviorally" very homologous to primitive races and children.[11] He described their actions as hedonistic, nonintellectual, curious, cruel, and cowardly even though they only make up about a third of all criminals.[12] He also theorized that insane criminals act in unnatural ways due to their insanity in the same way epileptic criminals act uncontrollably due to their epilepsy.

Lombroso's second category of criminals also has three subcategories: the occasional, the criminoloid, and the habitual. These people differ from the first set because they are not anthropologically criminal. The occasional criminal commits acts of terror periodically and spontaneously. The criminoloid is reluctant to commit crimes and will easily confess, while the habitual criminal commits crimes because of the company he keeps, committing crimes through imitation.

Lombroso's theories seemed extremely useful because identifying criminals by physical characteristics meant prevention was a possibility. If biology was the determining factor, however, criminals, at least born criminals, insane criminals, and epileptic criminals, should not be held accountable for their actions. According to Lombroso, "Theoretical ethics passes over these diseased brains, as oil does over marble, without penetrating it."[13] Given such a premise that some criminals are incapable of perceiving moral distinctions, a debate arose as to what should be done to punish such criminals and to prevent future crime. Those espousing the new science of criminolgy argued that society should not punish those who are anthropologically criminal because their genetic predispostion to crime prevented the exercise of free will. Punishment should be administered only to those who commit crimes by choice and therefore could be deterred by punishment. Lombroso made an exception for born criminals: "There exists, it is true, a group of criminals, born for evil, against whom all social cures break as against a rock—a fact which compels us to eliminate them completely, even by death."[14] Some of his contemporaries took this argument even further, for example, Hippolyte Taine:

> You have shown us fierce and lubricious orang-utans with human faces. It is evident that as such they cannot act otherwise. If they ravish, steal, and kill, it is by virtue of their own nature and their past, but there is all the more reason for destroying them when it has been proved that they will always remain orang-utans.[15]

Relegating some humans to the category of atavistic degenerates meant that they were no longer considered human or capable of responding as humans.

Accepting Lombroso's conclusion that criminality is biological, many scientists focused on the identification of a criminal physiognomy to forecast predisposition to crime. Dr.George Wilson, for example, conducted an experiment in 1869 in which he measured the heads of 464 convicts and decided that 40% of all criminals had cranial underdevelopment, which he considered to be evidence of their "moral imbecility."[16] A more practical perspective on criminals came from the director of Broadmoor Criminal

Asylum, W. Orange, who said in 1883 that society had a "'duty' to diagnose and treat lunatics *before* they committed crimes."[17] Henry Maudsley wrote in *Body and Mind* in 1873 "there is a class of criminal...[with] an extreme deficiency or complete absence of moral sense; that an absence of moral sense may be a congenital vice...."[18] Some criminologists distinguished between "offenders" and "criminals." Offenders may be convicted of crimes because of inopportune conditions or betrayal, but criminals are biologically predisposed to commit crimes. This distinction allowed "male crimes" such as murder or assault to be distinguished from "female crimes" such as petty thievery or prostitution. For example, Thomas Holmes, Secretary of The Howard Association, spoke of his beliefs, in a 1906 letter to the editor of the *Times* of London, that "habitual offenders are chiefly women, the habitual criminals are mostly men, many of whom should never be at liberty." He continued, in the same letter, to show his belief in criminal destiny, "I have seen them [criminals] sacrifice liberty and even affluence and go back to crime."[19] One of the most influential of scientists studying criminals was James Bruce Thomson, the resident surgeon for a Scottish prison, who wrote that a criminal "is marked by...a singular stupid and insensate look."[20]

Like Lombroso, Thomson classified "a distinct and incurable criminal class, marked by peculiar low physical and mental characteristics."[21] He noted that half of the inmates who died in prison were younger than thirty and were diseased in nearly every organ of their bodies, "few dying of one disease but generally 'worn out' by complete degeneration of all vital organs."[22] He also noticed a tendency for criminals to be violent for no apparent reason, which he attributed to hereditary "weakmindedness":

> ...crime is [often] hereditary in the families of criminals...this hereditary crime is a disorder of mind, having close relations of nature and descent to epilepsy, dipsomania, insanity, and other forms of degeneracy. Such criminals are really morbid varieties, and often exhibit marks of physical degeneration.[23]

Thomson's statistically supported conclusions reinforced the belief that criminals are recognizable and that criminal behavior is both biological and inherited.

Scientists who believed that criminality was biological insisted that true crime prevention required that those who study criminals inform society how to identify and what to do with criminals, before the commission of crimes. W.A.F. Browne, for example, the president of the Asylum Officers' Association, believed that science had proved the "affinity between crime and such debilitative disorders as insanity, alcoholism, and epilepsy," and argued that his association and society should use their knowledge to intervene and prevent crimes.[24] Havelock Ellis, who frequently cited Lombroso, believed that the more vicious the criminal, the less free will the criminal had, and that less vicious criminals had more free will. He considered vicious criminals morally handicapped and had few expectations for reforming them. One piece of evidence cited by Ellis to prove their handicapped morality was that criminals and other degenerates could not blush:

> Inability to blush has always been considered the accompaniment of crime and shamelessness. Blushing is also very rare among idiots and savages. The Spaniards used to say of the South American Indians: "How can one trust men who do not know how to blush?"[25]

Concluding that they could not be reformed led Ellis to argue that crime prevention required isolating vicious criminals from society or eliminating them.[26] Ellis was not alone in arguing for draconian measures against degenerate beings. In 1889 in his *Life and Labour of the People in London*, Charles Booth recommended eliminating criminals by tearing down their hovels and taking away their children. He saw criminals and poor classes as "render[ing] no useful service, they create no wealth; more often they destroy it. They degrade whatever they touch and as individuals are perhaps incapable of improvement."[27]

Recommendations for removing born criminals from society ranged from capital punishment to sending them far from Europe, e.g., distant penal colonies. Recognizing that England, with its Australian colonies, was better off for such deportation than Italy, Enrico Ferri suggested sending Italian criminals to those parts of Italy which were uninhabited and untilled because they were infested with malaria: "If the dispersion of this malaria

demands a human hecatomb, it would evidently be better to sacrifice criminals than honest husbandman."[28] In any case, those who believed reform was impossible wanted the removal of born criminals to be permanent and irrevocable, even if they were to be spared direct capital punishment.

After years of researching criminal behaviors, some scientists changed their minds about the accountability of criminals for their behaviors. One such scientist was Dr. David Nicolson at Broadmoor, who wrote in 1873 about two types of criminals, the habitual and the accidental. The habitual criminal "possesses an unmistakable physique with rough and irregular outline and a massiveness in the seats of animal expression," while the accidental criminal "differs little or nothing from the ordinary run of mortals."[29] Five years later in 1878, after dealing with the inmates at the asylum, Nicolson changed his mind, no longer believing that most criminals were physically different from non-criminals. Nicolson must be given credit for the intellectual integrity of his empirical studies: he did not limit himself to discussing data which supported his conclusion, instead changing his conclusions to coincide with the data he collected. His five years of study caused him to conclude that most criminals could be reformed, that only a few needed medical attention, and that medical attention alone would not reform criminals.[30]

On the other hand, Gabriel Tarde believed that even *if* crime has biological causes, criminals should be accountable for their actions. At the beginning of his career, Tarde believed criminality was mainly biological: "...the career of a criminal...is least often entered into by a person having freedom to choose."[31] He agreed with Lombroso's theory of degeneration, that criminals in a modern society exhibit behaviors that would have been typical of an earlier era—or perhaps highly civilized in an even more primitive society—"the ornament and the moral aristocracy of a tribe of Red Indians."[32]

As his own studies progressed, however, Tarde focused not only on the biological theories of the Italian school, but on the social and individual factors of crime, arguing "that persons

acquire criminal behavior patterns by learning them from others."[33] By the end of his career, Tarde not only insisted that the school of Lombroso failed to show that criminal behavior is exclusively a product of nature, but he also insisted that criminal behavior is affected by surrounding environment (imitation).

Like Tarde, Dr. Charles Goring, medical officer at Parkhurst and a student of the biometrician Karl Pearson, examined Lombrosian conclusions by testing many English convicts physically and psychologically. He concluded in *The English Convict*, 1913, that criminals are not physically different from normal people and "there is no such thing as a physical criminal type."[34] On the other hand, he concluded there were some statistically significant differences: criminals have lower intelligence, lower fitness rates, poorer physiques, and less ability to cope with challenges.[35] They had less strength of character. This means while there may be statistical differences between ordinary citizens and criminals, these differences cannot be used to predict who will commit crimes and who will not.

One way to gauge the influence of Lombroso and his followers is to examine a shift in the popular portrayals of criminals in literature. Between the first and second half of the nineteenth century, literary villains changed. In Dickens' novels, villains felt remorse, but in Rudyard Kipling's they did not. This change in villains may reflect a change in literary opinion, fueled by popular opinion: Dickens wrote before Darwin and Kipling wrote after Lombroso popularized his ideas, and their readers may have changed their minds about criminals and what causes criminality. Dickens wanted to reform his criminals by teaching them morals and punishing them, but popular opinion in the age of Lombroso saw criminals as degenerate, i.e., atavistic creatures who cannot be reformed because they are "biological freaks." Atavistic villains, according to criminologists influenced by Lombroso, must be isolated from civilized society or eliminated. Certainly they should not be allowed to live and reproduce, and novels often concluded by having the villain die.

In fiction and in popular opinion, a late nineteenth-century criminal was not a matter of morality but of scientific degeneracy. Sherlock Holmes referred to Professor Moriarity as having a hereditary criminal strain in his blood.[36] Similarly, in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), Mina Harker responded to Professor Van Helsing's urgings to describe the count with, "The Count is a criminal and of the criminal type. Nordau and Lombroso would so classify him, and *qua* criminal he is of imperfectly formed mind."[37] In his *Annotated Dracula* (1975), Leonard Wolf comments that Jonathan Harker's initial description of Count Dracula is based directly on Cesare Lombroso's account of the born criminal.[38] Finally, Professor Van Helsing branded the Count as a "persistent child" and, therefore, both a primitive and a criminal as well.[39]

Criminal physiognomy was also used in the prosecution of criminals. For example, the French courts sent a picture of a woman accused of murdering children to Lombroso for his opinion on her guilt. When Lombroso received the picture, he said that if the picture was in fact a good one, then the woman was no doubt abnormal (of a criminal nature) due to the round, small skull, flat forehead, and virile expression of her face.[40] Just from the picture, he classified the woman as a hysterical with epileptic and crétin characteristics. He also concluded that "her perverted instincts are mainly active under the stimulus of alcohol."[41] The woman was accused of murder, even though several doctors did post-mortems on the victims and concluded that they had all died of natural causes. Other doctors and civilians tried to come up with ways in which the woman might have killed the children without any sign of violence, since they had concluded she was of a criminal type and therefore she must be guilty.

Lombroso also performed as an expert witness at countless criminal trials. In one case he describes, Lombroso was asked to decide which of two brothers had killed their stepmother. Purely on the basis of their differing physical appearances, Lombroso identified one as "the most perfect type of the born criminal."[42] On this expert testimony, the man was convicted. For a man accused of robbing and murdering a rich farmer because he had been seen

sleeping in the vicinity of the murder site, Lombroso gave similar testimony; he concluded that the man's appearance, including tattoos, and his having epileptic and insane relatives made him the most likely perpetrator of this or some similar crime—and therefore deserving conviction. The nature of this "scientific" evidence must have frightened people accused of crimes even more deeply than it relieved people doing the accusing.

In the *Memoirs of Vidocq: The Principal Agent of the French Police* (1859), Vidocq describes criminals he encountered. These descriptions are similar to Lombroso's animalistic characterizations:

> ...a neck like a bull; wide shoulders, a full face, and his features like that of lion...in fight, he was pitiless...his manner...harsh and coarse to excess...[43]

When Vidocq describes the character of this criminal, he shows a belief in his lack of emotion and inability to be compassionate. He shows criminals to be no more forgiving of themselves: when talking to a criminal about criminal behavior, Vidocq reports this response:

> there is no such thing as fate; we are the workers of our own destinies, depend upon it; and I do not seek such a weak excuse for my crimes; no, I acknowledge that to a love of bad company alone I may attribute my being the wretch I am...[44]

Perhaps criminals did not want to see themselves as degenerates, biologically inferior to other humans, preferring to believe in pre-Darwinian free will? In another account, Vidocq describes a criminal's features and instincts as

> those of the hyena and the wolf, particularly if the attention were directed to his immensely wide jaws, furnished with large projecting fangs; his very organization partook of the animal instinct common to the beasts of prey; he was passionately fond of hunting; the sight of blood exhilarated him.[45]

Lombroso used these characteristics in his descriptions. Their presence in popular European fiction, newspapers, and autobiography shows widespread acceptance of these stereotypes prior to Lombroso's most popular writings, which may help to explain why

Lombroso's theories were so immediately and widely accepted: he gave scientific credibility to what was commonly believed but not systematically articulated.

In England, there was much controversy about whether criminal behavior was hereditary and predictable. One debate that surfaced in the letters to the editor section of the London *Times* illustrates the issues. Dr. H.B. Donkin, medical advisor to the Prison Commissioner, member of the Prisons Board, and Director of the Convict Prisons, commented publicly on "The existence of families of habitual criminals, preying on the public…"[46] This caused Professor Pearson to respond that society must determine whether criminality is hereditary: knowing whether criminality "...is or is not hereditary is of vital importance when we propose to modify our treatment of criminals"; in the same letter, Pearson continued:

> May I suggest that one of the most valuable additions that could possibly be made to the Prison Department at the present time would be the appointment of a medical man with one or two assistants, whose special occupation should be tracing the family history (chiefly from police records) and the environmental conditions in early life of convicted criminals? We should soon have sufficient material on which a definite judgment might be based as to whether crime or the tendency to law-breaking is or is not hereditary.[47]

Dr. Donkin responded the next day by saying he "never denied and do[es] not deny, the existence of families of criminals," but he believed that the question of whether crime is hereditary is a wholly different matter and that "such methods of solving it [crime] as are proposed by Professor Pearson would be fruitless, even if practicable."[48] A few days later, Pearson responded by saying that if this is what Dr. Donkin as the Director of Prisons believed, then, "no real reform in the treatment of criminals is possible. We must have facts before we can effectively alter treatment."[49] One could imagine a reader of the London *Times* pondering these issues of how to use science to prevent crime and how to use taxes to protect society, both very modern concerns.

Lombroso's influence was not limited to Europe, spreading across the Atlantic Ocean to the United States. Arthur

MacDonald, who frequently cited Lombroso and his work, wanted the U.S. government to fund laboratories "for the scientific investigation of criminals and other abnormals...[in] every large city, every state, and especially [in] the Federal Government"[50] to identify criminals, before they commit crimes by using Lombroso's classification system. MacDonald recommended taking,

> First. The necessary measurements of head and body...in accordance with the science of anthropology.
>
> Second. A psycho-physical study of the person should be conducted, including the measurements of the senses.
>
> Third. There should be a sociologic inquiry into the antecedents and history of the individual from childhood.
>
> Fourth. A pathological study of the signs of physical, mental, and moral stigmata of degeneration should be conducted.[51]

The Reverend F. Ward Denys from New York City also believed Lombroso's conclusions were authoritative and compared them in importance to the concept of original sin.[52] Perhaps Lombroso's criminal stigmata were a modern-day mark of Cain. Similarly, Robert Fletcher uses Lombroso's conclusions to support his lecture on "Tattooing Among Civilized People":

> ...it is soldiers, sailors, and, above all, criminals, including prostitutes, who most extensively resort to it [tattooing]...The criminal classes furnish the most elaborate and the most curious examples of tattooing...As regards [to] the region of the body chosen for the operation, Lombroso found the palmar surface of the fore-arm to be the most frequently selected.[53]

Lombroso had divided tattoos into four classes: emblems of love, of religion, of war, and of profession, which were in hieroglyphics and letters whose meaning the criminal refused to reveal to the ordinary man. Fletcher expanded on Lombroso's work with a study of tattooing around the world, finding that in most cultures, tattooing was "mostly confined to the lower classes," and among women it is "almost [always] confined to prostitutes."[54] Fletcher extended Lombroso's arguments that tattooing (i.e., defacing the body) correlated to the atavism of criminals.

In 1883, Sir Francis Galton (1822-1911) coined the word "eugenics," meaning "good birth."[55] Galton was a cousin of Darwin

and wanted to breed a better stock of humans by allowing only "higher order" humans to reproduce. Eugenics was propelled both by politics and science in the early part of the twentieth century, especially in Great Britain, Germany, and the United States. Galton extended Lombroso's ideas by arguing that heredity determines one's criminal tendencies and that society should control its future by increasing the number of superior and decreasing the number of inferior genes. He listed the favorable traits in a paper written for the Sociological Society: "...a considerable list of qualities could be easily compiled...It would include health, energy, ability, manliness, and courteous disposition."[56] Similarly in an article entitled "Eugenics and Pauperism," Galton listed unfavorable traits (to be bred out of society) and their negative effects on society:

> ...a large number of persons who, either from mental inferiority or from some other cause, are unable to hold their own in the competition of existence...the paupers examined by the committee were characterized by some obvious persistent vice or defect, such as drunkenness, theft, persistent laziness, a tubercular diathesis, mental deficiency, deliberate moral obliquity, or general weakness of character. Fourthly, there is a class of persons, continuing from one generation to another, who will not make any attempt to work or to continue in work so long as charitable funds, even of small amounts, are forthcoming.[57]

Today Lombroso's and his followers' conclusions have largely been refuted. Their conclusions have been criticized for insufficient and biased data collection, for lack of objectivity, and for rhetoric which was "lawyerly, rather than scientific."[58] When Lombroso found data that showed admirable traits among people he deemed savage, primitive, and criminal, he undercut the finding so it no longer seemed positive. His description of American black slaves and Native Americans does not find them courageous, dignified, nor heroic—but physically insensible:

> savage people who can bear in rites of puberty, tortures that a white man could never endure. All travellers know the indifference of Negroes and American savages to pain: the former cut their hands and laugh in order to avoid work; the latter, tied to the torture post, gaily sing the praises of their tribes while they are slowly burnt.[59]

It is also now known that when Lombroso found data that contradicted his conclusions, he ignored it. For example, one of Lombroso's most significant studies compared the head size (cranial capacity) of criminals and non-criminals, concluding that criminals have smaller brains. Lombroso displayed his data in large tables of percentages, which are quite hard to read. When these statistics are displayed in a bar graph showing frequency distribution of brain size for the two groups, one sees a similar bell curve for both. Nonetheless, Lombroso focused on differences at the extreme ends of the curve where one finds the fewest examples. Very recently, Stephen Gould reconstructed Lombroso's data to calculate the standard deviation differences between the distributions of brain sizes in the two groups. Gould concludes that the small statistical significance could be explained by sample sizes that differed by a factor of ten.[60]

Finally, and most important, Lombroso set up his classification system so it could not itself be falsified. Falsifiability is a critically important characteristic of modern science; it means that there must be potential for disproving one's conclusions and/or theories. When Lombroso classified some people as born criminals and others as occasional criminals, he eliminated the falsifiability of his system. Both murderers and noncriminals could be placed in any category without disturbing the classification system. Murderers were supposed to bear tell-tale stigmata, but the exceptions explained murderers without stigmata. Similarly, non-criminals were supposed to be without stigmata, but exceptions explained those who bore them. Lombroso's "science" fails on the most basic of scientific tests.

Even after Lombroso's conclusions have been refuted as "bad science," however, the stereotypes he made scientifically credible remain in our culture. For example, one episode (March 13, 1999) of NBC's TV show, "The Pretender," depicted Jared, the main character of the show, as a criminal. Jared takes on a new identity each episode. To become a credible criminal, Jared assumes textbook Lombrosian characteristics: a scanty goatee (i.e., limited facial hair), heavy tattooing of the palmar region of

the forearm, and excessive drinking. Lombroso may have been refuted by science, but his influence on popular culture remains.

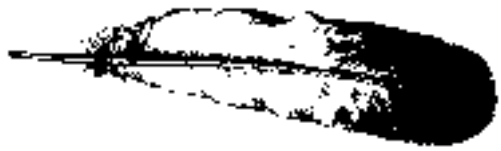
Why does this pseudo-science from the nineteenth century remain so powerful at the end of the twentieth century? Lombroso gave society a visual key for identifying people it feared. It is likely that Lombroso's descriptions caused "nice people" to avoid tattoos, gentlemen to be either clean-shaven or to have well-kept beards, and good citizens to avoid obviously excessive drinking. Perhaps part of the 1960s antagonism to the hippie movement came from Lombrosian antagonism to unkempt hair and tattoos, especially on women. These were also easy visual signals to identify "bad" people. Even today, people want easy visual keys to identify villains. For instance, after Littleton, many school districts have banned the wearing of black trenchcoats, as if trenchcoats have anything to do with murder. Lombroso's influence remains because people look for easy answers to complex problems.

Darwin's *The Origin of Species* had an extraordinary effect on nineteenth-century attitudes toward man, society, and science. His empirical model required observations over many examples to test hypotheses and to come to validated conclusions that support overall theoretical claims. While Darwin's work has become influential for many modern sciences from biology to geology to physics, Lombroso's is no longer considered valid. On the other hand, the questions Lombroso sought to answer—and those which arose from his studies—remain very modern concerns. As Tolstoy wrote in *Resurrection* in 1899:

> He also came across a tramp and a woman, both of whom repelled him by their half-witted insensibility and seeming cruelty, but even in them he failed to see the criminal type as described by the Italian school of criminology....
>
> He bought the works of Lombroso, Garofalo, Ferri, Liszt, Maudsley, and Tarde, and read them carefully. But as he read, he became more and more disappointed...He was asking a very simple thing: Why and by what right does one class of people lock up, torture, exile, flog, and kill other people when they themselves are no better than those whom they torture, flog, and kill? And for answer he got arguments as to whether human beings were possessed of free will or

> not. Could criminal propensities be detected by measuring the skull, and so on? What part does heredity play in crime? Is there such a thing as congenital depravity?[61]

It is a hundred years since Tolstoy's hero posed these questions, a hundred years in which we have sought ways to use science to identify criminals and prevent crime. Our understanding of science has dramatically increased and Lombroso's fame has largely died, but answers to these questions remain just as pressing.



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[2] Martin J. Weiner, Reconstructing the criminal: culture, law and policy in England, 1830-1914 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) p. 161

[3] Ibid., p. 173

[4] Francis Galton, Criminal Prisons, quoted in Weiner, p. 35

[5] Sawyer F. Sylvester, introduction to Cesare Lombroso, "Criminal Man," (1876) in The Heritage of Modern Criminology Sawyer F. Sylvester, Jr., ed. (Cambridge, MA: Schenkman Publishing, 1972) p. 63

[6] Ibid., p. 71

[7] Ibid., p. 63

[8] Cesare Lombroso, in introduction to Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, Criminal Man: according to the classification of Cesare Lombroso, with an introduction by Cesare Lombroso (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1972) p. xxix

[9] Leonard D. Savitz, in reprint introduction to Gina Lombroso-Ferrero, p. xi

[10] Ibid., p. xxix

[11] Ibid., pp. x-xi

[12] Ibid., p. xv

[13] Lombroso, 1911, quoted in Gould, p. 139

[14] Ibid., p. 139

[15] Taine, quoted in Lombroso, 1911, quoted in Gould, p. 139

[16] George Wilson, quoted in Weiner, p. 233

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