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# Eugenics, Sex Reform, Religion and Anarchism in Portugal

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## Introduction

Although the interconnections between Catholicism and eugenics were multifaceted and were textured in different ways according to the context in which they arose, in the Portuguese case, it was perhaps the searing debate in the early 1930s between Jaime Brasil (1896-1966), a vociferous proponent of sexual science and eugenics, and the Catholic establishment that showed most clearly how conflictive this relation could be. In mid-1932 the journalist, anarchist activist and sex reformer Jaime Brasil published his *A Questão Sexual*, a highly detailed volume of some 480 pages covering most aspects of sexual expression.<sup>1</sup> Faithful to a common format in European works on the ‘sexual question’, the book dealt with ‘morbid’ and ‘normal’ sexuality.<sup>2</sup> Within the section on ‘normal’ sexuality there were chapters on ‘Natal Matters’ and ‘The Selection of the Species’ covering inheritance and eugenics,<sup>3</sup> areas that trespassed on what Catholics believed to be their terrain of reference. The vehement reaction from the Jesuit review *Novidades* came quickly over the summer of 1932 in the form of several articles, classifying Brasil’s book as communist propaganda and as a source of moral corruption of the youth. In turn, Brasil responded to the Catholic campaign, denouncing the ‘hateful vomit of the padres’ in a short book that reproduced and commented on the increasingly charged texts that were exchanged between the two camps.<sup>4</sup>

In *A Questão Sexual* Brasil put forward arguments on the benefits of population limitation and ‘conscious procreation’ and stated that his book was aimed at dignifying women’s lives and making contraceptive methods available as part of his overall objective of clarifying ‘certain aspects of Existence, which are surrounded everywhere by ridiculous preconceptions, harmful practices and magical taboos’.<sup>5</sup> It is important to note from the beginning of this article that eugenics was articulated by Brasil as one of a set of resources allowing him to address the ‘sexual question’ and should be seen as being complementary to this discourse on sexuality and not necessarily as the main point of conflict with the Catholic Church. *A Questão Sexual* should be understood to form part of what was the broader

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<sup>1</sup> Jaime Brasil, *A Questão Sexual* (Lisbon, 1932). On Brasil see João Freire and Maria Alexandre Lousada (eds.), *Greve de Ventres! Para a história do movimento neomalthusiano em Portugal: em favor de um autocontrolo da natalidade* (Lisbon, 2012), p. 188, where it is noted that he was born in Angra do Heroísmo (Azores) in 1896 and died in Lisbon in 1966. He wrote for the syndicalist paper, *A Batalha* and critical cultural reviews such as *O Diabo* and *O Globo*. During the Spanish Civil War he worked in Paris, writing for the anti-fascist journals *Unir* and *Liberdade*, returning to Portugal in 1940 to be imprisoned until 1942.

<sup>2</sup> Under the rubric of ‘morbid sexuality’, Brasil discussed masturbation, homosexuality, prostitution and sexual diseases. Within ‘normal sexuality’ he included matters relating to love, marriage, birth control and sexual freedom. Brasil stated (*A Questão Sexual*, p. 10) that there had only been one ‘serious book’ published on sexuality in Portugal and this was Egas Moniz’s *A Vida Sexual*, which ran to multiple editions in the early twentieth century.

<sup>3</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, pp. 383-434, and, pp. 428-434, respectively. All translations from the Portuguese are my own.

<sup>4</sup> Jaime Brasil, *Os Padres e ‘A Questão Sexual’*. *Resposta a uma campanha do jornal católico ‘Novidades’* (Lisbon, 1932), p. 21. It was, in fact, not the only incident of this type. The sex reformer and eugenicist Almerindo Lessa published his *Exortações Eugénicas. Notas para um programa de política genética* (Oporto, 1933) a year later. The book proved to be a scandal and the author remembers being called ‘ugly names’ by members of the Catholic Church. See Almerindo Lessa, *No Tempo do meu Espaço. No Espaço do meu Tempo* (Lisbon, 1995), pp. 43-44 (p. 43).

<sup>5</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 7.

contemporary endeavour of ‘sex reform’ articulated by ‘progressive’ sectors of society across Europe. The condemnation by Novidades was a general one and did not focus particularly on eugenics but reflected the Catholic Church’s indignation at the temerity of a secular author who attempted to place sexuality within a scientific and not a religious moral framework. The confrontation was, essentially, a struggle for control over who could legitimately and authoritatively discuss issues of sexuality. It will nevertheless be argued here that in order to understand this conflict we do need to set Brasil’s *A Questão Sexual* within the context of both his own writings in the early 1930s on eugenics and sexuality, and the relations between the two, as well as within the broader context of Catholic discourse on eugenics and sexuality. In addition, the socio-political context of the early 1930s with respect to both the anarchist movement and the consolidation of the Salazar dictatorship in Portugal are essential elements in this debate. By taking all these factors into account, we can perceive how eugenics came to be a mobile resource for Brasil enabling him to reinforce the scientific dimensions of his work on sex reform; we can also see how eugenics and sexuality became bound together in both Catholic and anarchist mentalities. Portuguese Catholicism will be seen to have been particularly reactionary with respect to issues of sexuality and eugenics. Other countries’ Catholic Churches reacted differently.<sup>6</sup>

If the relationship between eugenics and religion is complex and problematic, the added ingredient of the reception of eugenics within different strands of the labour movement makes it even more so.<sup>7</sup> In many cases, notably in ‘Latin’ countries, labour movements rejected religious control of issues relating to sexuality, reproduction and family morality. They often rejected eugenics too, if they came across it. However, there were movements or sectors of movements that while rejecting religious ‘interference’ in sexual questions accepted some of the postulates of eugenics. This acceptance responded to two main complementary motivations. Religion was rejected as a legitimate source of explanations of the world and as a guide for social and sexual relations. In contrast, scientific thought was accepted and promoted, especially in the form of theories of evolution which were read positively to provide apparently progressive interpretations of human existence, social evolution, women’s roles and notions of freedom.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, Marius Turda and Aaron Gillette, *Latin Eugenics in Comparative Perspective* (London, 2014); Graham J. Baker ‘Christianity and Eugenics: The Place of Religion in the British Eugenics Education Society and the American Eugenics Society, c. 1907-1940’ in *Social History of Medicine*, vol 27, no 2, (2014), 281-302; Gustavo Vallejo and Marisa Miranda ‘Iglesia católica y eugenesia latina: un constructo teórico para el control social (Argentina, 1924-1958)’ in *Asclepio* [online], vol 66, no 2, 2014. For debates in the historical period itself, see Association du Mariage Chrétien, *L’Église et L’Eugénisme, La Famille à la Croisée des Chemins* (Paris, 1930), and, Joseph Mayer ‘Eugenics in Roman Catholic Literature’ in *Eugenics, a Journal of Race Betterment*, vol 3 no 2, (1930), 43-51.

<sup>7</sup> See David Redvaldsen ‘The Eugenics Society’s Outreach to the Labour Movement in Britain, 1907–1945’ in *Labour History Review*, vol 78, no 3, (2013), 301-29; David Redvaldsen ‘Eugenics, socialism and artificial insemination: the public career of Herbert Brewer’ in *Historical Research*, vol 88, no 239, (2015), 138-160; on socialism and eugenics in France, see Pierre-André Taguieff ‘Eugénisme ou décadence? L’exception française’ in *Éthnologie Française*, no 29, (1994), 81-103; on Germany, Michael Schwartz, *Sozialistische Eugenik. Eugenische Sozialtechnologien in Debatten und Politik der deutschen Sozialdemokratie 1890-1933* (Bonn, 1995); on Soviet Russia, see Alexander Etkind ‘Beyond eugenics: the forgotten scandal of hybridizing humans and apes’ in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science. Part C: Studies in History and Philosophy of Biological and Biomedical Sciences*, vol 39 no 2, (2008), 205-10, and, Pat Simpson ‘Bolshevism and “Sexual Revolution”: Visualizing New Soviet Woman as the Eugenic Ideal’ in Fae Brauer and Anthea Callen (eds.), *Art, Sex and Eugenics: Corpus Delecti* (Aldershot/Burlington, Vermont, 2008), pp. 209-38; for the social democratic left in Scandinavia see Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen, *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Sterilization Policy in Denmark, Sweden, Norway, and Finland* (East Lansing, 1996).

<sup>8</sup> Such engagement was typical of the most ‘advanced’ sectors of the labour movement across Europe. An impressive account of the British case is Jonathan Rose, *The Intellectual Life of the British Working Classes* (Yale/London, 2002).

Not only was Jaime Brasil outside of the mainstream eugenics movement in Portugal,<sup>9</sup> he spoke and wrote from a particular perspective within the Portuguese and international anarchist movement that had developed an interest in sexual matters from the late nineteenth century onwards. Although eugenics was a minority interest in Portuguese anarchist circles, questions relating to the role of women in society, sexual hygiene and contraception (understood as ‘Neo-Malthusianism’), were durable areas of interest within anarchist circles from the late nineteenth century well into the 1940s.<sup>10</sup> The fact that Brasil moved effortlessly from sexual hygiene to eugenics in *A Questão Sexual* and, as we will see, in his other writings, is testimony to this interest and to the association, common in the French and Spanish anarchist movements among others, between sex reform, birth control and eugenics.

This article, as a secondary objective, therefore intends to make a contribution to the history of the reception of eugenics within Portuguese and international anarchism. The debacle over Brasil’s work took place as the fascistic *Estado Novo* under Dr. António de Oliveira Salazar was being consolidated, a process that had begun when the democratic Republic, established in 1910, was overthrown by a military coup in 1926 and many basic liberties, including that of the freedom of the press, were placed under threat or had already been severely compromised. The anarchist movement operated clandestinely by 1932 and was, the following year, along with other oppositional groups, formally illegalised. Despite this, the structures of the movement, particularly its syndicalist tendency encapsulated by the CGT (General Confederation of Labour) were maintained up to and beyond the revolutionary attempt to overthrow Salazar on 18 January 1934 when repression severely curtailed the viability of the movement.<sup>11</sup> Anarchist propaganda, despite this, was still produced up the end of the 1950s.

### Theories of Heredity, Progress and Religion

Following the work undertaken on the relationship between anarchism, the spread of theories of heredity and progress and the rejection of religion in countries such as Spain and France,<sup>12</sup> it can be posited that certain sectors of anarchist movements based their (limited) adoption of eugenics on their approval of science as potentially liberatory if placed in the ‘right’ hands, that is, far from the influence of the bourgeoisie and institutionalised religion. Such an

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<sup>9</sup> On the eugenics movement in Portugal see Irene Flunser Pimentel ‘O aperfeiçoamento da raça. A Eugenia na primeira metade do século XX’ in *História*, no 3, (1998), 18-27; Ana Leonor Pereira ‘Eugenia em Portugal?’ in *Revista de História de Ideias*, no 20, (1999), 531-600; Richard Cleminson, *Catholicism, Race and Empire: Eugenics in Portugal, 1900-1950* (New York/Budapest, 2014).

<sup>10</sup> Freire and Lousada (eds.), *Greve de Ventres!*, pp. 190-8 discuss the interest in Neo-Malthusianism from the late nineteenth century up to the clandestine ‘Despertar’ anarchist group which was devoted to sex education throughout the 1940s. The group distributed leaflets urging women not to procreate or to reproduce only under certain conditions and distributed pessaries as birth-control measures. On Portuguese anarchism in the 1940s, see João Freire ‘Os anarquistas portugueses na conjuntura do após-guerra’ in Various Authors, *O Estado Novo das Origens ao Fim da Autarcia (1926-1959)*, vol. II (Lisbon, 1987), pp. 9-26.

<sup>11</sup> See Edgar Rodrigues, *História do Movimento Anarquista em Portugal* (Florianópolis, 1999) and João Freire, *Freedom Fighters: Anarchist Intellectuals, Workers, and Soldiers in Portugal’s History*, trans. Maria Sousa (Montreal, 2001). For a communist-inclined history of the 18 January movement, see L.H. Afonso Manta (ed.), *O 18 de Janeiro de 1934. Do movimento de resistência proletária à ofensiva fascista* (Lisbon, 1975) and for an anarchist perspective see José Francisco, *Páginas do historial cegetista* (Lisbon, 1983). Anarchists were the authors of an assassination attempt on Salazar in 1937. See Emídio Santana, *História de um atentado: O atentado a Salazar* (Mem Martins, 1976).

<sup>12</sup> Specifically, Álvaro Girón ‘¿Hacer tabla rasa de la historia?: La analogía entre herencia fisiológica y memoria en el anarquismo español (1870-1914)’ in *Asclepio*, vol 52, no 2, (2000), 99-118; Álvaro Girón, *En la mesa con Darwin. Evolución y revolución en el movimiento libertario en España (1869-1914)* (Madrid, 2005). For France, see Richard D. Sonn, *Sex, violence, and the avant-garde: anarchism in interwar France* (University Park, Pennsylvania, 2010).

acceptance of scientific ideas in general and understandings of human, animal and plant evolution in particular would be articulated alongside diffuse notions of inheritance, which vacillated between what might be termed ‘Mendelian’ and ‘Lamarckian’ understandings (without usually being referred to as such by anarchists). The acceptance of eugenics, in some cases constructed on the postulates of Neo-Malthusianism, conjoined with birth-control propaganda, anti-militarism and ‘rational’ non-religious education provided a scientifically respectable means by which the anarchist desire for social and moral perfection – understood as the elimination of hierarchies and the establishment of a stateless society with no centralized power – could find a home. I have argued elsewhere that in the Spanish case, these disparate strands came together and allowed for a platform upon which an anarchist expression of eugenics could sit.<sup>13</sup> In the Portuguese case, many of these ingredients were present,<sup>14</sup> but the connection between them and eugenics was rarely forged and remained limited to a few figures such as Jaime Brasil. The full reasons for this lack of engagement cannot be entered into here but some brief remarks on the context of ideas on Malthus, heredity, and sexual matters within Portuguese anarchism are required.

Alongside Darwin, the means by which scientific discussion on species change (eventually ‘evolution’) entered Portugal, in common with many other ‘Latin’ countries, was via discussions on inheritance and transformism in the context of Lamarckism.<sup>15</sup> One of the means by which eugenics made its entry into the Portuguese scientific milieu was in a discussion of Lamarckism by University of Oporto scholar, Americo Pires de Lima (1886-1966), who wrote his *A evolução do transformismo* in 1912.<sup>16</sup> Pires de Lima, defending his thesis in late 1912, praised the work of Charles Darwin, Jean-Baptiste de Lamarck, Hugo de Vries, August Weismann and Herbert Spencer in order to explain the mechanism of inheritance. In a late addition to his work as an appendix just before reading his thesis, he assessed the ‘new’ thought of Gregor Mendel.<sup>17</sup> Mendel’s theory was largely rejected by Pires de Lima as undemonstrated and, despite having been employed to bolster eugenic ideas at the 1912 Eugenics Congress in London, was taken to undermine the case for eugenics precisely because its claims were undemonstrated. Any resultant prohibition of the marriage and reproduction of certain individuals based on insights drawn from Mendelism were cast by Pires de Lima as ‘inefficacious, [...] an affront and unjust’.<sup>18</sup>

Reflections on Malthus’ warnings on population growth and Darwinian explanations of the struggle for existence began to percolate and be debated in the Portuguese anarchist movement in the early twentieth century. An early exponent of the Neo-Malthusian

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<sup>13</sup> Richard Cleminson, *Anarchism, Science and Sex: Eugenics in Eastern Spain, 1900–1937* (Oxford/Bern, 2000). For an earlier account, see Raquel Álvarez Peláez ‘Eugenesia y darwinismo social en el pensamiento anarquista’ in B. Hofmann, P. Joan i Tous and M. Tietz (eds.), *El anarquismo español y sus tradiciones culturales* (Frankfurt am Main/Madrid, 1995), pp. 29-40. This relationship was played down by Eduard Masjuan in *La ecología humana en el anarquismo ibérico: urbanismo ‘orgánico’ o ecológico, neomalthusianismo y naturismo social* (Barcelona, 2000) but was broadly reaffirmed in Isabel Jiménez-Lucena and Jorge Molero-Mesa ‘Good birth and good living. The (de)medicalizing key to sexual reform in the anarchist media of inter-war Spain’ in *International Journal of Iberian Studies*, vol 24, no 3, (2012), 219-41.

<sup>14</sup> João Freire and Maria Alexandre Lousada ‘O neomalthusianismo na propaganda libertária’ in *Análise Social*, Vol 18, no 72-73-74, (1982), 1367-97; Diogo Duarte ‘Everyday forms of Utopia: Anarchism and Neo-Malthusianism in Portugal in the Early Twentieth Century’ in Francisco Bethencourt (ed.), *Utopia in Portugal, Brazil and Lusophone African Countries* (Oxford, 2015), pp. 251-73.

<sup>15</sup> For the most extensive discussion of Darwin and the history of evolutionary theory in Portugal, see Ana Leonor Pereira, *Darwin em Portugal. Filosofia. História. Engenharia Social (1865–1914)* (Coimbra, 2001).

<sup>16</sup> Americo Pires de Lima, *A evolução do transformismo* (Oporto, 1912); Carlos Almaça ‘Neo-Lamarckism in Portugal’ in *Asclepio*, no 2, (2000), 85-98; for this reception, see Cleminson, *Catholicism*, pp. 42-3.

<sup>17</sup> The appendix is entitled ‘Estudo do mendelismo, especialmente nas suas aplicações ao homem’ (Pires de Lima, *A evolução*, pp. 117-35).

<sup>18</sup> Pires de Lima, *A evolução*, p. 119.

interpretation of Malthus' doctrine on population imbalance can be found in numerous figures connected to the anarchist movement such as Ângelo Vaz (1879-1962) and reviews such as *Paz e Liberdade*, subtitled 'A Monthly Anti-Militarist, Anti-Patriotic, Revolutionary Syndicalist and Neo-Malthusian Review'.<sup>19</sup> Some authors, particularly when discussing the ideas of the French educational and sex reformer Paul Robin (1837-1912), the inspiration behind the International League for Human Regeneration, articulated the need to improve the 'quality' of the population but did not do so within the discursive frame of eugenics.<sup>20</sup>

As Ana Leonor Pereira has argued, in Portugal, one of the most significant early interventions in debates on social progress, the usages of notions of the 'struggle for existence', and ideas on the mechanisms of inheritance was the 1910 libertarian work by João Evangelista Campos Lima (1887-1956).<sup>21</sup> The first part of his book, an analysis of the thought of Cesare Lombroso, Malthus and Darwin, among other thinkers, was followed by an overview of the state of the workers' movement in Portugal to date. A strong environmentalist thesis on the criminogenic and unhealthy nature of capitalist society was advanced. Lima wrote: 'Let the environment be transformed, let all be given the necessary means of existence and, fear not, the biological law will falter: degeneration will be limited and, even though it will subsist some time afterwards because of the residues that heredity transmits, it will eventually disappear'.<sup>22</sup> The so-called 'struggle for existence' was seen as a ruling class ploy to aid their own survival and dominance. Lima reaffirmed this line of reasoning in the 1920s when he argued that the weak and the degenerate, as they normally attracted one another and as their unions were usually infertile, would die out in the future.<sup>23</sup> He argued that the lack of naturalness of the marriage convention, which allowed for the weakest to thrive, would not survive into the future and the fixation of the 'superior qualities of individuals and the elimination of the weakest by means of the lack of fecundity of their sexual relations' would be the result.<sup>24</sup> Such a process would guarantee the progressive perfectibility of human kind.<sup>25</sup> Jaime Brasil would continue this kind of analysis into the 1930s.

### **Jaime Brasil: From 'Conscious Procreation' to Eugenics**

Apart from his collaboration with the more trade-union oriented *A Batalha*, Jaime Brasil was a significant figure in a variety of other publications. One of these was the already mentioned *O Globo*, a critical cultural review which, despite the dictatorship, maintained a weekly periodicity under Brasil's editorship and directorship from January 1930 up to the end of July of the same year. An eclectic mix of articles was published in the review, which enjoyed a high quality presentation and eye-catching imagery. Articles on the women's movement, reproduction, morality, film, emigration and nudism were just some of the themes approached. Brasil wrote on the subject of 'voluntary procreation' in May 1930 and argued in

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<sup>19</sup> On Vaz see Pereira, *Darwin em Portugal*, pp. 436-455, passim; Freire and Lousada (eds.), *Greve de Ventres!*, pp. 51-68, pages which reproduce some sections of Vaz, *Néo-Malthusianismo: Tese inaugural apresentada à Escola Medico-Cirurgica do Porto* (Oporto, 1902).

<sup>20</sup> On Paul Robin, see Gabriel Giroud, *Paul Robin* (Paris, 1937).

<sup>21</sup> [João Evangelista] Campos Lima, *O Movimento Operario em Portugal* (Lisbon, 1910). See Pereira, *Darwin em Portugal*, pp. 436-476, passim. Campos Lima, as he was known, wrote the text originally in 1904 as a dissertation at Coimbra University.

<sup>22</sup> Lima, *O Movimento Operario em Portugal*, p. 19.

<sup>23</sup> Campos Lima, *A Theoria Libertária ou o Anarquismo* (Lisbon, 1926), pp. 28-31. This was the printed version of a talk originally given at the Popular University.

<sup>24</sup> Lima, *A Theoria Libertária*, p. 29.

<sup>25</sup> Lima, *A Theoria Libertária*, p. 32.

favour of a doctrine that he declared would be termed ‘biosofia’.<sup>26</sup> The idea of voluntary procreation for women, common currency by that date in the French and Spanish anarchist movements, argued in favour of women having children when they desired and called for women to ‘impede the reproduction of people whose physical or moral taints, where scientifically identified, prevent them from perpetuating the species’ as a ‘duty’ towards society.<sup>27</sup> In this process, the individual should be subordinated to the species. Pre-matrimonial certificates were insufficient and divorce was not adequate either for the selection of a ‘good human product’. Instead, preventive neo-Malthusian measures should be extended and doctors should participate in a new institute that would be ‘in charge of overseeing the conservation and perfecting of the species’.<sup>28</sup> This body would also prevent individuals from reproducing and would provide them with the means to avoid doing so. Such a questionable institution in libertarian terms would also allow for or encourage the voluntary castration of alcoholics, syphilitics and madmen, an intervention that would supposedly regenerate the species. Brasil named the French authorities Adolphe Pinard and Alfred Binet to back up such ideas.

It was not long before Jaime Brasil began to articulate such notions explicitly as part of a programme of eugenics. Although his engagement with eugenics was significantly more extensive in his later *A Questão Sexual* and his *A Procriação Voluntária* of 1933,<sup>29</sup> in the slim *O Problema Sexual* (1931) Brasil touched on the international eugenics movement just a few years after the ‘founding’ document of Portuguese eugenics, the report written by the Oporto anthropologist A.A. Mendes Correia, *O problema eugénico em Portugal* (1927).<sup>30</sup> Brasil’s *O Problema Sexual*, as the title suggests, was devoted principally to the need for sex education. The work began with a number of assertions that were commonplace in the transnational anarchist movement: that humans (‘man’ in the original) had been born ‘good and free’ but had later been enslaved and had given themselves over to hatred. Only through the use of intelligence and knowledge could they recoup their lost freedoms and goodness. But how, Brasil asked, could this be guaranteed if vices and bad traits existed in humanity?<sup>31</sup> These disadvantages, he responded, could be eliminated by means of integral education, which would in turn be based on morality and the truths of biology. Given the fact that sex was at the root of life, Brasil continued, it was to be lamented that it was hardly treated objectively at all; the sexual organs were taboo matters in schools and in life in general.<sup>32</sup> Brasil marshalled a number of voices to register his disapproval of this situation including some Catholic figures including the Archbishop of Paris Cardinal Verdier who spoke at the VIIth National Congress on Christian Marriage held in Paris to this effect.<sup>33</sup> Brasil even

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<sup>26</sup> This would be different from the ‘biocracy’ of eugenicist Édouard Toulouse and first elaborated upon extensively in Portugal by Luís A. Duarte Santos ‘O normotipo do homem na zona de Coimbra e o normotipo dos portugueses’ in *Arquivo de Anatomia e Antropologia*, vol XXI, (1940–1941), pp. 507-40. For Toulouse, see Alain Drouard, *L’eugénisme en questions. L’exemple de l’eugénisme «français»* (Paris, 1999), pp. 21-65.

<sup>27</sup> Jaime Brasil, ‘Problemas actuais. A “procriação voluntária” em nome dos superiores interesses da espécie’ *O Globo*. *Hebdomadário de cultura, doutrina e informação* no 18, (1930), 2.

<sup>28</sup> Brasil, ‘Problemas actuais’, 2.

<sup>29</sup> Jaime Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*. *Processos para evitar a gravidez* (Lisbon, 1933). This volume was the first offering in the ‘Biblioteca de Educação Sexual’. It was published by Nunes de Carvalho, the firm that also produced Brasil’s *A Questão Sexual* and *Os Padres e ‘A Questão Sexual’*.

<sup>30</sup> Jaime Brasil, *O Problema Sexual* (Lisbon, 1931). Like Lima’s talk on anarchist theory in 1926, this was also the text of a talk given at the Popular University in Coimbra (26 March 1931). A.A. Mendes Correia, *O problema eugénico em Portugal* (Oporto, 1927).

<sup>31</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 8.

<sup>32</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 11.

<sup>33</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 16. Brasil does not give the full reference, but the event referred to was probably that of the Association du Mariage Chrétien, which published *L’Église et L’Eugénisme, La Famille à la Croisée des Chemins* (Paris, 1930).

suggested the creation of an Institute of Sexuality and Eugenics to take care of the teaching of these matters to the population at large.<sup>34</sup>

This Institute and other initiatives would provide boys and girls with information on the dangers of prostitution, syphilis and other venereal diseases, the advantages of pre-marital medical examinations, the role of voluntary and conscious maternity and would establish clinics to dispense 'eugenic devices' (probably contraception).<sup>35</sup> In the chapter on the issue of voluntary procreation, Brasil praised the work of the recently established World League for Sex Reform, in whose congress (Geneva 1927) the question of sex education had been discussed.<sup>36</sup> Voluntary procreation was described as one of the fundamental rights of women.<sup>37</sup> It would appear, however, that neither the Institute, at least in the form Brasil envisaged, nor the Portuguese chapter of the WLSR came into existence.

Brasil soon moved on to address the question of impeding procreation in those cases where poor traits were deemed hereditary and incurable. These should be taken cognizance of in order to prevent procreation. Brasil argued that the transmission of degenerative traits, such as tuberculous conditions, had been demonstrated scientifically and, as a consequence, in certain American states 'castration' of delinquents had been permitted.<sup>38</sup> Although such a step was not explicitly advocated or condemned by Brasil, his view was that a more rational and human approach rather than 'these mutilations or privations' would be what he called the prophylaxis of conception.<sup>39</sup> It was this method that the Neo-Malthusians Eugène and Jeanne-Humbert had defended at the 4<sup>th</sup> congress of the WLSR held in Vienna in 1930.<sup>40</sup> Even the Lambeth Conference had reversed a decision previously taken in 1920 disapproving of contraception allowing it if its use was 'moral'.<sup>41</sup> Such a move, of course, provoked the papal encyclical 'Casti Connubii' criticising those that had strayed from the Christian path and it was these sectors of the Church that Brasil condemned strongly in his final section.

Brasil finished his discussion of voluntary procreation by praising what he identified as the recent upsurge, a 'silent revolution', in Norway and elsewhere whereby free unions outside of marriage had become increasingly the vogue.<sup>42</sup> This oft-cited anarchist remedy for the authoritarian nature of marriage was classified by the author not as a utopia but as a strident reality. Finally, eugenics and its supporters, guided by the recent progress in genetics, would provide a 'perfect humanity' in the future.<sup>43</sup> Such a scenario could only be halted by a generic 'eles' ('they...') who would attempt to scupper emancipatory developments. These sectors wanted everything to remain the same; they were the 'frightful forces of reaction in the service of a depraved and greedy capitalism' incarnated in a form of 'corrupt and ignorant clericalism that, incapable of discussing ideas, denounces its adversaries to the police...'.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 19 (the original Portuguese was 'Instituto de Sexualismo e Eugenia').

<sup>35</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 41. In his *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 47, Brasil refers to the attempt by the Oporto-based scholar and sex reformer Almerindo Lessa to establish a Portuguese chapter of the WLSR. Lessa wrote a piece for the Spanish League's journal in 1933. See Almerindo Lessa 'Problemas de Psicología Sexual. El Amor' in *Sexus*, vol 2, no 2, (1933), 61-71.

<sup>37</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 43.

<sup>38</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 47.

<sup>39</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 48.

<sup>40</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 48-51. The Humberts enjoyed a prominent profile in the anarchist Neo-Malthusian movement. Jeanne Humbert was arrested and convicted of spreading Neo-Malthusian propaganda in contravention of the French 1920 law in 1934. See William H. Schneider, *Quality and Quantity: The Quest for Biological Regeneration in Twentieth-Century France* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 185.

<sup>41</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 51. Brasil did not state which conference, but this would have been the one convened in 1930.

<sup>42</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 57.

<sup>43</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 58.

<sup>44</sup> Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, p. 59.

This short book by Brasil combined explicit praise for scientific developments, a libertarian political stance in favour of sex education and women's rights with a condemnation of the most reactionary sectors of Catholicism and capitalism. It drew on a battery of sex reformers to support its cause including Iwan Bloch, Havelock Ellis, Sigmund Freud, Egas Moniz and Pierre Vachet and combined them with prominent anarchist thinkers from across Europe (Charles Albert, E. Armand, Élisée Reclus).<sup>45</sup> The references to eugenics per se were not extensive but the understanding of voluntary procreation as part of a process leading to the perfection of human types, the discussion of hereditary traits and 'castration' (i.e. 'eugenic sterilization') and suggestions for less authoritarian alternatives place *O Problema Sexual* within the anarchist tradition of eugenics and, more significantly, within a tendency whereby discourse on conscious procreation and neo-Malthusianism were beginning to take on explicitly eugenic overtones. The added dimension interrogating the various stances of the Christian Churches, together with the condemnation of those which Brasil took to be the most reactionary sectors, also confirm the piece's presence within this tradition. The work also, quite evidently, set the stage for future conflict with the Catholic Church.

A far more explicit account of the science of eugenics was to be elaborated in Brasil's *A Questão Sexual* a year later. His thought on the subject was evidently undergoing rapid evolution as it took on greater sophistication and showed its debts to broader international eugenic discourses.<sup>46</sup> After having argued in favour of contraception as an economic and moral necessity, Brasil justified such means as being devoted principally to the selection of the species. Women should be free to have children when they wished and should be able to satisfy their own sexual desires without the risk of pregnancy.<sup>47</sup> As part of the 'selection' process, women should be able to have sexual relations with men until finding the right partner in order to have a child. This was an individual right, he declared.

The collective should, however, also be considered. Under the capitalist system (which, Brasil averred, would not be lasting for much longer) it was necessary for the proletariat to cease reproducing in order to limit the growth of surplus workers, reduce poverty and unemployment and to combat wage reductions.<sup>48</sup> Such assertions placed Brasil firmly in the anarchist neo-Malthusian camp as expressed in reviews such as *Salud y Fuerza* (1904-1914) which had argued for a similar strategy.<sup>49</sup> Beyond these measures, however, it was necessary to 'avoid procreation between individuals who are ill and tainted'. Such a concern had been discussed in earlier evaluations of eugenics in Portugal, for example, in the writings of the psychiatrist Miguel Bombarda (1851-1910) in 1910 and later on among eugenicists in the 1920s and, in this sense, Brasil's referral to this debate was not exceptional for the period.<sup>50</sup> But how did it fit with a doctrine supposedly devoted to the liberation of individuals and opposed to authoritarian methods?

It was the relationship between individual rights and the collective health of the species that was at the forefront of Brasil's rationalisation of this problematic. The limitation of reproductivity in these individuals was, in Brasil's eye, to their own benefit, but it would

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<sup>45</sup> See the bibliography in Brasil, *O Problema Sexual*, pp. 61-63.

<sup>46</sup> See the section of Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, pp. 428-34 on the 'selection of the species'.

<sup>47</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, p. 428.

<sup>48</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, p. 429.

<sup>49</sup> From a different political perspective, Leonard Darwin, *What is Eugenics?* (New York, 1932; first edition 1929) p. 26, argued that those filling well-paid positions should keep their levels of offspring high to maintain such positions while those in poorly paid jobs should reduce their numbers, resulting in fewer applicants for such labour, in turn meaning that wages would go up. Further, 'If the unemployed had few children, this would in like manner lessen unemployment in the future, with all its attendant misery'. As we will see below, Brasil drew on Darwin to justify his vision of eugenics.

<sup>50</sup> Cleminson, *Catholicism*, pp. 34-40.

be ‘cruel and absurd to prevent them from having sexual relations’. Their own natural libido demanded the exercising of a normal sexual life but without the burden of offspring, which, even though it was not stated, was something that would be possible by means of the use of contraception.<sup>51</sup> This would allow for ‘the healthy, apt, strong, intelligent’ types to procreate.<sup>52</sup> The programme of eugenics was now not just an ideal but a ‘laboratory science’ whose prescriptions and discoveries should be obeyed.<sup>53</sup> Drawing on the French eugenicist Charles Richet’s work, *Sélection humaine* (1919), Brasil repeated his support for conscious procreation and scientific developments as routes towards human perfection.<sup>54</sup>

Richet (1850-1935) was the first of numerous international commentators on eugenics to be referred to by Brasil. Others included Marie Stopes (1880-1958) and Leonard Darwin (1850-1943), president of the British Eugenics Society. The latter was quoted to illustrate the two main tendencies within eugenics, positive and negative eugenics, and to provide ballast for the argument to promote the reproduction of those with ‘superior faculties’.<sup>55</sup> Although Brasil’s engagement here with eugenics was more extensive than in previous publications it was still of a somewhat popularised type. Darwin, for example, was referred to but the precise reference was not supplied. In the final section of the book, a whole range of measures were proposed in order to provide guidance on how sexuality would be in the future. The ‘sexual revolution’ that was underway would draw on conscious procreation, nudism, the elimination of prostitution, opposition to masturbation, different models of cohabitation including monogamous and polygamous relationships. This revolutionary change was deemed to be inseparable from the broader social revolution.<sup>56</sup>

With *A Questão Sexual* Brasil admitted he had not wanted to write a doctrinal, normative, professorial or didactic work. Instead, he had aimed to educate his readers about sexuality through knowledge and understanding.<sup>57</sup> Such an aim, of course, coincided with his anarchist and indeed journalistic preferences and it continued into his *A Procriação Voluntária*, the volume that appeared after his counter-attack on *Novidades*. Before considering the central debates contained in this riposte, we will go forward in time to analyse *A Procriação Voluntária* for its continuation of Brasil’s eugenics. The final part of this article will return to *Os Padres e ‘A Questão Sexual’* and the conflict between Brasil’s anarchistic sex reform project and eugenics and Catholicism.

### **‘Systematic and progressive perfection’ through voluntary procreation**

The relationship between the individual and the collective, constant in the anarchist political repertoire, was revisited by Brasil in his *A Procriação Voluntária*. The mechanism by which the balance would be achieved was through the new science of eugenics. Eugenics would achieve a process of systematic and progressive improvement in the individual. Its methods were praised by Brasil as the route to achieving what philosophical schools, religious thought, scientific discoveries and social systems had yearned after for centuries: the attainment of human perfection. As the preface to *A Procriação Voluntária* proves, eugenics had gained centre stage in Brasil’s thought by 1933. In light of his suggestion that the study of the economic ideas of neo-Malthusianism needed to be combined with the scientific premises of eugenics, Brasil, like many other anarchists, sealed the association between the two in

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<sup>51</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, p. 429.

<sup>52</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, pp. 429-30.

<sup>53</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, p. 430.

<sup>54</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, pp. 430-31 where Richet’s *Sélection humaine* (Paris, 1919) is quoted extensively. Richet’s work is discussed in Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, pp. 109-115.

<sup>55</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, p. 432.

<sup>56</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, pp. 469-474.

<sup>57</sup> Brasil, *A Questão Sexual*, p. 470.

anarchist ideology.<sup>58</sup> *A Procriação Voluntária* was composed of two parts, the first being a theoretical exposition on the regulation of birth, imbued with eugenic concepts, and the second dedicated to practical birth control techniques faithful to the subtitle of the work, ‘The Means of Avoiding Pregnancy’.

In the theoretical section, Brasil appeared to be well informed about the debates and about the relevant thinkers. Havelock Ellis, Francis Galton, J. Huxley, H.F. Osborn, Charles Davenport and Renato Kehl were all referred to along with their relevant institutes and publications. This first part was also broad and did not limit itself to discussions on eugenics alone. Chapters discussed the principles of eugenics, the basis of neo-Malthusianism, the birth control movement, the liberation of love and sexual prophylaxis. While it must be emphasised that all these sections were considered by Brasil to be interrelated and complementary as part of an overall whole, it is the section specifically on eugenics that will be discussed here. The various elements were, nevertheless, subject to considerable re-positioning and one has only to think of the discussion in a Spanish anarchist review of neo-Malthusianism and eugenics as complementary but different theories by the Spanish educationalist Luis Huerta in 1930.<sup>59</sup>

Brasil gave an account of the history of eugenics from its Galtonian starting point – reference is made to Galton’s *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (1884) as the text which first mentioned ‘eugenics’ – and recounted its intellectual forerunners, including Darwin’s debt to Malthus with respect to the idea of the struggle for existence (in fact, the debt of Darwin to Malthus’ idea on population pressure).<sup>60</sup> The history and current state of the international eugenics movement was also recorded and brief remarks were made on the French, Romanian, Italian, Russian, Estonian, North American and British movements. Few comments were made on the Portuguese counterpart, save the remark that the Brazilian Renato Kehl had given a talk to the Portuguese Anthropological Society and the aforementioned note on Almerindo Lessa’s potential involvement in the WLSR.<sup>61</sup>

Returning to the thought of Leonard Darwin, Brasil explained that there were two principal types of eugenics: positive and negative. The positive form needed little explication: ‘Any couple of healthy individuals, living under normal economic conditions, needs no advice on procreation within reasonable limits’.<sup>62</sup> This ‘normal’ couple would be composed of individuals who were ‘healthy, with no ancestral taints, strong, young, intelligent and educated in matters pertaining to sexuality’.<sup>63</sup> The biological basis of eugenics was considered by Brasil to derive from similar techniques used for animal rearing (‘zootecnia’) in order to select races and improve types.<sup>64</sup> What, however, was to be done with the ‘inferior’ types? Brasil was quite clear on this. The healthy had to support the ill and the ‘sub-products of humanity’ in hospitals, asylums and through welfare schemes and it was the task of negative eugenics not to eliminate these but to prevent them from being born in the first

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<sup>58</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 7. The preface notes that the work was completed in February 1933 (Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 10). An eloquent example of the fusion between Neo-Malthusianism and eugenics was the re-naming of Albert Gros’ review, *Le Malthusien*, to become *Le Malthusien: Revue eugéniste*. See Schneider, *Quality and Quantity*, p. 37.

<sup>59</sup> Luis Huerta ‘El Malthusianismo no es el Eugenismo’ in *Estudios*, no 77, (1930), 36-43. Huerta’s book, *Natalidad Controlada*, published by the anarchist publishing house Cuadernos de Cultura (Valencia) in 1933 restates and amplifies this argument.

<sup>60</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, pp. 14-15.

<sup>61</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, pp. 17 and 47, respectively. Kehl gave his talk in Oporto on 24 October 1932 (Cleminson, *Catholicism*, pp. 106-107).

<sup>62</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 19.

<sup>63</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 19.

<sup>64</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 20.

place.<sup>65</sup> In addition, certain states or conditions, following Marie Stopes' book on contraception, were deemed 'counter-indicative' for reproduction.<sup>66</sup> These included hereditary blindness, syphilis, tuberculosis, epilepsy, diabetes, mental disorders and, in women, the malformation of the pelvis.<sup>67</sup> Some importance was given to the environmental causes of degeneration and poor traits with heredity seen to provide some 50% of character; 15% of character came from education, 25% from the environment and 10% from one's physiological state.<sup>68</sup> Such a formula was viewed as too rigid by Brasil, but worth taking into account as the neo-Malthusian Manuel Devaldès (1875-1956) had argued in his book on conscious maternity.<sup>69</sup> Devaldès was a favourite author amongst the anarchists in France, Portugal and Spain for his plain-speaking approval of women's right to sexual pleasure without children and for his open stance on sexual education and it was his work that Brasil used to frame the preface of his *A Procriação Voluntária*.<sup>70</sup>

The 'inheritance formula' mentioned by Brasil was indicative of discussions at the time on the importance of heredity with respect to environment and the on-going deliberations in the eugenics movement itself. Those anarchists in Portugal, such as Campos Lima and Brasil, who raised this issue oscillated between an almost complete faith in the environment to improve humanity through to some kind of combination of environmental and hereditary influences. Brasil himself mentioned that certain diseases were transmitted through uterine means, tuberculosis made offspring more 'predisposed' to disease and certain illnesses were deemed to be hereditary. Such a concession to vague notions of predisposition, uterine inheritance and the environment was typical, first, of anarchist thought on the subject and, second, of many eugenicists who operated in the 'Latin' eugenics tradition.<sup>71</sup>

Brasil's talk of 'sub-humans', 'inferior types' and 'criminals' fitted with difficulty with an anarchist model of egalitarianism and the idea that capitalism was at the root of poverty and crime. A number of ambivalences can readily be detected in the text. Brasil seemed to suggest it was legitimate to prevent such types from reproducing in the last section of his chapter on eugenics, but on the other hand, he wrote that it was 'too cruel to try to prevent the poor from the pleasures that reproduction may bring them'.<sup>72</sup> Indeed, the eugenic strategy for the rich and the poor, reflecting a class analysis, would be different. The poor could employ methods allowing for a 'conscious regularization of birth' with the 'absolute suppression [of births] for the poorest' and this would allow for economic wealth for all and the happiness of perfection for humanity.<sup>73</sup> For the rich, a different outcome was suggested. The rich, he stated bluntly, 'had no right to exist'. Wealth, Brasil argued, was a 'taint that deforms character' and was rooted in the 'anal character' that psychoanalysis studied. The 'caste of the rich', therefore, carried its own seeds of destruction and would soon 'disappear from the surface of the earth'.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 21.

<sup>66</sup> Marie Carmichael Stopes, *Contraception (Birth Control)* (London, 1924).

<sup>67</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>68</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, pp. 22-23. Brasil mentioned a work by Henrique Guillou, *Ensaio de filosofia geral*, which may have been J.M. Guyau, *Ensaio de uma moral sem obrigação, nem sanção* (Lisbon, 1919), a text popular in anarchist circles at the time.

<sup>69</sup> The original French edition was Manuel Devaldès, *La Maternité consciente. Le Rôle des Femmes dans l'amélioration de la race* (Paris, 1927).

<sup>70</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 5, where Devaldès' (written with an acute accent in Portugal and Spain) book is qualified as a 'lucid work'. For Devaldès' comments on the percentage formula, see Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 23.

<sup>71</sup> Turda and Gillette, *Latin Eugenics*, *passim*.

<sup>72</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 25. The original Portuguese for 'reproduction' was 'proliferação'.

<sup>73</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 26.

<sup>74</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, p. 26.

It may be assumed that the methods to be employed for the ‘absolute suppression’ of births in the poor would be contraceptives. But in the second part of the book Brasil discussed other practical birth control techniques and these included sterilization. In a somewhat detached set of observations, Brasil noted that sterilization was a process that had been disseminated as a solution in many parts of the world, as had vasectomy, a technique that had been persecuted. In England, sterilization was proposed by some and opposed as irreversible by other eugenicists. In America, the Human Betterment Foundation approved of sterilization and X-rays could be employed for such a purpose.<sup>75</sup> It would appear, therefore, that although Brasil advanced contraceptive methods as the key to impeding the reproduction of the ‘unfit’ and for the poor to control their own natality, sterilization was clearly not rejected as a means towards the same end. This was unusual for anarchist commentators on the question of the legitimacy of sterilization.<sup>76</sup>

### **Novidades and the Catholic response to A Questão Sexual**

The relationship between Catholicism and the Salazar regime was not straightforward and although Salazar was broadly in favour of Catholic moral precepts he was wary of the power of the Church regarding the day-to-day operation of the regime, its role in education and the socio-political influence it could accrue.<sup>77</sup> But the regime adopted as its slogan, ‘God, Nation and Family’ and this triple liaison effectively sealed the influence of the Church in the regime’s affairs and development. Traditional Catholicism was a ‘crucial contributor’ and ‘determining influence’ on the regime and affected the wording of the constitution and the declaration of the regime’s principles,<sup>78</sup> thus expressing a ‘common ideological and political nucleus that was corporatist, anti-liberal and anti-communist’.<sup>79</sup> The daily paper *Novidades* grew out of a late nineteenth-century concern to provide intellectual and moral guidance to the population from a more ‘neutral’ position and the journal was established in 1885 under the wing of the Progressive Party politician Emídio Navarro and the army officer and journalist Eduardo Noronha.<sup>80</sup> It became one of the principal Catholic publications of the twentieth century in Portugal and, having gone through various publishing periods, was still produced as a daily by the time of the debacle with Jaime Brasil. *Novidades* was not simply a reactionary publication, however; it condemned fascism and Mussolini in particular as examples of ‘pagan’ politics whereby the state claimed all authority (over and above the Church),<sup>81</sup> and Hitler’s party and the Nazi regime also came in for much criticism throughout the early 1930s for their nationalism, racism and violence.<sup>82</sup> When Salazar addressed the first

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<sup>75</sup> Brasil, *A Procriação Voluntária*, pp. 119-121.

<sup>76</sup> See Cleminson, *Anarchism*, pp. 212-18 for the anarchist response to the Nazi sterilization laws.

<sup>77</sup> Manuel Braga da Cruz ‘As origens da democracia cristã em Portugal e o salazarismo (I)’ in *Análise Social*, vol 14 no 54, (1978), 265-278; ‘As origens da democracia cristã em Portugal e o salazarismo (II)’ in *Análise Social*, vol 14 no 55, (1978), 525-607; Manuel Braga da Cruz ‘As elites católicas nos primórdios do salazarismo’ in *Análise Social*, vol 27, nos 116-117, (1992), 547-574. For a succinct overview of the Church’s role under Salazar, see Tom Gallagher, *Portugal: A twentieth-century interpretation* (Manchester, 1983), pp. 125-129.

<sup>78</sup> António Costa Pinto and Maria Inácia Rezola ‘Political Catholicism, Crisis of Democracy and Salazar’s New State in Portugal’ in Matthew Feldman and Marius Turda with Tudor Georgescu (eds.), *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe* (London/New York, 2008), pp. 141-156 (p. 153).

<sup>79</sup> Costa Pinto and Inácia Rezola ‘Political Catholicism’, p. 154. For the changing face and evolving relationship with the regime of organised political Catholicism, the *Acção Católica Portuguesa*, see António Matos Ferreira, ‘A Acção Católica. Questões em torno da organização e da autonomia da acção da Igreja Católica’, in *O Estado Novo das Origens ao Fim da Autarcia (1926-1959)*, Vol. II, Lisboa, Fragmentos, 1987, pp. 281-302.

<sup>80</sup> For the early period of the journal, see Rogério Santos ‘O Jornalismo na Transição do Século XIX para o XX. O Caso do Diário *Novidades* (1885-1913)’ in *Media e Jornalismo*, vol 9, no 9, (2006), 89-104.

<sup>81</sup> For evidence and discussion of this position, see Braga da Cruz ‘As elites católicas’, 552-54 cites several *Novidades* issues from 1931; Costa Pinto and Inácia Rezola ‘Political Catholicism’, pp. 147-148.

<sup>82</sup> Braga da Cruz ‘As elites católicas’, 555.

Congress of the regime party, the União Nacional, and criticised the ‘pagan totalitarianism’ of fascism in 1934 it met with the resounding approval of *Novidades*.<sup>83</sup> Despite evident common causes, however, the eventual text of the Concordat signed in Rome between the Estado Novo and the Church on 7 May 1940 maintained the independence of the state vis-à-vis the Church. Certain hangovers from the anticlerical Republic were maintained such as divorce for those married during the republican period and for non-Catholics.<sup>84</sup> Catholic opposition to the regime and those forces broadly under the banner of ‘social Catholicism’ were kept in control by the political regime and the powers of the Church until the late 1950s and early 1960s.<sup>85</sup> The Second Vatican Council and Catholic critiques of colonialism led to further differences between the regime and the Church.<sup>86</sup>

The response to Brasil’s *A Questão Sexual* was anything but moderate or neutral and any limited Catholic enlightenment with respect to social and scientific issues, as evidenced in work by figures such as the French Jesuit Teilhard de Chardin (1881-1955), was not a characteristic of Portuguese Catholicism in the early 1930s. Jaime Brasil’s ‘response to a campaign’ by the Catholic *Novidades*, entitled *Os Padres e ‘A Questão Sexual’* ran to just less than one hundred pages and reproduced verbatim the original articles published by *Novidades* as well as some that appeared in other newspapers, either in favour or against Brasil’s ideas. Early on in the volume, Brasil stated that his *A Questão Sexual* had been published in June 1932, was reviewed by some newspapers of the national press, such as the *Diário da Noite* and *O Século*, and was therefore known to the ‘fathers’, the ‘padres’ of *Novidades* very soon after publication.<sup>87</sup> At this point, however, they did not condemn the work as it had not been approved for publication by the Church.

It was only therefore in mid-July 1932 that the ‘general offensive’ against *A Questão Sexual* began. Brasil was careful to point out that apart from being a personal offensive meted out by the Catholic Church against him it was also part of a broader attempt to counter the anti-clerical press, such as the newspaper *O Século*, for which Brasil wrote, and to admonish other recently published works critical of religion.<sup>88</sup> In response to an article by Brasil in *O Século* in favour of educational and scientific means to combat prostitution in Oporto over and above simple Catholic moral declarations, thus coinciding with the energetic hygiene campaigns of the Portuguese League for Social Prophylaxis (LPPS) based in the city, *Novidades* aimed to refute Brasil’s position and published an article on ‘Communism – How its propaganda is being spread in Portugal’.<sup>89</sup> According to this piece, Brasil, the author of the book ‘of declared communist propaganda’, *A Questão Sexual*, was in the process of providing almost unnoticeable homeopathic doses of ‘communist venom’ to be swallowed by an unsuspecting public in order to promote the social revolution he envisaged as necessary to resolve the sexual question; this was, however, little more than ‘pseudo-intellectualised pornography’.<sup>90</sup> Instead of chastity, marriage, honour and propriety, values classed as ‘medieval’ by Brasil, the scientific and moral values propounded by him were nothing more

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<sup>83</sup> Braga da Cruz ‘As elites católicas’, 559.

<sup>84</sup> Paul Blanshard, *Freedom and Catholic Power in Spain and Portugal: An American Interpretation* (Boston, 1962), p. 219.

<sup>85</sup> Nuno Medeiros ‘Action, Reaction and Protest by Publishers in 1960s Portugal: Books and Other Publications in the Catholic Opposition’ in *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, vol 16, no 2-3, (2015), 137-153. Some translated works on conjugal love and related matters began to appear in the 1950s (Medeiros, ‘Action’, 147).

<sup>86</sup> Richard Robinson, *Contemporary Portugal: A history* (London, 1979), p. 79.

<sup>87</sup> Brasil remarks, *Os Padres*, p. 11, note 1, that his use of the term ‘padres’ is ‘employed in the most pejorative of senses’.

<sup>88</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 12. Although Brasil does not state which, these may have included the above-mentioned work by Lessa.

<sup>89</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, pp. 18-20. The article was published on 18 July 1932.

<sup>90</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 18.

than ‘the exaltation of all carnal tendencies and appetites of the human animal’.<sup>91</sup> In a tug-of-war that lasted several days, Brasil’s ‘intelligent and worthy’ opinions were, nevertheless, defended in turn by the *Diário Liberal* the day afterwards. The author of this defence of Brasil supported his proposed solutions to the sexual question and condemned the morality of Catholicism which gave vent to ‘bestial instincts’.<sup>92</sup>

A further article with the title ‘Communist propaganda – a manual of public corruption’ was printed the same day by *Novidades* and the review reaffirmed its position, rejected Brasil’s *A Questão Sexual* and declared it to be inspired by the likes of communists Alexandra Kollontai and V. I. Lenin.<sup>93</sup> The work, the piece ran, ‘[w]ishes to corrupt, above all, the youth’, differentiating his work from that of Egas Moniz: ‘Mr. Jaime Brasil has inaugurated political pornography’, which hid under ‘the mask of hygiene’.<sup>94</sup> The book ‘assaulted the most elementary precepts of morality’ and pretended to justify all crimes of morality and activities ‘against nature’.<sup>95</sup> *Novidades* went further in its acerbic critique and declared that ‘[t]he book by Mr. Jaime Brasil aims to corrupt systematically and overtly, combatting all the defences of public morality. It is, therefore, frankly and openly revolutionary’.<sup>96</sup> It was, in sum, ‘the most shameful manual of political corruption to come off any Portuguese press to date’.<sup>97</sup>

In turn, Brasil responded in the pages of the *Diário Liberal* on 21 July refuting his supposed communist affiliation pointing out the personal risks such an accusation could entail and demanded that the Catholic paper provided the relevant proofs. In certain sections of his response that were not printed by the liberal paper, but which were provided in italics in his *Os Padres*, he went on to accuse figures of the Church of various misdemeanours including child molestation.<sup>98</sup> This merited a further response from *Novidades* and a counter-denunciation of the attitudes of the Catholic paper by Ribeiro de Carvalho (1880-1942) in the progressive Republica on 25 July whereby it was stated that Portugal was not a branch of Rome, was not subject to the ‘stinking hypocrisy’ of the Jesuits and was a nation free of ‘ultramontane’ prejudices.<sup>99</sup> Following this piece, Brasil elaborated further on the question of Russian communism and the supposed corruption of the youth. After these exchanges, some of the same and other newspapers came out in defence of and in solidarity with Brasil. Towards the end of the year, in light of a campaign to honour him through the presentation of a golden pen for his contribution to journalism (an offering he stated he would refuse), right-wing papers added to the condemnation of Brasil in particular in ideological terms.<sup>100</sup>

The association between Brasil’s work and communism, the accusation that his work contributed to the corruption of youth and the argument that scientific morality was a lesser guide for the complexities of human choice and life were all wrapped up in the *Novidades* critique. As such, the ideas such a critique contained were, if not typical of particular conservative Catholic approaches, were at least not exceptional in the Iberian setting where

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<sup>91</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 19.

<sup>92</sup> The article in the *Diário Liberal* is reproduced in Brasil, *Os Padres*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>93</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, pp. 22-25. Later, *Novidades* referred to the book as ‘verdadeiramente anarquizadora’ (‘truly anarchistic’), adding to the lack of clear ideological classification (Brasil, *Os Padres*, ‘Em duas palavras’, *Novidades*, 31 July 1932, pp. 67-68 (p. 67)).

<sup>94</sup> Both quotes from Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 23.

<sup>95</sup> This must have referred to Brasil’s approval of female sexual freedom and contraception rather than of homosexuality and masturbation, which he decried.

<sup>96</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 25.

<sup>97</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 25.

<sup>98</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, pp. 27-30. He also referred to the immorality of Catholics in their frequenting of houses of prostitution, of unsavoury practices in convents and of ‘pederasty’ (p. 50); the latter charge is repeated (p. 56).

<sup>99</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, pp. 37-38 (p. 37).

<sup>100</sup> See, for example, Brasil, *Os Padres*, pp. 78-79.

matters related to sexuality were deemed to be either sinful or to be essentially part of the Church's purview. The condemnation focused on the ideological aspects of Brasil's work and on the supposed corrupting elements it proffered. Such condemnation was more general than specific, however, and particular issues were not referred to in depth. In fact, in respect of eugenics, *Novidades* did not comment on Brasil's ideas. Some comments were, however, made on the issue of contraception and Brasil sallied forth to defend this posture by drawing on the work of Auguste Forel.<sup>101</sup> The vehemence with which the Catholic paper *Novidades* condemned *A Questão Sexual*, nevertheless, was extreme and, even though eugenics was not singled out for attention, the paper effectively refuted any 'scientific' meddling in an area – sexuality and reproduction – that was to be firmly maintained within the Catholic sphere.

## Conclusion

The greater propensity of some Catholic intellectuals, some fifty years after Vatican II, 'to interact in a constructive way with secular reason and with science' is a relatively new phenomenon.<sup>102</sup> The conflict over Jaime Brasil's *A Questão Sexual* in the 1930s clearly belonged to a different era that was much more hostile to secular and scientific debates particularly when these attempted the reform of sexual customs. The dispute between Brasil and the Jesuit *Novidades* illuminates a number of matters relevant to the history of sexuality, eugenics and religion, not only in Portugal but also on an international level.

First of all, the socio-political circumstances of Brasil's works played a significant role in generating the raised stakes and vituperative prose that the conflict engendered. The atmosphere of 1930s Portugal as the dictatorship of Salazar became consolidated was one of huge political and social tensions with 'internal enemies' on both the left and the right being neutralised by the regime. The struggles of the anarchist movement, whether in respect of its more trade union activities or in cultural terms, in respect of education and the sexual question, still presented a challenge to regime stability and were therefore subject to severe repression including torture, incarceration and exile. Brasil remarked in his defence against *Novidades* that the identification of someone as a communist could result in imprisonment and, in some countries, death. The fact that he was indeed imprisoned from 1940 to 1942 testifies to the reality of that threat. His work also shows that within anarchist thought on sexuality commonalities were being forged between neo-Malthusianism and eugenics; both were framed by a broad commitment to sex reform and cultural struggle which, in turn, was anti-clerical in nature.

Second, the conflict between Brasil and *Novidades* is testimony to the struggle for legitimacy and the right to speak about sexual matters in Portugal. Brasil was not the only sex reformer to fall foul of the Church's condemnation; Almerindo Lessa (1909-1995), the author of the slim but informative volume on eugenics, *Exortações eugénicas*, was also vilified in 1933. Even the more ostensibly scientific work of someone of the stature of Egas Moniz, author of *A Vida Sexual*, did not achieve complete freedom of expression in 1930s and 1940s Portugal, being black-listed by the regime and available only with a medical prescription.<sup>103</sup> Brasil, from a contestatory journalistic and libertarian position was even less likely to achieve this limited freedom of expression.

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<sup>101</sup> Brasil, *Os Padres*, p. 56. An article in the *Diário de Notícias*, 30 July 1932, with the title 'A Questão Sexual por Jaime Brasil', rated Brasil's work alongside that of Egas Moniz and Forel, in *Brasil, Os Padres*, pp. 66-67 (p. 67).

<sup>102</sup> Lluís Oviedo and Alvaro Garre 'The Interaction between Religion and Science in Southern Catholic Europe (Italy, Spain, Portugal)' in *Zygon*, vol 50, no 1, (2015), 172-193 (173).

<sup>103</sup> *Comissão do Livro Negro sobre o Regime Fascista: Livros proibidos no regime fascista* (Sintra/Mem Martins, 1981), p. 67.

Third, even though eugenics was a minor issue for Catholicism in the 1930s in Portugal and despite no specific reference to eugenics in the condemnation meted out to Brasil in *Novidades*, Catholics, and *Novidades* itself, had been concerned about the ‘excesses’ of eugenics and far-left and far-right ideologies in Portugal and internationally since the early 1930s. While Nazism and fascism were condemned, particular opprobrium was reserved by the Catholic Church and regime for ‘communism’ or any left political position. Trenchant criticism of certain forms of eugenics and particularly sterilization would appear in *Novidades* as the 1930s wore on. When opposition to political extremism was combined with censoring conscious procreation, birth control and the advocacy of ‘sexual revolution’ it is no surprise that Brasil’s ‘corrupting manual’ would be firmly placed in the *Novidades* firing line.

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