

Puériculture, Biotypology and “Latin” Eugenics in Comparative Context

Maison Française d’Oxford

(2-10 Norham Road Oxford OX2 6SE)

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Organised by the History of Race and Eugenics (HRE) Research Group
(Oxford Brookes University)

PROGRAMME

10.30-11.00 Marius Turda (Oxford Brookes University): Introductory Remarks: “Latin” Eugenics in European Perspective

11.00-11.30 Maria Sophia Quine (University of East Anglia and Institute of Germanic and Romance Studies, University of London): “Hyperfecundity”, Biotypology and Race in Fascist Italy: Good, Reformist, “Latin” Eugenics in Action?

11.30-12.00 Despina Karakatsani (University of Peloponnese): Eugenics, Puériculture and Child Welfare in Interwar Greece

12.00-13.30 Lunch

13.30-14.00 Louise Lyle (University of London Institute in Paris): *Les grands tarés et l’intérêt national*: French Literary Responses to the Nazi Eugenic Legislation of July 1933

14.00-14.30 Richard Cleminson (University of Leeds): The Reception and Dissemination of Biotypology in Portugal, 1930-1960

14.30-15.00 Coffee Break

15.00-15.30 Yolanda Eraso (Oxford Brookes University): Puériculture, Biotipologia and *Frauenklinik*: A “Latin” Eugenics or a Latin-American Approach?

15.30-16.00 Paul J. Weindling (Oxford Brookes University): Concluding Remarks

“Hyperfecundity”, Biotypology, and Race in Fascist Italy: Good, Reformist, “Latin” Eugenics in Action?

Maria Sophia Quine

In fascist studies, a tendency to see an apparent exceptionalism in Nazism has experienced a resurgence in recent years as the theory of ‘totalitarianism’ has returned in a new post-Cold War guise. One of the singular features of National Socialist Germany, for many scholars, was its unparalleled, fanatical drive to create a racial utopia. The by no means unique anti-natalist policies of sterilization, ‘euthanasia’, and genocide (especially now that forced sterilization is defined in international law as genocidal) have dominated and skewed thinking, somewhat, and obscured the reality that these were and are not the only determinants of a biological prime directive.

The Italian Fascist dictatorship possessed a commitment to an overarching racial imperative and pursued a ‘total’ and totalizing bio-political programme no less obsessively than the Nazi regime did. But Fascist Italy’s overriding objective was different from that of Nazi Germany. Italian fascism sought to increase racial prolificity, rather than safeguard racial purity. Italianists working within the mainstream have come to embrace the view that one of the defining features of Italian fascism was that the ‘racisms’ which it espoused were largely cultural, spiritual, or nationalistic, but not ‘Social Darwinist’, scientific, or biological until 1938. Even Nicola Pende, the arch-typical bio-medically-driven fanatic, whose science of racial re-engineering, biotypology, aimed first and foremost to increase fecundity through endocrinology, is depicted as a proponent of ‘nationalistic-spiritualistic racism’ (whatever that really means).

This contribution to the workshop will bring to the fore for dialogue and debate some of the particularities of Italian fascism’s population/health/race/class/social/family/welfare policy that have relevance for the study of both eugenics and fascism. Whether motivated by a distinct culture of ‘Latinicity’ or not, the Italian fascist dictatorship’s demographic programme was predicated on a notion of biological race and focused determinedly on a desire to preserve, protect, and enhance fertility.

Eugenics, Puériculture and Child Welfare in Interwar Greece

Despina Karakatsani

This presentation seeks to explore the intellectual framework within which the combination of eugenics and puériculture became possible in the Greek context in interwar years, as well as analyzing the social hygiene measures adopted by Greek Governments in order to improve children’s health more generally. It further aims to make sense of the various ramifications in this discussion through the concept of ‘biological capital’. Relying on primary sources, such as material from state archives and articles published in contemporaneous popular hygiene journals, it concentrates on the role certain pediatricians played in linking puériculture to eugenics; on views regarding the value of children as biological capital; on the possible influence of other European paradigms; and finally, on those groups and individuals playing key roles in the enactment of social hygiene measures for the amelioration of this putative ‘biological capital’.

***Les grands tarés et l'intérêt national: French Literary Responses to the
Nazi Eugenic Legislation of July 1933***

Louise Lyle

Privileged to have enjoyed an education (in both the formal and informal senses of the word) that offered him equal access to the worlds of science and letters, Jean Rostand (1894-1977), son of the playwright Edmond Rostand, was one of the most prolific and influential scientific popularisers of twentieth-century France. In his essay entitled 'Hérédité et Racisme', published in November 1939 under Gallimard's *nrf* banner, in which he declares himself to be 'un humaniste de gauche', he makes the following statement:

When Hitler, on 14 July 1933, promulgated his famous law on the sterilization of the disabled – a law which was greeted with considerable sarcasm on our part – we could criticize certain of the measures proposed by this law, even its general orientation, disdaining it as a worrying symptom, and protesting that no individual has the right to impinge with such ease upon the liberty of the collective. We cannot, however, deny that by this action itself, he was serving the genetic interest of the nation.

[Lorsque Hitler, le 14 juillet 1933, promulgue la fameuse loi sur la stérilisation des grands tarés – loi qui a soulevé chez nous bien des sarcasmes -, nous pouvons critiquer certaines dispositions de cette loi, nous pouvons n'en pas aimer l'esprit, y voir un symptôme inquiétant, nous pouvons penser qu'un seul homme n'a pas le droit de toucher aussi légèrement à la liberté de tous ; mais nous ne pouvons nier que, par cette légèreté même, il ne serve les intérêts génétiques de sa nation.]

In this presentation, I will firstly give an overview of French responses to the Nazi legislative programme of 14 July 1933 to which Rostand refers above, in non-specialist publications, particularly those with a more literary orientation. I will then consider what these responses can tell us about attitudes towards disability from writers across the French political spectrum, but with a particular focus on the left wing, in the run-up to the Second World War.

The Reception and Dissemination of Biotypology in Portugal, 1930-1960

Richard Cleminson

Although there were different variants of biotypology, such as those proposed by Kretschmer and Viola, it was Pende's that was to be most influential in the Portuguese case. The reception of this new science began to take hold in Portugal in the early 1930s and connected in complex manners with pre-existing eugenic discourse on the health of the 'race'. Biotypology, somewhat in contrast to eugenics, emphasised the individual as the key to racial regeneration by means of identifying different types ('biotypes') of individuals with particular characteristics and appeared to offer a flexible framework for therapeutics based on a particular interpretation of the heredity/environment conundrum.

The interest in biotypology generally came about in part through a reconfiguration of medicine itself away from disease and pathology in the direction of constitutional medicine where the whole person was considered as the source of good or ill health. In the Portuguese case, there are numerous reasons for the acceptance of biotypology. As the psychiatrist Barahona Fernandes, one of the earliest advocates of biotypology in Portugal, was to state, this new field seemed to shore up the inadequacies of eugenics itself – the lure of the new was no doubt attractive. In addition to a certain disappointment with eugenics, a second factor influencing the uptake of biotypology was the emphasis on the individual. Such an emphasis signified less of a concentration on questions of race, mirroring the reception of biotypology in Argentina, and thus allowed advocates to focus less on debates on racial superiority. A third factor influencing the reception of biotypology in Portugal was the evident proximity of the ‘Estado Novo’ of Dr. Oliveira Salazar to Italian fascism, an association which was influential as the regime was consolidated. A fourth factor that may have influenced the uptake of biotypology in Portugal was a certain degree of scepticism towards what might be termed hereditarian reductionism. Like the American Raymond Pearl, interested in constitutionalism in the 1920s and disenchanted with eugenics, Portuguese advocates of biotypology also expressed doubts as to the influence of hereditarian ideas.

This presentation traces the development of biotypology in Portugal from its early inception in the 1930s through to its presence in the 1960s against the backdrop of the broader eugenics movement in the country and against the above four hypotheses framing its reception.

**Puériculture, Biotipologia and *Frauenklinik*.
A “Latin” Eugenics or a Latin-American Approach?**

Yolanda Eraso

My presentation proposes to chart the transition from puériculture to biotypology notions with the view of proposing possible interpretations of the ways in which a “Latin” eugenics took shape in Latin-American countries. With a main focus in Argentina, I will concentrate on the localisation of those notions in maternal institutions and medical practices. I will look at, firstly, how a transition within the so-called Latin eugenics (French and Italian) took place, from sanitary measures and maternal and child-care to interventions based on a biological and demographic classification of the population (biotype). Secondly, I will focus on the influence of Nazi medicine in the 1930s to offer insight into how Argentine biotypology, although grounded in Italian ideas, coexisted with more radical thinking. I will argue that Argentine eugenics lost its more Latin approach towards an amalgamation of propositions and interventions that aimed at controlling reproductive practices. Given the Latin American reception of different strands of the eugenic movement, my paper would like to discuss more broadly: What constitutes a “Latin” form of eugenics? Is it possible to speak of Latin-American eugenics?