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Anticlericalism, effeminacy and homosexuality in early twentieth-century Portuguese and Brazilian anarchism

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ABSTRACT

This article analyses discourses within Brazilian and Portuguese anarchist periodicals on the subject of homosexuality. It shows that many concepts and languages employed by the anarchist movement were what may now be termed both heterosexist and homophobic. Rather than straightforwardly condemn the movement for this approach, however, the article seeks to understand "homosexuality," often expressed as sexual inversion or pederasty, as a relational category, which formed connections with broader ideological concerns that the anarchist movement held as important. In the early twentieth century, these concerns were often related to the influence of religion. Forging an association between anticlericalism, the denunciation of Church sexual abuse and other issues such as antimilitarism and the promotion of rationalism and sexual science, anarchists developed a position on homosexuality that reinforced their stance against religion and what they perceived as expressions of unjust influence and power. This approach was transnational in nature, being fomented by anarchists who criss-crossed the Atlantic. By the mid-1920s, however, the rather blunt association between Catholicism and homosexuality began to wane as influential voices engaged with scientific thought on the question; such a move also reflected the shift from viewing homosexuality as a practice to one acknowledging emerging same-sex identities.

KEYWORDS

Anarchism; anticlericalism; homosexuality; Portugal; Brazil

Introduction

Writing in 1904 in the Lisbon-based anarchist-oriented workers' periodical, *A Obra*, the influential militant José Bacellar aimed to dispel the commonly held notion that anarchism was devoid of moral sense as its detractors often supposed (Bacellar 1904, 2).[1] Bacellar argued in his "Chronica subversiva. Immoraes" that anarchism was in fact guided by a profound sense of ethics and social justice. The author contrasted the accusation of anarchist immorality with the actions of those who professed moral clarity while practising precisely the opposite. These "hypocrites," he stated, advocated sexual abstinence while at the same time abusing children in their care. Such, Bacellar went on to detail, was

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the case of the renowned priest Frère Flamidien in Lille (Verhoeven 2018), a padre who had been accused of subjecting boys to the "mais repugnantes practicas sodomiticas" (most repugnant practice of sodomy) (Bacellar 1904, 2). In other quarters, nuns who proclaimed their religiosity by observing the sixth commandment became furious nymphomaniacs engaged in the "ignominia do saphismo" (ignominy of Sapphism) with their "companheiras de *renuncia*" (sisters of *renunciation*) (Bacellar 1904, 2, original emphasis). While anarchists proclaimed sexual freedom, it was "Sodomitas e saphicas, mascarados de *abstinentes*, [quem] são os primeiros a apontar-nos como destruidores da moral" (Sodomites and Sapphics, disguised as *abstentious*, [who] are the first to point to us as the destroyers of morality) (2, original emphasis). Where did such vehement statements on homosexuality come from and why were they framed as part of anti-religious views?

The association between the clergy, sexual abuse and the "unnaturalness" of sexual abstinence – which led to "perverse" sexual acts – was a transnational mindset common among leftists at the turn of the century. Anticlerical socialists and republicans in France and Spain, for example, associated the denial of the flesh with the flowering of illicit desire, violence and the crushing of the human spirit (Conard 1971; Mitchell 1998; Sanabria 2009; Vázquez García 2020; Verhoeven 2018). In São Paulo, Brazil, this same association was reiterated.[2] An anonymous author, writing in the libertarian anticlerical *A Lanterna* about the Lille case, cited Xavier de Carvalho, the Paris correspondent for *O Paíz*, and the book by anarchist lawyer (and one time editor of *A Lanterna*) Benjamim Mota, *A Razão contra a Fé*, to record that one boy had been "desflorado" (deflowered) and murdered in the Catholic school where Flamidien worked and that his body had subsequently been concealed in the director's office. The director was, according to the article, another "porcalhão sodomita" (sodomitic pig) (Anon 1901a, 2).

In the same issue of the paper, rumours were circulated about a priest from Campo Largo, Paraná state, who attempted to get into bed with boys from the local area (Anon 1901b). In another issue of the paper, showing how ideas flowed transnationally from Portugal to Brazil and vice versa, *A Lanterna* discussed the accusations of "homosexuality" against the Bishop of Beja (Sebastião de Vasconcellos) voiced by the disgruntled priest ManuelAnçã (Anon 1910; cf. Curopos 2021), whose less than orthodox ecclesiastical methods the bishop had sought to curtail by removing him from office. "homosexuality," stated as such, became a stick forAnçã with which to beat the religious authorities that had dismissed him from his position. Anarchists gleefully seized the opportunity to deride the Church, its values and the clergy.

The events surrounding the accusation of sodomy and murder against *père* Flamidien provide insights into the mentality that many anarchists shared with socialists and other leftists on the question of homosexuality at the time. Flamidien was a priest at the Catholic school, the Frères des Écoles Chrétiennes at Lille, and the scandal that emerged around him and the school pitched anticlerical republicans across France and beyond against the power of the Catholic Church and its seeming ability to conceal misdemeanours and protect its own. In 1896, the body of a pupil, Gaston Foveaux, was found in a room upstairs in the main building, apparently having been raped by one of the fathers. A long case ensued, which encapsulated what were for many the unsavoury elements of Catholic practice including the celibacy of priests and sexual abstentionism that provoked the most "repugnant" of sexual desires. As Verhoeven (2018) has argued, both popular culture and the sexual sciences of the time regarded celibacy as the source of repressed

sexuality that then found its expression in "perverted" ways. These included practices such as excessive masturbation, attraction to men and desire for children. Although charges were eventually dropped against Flamidien given the lack of evidence, the murder of the boy sealed the association in France between religion, crime and gender and sexual deviance.

The Flamidien case contains parallels, as Timothy Verhoeven has suggested, with the Dreyfus affair of 1894 as it brought together of a wide range of views set on demolishing one pilar of the (old) establishment. If the denunciation of antisemitism, combined with anti-Catholicism and anti-militarism were all present in Dreyfus, Flamidien combined the latter two with strong remonstrations about the correct channels to be pursued for sexual expression. As such, anarchists found a ready source to decry the mystifications and bodily privations of Catholicism as part of their anticlerical repertoire, coalescing in their opposition to same-sex desire whose visibility was used as a vehicle to denigrate Catholicism.

Historiographical renewal in anarchist studies

Before exploring the connections between anarchist anticlericalism, notions of effeminacy and the practice of homosexuality, it is necessary to comment on recent developments in the historiography of anarchism. In the last fifteen years, new directions taken in the field have proved fruitful in moving away from overly laudatory or congratulatory accounts of anarchist revolutions, particularly events in Spain between 1936 and 1939, and stories of individual militancy, suffering and repression. Many possible new avenues for research and evolving methodologies have been outlined by Evans and Yeoman (2016), including an increasing transnational perspective in the case of some countries' historiographies, despite the fact that such an approach remains partial and incomplete from one period and geographical space to another (Bantman and Altena 2015).

The relations between anarchist activism and emotionality have been explored (Romanos 2014), questions of "race," activism and colonialism (Ramnath 2011) have been interrogated and anarchist policies on health reform explored (Cleminson 2024a). These initiatives come after a by now well established "cultural turn" in anarchist historiography that has analysed the relationship between the press, activism, cultural change and everyday life (Navarro and Javier 2004; Ealham 2010; Suriano 2010). The examination of the role of women in Spanish and Argentinian anarchism, for example, has received ongoing and renewed attention (Fernández Cordero 2017), as has the question of sexual advice literature in Spanish anarchist periodicals in the 1920s and 1930s (Turbutt 2024).

Despite these multifarious initiatives, concentration on same-sex sexuality within the broad scope of the movement has been relatively slight and has mainly taken the form of sections within publications on the wider sexual culture of the anarchists with few book length discussions of the question (Cleminson 2024b; Kissack 2008). In the case of Portugal, the issue has received some attention more recently (Cleminson and Duarte 2022; Duarte 2023, 311–321), particularly in respect of the connections between anticlericalism and the revelation of sexual abuse. The reasons for these absences in the historiography of anarchism are several. While homosexuality, whether connected to the Church or otherwise, was without doubt a peripheral question for most organised anarchist movements, especially the large trade union formations inspired by anarchist

ideology, which were often at the centre of prolonged, difficult and regularly violent disputes, sexuality in general only emerged as a central issue for large swathes of the movement in the 1930s.

Increasing awareness about the "woman question" did pepper the movement at the end of the nineteenth century but the attention paid to it was less about the exercise of sexuality and more about the need for equality between women and men, conditions in factories and the issue of women's labour, maternity and the general position of women in society. Child labour and, more generally, discussion of the ideal conditions in which to bring up offspring did, however, become important topics. Reflecting broader changes in understandings of the place of sexuality in human experience and hence in social struggles, leftist movements increasingly engaged with matters such as reproduction, birth control, and the sexual sciences as the twentieth century wore on. Within this intersection of concerns, framed by an approach that sought to promote "natural" sexuality (understood as heterosexuality), anarchists, particularly those who adhered to individualist anarchism, those who worked in health-related professions or who had an interest in criminality and psychiatry, discussed lesser explored aspects of sexual experience including "free love," non-monogamy and practices such as masturbation and homosexuality (for France, see Armand 1931). Accompanying the interest and early manifestations in favour of the equality of women (which were by no means hegemonic within the movement), was an outlook that sought to "liberate" sexual desire from what were viewed as the constraints, unnaturalness and hypocrisies of bourgeois society. State initiatives on prostitution were decried as harmful and useless while the conditions pushing women into the practice were left intact. A lack of education and opposition to the co-education of the sexes mystified sexual differences and the workings of the body. Catholic and state opposition to birth control fuelled the argument that workers were reproduced for cannon and industrial fodder.

Despite a degree of opening on the question of homosexuality in the mid-1920s onwards (for discussions in Spain, see Martí Ibáñez 1935), heralding a more tolerant position, sources do not abound in the periodicals of the movement, and it is necessary to search for the areas – such as anticlericalism – with which homosexuality formed intimate connections and served as platforms to explore "deviant" sexuality. In addition to a relative paucity of sources and a lack of consideration of the question by the movement, the reluctance of historians to examine discussions of homosexuality within historical anarchism may constitute another reason at play for the lack of attention given to the topic. This, in turn, arises from several causes: the notion that in view of the lack of sources, this question is without importance, eclipsed by weightier issues such as how syndicalist unions were organised, specific struggles or the history of particular groupings. Also influential may be a degree of uncomfortableness at the negative attitudes displayed towards homosexuality by anarchists and the fear of being perceived as disloyal to the movement, its history or bringing anarchism into disrepute given the fact that many who work on the history of the movement are sympathetic, at least to a degree, to its principal ideas.

Apparently straightforward approaches to historical instances of derision of homosexuality are also fraught with problems. As Muñoz (2009) has illustrated, it is not helpful to project accusations of homophobia backwards in time, especially to periods when the concept did not even exist, but to explore the dense network of suggestibility and the

intersections with identity, question of "race," violence and normative sexuality that homosexuality conjured up. Engaged and critical historiography should be bold enough to contextualise and interpret historical discourses and practices by analysing their generation as products of specific periods, languages and concepts that were grounded in the understandings and ideological mobilizations of the time. Texts are, as Roger Chartier argued, only intelligible as part of the network of associations in which they are produced and inserted (Chartier 1989, cited in; Sanabria 2009, 116). Such is the methodology adopted in this article, one that might be termed a thematic relational approach. As such, homosexuality was not usually considered *per se* or in isolation in the anarchist movement until the 1930s. Instead, it was considered for what light anarchists argued that it shed on contiguous questions such as the power of the Church.

Anticlericalism, children and the danger of sodomy

As the Flamidien case makes clear, a nexus of concerns came together under the banner of anticlericalism. Anarchism, like the rest of the European and American left, developed out of an Enlightenment tradition that questioned the power of the celestial deities and their terrestrial representatives. As Peter Marshall has noted: "The great nineteenth-century anarchist thinkers Proudhon, Stirner and Bakunin were all imbued with the scientific spirit of the Enlightenment and identified Christianity with the existing authoritarian Church" (Marshall 1992, 80). Bakunin was militant in his atheism: "*The idea of God implies the abdication of reason and of justice; it is the most decisive negation of human liberty, and necessarily ends in the enslavement of mankind, both in theory and practice*" (Bakunin [1871] 1973, 125, original emphasis). In tune with a materialist approach, most anarchists saw scientific method and knowledge as repositories of progress against the "obfuscations" of superstition and religious thought. Although individuals could determine whether to obey science and expertise, thereby questioning automatic deference towards authority, Bakunin added that: "We recognize the absolute authority of science, but we reject the infallibility and universality of the *savant*" (Bakunin [1871] 1973, 133, original emphasis).

Accompanying such a critique of religion was a generalised repudiation of authoritarian values and structures. Government and the state were rejected as modes of social organisation and what anarchists believed constituted the inequalities and contradictions arising from capitalism and the state were highlighted. Different thinkers were marshalled to prove these points: in *A Obra* in 1904, for example, Angelo Jorge praised Herbert Spencer's thought on the decadence of laws and government (Jorge 1904a) and went on to list the degradation that resulted from their rule.[3] Disorder reigned, he proclaimed, whereby people were subjected to hunger while others took their fill and where women were made to sell their bodies and pass syphilis on to the next generation. The "order" of existing society was contrasted to a happier anarchist future: "Será ordem a guerra, a tisica [,] a neurastenia, a historia [sic], o onanismo, o safismo, o sadismo, a pederastia, os suicidios, os crimes, e mil outros fenómenos proprios e inseparaveis desta organisação social, com seu Estado e seu capitalismo!" (So, order is war, consumption, neurasthenia, history [sic, for hysteria], onanism, Sapphism, sadism, pederasty, suicide, crime, and all the thousands of other phenomena belonging to and inseparable from current social organisation, the state and capitalism) (Jorge 1904b, 1). Following Spencer, society was seen to

be driven by progressive and regressive evolution and Jorge judged that the principle of authority had suffered regressions for centuries. The state therefore must disappear as it had regressed morally; hence, it must never reappear again (Jorge 1904b, 2).

The republican tradition within Portugal observed many of these same principles. Indeed, nineteenth-century republican thought which questioned the power of the Church and proposed laicism preceded the anarchist movement by some decades but drew on some of the same sources as anarchism eventually would. As Catroga (1988, 242) has illustrated, Proudhon was a guiding light for many republicans and their interest in science became a vehicle to foster the institutionalisation of laicism to combat religion, which was seen to offer "uma visão do mundo e de uma moral anacrónica e, consequentemente, adequadas aos interesses da reacção política e do ultramontanismo" (a vision of the world and of an anachronistic morality tailored, as a result, to the interests of political reaction and ultramontanism) (Catroga 1988, 211). Towards the end of the 1800s, both literary texts, for example in the form of Eça's *O Crime do Padre Amaro* (1875), which presented the reader with clerical seduction, pregnancy out of wedlock and child murder, and workers' articles and tracts, were common in the country. The mason Heliodoro Salgado published several pieces in prominent workers' reviews from a socialist (later to be anarchist) standpoint on anticlericalism (Salgado 1888), embracing the thought of Proudhon, Littré and Pi i Margall (Catroga 1988, 215–216). Later, anarchists argued for the separation of Church and state and participated in popular demonstrations against religious power before and after the installation of the Republic in 1910 (Catroga 1988, 232; 252). The removal of religious control over education and values more generally was deemed part of a broader process of necessary "regeneration" of Portuguese society (Corrêa da I. C. D. Silva 2014, 19). From the early months of the Republic, several far-reaching reforms were passed, encapsulating the expulsion of the Jesuits, the ceasing of religious holidays, the end of religious teaching at university and legislation on divorce (Silva de Moura 2024, 21–22).

Within the Portuguese anarchist press, both the figure of the priest and the practice of religion came in for derision based on the above kinds of interpretations. In an anonymous piece, once again published in *A Obra*, it was reported that the yearly conferences given by padre Gonzaga Cabral at the Church of the Martyrs had once again begun. With little reasoning provided, short of the critique of the negative influences brought by these events on the human mind and the assertion that this year's events were a repetition of those of last year, the writer declared that the house of the lord had become nothing less than a "reles barraca de feira" (cheap circus shack) and a "prostibulo de invertidos" (house of prostitution for inverts) (Anon 1904). To go to see the "cara rapada e ouvir os devaneios d'um ermafrodita" (shaven face and to hear the reveries of a hermaphrodite) was nothing less than repugnant and anti-natural (Anon 1904). At stake here was not only the accusation of homosexuality but also condemnation of a kind of sexual ambiguity between maleness and femininity. As Sanabria has argued in the case of Spain: "To republican men, clergymen were not normal. They were not strong, virile, violent men, nor were they delicate and passive women" (Sanabria 2009, 135). Gendered certainties had vanished and there remained the threat of inconclusiveness and ambiguity, both moral and bodily. While anarchists generally embraced shifting patterns in gender relations towards greater autonomy for women and a critique of bourgeois domesticity and established family norms, they found it harder to shrug off established gender

expectations in terms of the roles men and women should display. Debates over the "New Woman" and questions such as promiscuity were common in several movements (Montseny 1925). Female orators and factory organisers were praised but were unusual; effeminate men were a "betrayal" of maleness and potentially of the political designs of the movement as a whole. Sharp differentiations between men and women were generally upheld and a permanent concern was expressed over the "naturalness" of sexuality and whether or not new representations of femininity were to be dismissed as "bourgeois," immoral or somehow ungenuine or superfluous.

Being less than man was a theme taken up in the Lisbon-based *Terra Livre*, edited by anarchist journalist Pinto Quartim. In February 1913, José Carlos de Sousa wrote an unforgiving caricature of the figure of the Catholic padre. Here, the allegation of effeminacy and incomplete or dysfunctional masculinity was once again taken up. As well as adding grist to the notion of the unproductivity of the Church and the perverse effects of the undermining of masculinity through celibacy (cf. Catroga 1988, 220–226), the article also dehumanised the priest and reduced him to a grotesque and animalesque expression: the priest does not look others in the eye, has a double and indecisive character as he dresses in skirts like women and has no beard, "tem a pele setinosa como as damas" (he has skin soft as that of women) and he walks with an "ondulado mulheril" (womanly gait) (Sousa 1913). He dresses in black to display his ignorance or criminal tendencies or in red to display his blood-thirsty character. Thick lips evidence his sensuality, "misto de camaleão, porco, rapoza e hiena" (a mixture of chameleon, pig, vixen and hyena) (Sousa 1913), all animals that had a reputation of cheating, changing colour or being not quite what they appeared to be at first sight. Further, "As suas falas são untuosas, melifluas" (His speech is unctuous, mellifluous) (Sousa 1913) rather than distinctly manly. Finally, "Este homen, que sem ser hermafrodita é, por assim dizer, meio homem meio mulher, castrado e sátiro, sodomita e femeeiro, ascéta e libidinoso, ente inqualificavel que afinal, em ultima análise, nem é homem nem é mulher, pois que ambas estas entidades nega, acervo hibrido de todas as incongruências sociais que censura e aproveita, este omem, dizia eu, é o padre!" (This man, without quite being a hermaphrodite, is, we might say, half man and half woman, castrated and a satyr, sodomite and womanising, ascetic and libidinous, an unqualifiable creature who finally, in the last analysis, is neither man nor woman, since he is the denial of both these figures, is a hybrid repository of all the social improprieties that he critiques and yet takes advantage of. This man, say I, is the priest!) (Sousa 1913). The in-between nature of the priesthood in physical, sexual and moral terms could barely be more explicitly expressed.

This article opened with a discussion of the perceived threat of the clergy for the integrity of children. As Vázquez García (2020) has made clear for Spain, the figure of the paedophile priest was common in leftist and republican quarters and this connected with a broader concern, as discussed in sexological and pedagogical milieus, about "childhood in danger." Childhood became a period of life that was increasingly monitored for mental and physical health, the dangers of perversion and petty criminal behaviour (Seoane 2006; Vázquez García and Moreno Mengíbar 1997, 49–184). Within Portuguese anarchism, as in other branches of the movement, detoxified education, free of religious and gender prejudices, was at the heart of what adherents called rationalist education, which served as a critique against the state and religious model. As Diogo Duarte has noted: "o alvo principal dessas críticas era o princípio autoritário que atravessava as formas de ensino

oficiais: na própria organização do espaço e do controlo dos estudantes" (the main target of these critiques was the authoritarian principle that courses through official pedagogical techniques, in the organisation of space and in the control of students) (Duarte 2023, 112); in addition, the fact that schools were often based on the structures of the "caserna" or military barracks caused concern.

Military life and the uselessness of war became stock complaints in anarchist publications and congresses across the globe (Taibo 2018, 107–108). To take just one example from Portugal, the Porto-based *A Aurora*, according to a report on the First Anarchist Congress of the Portuguese Region, discussed opposition to war and laid its causes at the foot of militarism, social hierarchies and the barracks life (Anon 1911). Military life, however, for all its injustice and arbitrary command structures, also entailed a further danger. Following the congress report, Constantino (1911) would write in *A Aurora* that "O militarismo provoca ainda a inversão sexual, sifilis e o alcolismo [sic]. Homens degenerados, maquinas de matar" (Militarism also creates sexual inversion, syphilis and alcoholism. Degenerate men, killing machines), a set of concatenations highlighted by the French writer Augustin Hamon whose work was often cited in anarchist publications (Hamon 1894, 153–165).

The sexual abuse of children was linked to these broader phenomena, as Salgado (1900a) wrote in *A Obra* at the turn of the century: the rape of minors, he argued without providing a justification, was even worse when it included an act of pederasty. Pederasty, in turn, was the result of a process of organic degeneration, was largely atavistic, and came about because of a range of artificial causes, including a vagabond lifestyle, life in children's homes and the soldier's life in the barracks. Salgado neatly provided a holistic analysis that brought a critique of authoritarian methods, anticlericalism, antimilitarism and a degree of scientific explanation together to condemn what he termed "pederasty."

This kind of critique was also alive in trade union milieus in Portugal well into the 1920s. A member of the Lisbon branch of the Syndicalist Youth, Edmundo Vaz, wrote that he recognised the influence of the Catholic Church in sustaining morality in society and even acknowledged that it may have a role in this sense. The institution, however, had decayed and had fallen into luxuriousness and pederasty, which in turn reflected a decadent civilisation: "A igreja tornou-se imprescindivel aos mediocres da virilidade – fisica e mental" (The Church has become essential for those who are mediocre in respect of their physical and mental virility) (Vaz 1923). Such an assertion allowed Vaz to argue that the Church had now become highly useful for the upper classes who "estão possuidas de pederastia e precisam dum cobertor à voluptuosidade" (are in thrall to pederasty and require a cover for their voluptuousness) (Vaz 1923). Class, unproductiveness and religion, as well as sexual misdemeanours, formed a seamless whole for Vaz.

The São Paulo-based anticlerical *A Lanterna* likewise consistently exposed what it believed were the crimes of the Church and was one of the most vehement of publications to focus on its powers and potentials for abuse. Other publications addressed similar issues but did so as part of the broader struggle as well as foregrounding antimilitarism as a major pole around which to agitate (K. W. D. Santos and da Silva 2017a). The Brazilian movement, less concentrated than its Portuguese counterpart and facing difficult linguistic, geographical and organisational problems, was nevertheless the dominant force in organised labour, as expressed in anarcho-syndicalism, in the country's cities from 1906 till the early 1920s (Maram 1977, 255). Repression, after a relatively successful strike in Rio

de Janeiro, São Paulo and Porto Alegre in 1917 (Batalha 2017), was severe, however, and the dictatorship under Vargas from 1930 obliged anarchism to go underground.

Anticlerical motifs were common in Brazilian anarchist publications and illustrations, not least as expressed by the syndicalist labour union, the Confederação Operária Brasileira (COB) publication *A Voz do Trabalhador*. Its front cover for 1 May 1913 showed a triumphant worker gazing towards the sun of freedom with the skulls of militarism, the clergy, the bourgeoisie and capitalism at his feet (Batalha 2017, 84). Anticlerical agitation continued in the movement into the 1920s and 1930s, often focused on the question of education in Brazil (Loner 2015, 178–179). In various cities, anarchist publications sought to promote women's struggles and emancipation, and often demanded the elimination of the power and influence of the clergy over their lives (Bignami 2023; Mendes and da Silva 2017, 199). Italian, Portuguese and Spanish anarchists brought with them such ideas, inspired, for example in the Spanish case, by the anticlerical *El Motín*, edited by José Nakens (Poletto 2017, 262–263). In the case of German militants in Brazil, rather than a pro-nation or pro-state nationalism, these displayed a position that Goyens has described as a "militant, countercultural, antistatist and anticlerical nationality" (Goyens 2023, 147). In this sense, Brazilian anarchists differed from the "radical republican nationalism" sponsored by anticlerical Spanish leftists who sought the regeneration of the nation on those terms (Sanabria 2009, 69). Anarchists denied the nation as a legitimate mobilising political force. Speaking the same language was also an aid in the proliferation of a transnational message. Alongside the many workers who swelled the ranks of the anarchist and syndicalist movements in Brazil and in the Portuguese African colonies, a number attained international renown. Often moving physically between countries, many individuals such as Maria Lacerda de Moura, Pinto Quartim, Edgar Rodrigues and Neno Vasco, cultivated transnational resonances through their presence or writings (Góes 2017, 12; 18; 20–25).

A Lanterna, throughout its existence up to the mid-1930s,[4] reported on cases of sexual abuse by religious figures and as such constitutes the principal source of discussion of homosexuality within the context of the Catholic Church and the paper's anticlericalism. It even gave column space to ex-priests such as Francisco Bigliazzi, just as *El Motín* printed articles by the former priest José Ferrándiz (Sanabria 2009, 42). Bigliazzi was keen to reveal the predatory nature of priests in the seminaries. Here, priests sought to undertake "actos de que se envergonhariam os propios habitantes de Sodoma" (acts that even the inhabitants of Sodom would find shameful), ruining innocent Christian children (Bigliazzi 1909). A further scandal was uncovered in the Liga Catolica de Curitiba whose victims included various "menores estuprados" (youngsters who were violated) (Anon 1934). That same year, the paper praised the opening, to the "horror" of the Church, of a new Circulo Brasileiro de Educação Sexual under the presidency of Dr. Julio de Albuquerque, an entity that displayed a similar interest in education as an antidote to Catholic values (Bilhão 2015) as harboured by Portuguese anarchists.[5] At this new centre, according to the paper, young people would be guided away from the nefarious influence of Catholicism where "por actos, por palavras, com pessoas do mesmo sexo ou de sexo diverso [. . .] todas as perversões que dizimam e pervertem a mocidade dos nossos dias" (by words and deeds, with persons of the same sex or of different sex [. . .] all the perversions that infect and pervert youth today) were rife (Rogerio 1934). Other anarchist-oriented papers, such as the São Paulo *O Trabalhador*, which supported the

syndicalist COB, simply named the clergy as "perverso" and evil (Valdivia 1933). Others still, however, such as the Curitiba trade union-oriented *A Barricada* (paper of the Federação Operaria do Paraná), while mentioning what it saw as the mystifications of religion and the need to oppose electoral candidates from the Catholic League, did not mention any sexual misdemeanours by the Church (Navelar 1934).

The medicalisation of homosexuality

As Bakunin's words cited earlier suggest, many anarchists were prepared to accept scientific thought as a guiding light in their propaganda. Once again, coupled to their Enlightenment inheritance, such an approach responded to the need to oppose especially Christian interpretations of life. Science, in all its luminosity, would sweep away the world of superstition and reliance on established "truths."[6] One prominent militant rather triumphantly declared in a 1900 issue of *A Obra* that the "new dawn" of ideas, disposing of questionable beliefs and superstitions, was what anarchism offered (Salgado 1900b). Gradually, the new sexual sciences would also be employed by anarchists to explain "sexual deviance."

There are numerous examples of the association between anarchism and the sexual sciences in the Lusophone movement. Just as Hamon, above, drew on and contributed to the relatively new science of criminal anthropology (Duarte 2023, 190–195; J. E. C. Lima 1910; Mella 1896), the life sciences, including the sexual sciences, received a positive reception in the movement. Portuguese anarchism's João Campos Lima argued that crime resulted from a combination of individual physical or mental degeneration or personal circumstances and would be resolved when society was based on justice, peace and love (C. Lima 1905, 84).

With respect to the specific "degeneration" of homosexuality, it was in the paper of the Syndicalist Youth, *O Despertar. Órgão das Juventudas Sindicais*, that one author broached theories homosexuality's origin. Reflecting on a new theory that had been published in the *British Medical Journal*, having come to the attention of *O Despertar* via the Barcelona-based review *Eugenia*, the discussion in this journal shows the connectivity that anarchism displayed with "high cultural" debates and sources. In this article, the writer of "O que os sábios não dizem. . . Curiosa teoria àcêrca da inversão sexual" (Anon 1923), noted, without referencing the precise source, that a Dr. Leonard Williams had investigated the origins of "sexual inversion" and had argued that the practice arose from an incomplete battle to define the sexes early on in an individual's life. Drawing on an emerging set of theories on the workings of hormones in shaping the sexual character of individuals, the syndicalist author referenced the work of the Spanish doctor Diego Madrazo on the subject. Williams' article (Williams 1922) was in fact part of a lengthy discussion within the *BMJ* on the "causes" of sexual inversion by international commentators.[7]

This anonymous article in *O Despertar* heralded what would eventually become a more distanced, less emotive, and ostensibly more scientific approach to homosexuality within the anarchist press in Portugal. As Duarte has pointed out (Duarte 2023, 318), it was largely down to the figure of journalist and sex reformer Jaime Brasil who pioneered this shift. With Brasil, a more scientific gaze viewed homosexuality as a pathological condition, rather than being condemned outright, and offered potential forms of treatment to eliminate it (318). It was specifically within the cultural supplement of *A Batalha* where

this new vision was outlined (319) and where the immediate association between the Church and homosexuality waned.

In March and April 1925, Brasil explored issues of sexual morality in *A Batalha*'s *Suplemento Literário e Ilustrado* (Brasil 1925, 1925b, 1925c). In these pieces, Brasil argued that nature was founded on laws and that these laws should be observed for the preservation of life. It was for this reason that the moral laws of the future should rely on biological foundations (Brasil 1925). Custom, prejudice and its rules had been swept aside by rational thought and religions were of little use as a moral compass (Brasil 1925). Brasil developed this argument in the second part of his series, which argued that those practices that were against morality, that is, the tenets of biological reality, were "crimes" against nature. Arising sometimes from philosophical or artistic suggestion, practices such as onanism acted against life as they limited its expansion (Brasil 1925a). Certain malpractices, however, could not simply be considered crimes as they resulted from the poor social organisation that capitalism engendered. The implication of such an idea, in the anarchist repertoire, was that once society was organised along libertarian lines, these "crimes" would cease to exist. The "repugnant" practice of *estupro* was one such example (Brasil 1925a).

In the third and final part of Brasil's trilogy on sexual morality, the writer acknowledged one of the sources of his thinking: the visit to Lisbon by the eugenicist Dr. Paulina Luisi, the Uruguayan women's rights and sex reformer (Nicoladeli 2024). This gesture towards international scientific respectability allowed Brasil to centre on the "aberrations" of sexual life. These, he argued, arose largely from physiological anomalies such as poorly functioning bodily organs and even skeletal deformations (Brasil 1925b). Other cases arose from psychopathological causes. Following this interpretation, Brasil employed several terms to describe his subject, barely distinguishing between them. These were Uranism, inversion and pederasty. Uranism was deemed by Brasil the most benign of the three. Even though it was not defined, Brasil argued, somewhat surprisingly, that often it did not entail the practice of "homosexuality." It is possible that Brasil was thinking of a more platonic, emotional or sentimental attachment in this case.

While such a range of sentiments were admissible under the category of Uranism, uses of the term at the time were in fact rather more explicit as to its sexual nature. Despite this being the case, there was evident confusion between the various terms, as one late nineteenth-century Portuguese medical doctor acknowledged (Silva 1895, 40–44; 157 *passim*). Silva argued that pederasty was, according to Greek usage, love of boys; for others, pederasty was a synonym of sodomy (157). Sexual inversion, Silva noted, expressed itself in both men and women. In men, it was termed Uranism and in women, lesbianism (159). For the two authors that had coined the expression "sexual inversion," however, this term denoted a broader range of feelings, sexualities and gendered identities (Charcot and Magnan 1882). It is not the place of this article to account further for these differences but rather to note that, for Brasil, pederasty and tribadism, alongside masturbation, were evidence of the inversion of the "lei sexual" and should be combatted energetically. They acted against the biological law of reproduction and thereby thwarted biological law. Bestiality and incest, as well as sexual acts against children, came slightly lower down the scale of acts to be abjured (Brasil 1925b).

In the mid-1920s, as can be seen, Brasil subscribed to a pathological model of same-sex attraction. In his later work, *A Questão Sexual* (Brasil 1932), this condemnatory framework

eased slightly. As Duarte (2023), 319–320) has pointed out, while homosexuality was still treated as an anomaly, Jaime Brasil condemned the 1912 republican laws against homosexuality,[8] which he defined as more severe than under the monarchy and argued that individual liberty should trump a "medieval" morality and fear of homosexuality.

In Brazil, as recent studies have shown, mentions of homosexuality outside of the context of anticlericalism were sparse. As Ribas (2015, 181) has pointed out in the case of *A Plebe*, discussion of same-sex relations was overseen by "um pesado silenciamento" (a deafening silence), an observation that can be generalised to other periodicals of the movement. In *A Plebe*, nevertheless, in a discussion of sexual morality and women and despite comments on "free love" being entirely focused on heterosexual relations, some mention of lesbianism surfaced in 1934 (Ribas 2015, 179). In an article on the importance given in bourgeois culture to the preservation of the hymen as a sign of virginity, Campos de Carvalho asked rhetorically and rather convolutedly if "Uma jovem, por exemplo, que se entrega a amores lésbicos com uma companheira, sem o perigo de haver ruptura do hímen, será para nós mais 'pura' do que a outra que já trouxe do berço a ausência da membrana, sem conhecer relações sexuais?" (A young woman, for example, who engages in lesbian love with a friend, without having broken their hymen, would be "purer" for us than another who from the crib already lacked the membrane although no sexual contact had occurred?) (Campos 1934; Ribas 2015, 179). The implication was not only that contemporary morality may push women towards such relationships but also that this was a way of maintaining "purity" – such an option, however, was clearly rejected by the author.

Literary homosexuality

A more comprehending attitude such as that offered by Jaime Brasil was long in coming and rarely reached the printed page in the Lusophone anarchist movement. Although the Portuguese syndicalist youth paper appeared somewhat open to new theories on homosexuality, at the same time it was vehement about representations of homosexuality in literary circles in the early 1920s. Although it was probably the same case that the syndicalist *A Batalha* had commented upon two years previously, that is, António Botto's *Canções* (Anon 1921), for Lima (1923), writing in *O Despertar*, what was at stake was not only the unsavoury nature of homosexuality but the hypocrisy of society that supposedly produced it and tolerated it. In his "A moral hipocrita," Lima wrote that some days previously – in fact, it must have been several months previously – a book had appeared in the Lisbon bookshops that had provoked a scandal because of its contents.

While the precise nature of the scandal was not elaborated upon and the book's title was not mentioned, Lima more than hinted at the author and the book's inferences – Botto and homosexuality. What was requiring condemnation, however, was the hypocrisy of society at large. Society, Lima wrote, had produced "milhares de pederastas que para ai andam vivos e fazendo a vida anti-natural da sua inversão" (thousands of inverts who are out there and who live their anti-natural inverted lives) (Lima 1923). But this same society had also become indignant on seeing this book published and had argued for its suppression. In response to the publication of the book, Lima continued, some students had formed a league against pederasts and demanded that the authorities remove the book. This was, as Klobucka (2018) has noted, the Liga de Acção dos Estudantes de Lisboa.

Lima's position was clear, if intolerant: he was against the book and its display of vice but was also against the intervention of the authorities, which had acted to censor the volume. Free thought must be guaranteed. Sensing that the book's condemnation was part of a broader morality campaign by the conservative right, he declared that he was unsurprised to learn that a few days later copies of Victor Margueritte's *La Garçonne* were apprehended. *La Garçonne* was a title favoured (although much critiqued) in anarchist milieus for its frank representation of female sexuality and exploration of moral questions, but also as a story that illustrated the shallowness of bourgeois consumerism and aspirations.[9] The reaction, in full swing and egged on by the Church, jeopardised independence of thought and artistic and cultural freedom. The fact that *A Batalha* months previously had denounced Botto's work as part of a "morality campaign" (Duarte 2023, 314–315), while objecting to its removal, was lost on the young syndicalist.

The "mulher-homem" from Famalicão

On 22 September 1921, as part of *A Batalha*'s campaign against sexual morality, explicit details were provided of a further case of sexual inversion. In an article entitled "Contra uma inversão sexual – A 'mulher-homem' de Famalicão," J. Gomes dos Santos (1921) told how a widow was left in charge of six children in the northern town of Vila Nova da Famalicão. The eldest of these children, Arminda Sampaio, on the death of her mother, assumed overall responsibility for their care. As time went on, Arminda established relations with another girl and left her siblings, now grown up, under male supervision to go to live with her childhood sweetheart. They lived together for years.

Doubt, nevertheless, as to the veracity of this story was cast by a further note to the paper. Sampaio (1921) corrected some details about the family's circumstances but also declared that there was in fact no such person in the locality and that "Arminda" was a pseudonym. What appears to be true, however, according to Sampaio, is that the individual in question went to live in another town, lodging with a teacher friend. Whatever the truth of the case, on the face of it, Arminda's case was nothing more than one of lesbianism (if indeed there was relationship between the two women), but the fact that the individual was apparently known in the locality as a "man-woman" poses certain questions. In addition to illustrating how rumour and gossip surrounded "illicit" sexual relations in this semi-rural locality, the descriptions employed by Gomes dos Santos reflected a dual understanding of homosexuality. In conjunction with a folk understanding of lesbianism, there coexisted a more recent scientific term, "sexual inversion," showing how the old and the folkloric could exist alongside the modern and scientific in this period of transition in the mid-1920s.

Conclusion

While the discussion of homosexuality was uneven throughout the Portuguese and Brazilian anarchist milieus, with far more evidence of this issue within Europe than in Brazil, several factors united the two presses across the Atlantic. One was the question of the power of the Catholic Church, its alleged abuse of children, and the consequences of celibacy for acceptable manhood. Anti-Church feeling was mobilised by anarchists as a way of countering what they believed were the mystifications of

religious views and the power structures that religion enjoyed and upheld. If effeminacy, abuse of children and homosexuality could be proved as part of the Church's repertoire, such characteristics were deemed useful in the struggle in support of rationalism, scientific thought and an anarchist future devoid of oppression. Within the selection of publications reviewed in this article, however, the tendency to use homosexuality as a stick to beat the Church began to fade in the 1920s. In the late 1920s and 1930s, other pressing issues, such as the struggle against fascism in Brazil, against military rule and later the *Estado Novo* in Portugal loomed large. In addition, emerging scientific concepts of homosexuality slowly shifted the emphasis away from associations between religion and sodomy.

The discussions held in the periodicals analysed here also displayed an intense interest in searching for the supposed causes of homosexuality beyond the "corrupting" culture of Catholicism. From overcrowded barracks, military command structures, or physical and mental degeneracy, the causes of homosexuality were put down to harmful structures and social relationships that would be swept away by anarchist rationalism. The use of terminology is, in this sense, important. While the more scientific terms "sexual inversion," and later "homosexuality," were evident in the Lusophone anarchist press, showing a degree of medical or scientific engagement, the notion of pederasty was often employed as the default option. This term not only hinted at adult-child sexual interaction and the abuse of a trusting relationship between children and adults. It also referred primarily to a practice and not an identity. Pederasty was associated by anarchists with non-consensual penetration or molestation, while the later more scientific terms, which in turn reflected an ongoing "discovery" of homosexual subcultures, viewed homosexuality as more consensual and as a practice – however undesirable – undertaken by adults.

This article has argued that homosexuality and its reception in Brazilian and Portuguese anarchist periodicals need to be understood as relational phenomena. They did not exist outside of the parameters of the ideological frameworks that illustrated their alleged connections with the abuse of power. Concerns over homosexuality also arose due to misgivings more generally over shifting gender behaviours and representations in society. As a defence against the blurring of the lines between men and women and the temptation of non-heterosexual forms of sexuality, anarchists reasserted what they believed were "correct" expressions of sexual behaviour. One of the ways in which these expressions could be evoked was by focusing on the sexual misdemeanours of the Church. In doing so, not only was "perversion" countered; by linking the Church specifically to homosexuality, its ideas and structures could be utterly condemned. In addition to declaring the Church useless as a moral compass, "respectable" working-class productive masculinity and femininity were praised as antidotes to clerical laziness, opulence and abuse. It would only be in the 1930s, with writers such as Jaime Brasil, that the association between clericalism and homosexuality would be revised in the anarchist movement and, to some degree, lost.

Notes

1. When established in 1891, *A Obra* carried the subtitle *Órgão dos carpinteiros civis*. It subsequently became a paper for all workers and ceased publication in 1906.

2. For some general studies on the history of anarchism in Portugal, see Bayerlein and van der Linden (1990), Rodrigues (1999), Freire (2001), Baptista (2019), and for Brazil Samis (2009), Rodrigues (2010), Góes (2017), K. W. D. Santos and da Silva (2017b).
3. Jorge, as Góes (2017, 24) notes, was a poet and translator who addressed philosophical themes and love and neo-Malthusianism. His work also drew comparisons between the situation of workers and enslaved people in Brazil, illustrating how "anarchists in Portugal and Brazil [were] an inter-active group giving and borrowing from each other" (Góes 2017, 24).
4. *A Lanterna* was suspended several times during its existence, *A Plebe* (São Paulo), taking up its baton. *A Plebe* was less openly anticlerical but maintained this critique. See, for example, F.A.L. (1917).
5. Criticism of the monopoly and high price of Catholic education was also reflected, for example, in B. D. Silva (1920) in *A Plebe*.
6. For an innovative examination of the anarchist position on science, see *The Raven: Anarchist Quarterly (1993)*.
7. Rather than mentioning Madrazo, the author could have mentioned the work of Gregorio Marañón, renowned for his work on "intersexual types."
8. The republican law of 1912 was severe in its punishment of "actos contra a natureza." See Cascais (2016, 108).
9. Quiroule (1923), 5) in his article on *La Garçonne* and sexual morality argued that the substitution of the current state of affairs would allow for the emancipation of women and a general distancing from "a prática da perversão sexual, que é um determinante de degenerescência física e mental, loucamente aconselhada pelo citado autor burguês [Victor Margueritte]" (the practice of sexual perversion, which is a determining factor in physical and mental degeneration, wildly advocated by the cited bourgeois author [Victor Margueritte]).

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