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No Collar, No Master:

Workers and Animals in the Modernization of Rio de Janeiro 1903-1904¹

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BIO SKETCH

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ABSTRACT

This paper focuses the expulsion of animals from urban space during the process of modernization of the city of Rio de Janeiro, in the first years of the 20th century. On the one hand, following M.Foucault and G.Agambem, it explores the written sources of the period – the press, administrative reports and literary texts, notably by Brazilian writer Lima Barreto – in order to place the re-ordering of the relationships with domestic species within the larger frame of the modern State biopolitics, which consolidates the notions of pest and stray. On the other hand, the paper seeks to fill a historiographical lacuna and highlight the biopolitical popular resistance carried by anarchist workers, most notably affiliated to the naturist current, which brought alternative ideas on nature and inter-specific relationships to the scene of Brazilian urban workers' struggles of the period.

At the beginning of January 1904, a note in the Rio de Janeiro newspaper *A Nação* reported that there had been gunfire at a city slaughterhouse and a circus.² A laconic note that might have passed unnoticed were it not for the intriguing connection it establishes, at first sight, between disparate locations. The link between the two is the presence of animals and, from this perspective, the note is an invitation, which I take up here, to reflect upon the codification of the presence of animals in town and the consequent political conflicts during the urban reform of the Brazilian federal capital, Rio de Janeiro, in the first decade of the twentieth century.

Epidemic outbreaks of yellow fever and smallpox throughout the nineteenth century and the black plague at the start of the twentieth, ravaged the port of Rio de Janeiro, resulting in heavy losses to commerce, most notably to coffee exports. In addition to this, in the eyes of the intellectual elite, Rio de Janeiro—with its narrow streets, colonial houses and ridden with epidemics—epitomised the backwardness of the country.

Reacting to this, the newly established Republic aimed to reform the capital—following the model of Paris and, more closely, that of Buenos Aires—in order to make it attractive for foreign investment. To further this goal, the federal government designated engineer Francisco Pereira Passos as the mayor of the city and physician Oswaldo Cruz as Director of Hygiene, who had recently arrived from Paris, enthused with Pasteurian theory. Under the direction of both, the rebuilding of the central and port areas of the city was accompanied by sanitary measures to prevent epidemics. While the mayor ordered the old colonial town to be destroyed—an authoritarian process which the local population, the “*cariocas*,” captured in the expression “*bota-abaixo*” or “take it down”—hygiene officials entered the slums and fumigated or burned the few belongings of the poor. The whole set of measures - very problematic in terms of constitutional rights - was contemporaneously described as “sanitary despotism”.

In the last few decades, this process has been a topic of interest to historiography, which has emphasised the sanitisation of society.³ However, this historiography tells very little about the impact of the sanitisation process on the animal population, which was also gravely affected. As microbes or bacteria entered the popular imaginary, so, conversely, cows, pigs, dogs and other species were, from that moment, expelled from urban space and rendered invisible to urban dwellers. The sanitary model, which came into being at the start of the twentieth century, would persist thereafter and, in its most aggressive form, would regulate the lives of animals, conceiving

2 A Nação, January 10, 1904

3 Benchimol, Jaime L. *Pereira Passos, um Haussmann tropical: a renovação urbana da cidade do Rio de Janeiro no início do século XX*. Rio de Janeiro: Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, 1992; Chalhoub, Sidney. *Cidade Febril: cortiços e epidemias no Rio de Janeiro Imperial*. São Paulo: Cia das Letras, 1999; Bahia Lopes, Myriam. *O Rio em movimento: quadros médicos e(m) história, 1890-1920*. Rio de Janeiro: Fiocruz, 2000; Sevcenko, Nicolau. *A revolta da vacina: mentes insanas em corpos rebeldes*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2010.

of them as commodities the surfeit of which would be disposable in the modern city. Intruders they would be, co-dwellers never more.

The rebuilding of Rio de Janeiro was thus a crucial moment in the establishment of a biopolitics and, for this reason, it constitutes a strategic locus by which the political and ontological disputes around the correlate definitions of animal and human in Brazilian modernity can be envisaged.

Animal co-dwellers: a sketch

K. Thomas' classic study⁴ delineates the gradual movement in England, from the end of the nineteenth to the first decades of the twentieth century, which created the conditions for the subsequent industrial production of animals. Notably, it was due to the expulsion of stock-rearing farms and slaughterhouses to the outskirts of the cities, which veiled the suffering and death of animals from urban sensibilities.⁵ As C. Lévi-Strauss⁶ pointed out some time ago, social distance constitutes the symbolic operator by which the animal is transformed into an anonymous multiplicity, exactly describing the condition of animals in modern industrial societies, in sharp contrast to the domestic rearing of animals, which is based upon dense social relations between human and animal.

Such a transition can be detected in the context of the Rio de Janeiro of the beginning of the century. A brief examination of the press of those years presents a picture of a town populated by varied species of animals, mostly domestic ones: advertisements in the newspapers reveal houses with pastures in residential areas, coach houses, barns and widespread urban trade in milking cows and their calves, pigs, chicken, ducks or birds. This can be seen, for example, in the advertisements of the daily *Correio da Manhã* in the beginning of the year 1903:

“For sale – a heifer, first pregnancy two months ago, very cheap. Contact at Catumby St, 5.

[...]

For sale – a small donkey, young and very tame. It is perfect. Price 140\$000. Frei Caneca St, 200”⁷

4 Thomas, Keith. *O homem e o mundo natural: mudanças de atitude em relação às plantas e os animais, 1500-1800*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1988

5 See also Lansbury, Coral. *The old brown dog: women, workers and vivisection in Edwardian England*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

6 Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *O Pensamento Selvagem*. São Paulo: Cia Ed.Nacional, 1976; see also Fontenay, Elisabeth, de. *Le silence de bêtes: la philosophie à l'épreuve de l'animalité*. Paris: Fayard, 1998.

7 *Correio da manhã*, January 3, 1903.

Or,

“For sale – excellent cows, Cerqueira Lima St, 24, Riachuelo station.

For sale – a beautiful dapple-grey horse, a young pacer. Contact at Dias da Cruz St, 35, Meyer.

For sale – a Zebu ox, to see and contact at Botafogo Beach, 170, hotel.”⁸

It is also necessary to mention dogs and donkeys, especially the latter, worked to complete exhaustion in public transport systems and constantly replaced.⁹ In addition, there were worn out cattle that crossed the town to die in the urban slaughterhouses, the cirques and even sporadic bullfighting¹⁰ in the residential area of Laranjeiras:

“Tauromachy: It will be the last of the season, the bullfighting announced for tomorrow, in the bull ring at Larangeiras. The funds will be for the charity benefit of the Asylum of N. S. Auxiliadora. The public, for sure, will not leave an empty seat in the bull arena.”¹¹

Large houses in residential areas were often advertised as including pasture for grazing, for example:

“For sale [...] 22\$000 a house with many rooms in the centre of a expansive property, just two minutes from the Engenho Novo station [...] On the property there are many fruit trees and pasture for three or four animals [...]”¹²

And, in order to get a plausible image of the presence of animals in town the sight of the “continuous flight of insects”¹³ on the meat exhibited for sale at the streets must also be mentioned.

When raising so-called farm animals in town was forbidden in January 1903, a significant number of accusations and complaints was presented to the Municipality targeting piggeries, barnyards, and coach houses in residential areas of the town.¹⁴ Although the complaints may have

8 *Correio da manhã*, January 4, 1903.

9 Pereira Passos, Francisco. Pereira Passos, Francisco. *Mensagens do Prefeito lidas na Sessão do Conselho Municipal*. Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias, 1903-1907.

10 Bullfighting and other animal fights for public entertainment were forbidden in Brazil by Federal Decree n.16.590, in 1924.

11 *Correio da manhã*, January 3-4, 1903.

12 *Correio da manhã*, January 8, 1903.

13 Pereira Passos, Francisco. *Mensagens do Prefeito lidas na Sessão do Conselho Municipal*. Rio de Janeiro, Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias, 1903,7.

14 *Livro de Queixas e Reclamações da Municipalidade do Rio de Janeiro, ms Arquivo da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1903.*

veiled existing quarrels between neighbours, they are still telling of the conspicuous presence of animals in town.

Indeed, besides the obvious exploitation of animal labor, which fed and moved the town, we can assume that the co-residence and social proximity of animals made it difficult to reduce them, in their condition and being, solely to commodities. This is manifest in the touching description of the suburbs of Rio de Janeiro by the Brazilian writer Lima Barreto in early 1900:

“The most distant streets from the line of the Central Railway are full of patches of grass and weed, on which families place clothes to bleach under the sun. From morning to evening, the terrain is populated by all kinds of small domestic animals: hens, ducks, teals, goats, sheep and pigs, not to mention dogs which fraternise with all of them.

In the evening, from every gate sounds a “gathering call”: “Mimoso! An owner calls her goat. Sereia! It is a sow that a child beckons home, and so on. Sheep, goats, teals, hens, turkeys – all enter through the front door, cross the length of the house and retire to the backyard.”¹⁵

Lima Barreto witnessed precisely the multifold process which initiated the forced decline of domestic animal rearing, expelling animals from Rio’s urban space, as well as the state-sponsored systematic extermination of undesirable animals. Following Foucault,¹⁶ it would be a truism to point out that the definition of undesirable was informed by linkages of the modern medical-sanitary project and the architectural plans for the city: as a necessary correlate, the new aesthetics had a new ethical codification, which aimed to create a “clean” social space.

The pest and the stray

At the outset was the battle against flies, which had been targeted as transmitters of yellow fever. In a chronicle of 1903, Lima Barreto¹⁷ satirized the campaign, by investing the fly with a narrative voice to describe its fatal encounter with a young dandy physician with thick black hair—a caricature of Oswaldo Cruz—who, tormented by a fly for one night, had sworn eternal revenge against the species. Indeed, the campaign against yellow fever was understood as a war, which was mirrored in the vocabulary used to refer to it: as mentioned before, anti-fly squads were organized

15 Lima Barreto, A.H. *Clara dos Anjos, Prosa Seleta*. (1904) Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 2001, 691-692.

16 Foucault, Michel. *Vigiar e Punir: nascimento da prisão*. Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987

17 Lima Barreto, A. H. “Memórias de um *stegomya fasciata*.” (1903) In *Toda Crônica*. Edited by Beatriz Resende & Rachel Valença, vol. I:64-65. Rio de Janeiro: Agir, 2004, 64-65.

to fumigate all the slums, pensions and dwellings of the poor in central areas of the city.

At the same time, due to the black plague, a program aimed at exterminating rats and mice was put in place. Oswaldo Cruz had previously tested his techniques to combat the plague in the port of Santos between 1899 and 1900. According to his own report, he adopted the same technique deployed by the Americans in Philippines, which encouraged the population to hunt rats and mice.¹⁸ The Hygiene Directory offered a small sum of money as an incentive for each animal delivered. The purchase of rats and mice by the State, although viewed with suspicion by the population,¹⁹ actively engaged the poor quarters of the city. However, this trade in rodents left space for private rearing and brokers: a broker from the nearby town of Niterói became sadly famous for charging the Municipality the then significant sum of 8,000 Réis for the delivery of a consignment of mice.²⁰ As early as February 1903, critical references to the bio-medical combat against mice, and the corresponding experimental bacteriological research on the plague, appear in the carnival parade: in a masquerade ball hosted by Lucinda Theatre, a guinea pig and two rats were mixed in among the clowns and Adonis and Venus callipygia.²¹ The carnival of 1904 took up the topic again with its polka *Rato-Rato* (Rat-Rat), which was a big hit that year. A rough translation of the lyrics is as follows:

Rat, rat, rat

For what reason did you gnaw my kist?

You, insolent and malevolent rascal

Rat, rat, rat

I shall see your last day

Will the trap haunt you

And satisfy my want

Who conceived of you?

No other than the devil, you'd better believe it!

Who gave you life?

It was a mother-in-law at death's door

Who created you?

18 Cruz, Oswaldo G. Relatório acerca da Molestia Reinante em Santos, apresentado pelo Dr Oswaldo Gonçalves Cruz a S.Ex. o Sr Ministro da Justiça e Negócios Interiores. Opera Omnia, 323-372. Rio de Janeiro: Imp. Brasileira, 1972

19 Farage, Nádia. "De ratos e outros homens: resistência biopolítica no Brasil moderno." In Manuela Carneiro da Cunha: o lugar da cultura e o papel da antropologia. Edited by Lépine, Claude et al, 279-309. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Beco do Azougue, 2011.

20 Alencar, Edigar de. *O carnaval carioca através da música*. Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Freitas Bastos, 1965, 77.

21 *Rio Nu*. February 25, 1903

*It was revenge, I guess
Rat, rat, rat
Messenger of the Jew
When the trap is sprung
You, cowardly monster,
Do not come with your kikiki, please
Old, impudent gnawing rat
Old rat, you horrify me
I will show you I am wicked
My pence is guaranteed
I will never release you, no matter what.*

The polka was apparently inspired by the *jota de las ratas* movement of the famous satiric zarzuela *La Gran Via* (1886, by the Spanish maestros Villaverde and Chuenca), which referred to the opening of an avenue in Madrid, displacing thieves, sailors and rats. Irreverent, with an offensive anti-Semitic reference, the polka *Rato-Rato* simultaneously mocked both the rats and the Government. The pipe and chorus parodied the peculiar sound of the animals as well as the call of the mice brokers in the streets. One may note that the polka does not make any reference to the disease brought by the rats, but only to the losses caused by mice as co-dwellers – “*For what reason do you gnaw my kist?*” The mice hunt is an act of counter-revenge, but the animal - the child of revenge, the malevolence of the mother-in-law and of the devil - — turns to be , at the same time, a commodity: “*My pence is guaranteed, I will never release you, no matter what.*”

No debate on the matter is allowed; useless would be the protest, the “kikiki” of the rat. Indeed, a pragmatic agreement appears to be established between the scientific and popular conceptions of the rat, settling upon a common meaning, although based on different motives, for the notion of a pest animal.

Furthermore, the State’s battle against flies or rats was triggered by a demographic calculus, as the priority target for sanitary control was the quantity of animals - further mediated by invisible legions of microbes or bacteria. The war waged against animals was constantly mocked in the press, as can be seen in the satirical newspaper *Rio Nu*.²²

“Public Health, with the new regulations, will comprise a division consisting of three brigades: killing flies, killing mice and killing dogs, all of them commanded by Dr. O.

22 Rio Nu. January 9, 1904.

*Cruz in the post of general. The Ministry of War is astonished*²³

This scornful note makes a point, however, about the alignment of the animals targeted for elimination—it highlights the link established by demography. Indeed, it seems that it is the countless number of animals which equalises different species—and different inter-species relationships—in the same classificatory position of “pest.” This is the route through which the elimination or expulsion process reached the domestic animals, those socially closer species which D. Haraway has rather optimistically designated as “companion species.”²⁴ The reality is that from 1903 on, the demographic control of animal population in the streets—be they rats, dogs or cows—was, significantly, the responsibility of the Public Cleansing Department.

The regulation of the presence of animals in urban space was not a unique initiative of the Republican period. Indeed, a municipal by-law of September 11, 1838,²⁵ had already set up detailed laws on the movement of cattle, their slaughter and commerce in fresh meat, as well as the movement of horses and donkeys. The same by-law forbade the rearing of pigs and goats in yards, and dogs from wandering the streets. In 1892, the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro addressed the issue of dogs once more making their registration obligatory: unaccompanied dogs should be collected by the Municipality and sent to scientific laboratories for experiments.²⁶ The very notion of the “stray,” as one can see, emerged from these rules and political practices. The law was never enforced, however, during the nineteenth century. It was the project of urban renewal, which consolidated the modern ethical project that created the conditions that led to the fulfillment of the legislation’s attempt.

New customs, old laughter

Nicknamed “the Perfect”—a good-humoured corruption of the Portuguese “*prefeito*” (“prefect”, or more correctly, mayor) —Pereira Passos passed legislation governing animals as one of his first acts of governance on January 6, 1903. There’s nothing like a Kings’ Day to start a career of a vice-king, opined a “*lettre d’un missiu*” to the mayor in intentionally broken French.²⁷

The decree of 6th of January, 1903 included amendments to the Code of 1838 that prescribed the rearing, the transit and the commercialization of animals, dead or alive, in town. Thus, the

23 Rio Nu. January 9, 1904.

24 Haraway, Donna. *The companion species manifesto: dogs, people and significant otherness*. Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2003.

25 In Código de Posturas, Leis, Decretos e Editaes da Intendência Municipal do Distrito Federal, 1894. Rio de Janeiro, Papelaria e Typographia Mont’Alverne.

26 Jornal do Commercio. August 25, 1892.

27 Rio Nu. January 7, 1903

movement of cows in urban areas, and door-to-door milking, which was a customary practice of the time, were forbidden:

“(...) *I also abolished the rustic practice of milking cows in public streets, as the cows were covering the paths with their dejecta, scenes that certainly no one will judge proper to a civilized city (...)*”²⁸

Furthermore, the new regulations controversially prescribed that Hygiene Officers inoculate cattle against tuberculosis and the inspection of livestock, be it for milk or slaughter.

In the case of milk, the regulations aimed to avoid its adulteration with water—a practice that the newspaper *Rio Nu* playfully said to be “homeopathic dynamisation.” This was also done to prevent commerce in milk from cows affected by tuberculosis, of which there were a considerable number at the time.

The obligatory sanitary inspection of slaughterhouses aimed to both control cattle diseases and to prevent the deterioration of meat sold by street vendors. The regulations which prescribed the inspection of live animals on government premises gave rise to long judicial disputes with private slaughterhouses. Nevertheless, the official statistics²⁹ demonstrate that cattle failed to pass the inspections not so much to transmissible diseases, but due to malnutrition or traumas from long trips on foot or in closed train wagons with no food or water for days,³⁰ as they often came from distant estates or even neighbouring Uruguay. Many were dead on arrival.

The same regulations stipulated that the slaughter of cattle could only take place in public butcheries which were then slowly moving to the periphery of the city, in order, it was maintained, to avoid the stampede of cattle in the streets, then a common occurrence, causing the city dwellers great alarm and perhaps some concern for the terrified animals, which often sought refuge in nearby houses and even churches.³¹

In this regard, referring to municipal prohibitions on the slaughter of cattle and meat commerce in Rio, the libertarian periodical *Gazeta Operaria*³² was the only voice to boldly state:

“*As a matter of ideas and sentiments, we are against those who eat corpses...*”

28 Pereira Passos, Francisco. Mensagens do Prefeito lidas na Sessão do Conselho Municipal. Rio de Janeiro, Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias, 1903,7.

29 Pereira Passos, Francisco. Mensagens do Prefeito lidas na Sessão do Conselho Municipal. Rio de Janeiro: Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias, 1903-1907.

30 For an analysis of cattle slaughter, see Gomes Dias, J. V. O rigor da morte: abate humanitário e produção industrial de animais no Brasil contemporâneo. Dissertação de mestrado inédita, IFCH-UNICAMP, 2009.

31 For the analogous case of London, in the same period, see Lansbury, Coral. *The old brown dog: women, workers and vivisection in Edwardian England*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985.

32 *Gazeta Operária*. February 8, 1903.

This strong stance is detailed further below.

Yet, the banishment of dairy cows from urban spaces caused perplexed, if not indignant reactions in the press. On January 7, 1903, the *Rio Nu* newspaper commented that the “Supreme Intendant” had forbidden “*the cow men to deliver milk door to door, claiming that some of the tamed cows they lead might be bitten by a wild one.*” The comic aspect of the comment relied upon double entendres, as in the pornographic patois of the time, “unruly cows” – or in general, “cattle”—were coquettes or prostitutes. In the same vein, johns and pimps were “*marchands,*” the cattle merchants; brothels were the “slaughterhouses” and, in the continued metaphor, sexual intercourse was referred to as “slaughter.” Betrayed husbands were referred to as the “oxen.”³³

Sparse notes in the press reveal that the population contested the prohibition. An article in *Rio Nu* reports:³⁴

“(...) A few days ago a young man led his aunt’s cow to pasture (...) when a Municipal Officer decided to imprison him and take the animal to the pound, despite the fact that the young man swore that he was not a milk dealer. The zealous municipal authority would have had his way, if, while many curious assistants debated the fact, the smart boy had not run, pulling the cow along with him, to take refuge in his grandmother’s pasture, few steps from the scene of the event (...)”

Popular reaction targeted not only cows. The use of horses and donkeys for transportation, on which public and cargo transporters depended, was then taxed at three thousand Réis per head. This was undoubtedly the main reason for a coachmen and carriers’ strike in January 1904, which made waves in the city’s political waters. I shall return to this point further below. For now, it is sufficient to note that the carriers claimed that the tax made their labor more vulnerable to exploitation, as most of them were employees. It did not pass unnoticed, as stated in the press, that the tax also led to a hyper-exploitation of animals, whose owners, in order to evade the tax and protect their interests, cut back on the number of animals used to carry out their operations and even reduced their feed—whips were the only abundance these animals knew, as the owners sought to extract more work from the fewer animals available.

Finally, it is necessary to mention the rabid—excuse the unavoidable pun—campaign Pereira Passos launched against dogs in the city. Municipal regulations required all dogs in the city

33 Rio Nu. February 25 and 28, 1903.

34 Rio Nu. January 17, 1903.

to be registered, upon payment of a prescribed fee. In addition, a fine was levied on owners who allowed dogs to roam freely. Sheep dogs were the only exception, which, if properly registered could wander the streets by themselves. Thus, the rules imposed yet another tax on the population; and those who could not afford the tax ran the risk of having their dogs taken from them. The data shows that the tax on dog registrations culminated in revenue of 96,701 Réis in 1903, and declined in the subsequent years,³⁵ indicating that the population either refused or simply could not afford to pay. Abandoned dogs—classified in official documentation as vagrant dogs—were hunted down and exterminated. According to the press, 13,000 dogs were exterminated between 1903 and 1904.³⁶ *Pereira Passos* reported the following for the year 1904:

“[...] I ordered the urgent capture and elimination of thousands of dogs that strayed near the city, giving to it the repugnant aspect of certain eastern cities and with grave loss to public security and morality [...]”³⁷

As one can well imagine, this moral argument for the elimination of dogs on account of their mating in public provided an endless source of pornographic satire. In a chronicle published by *Rio Nu* on February 14, 1903, the author, pretending to hold a political office, declared in his manifesto that:

“No dog may play seesaw in the middle of the streets, without previous knowledge of the municipality officer (...).

The same newspaper sarcastically reported on January 13, 1904:

“Yesterday, the police arrested a couple of dogs for being united in wedlock without license of the Municipality”

The tensions created by the bio-political practices of State began to culminate and led to a riot against obligatory smallpox vaccination in November 1904, but that will not be pursued here. Let us stick to the mordacious, rabellaisian laugh of the population during Carnival, which

35 *Pereira Passos, Francisco. Mensagens do Prefeito lidas na Sessão do Conselho Municipal. Rio de Janeiro, Typographia da Gazeta de Notícias, 1903:21; 1903-1906)*

36 *(A Nação, February, 14., 1904)*

37 *Questões Municipais, 1905, in Benchimol, Jaime L. Pereira Passos, um Haussmann tropical: a renovação urbana da cidade do Rio de Janeiro no início do século XX. Rio de Janeiro: Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, 1992.*

continued beyond the period of the ritual.

In 1904, the Carnival—the acme of cultural critique of the carioca population—would once more, and with renewed vigour, take regulating animal presence in urban areas as its theme: indeed, cows and dogs were not left out of the street parades and carnival balls. It is quite amusing that the masques, incorporating animals in the ritual event, challenged the municipal prohibition and allowed them to circulate at will during the nights of Carnival. In a malicious reference to the Town Council, the Fenians, a carnival association, paraded an allegory under the name “Rats of the Council” with an array of masked dogs, mice and mosquitoes representing “the three chased species.”³⁸ Another association, the Democrats, opened the parade with nothing less than a clarion band of masked *Stegomya fasciata*, the feared mosquitoes; another allegory the Democrats presented under the title “*The Hunting Down of Dogs*” showed a parade “*defending the liberty of dogs*.”³⁹ This was probably the parade of “dogs” referred to by R.de Athayde (n.d:214), which, divided between those “registered” and “unregistered,” sang this good-humoured protest:

This beautiful cage
Which comes with no obstacles
Is the nicest invention
Of the genial Dr. Passos
From one extreme to the other of the streets
Climbing and descending mountains
Wherever it passes it gathers
Vagrant dogs
Always frenetic land
Unmatched in the whole world
Wonderful city
Long live Rio de Janeiro!

It is worth remembering the perfect symmetry between the municipal regulations that targeted animals and those targeting unemployed people or informal workers, as beggars, prostitutes, ruffians, gamblers, street vendors and slum dwellers were also arrested or removed from the central areas of the city. Therefore, it is no coincidence that the Head of Police when reporting on the street riots in November 1904, referred to “vagrants and ragged women” as coming out of “

38 Correio da Manhã, February 18, 1904.

39 Correio da Manhã, February 18, 1904.

burrows” to set the city awry. This symmetry, along with the political process of animalisation it reveals, was the object of a rather Swiftian irony in the pages of *Rio Nu*:⁴⁰

“Following what the Prefect has been doing to vagrant dogs, the Head of Police will order the caging of all minors without owners who wander the streets of the city. Well done.”

The extreme image of “bare lives,” as G. Agamben⁴¹ acutely describes it, are animal lives. Thus conceived, within the bio-political calculus that is under consideration here, “bare life” is also excess life,”— the crowd in its uncontrollable numbers, whether they are human or animal.

However, from a popular point of view, bio-political symmetry seems to have produced solidarity as a counterpart: the banishment and elimination of animals invoked a range of responses, from cultural comment to popular reaction.

Freedom for piety

Indeed, not only cultural critics challenged the “sanitary despotism” of the time. Official documentation from the period reveals evidence of workers who took direct action to free captured animals. The complaints register of the Municipality for the year 1903 includes this entry:⁴²

“(…) Yesterday at about eleven o’clock, the dog collection cart arrived here, accompanied by a squad of Municipal Officers, who seized a large number of dogs, some belonging to workers in the textile factory. As they were leaving and passing the gates of the factory, the cart was attacked by the workers, who liberated all the encaged dogs. As a result of these events, the fiscal officer arrived at the place, looking for soldiers to arrest the workers, who already had returned to their work in the factory (...)

(...) At the gate of the factory, the officer insisted that the soldiers invade the factory to arrest the workers who had released the dogs and who were back at their work, which the soldiers refused to do, alleging they could not be ordered by a civilian authority.

Casern of the Sixth Policial Post in the 4th of October of 1903.

(signed) Pedro Manoel de Souza, Commander”

The coachmen and carriers’ strike in January 1904, mentioned above, is undoubtedly another

40 *Rio Nu*. January 6, 1904.

41 Agamben, Giorgio. *The open: Man and Animal*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004.

42 *Livro de Queixas e Reclamações da Municipalidade do Rio de Janeiro*. ms Arquivo da Cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1903, 89-90.

exemplary instance of worker solidarity with animals. “*Vira a joça*” (“Dump the trash”) was the call of the strikers and the picketers as they proceeded to overturn and immobilize carts and trolleys around the city. However, it is quite significant that when the strike erupted, the first target was a dog collection cart, which was broken into to free the animals.⁴³ It seems that the action was supported by the population, as the press also reported another dog collection cart being dumped and the dogs released in a different sector of the town on the same day.⁴⁴

Based on the documentary evidence of the time, the practice of releasing dogs was indeed a recurrent event in those turbulent years. Even the Prefect acknowledged this, reporting that he had to order a police escort “*in order to prevent the populace from destroying the carts collecting vagrant dogs.*”⁴⁵ This case is diametrically opposed to those of the classical studies of E. P. Thompson and R. Darnton,⁴⁶ where animals appear as a sign of bourgeois power in class struggle. British historiography, from the 1980’s on, had already formed strong counter examples to Darnton’s bourgeois cats, pointing out that the first actions against bull-baiting came from workers in the manufacturing city of Birmingham, and that during the nineteenth century the British humanitarian movement’s multifold struggle against cruelty to animals was deeply rooted in workers’ associations. Regrettably, British historians tended to read the humanitarian movement as a surrogate for class struggle rather than an ideology in its own right.⁴⁷

In the first years of the twentieth century in Rio de Janeiro, as elsewhere, workers may have seen their own destitute lives mirrored in the persecution of animals. However, I suggest that the acknowledgment of similitude was not confined to this, but overflowed and brought about active resistance in defence of the existence of animals *tout court*. In other words, if bio-power symbolically equated animals with poor men, the workers’ reaction was not to negate the equation, but to creatively turn it into a struggle for life.

I argue that to a certain extent the intelligibility of such resistance relied on naturist ideas present in the workers’ circles of Brazil at the time. Naturism had its origins in French anarchism at the end of the nineteenth century and spread via international anarchist links to South America, mainly through periodicals published in Catalunya. So the very idea of interspecies solidarity was not alien to Brazilian libertarianism, as it was a pervasive assumption in all currents that, between

43 A Nação, January 10, 1904.

44 Correio da Manhã, January 10, 1904.

45 *Questões Municipais*, 1905, in Benchimol, Jaime L. *Pereira Passos, um Haussmann tropical: a renovação urbana da cidade do Rio de Janeiro no início do século XX*. Rio de Janeiro: Departamento Geral de Documentação e Informação Cultural, 1992.

46 Thompson, E.P. *Senhores e Caçadores: a origem da Lei Negra*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1997; Darnton, Robert. *O grande massacre de gatos e outros episódios da história cultural francesa*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal, 1986.

47 Turner, James, C. *Reckoning with the beast: Animals, Pain and Humanity in Victorian Mind*. Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1980; Perkins, David. *Romanticism and Animal Rights*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.

the end of the nineteenth to the first decades of the twentieth centuries, claimed human freedom would only be attained by putting an end to production and returning to nature.

In broad terms, libertarian naturism affirmed that capitalism had corrupted the human condition by taking it so far from nature. Hence the struggle against capitalism demanded the eschewal of all technologies, generally speaking, of the artificial. Human beings, it was asserted, should go back to nature, to live side by side with other living beings. This general principle became a primary mark of difference, separating naturists from communists and even anarchists, because the concept of revolution of the latter two still retained the line of production, raising the objection from the naturists that production would always produce slaves. Returning to nature was apparent in a variety of practices such as vegetarianism (or a kind of veganism *avant la lettre*, refusing the consumption of all animal by-products), crudivorism, nudism, and in gathering fruits instead of agriculture.

Two periodicals in Rio de Janeiro spread libertarian naturist ideas: *Gazeta Operária*, published in the years 1900-1903 and 1906, and *A Vida*, published in the years 1914-1915. They appeared alongside the pamphleteering work of anarchist Eugenio George and writer Lima Barreto, the latter of whom was strongly influenced by Tolstoi and Kropotkin.

Peter Kropotkin's *Mutual Aid*, published in London in 1902, provided a sound theoretical basis for the idea of solidarity among species, for solidarity was a factor of evolution in his argument. Far from Darwin's idea of the predator as the most fit, Kropotkin argued that the most fit were bands of beings who helped each other against a hostile environment, an argument he held to be valid in relation to humans (be they primitive or peasant communities, or anarchist collectivities) as well as animals. The concept of solidarity in Kropotkin, as the author acknowledges, is equivalent to the notion of piety in Rousseau—a natural feeling which is present in all living and sentient beings. Inverting the poles of social darwinism, which extends nature to social categories, Kropotkin reads the relationship among species as a field of intense sociality, a solidarity network against nature, a concept he confined to climatic or geological phenomena. In this line, the author praised the small, anonymous lives based on solidarity, of animals or workers who give their lives for the sake of others.

It seems that the Kropotkian idea of a solidary network of sentient life, when transposed to the industrial and urban ambience, found its crucial anchorage in domestic species, the ones man "*encages for fun, kills for pleasure and subdues to forced labour and torture.*"⁴⁸ In this vein we can understand one of Lima Barreto's melancholic passages in defence of animals: "*(...) it is over their*

48 George, Eugênio. *Loucuras da Medicina*. Rio de Janeiro: Pap.Moderna, 1927 a,11.

*suffering, it is over their own lives that we erect ours (...).*⁴⁹

From a naturist point of view, the hyper-exploitation of animal work and life was the ultimate form of slavery that still needed to be abolished. Animal slavery was also human slavery: only in the company of men, “*reduced to misery, undernourished, compelled to agglomeration and dirt*” do animals live a degraded existence, because human life is degraded by capitalism.⁵⁰ On the eve of the war in 1914, the periodical *La Vie Anarchiste* reiterated that human slavery sprang from animal slavery, with the advice : “*if you understand that (...) your children will not be prison-fodder.*”⁵¹ The expression “prison-fodder” eloquently manifests naturist reasoning of a homologous fate of animals and workers in the context of capitalist production.

In this frame, workers’ resistance to the expulsion and killing of animals in Rio de Janeiro gains full meaning as a struggle against the commoditisation of life. Alas, “*piety was held prisoner in the dungeons of repression,*” as the *Gazeta Operária* remonstrates in 1906, protesting against indifference to the brutal violence towards animals and entreating: “*may all living beings emancipate themselves.*”⁵²

It is true that “sanitary despotism” persisted in the control of animal lives in urban space, in the imposition of more miserable conditions on their lives and the strict regulation of their death. It is also true that dogs have not freed themselves of collars, nor have workers freed themselves of masters.

Nevertheless, the struggle for solidarity at the beginning of the twentieth century would endure in popular memory, as we can see in the samba by Alberto Ribeiro, a hit sung by Carmen Miranda during the Vargas dictatorship in 1937:

*I like very much a vagrant dog
Which walks alone in the world
With no collar and no master*

The samba points out the burden of class even for animals, while some have lunch and dinner, others have not a bone to chew. But, together with a shared class condition, an echo of past struggles can be heard: a human voice expresses affection and empathy with a vagrant dog, and the vagrant dog in the song—the dog with “no collar and no master”—pays a canine homage to the

49 Lima Barreto, A.H. Contos e histórias e de animais. (1919) Coisas do Reino do Jambom. *Prosa Seleta*. Rio de Janeiro: Nova Aguilar, 2001, 1020

50 George, Eugênio. 1927 b O perigo das vacinas. Rio de Janeiro, Pap.Moderna.

51 In Rosseló, J. (Editor). *Viva la naturaleza! Escritos libertarios contra la civilización, el progreso y la ciencia* (1894-1930). Barcelona: Virus Editorial, 2008, 68-71.

52 *Gazeta Operária*. December 12, 1906.

anarchist slogan “no country and no master.”

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