“When, on May 13, 1888, Princess Isabel signed the Golden Law there were still 723,419 slaves in our country. To reach that victory, that has maintained the name of The Redeemer [Isabel] in the hearts of Brazilians, the entire nation mobilized; the parties rose up; for many years Parliament was in a constant state of agitation; much of the press went all out for the liberation of the slaves. [Now] We cannot remain impassive, with our arms crossed, in the face of the fate of millions of Brazilians who, still in childhood or youth, live handcuffed to misery or sickness and who, unprotected, will march to an even more humiliating captivity: crime and prison.”

These fragments compose part of the discourse of legal scholar Vicente Piragibe, read in the presence of Minister of Justice Vicente Rao in the offices of the just inaugurated Laboratory of Infantile Biology (LBI). The first institution of its kind founded in Brazil, it was the result of the aspirations of physicians and legislators who felt the need to develop a different focus for the problem of “needy children” and of “abandoned minors” in the nation’s capital. In the clamor for an appropriate policy to confront the problem, the trope slavery-liberty-criminality that runs through Piragibe’s words, was often suggested in the juridical and medical-legal discourses of that generation. Interpretations of the social and historical causes of the problem ranged over diverse perspectives situated among “correction,” “education,” and “cure.” Thus, the apprehension at the disconcerting intersection between poverty, crime and public policies directed at childhood incorporated a variety of approaches that oscillated, in their general lines, between the moral dilemmas that characterize philanthropic appeals and the firm hand—most markedly in the realm of police repression and control—of State institutions. The emergence of the LBI in 1936 signaled the growing hegemony of the tendencies that both the State and political elites promoted, positioning themselves, not just discursively but pragmatically, around
what the medico-criminologist Afranio Peixoto once denominated “ortogenia”—a machine generating public policies and human “repairs” in the area of medical hygiene and public safety.²

So that we may explore further the processes and discourses that permitted such voices to become preeminent during the Brazil of the Estado Novo [1937-1945], in this paper I propose to examine some of the institutional initiatives attempted for the treatment of “children” and “minors” in Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the 1930s. Assuming that to understand the political vicissitudes, the theoretical-methodological divergences and the links maintained with the State one must note the heterogeneity of formats and perspectives adopted in the field of health and public safety, my intention is to explore possible points of inflection in reference to the constitutive gaze on the formation of a sick body—an element that is “harmful,” “dangerous,” “weak,” “ugly” and worthy of diverse “politics of compassion”—within the body of the nation.³ The project that was designed through the set of reforms initiated in the field of child labor legislation and in the repression of those who wandered the streets unassisted, had its start back in the mid-1920s. In that period, as I intend to show, deprived childhood was definitively consecrated as a problem whose solution depended upon the construction of a public order oriented toward its treatment and care and, above all, legitimizing the tutelage of those who suffered from a lack of family protection. Meanwhile, little or nothing is known about the subjects of these policies of control that would be outlined from that moment forward. On the contrary, in the rhetorics directed toward the comprehension and solution of the problem, poor children, ‘abandoned’ and unattended by their families, are treated as moral subjects that, in the future, thanks to the reorientation of medical-juridical discourses, would be transformed into biological subjects. If, up until then, the theme of inheritability had been insinuated hesitantly into the discourses of moral order, during the 1930s that theme would find in the terrain of the
bodies of minors a fertile field for exploration for projects in the realm of social engineering and imagination in the interpretations of the State’s role in the good guidance (and health) of the national body. Thus a discourse whose subject is obscure and unknown preceded a politics of knowledge, treatment and control of the child body.

Although many studies have been dedicated to producing histories of childhood and of the institutions that in Brazil were dedicated to correcting, punishing, and protecting “neglected minors,” there has been very little discussion of the formation of a discourse about the body that would incorporate supposed desires and projects of barbarism. It is toward this end that we begin our interpretation with Vicente Piragibe’s discourse. In the first part of this essay I want to trace the principal tendencies in the realm of these “politics of compassion”—utilizing, once again, Boltanski’s phrase; in the second part I analyze two projects observed during the Estado Novo for the treatment of the disturbing link between the child, inheritability, and criminality that were based on criminological assumptions.

_The Nation of the Future: inheritance and socioplasty_

“To prevent, if possible. If not, to fix. As a planter chooses his best seeds and a livestock raiser, the best reproducers, the State will also interest itself in its formation, more than its industry, its life. It will not look at quantity (…) to remedy biologically with endocrine surgery, the grafts. To fix, remaking, improving, through an appropriate bioplastic procedure, they can no longer be abnormal. To fix, sociologically, to adapt to the community, as Adler would say (…) through psychology, profound or superficial, through pedagogy, through education, re-education, making and remaking sociable, good, honest men, ‘economic’ and fair, and they can no longer be criminals.”

In the same text in which he links the problems derived from the end of slavery with the prognosis of an increase in criminality, Piragibe prescribes a panacea for the “treatment” of abandoned minors. In criticizing the lack of preparation and conditions for philanthropic and religious action in the field of the policies for controlling juvenile delinquency, he calls for a technical-scientific approach and praises the example provided by the Italian institutions. This
affirmation and proposal of such an approach were directly linked to his accumulated experiences as a judge in the courts, or when he acted as guardian [curador] for minors submitted to police and judicial scrutiny in cases involving vagrancy, begging, sexual violence, theft and homicide. The activity of Piragibe in the 1930s resembles that of his colleague, Evaristo de Moraes, a pioneer in the interpretation of the dramas of the “abandoned children” and in the formulation of a politics for its resolution. However, the difference between the two is marked, in the case of Moraes, by his belief in political and social solutions, while Piragibe privileged a medical and individualizing approach.

An excess of imagination and small perversions could lodge themselves within undefended bodies. This was the warning issued to legislators untrained to consider juvenile testimony, which formed the basis for the arguments by legal scholar Evaristo de Moraes. Evaristo was preoccupied essentially with the quality of testimony provided by minors subjected to the care of the police and legal authorities. His experience as a court guardian for juveniles arrested or detained in institutions for minors suggested the need for new techniques and treatments for what he called “juvenile bad faith,” capable of introducing errors in the judicial process. This concern, distinct from the hygienic and eugenic approach of the medical and educational professionals, is foregrounded throughout his presentation in a congress dedicated to the “problem of the child” organized by Moncorvo Filho in 1924. Founder of the Department of the Brazilian Child, and a physician, Moncorvo Filho gave popular lectures on puericulture and heredity sponsored by the first non-philanthropic governmental institution created in the capital, the Institute for Protection and Aid to Children of Rio de Janeiro. The targets of these initiatives were poor and neglected children, for the most part coming from impoverished families: future exploited workers and potentially criminal individuals. References to the
children’s family origin and heredity, present in the large majority of the institution’s publications and projects during the first two decades of the Republic, thereby expressed a sociological vision of the problem through a sanitationist rhetoric and a prescriptive style. In that context, the reference to heredity in the discourse of Evaristo de Moraes sought to emphasize the necessity of a preventive policy on the part of the State.

In one of the cases described by Evaristo there is a child—a “little black girl, 12 years of age”—interned in an Asylum for Minors but the object of dispute between “two unmarried women, of strict habits.” The process of adoption, however, would not have a happy ending. “The poor creature had barely entered the home of her protectors,” Evaristo relates, “when a maid, to whose care she had been entrusted for unavoidable hygienic care, discovered that she [the little girl] had been infected with a serious venereal disease that was developing at a frightening pace.” This fact led to the reversal of the legal process that resulted in the adoption. The nameless “little black girl” was returned to the care of the courts. Having been named “guardian of the little black girl,” Evaristo refers to his attempts to discover the identity of her “perverse rapist and contaminator.” Evaristo recounts fruitless attempts by the girl to successively incriminate a “guy” who was the son of a well-off family, a “Turk” and a “black guy,” and his surprise at the girl’s insistence upon protecting the one who had “done her wrong.” Such behavior exemplified the inventive imagination and the danger of suggestibility among juveniles giving testimony. The persuasive rhetoric privileged by Evaristo also reveals to us other concerns. In the mid-1920s, questions related to the regulation of child labor and vocational education occupied the juridical stage. The touchstone both of complaints that involved the need for regulation of labor relations and of labor rights, and of the penalizing of infractions committed by minors, themes such as will, discernment, responsibility, and the limits
of the minority galvanized the attention of legislators in various fields. In 1927, when the Juvenile Code [Código de Menores] is finally approved, it became an important tool for the definitional and systematic classificatory practices that already characterized it (although in an informal manner), and for the everyday life of the institutions closest to the everyday life of children transformed into minors due to their distance from the family and proximity to the State. But the formalization of a juridical apparatus capable of resolving relevant aspects of technical questions that punctuated personal dramas in the judicial context, when considered in light of Evaristo de Moraes’ comments, indicated other dilemmas. How and in what way would the State be able to protect children who were victims of misfortune and neglect? The first step would be to form institutions staffed with professionals capable of listening to them, observing them and curing them, aside from understanding the vicissitudes of the pathologies that frequently afflicted children and youths. Although Evaristo refers exclusively to psychiatry and psychoanalysis, in this same period it is possible to observe more inclusive conceptions.

This debate is not exactly new and would encounter resistance from legal scholars advocating a more sociological approach to criminality. Meanwhile, the rise in criminal statistics during the turbulent years of the 1920s re-started the debate about the adoption of policies of “social defense” through which society and its representative—the State—could guard against expressions of anti-social behavior. The theses of “social defense” that were adopted emerged from an eclectic approach, reinforcing the juridical belief in the legitimacy of taking action that was less corrective and punitive, and more preventive and corrective of criminality. Such a task demanded a coordinated effort by legal scholars and physicians—individualizing the subjects submitted to legislators’ action. Doctors, psychologists and anthropologists would then be called upon to position themselves in line with the propriety of a
criminal policy that was preventive in character and directed at institutions charged with assisting the minors removed from the streets. This new purpose, both for medicine and for law, was tied to a broad remodeling of urban space and of public institutions throughout the nation. The cities, in the alarmist view of reformists like the criminologist Afrânio Peixoto, were seen as ideal contexts for the spread of a socio-biological pathology—criminality—that tended to grow and that needed to be contained through preventive policies.\textsuperscript{13} Populated by individuals unqualified for social conviviality, it would remain for the State and the institutions of correction to act as generator of a social engineering that was preventive in character. Like the children, individuals considered anti-social would have to have their rights subordinated to the range of their capacities. Incapable in the eyes of the law, but transmitters of pathologies inherited from their disgenic families, the children especially should be the target of a more effective policy of control and surveillance. Whether in the sphere of education or of hygiene, the spheres populated by children would come to be the object of a regenerative politics since it was in their very bodies that, through renovation, the process of national regeneration would take place.\textsuperscript{14}

Given that republican positivism proved incapable of installing the pillars of a society broadly structured upon universal civilizing values, diseases, ignorance, poverty, degeneration, moral insanity and fanaticism persisted in weakening liberal projects and sanitary policies oriented toward voluntary impulses. Physical and moral pathologies gradually penetrated the body of individuals and the nation. Hence, it fell to the State to assume a more purposeful role in the control, surveillance and classification of the body of the “national man.” It was in that context, during the 1930s, that the central concepts of the so-called “new criminal anthropology” were reborn in Brazil.\textsuperscript{15}
In various Latin American nations, a critique of Lombrosianism, paradoxically linked to re-readings of the theses of the “born criminal,” re-charged the spirits of a strong reaction that regarded sociological explanations of criminality bankrupt and limited. Principally among criminologists trained in legal medicine, there was a strong tendency to consider biological aspects as acting in tandem with social causes. In Brazil, this current of thought was represented by the group of medical-legal scholars [bacharéis], the majority of them trained in the Medical School of Bahia, headed by Nina Rodrigues and, now in the 1920s and 30s, by his important successor, Afrânio Peixoto. For a new generation of doctors and jurists trained under the influence of Afrânio’s ideas, eclecticism established itself as the most viable path. The idea was that, not only did ‘biological causes’ predominate over social ones, but the former could be diagnosed utilizing psychoanalysis and endocrinology. Through an interpretation of the way of life and behavior of children and young lawbreakers, it would be possible not only to reveal the motor of criminality, but also to identify and classify ‘mentalities disposed’ to criminality. Those authors in tune with a Freudian approach imagined that it was possible to diagnose a ‘criminal personality’ through stories, lapses, impulses, dreams, drawings, tattoos, and memories. Finally, a large part of these analyses tended toward a view that ‘immoral’ and ‘anti-social’ behaviors had their origins in physical and mental phenomena. The notion of ‘constitution’ adopted by the Italian criminologists, applied to a nosology of mental infirmities, allowed a correlation between the integralized vision of individuals and the incidence of “physical-moral” disturbances. It is in this context of debates about eclectic criminalogical propositions that the position adopted by Evaristo de Moraes is gradually obscured. The adoption of the Juvenile Code [Código de Menores] marks the threshold of a new era of institutional changes and important policies: the
failure of philanthropic initiatives and the consecration of a biotypological discourse with respect to “delinquent minors” in the custody or under the tutelage of the State.

As Adriana Vianna has demonstrated, since the early 20th century, a considerable portion of the children housed in asylums, vocational schools and public and private residential facilities were sent there by the police authorities. Legislation intended to punish individuals considered vagrants or mendicants functioned as instruments of discipline for the idleness to which poor children had been relegated. For those who were adults, the law prescribed detention in agricultural colonies where they would be rehabilitated through labor. Those classified as minors, after being submitted to an “Age Test,” were exempt from the exile imposed upon adults in the Correctional Agricultural Colonies. They [the minors] were to be interned in institutions such as the Quinze de Novembro Asylum and The João Luís Alves Institute, in order to be submitted to a provisional regime of preparation for work. Thus vagrancy and child abandonment were two problems addressed by the legal and police perspectives in an interrelated manner. Even so, the structure of public institutions did not attain the level implied by the propaganda intermittently issued by governments and legislators, with regard to the real power and capacity for re-socialization and social integration of the vagrant minor transformed into the worker. By the end of the 1930s, the director of the Sete de Setembro Institute insisted on the association between vagrancy and delinquency in confirming the origins of the interned minors: “both internment due to abandonment and due to being orphaned responds to economic motives, keeping in mind especially that, as a rule, delinquency and vagrancy are primarily caused by economic factors.”

Vicente Piragibe, an Appeals Court magistrate responsible for decisions in many cases where lawyer/guardians appealed decisions by juvenile court judges [juizes-pretores] an
attempt to mitigate the harshness of a sentence, called attention to the fact that often the liberation of minors often resulted in a lack of options with regard to a truly effective policy of State assistance. When related to cases involving children, vagrancy was considered “a warning symptom of an evil that must be taken care of.” In the mid-1930s, Piragibe confirmed the failure of the policies then in effect, favoring instead the “modern” preventive and biotypological approaches. This ‘care,’ rather than being subjected to the opinions of legal experts and the violence of ‘asylums’ and correctional colonies, should be the domain of physicians. Studies for “verification of age” were the object of diverse rhetorics for strategies of determining ‘responsibility’ for criminal acts and aptitude for work. Leonídio Ribeiro, a medical doctor, railed against descriptions of cases whose “solution” lacked medical and anthropological elements. In 1925 he was assigned to examine the case of a “young black girl, 15 years old, who had savagely murdered her [female] employer with blows from an ax.” Since the young girl, who had no birth certificate, declared herself to be only 13 years of age and therefore considered “not responsible” for her actions for the purposes of criminal justice, the judged requested additional tests for age verification. Already anthropometric exams seeking to determine the “robustness” of children and adults were being performed by anthropologists.

The problems of juvenile delinquency in terms of “criminal prevention” would ultimately result in two inter-related efforts: In the first place, research on verification and “identification” of age, clearly intended to establish, through forms of classification based on scientific concepts, the degree of criminal responsibility of lawbreaking minors. And secondly, in projects for the correction of the “blemishes” produced by heredity and poverty, about which the physician Afrânio Peixoto was reporting in the epigraph that initiated this section of the text. He was convinced that state institutions should serve as “clinics of human repairs” and promote a
true “socioplasty.” The body of the minor neglected by his/her family but under the tutelage of the state, observed and classified according to biotypological indices, would thus be destined to make a patriotic sacrifice. By being submitted to the technologies of cure and correction they would enjoy a reduction in the defects of their origins—misfortune, illness, mental and physical pathologies, anti-social behavior—the same defects that it was feared would impair the future of the nation. This ambitious project would only be possible if policies for the individualization of the criminal, developed throughout his or her life as a minor, were really implemented.

A substantial portion of the criminological literature for this period were based on the new technologies of biotypical individualization, whether those adopted in the clinics or those adopted in the institutions of internment. As Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte emphasizes, the principles of this criminological literature, though eclectic, converged in its crafting of the “moral regulation of the person” in treating each individual in particular but, at the same time in sync with the “group” from which he/she originated. It is in this sense that “heredity” can be detected even though there weren’t always explicit references to an individual’s “racial” condition. To the extent that “juvenile delinquency” was defined as a “problem of adaptation” that manifested itself in puberty, studies on criminality carried out among children and youths, whether from a psychological or biological perspective, became an object of attention. In the case of the child, symptoms of ill-formation and of incapacity for social conviviality would be in a process of full expression. Among the causes of the manifestation of this infirmity during childhood would be “biological” and “inherited” factors, and those stemming from the “social environment.” The “hereditary transmission,” according to eugenicist interpretations, would provide the link. Alcoholic and syphilitic parents, carriers of mental anomalies, fanatics and socially ill-adapted, would constitute an important part of the antecedents commonly found
among delinquent youths studied in different institutes of correction. To this picture, they would also add “social factors” capable of facilitating the transmission and dissemination of physical, psychological and moral pathologies.

In Brazil and in the course of nationalist discourse, eugenics lent a special appeal to the vision and the discourses of those who saw in the “mixture of races” explanations for the perpetuation of “morbid hereditary factors” among the poor and non-white population. As Nancy Stepan suggests, there was a reinterpretation of the premises of eugenics in the Latin American context, which, in the Brazilian case, at times was conflated with the very discourse that treated “miscegenation” as a tribute to the nationality. The role of the State, in this respect, would have been to normalize the rules of implementation of eugenic principles in various institutional sectors that lodged themselves under its dominion. Ideas about the concept of “race” and, in this moment, its different interpretations, which circulated among those who sympathized with or adhered to eugenics, would compose facets of the same discourse, in which concepts about Brazilian identity and miscegenation intervened and were linked.

Moreover, if there was an intense relationship between eugenicist premises and the debate regarding nation building, the portrayal of projects discussed in Brazil as configuring a sort of ‘soft eugenics,’ as Stepan would have it, deserves a more complex analysis.

There is an entire field of complex connections in which the ‘reconfiguration,’ or ‘reinterpretation’—as some authors prefer—of the racialist discourses in Brazil starting in the 1920s is directly linked to the ideals of modernity and nation. It is precisely by incorporating projects of modernization of State-controlled institutions that the nation consolidates and improves its contours. Like the body of the nation whose ills and cures were being diagnosed
through eugenic lenses, the “abandoned minors,” offspring of a sheltering but stern homeland, should submit themselves to the paternal power of the State.

_The City, the Family and the Child_

The jurist-physician and director of the Institute of Identification in Rio de Janeiro, Leonídio Ribeiro, expounded his ideas regarding the necessary efforts for criminal prevention undertaken among minors who were abandoned or under the tutelage and assistance of the State and philanthropical entities, citing Cesare Lombroso and his Italian acolytes. The theses regarding “delinquent constitution” disseminated by the Italian physician Benigno Di Tullio, served as Ribeiro’s inspiration for a defense of an all-inclusive caring, not only for the children but also for the families that lacked an ability to keep up with society. Among them, he warned, it was possible to perceive precocious signs of physical and mental mal-formation, social inadaptation, and a propensity for delinquency. Factors of predisposition to pathological symptoms would be much more obvious in the field of criminality. Thus he elaborated a methodology of observation of children and adolescents that included an inquiry into their “family heredity,”—'bio-crinogenesis—through anthropological exams. Given that “crime” is an “human action,” it was necessary to explore it through a multidisciplinary focus. Di Tullio characterized the eclecticism of his interests in the fields of psychology, biology and psychiatry as constitutive of what he called “anthropology.” The latter would be the most efficient tool for the “unitary” understanding of the social phenomena whose causes were equally organic and biological. More than this, his “anthropology” was characterized as a “science of the human person,” dedicated to all the phenomena related to “evolutionary processes.”
In his polemic, “The Child and the Crime,” published in 1938, Ribeiro expounded the political bases and theories that sustained two of his grandest projects: the Laboratory for Juvenile Biology and the construction of model institution for social assistance, the City of Minors. In this text, after ruminating on the similar efforts developed in Switzerland, the United States, Argentina and Belgium, Ribeiro specifically addresses the Italian case: the “Italian campaign for the protection of maternity and infancy.” Recounting his observations from the trip and visit made in 1935 to the project initiated by Di Tullio, Ribeiro made explicit his vision and project for medical treatment as a means of crime prevention among children.

“In the one-year-old child, it is sometimes already possible to recognize the future criminal. It is in early childhood and puberty that the initial tendencies toward antisocial attitudes reveal themselves, which will then be consolidated and exacerbated, progressively, under the general influence of the environment. There exist in the children what we call “alarm signals” of such predispositions or tendencies toward crime, signals that can be of a morphological, functional or psychic nature. It is especially with regard to these last ones that mothers should be especially attentive, knowing that perverse, rebellious, violent, impulsive, indifferent, or inattentive children are those that principally need to receive special care so that they don’t ultimately become dangerous elements in society. It is, therefore, in the bosom of the informed family that true crime prevention should be initiated, with greater efficiency, by means of notions of juvenile social medicine.”

Children who were offspring of those with tuberculosis and syphilis should be kept outside the family orbit, under special care, “treated and assisted in schools or reformatories, offering fresh air, light, education, conditions for moral and physical health, one will easily secure the transformation of these vice-ridden individuals into an efficient element and one worthy of living in society.” Criticisms of hereditary alcoholism among children suggested that the family—the child’s biological and moral formation—imprinted indelible marks on the child
“delinquent” personality. Juvenile delinquency shifted to being seen, in Ribeiro’s treatment, through a “scientific and humanitarian” lens.

The draft project of the City of Minors, submitted by the minister of justice José de Carlos Macedo, was delegated to the physician Leonídio Ribeiro and the architect Adelardo Caiuby. There had to be installed in the building that had housed the old asylum for lawbreaking minor, the 15 de Novembro school, located in the suburban carioca neighborhood of Madureira.

“We had a concern to try to plan a true city in miniature, so that its population of nearly one thousand children could live as if they were in their own homes, and having, aside from this, the impression of being part of a small society. At the same time that they would coexist in each house with their companions, they would take part in classes, games, courses, sports competitions and artisanal labor (...) We adopted the system of isolated homes, in each one of which 30 children would live, along the lines advised by the Committee for the Protection of Childhood of the League of Nations.29

In the “exposition of motives” the architect Caiuby made plain his concern for “all the requirements of hygiene and comfort, with each one in his lot, in groups that would not exceed 36 children, grouping as if to form a large family under the guidance of a married couple. The home, the schools and the workshops were the only means used to regenerate these minors. Linking all of the residences to the educational centers and the field of physical exercise, we planned broad avenues. As a utopian replica of a city structured on principles of control and observation adopted by prison institutions, the City of Minors would house spaces for “leisure” and for “physical culture.” The ‘sound body’ and ‘spiritual hygiene’ would be relentlessly sought through a daily routine of educational films and sports. In the center for physical culture—“whose core would be the soccer field,” emphasized Caiuby—there were places for various games, such as darts, discus, high-jumping, swings, seesaws, without even mentioning basketball courts.30
More than a recreational city idealized for children, the institution would have as its central principle the reproduction of a familial atmosphere destined for minors. This differentiation was made explicit throughout the project and diverged from the models adopted in the philanthropic institutions. This concern to reproduce a “familial atmosphere” in the City of Minors structured the appeals for the diffusion and pedagogy of habits and values that were at the same time civic and moral:

“We have already said that the basis for the reformatory system at the City of Minors is the attempt at family life. It is the instrument with which we seek to awake in good conscience of the child the idea of a better world. Comfortable bed, clean clothing, ample food, to clearly show them the road to the school, to the office, of work, of discipline, of their transformation. She who entered the home as a veritable human rag, full of parasites, diseases, vices and revulsion, upon having contact with this new environment, will be clearly transformed into a useful element, into human value.”

The Project gave life to concerns crystallized in the Constitution of 1934 in its preoccupation with linking the family, the child, and the nation as terrain for the attention of the State. The abandoned minors deprived of their families would be treated as if they were “children” of the State and the Nation. It is precisely in the articles referring to the “family, education and culture” that statute 37 mentions in categorical and expressive terms “the moral, intellectual and physical protection of children and deprived youths, placing them under the aegis of the State, which has an undeniable obligation to provide their necessities and furthermore the pressing duty to administer prevocational and vocational education.”

Political and administrative problems prevented Ribeiro and Caiuby’s project from going beyond the plans on paper. The main criticisms of the City of Minors was that it was a very expensive project and would have unforeseeable consequences. In addition, the maintenance of the city would be too expensive when one considered the small number of children who would
be housed there. The demand was increasing and the children’s origins becoming more variable. The plan didn’t seem to give the necessary attention to the conjunctural aspects of the problem in isolating a small group of minors in a model institution. Its ‘inappropriate’ location, in the words of a director of another institute for minors—the Sete de Setembro Institute—Merton Alencar, would not allow agricultural training and would isolate the minors from all forms of social conviviality. Merton’s criticisms extended to that which seemed to be the key aspect of the adopted model: the creation of a “home-system” and the inclusion of married couples selected to administer to and care for the children. The ‘artificial home’ would encounter problems in selecting couples who would truly dedicate themselves to the juveniles, who had “an exemplary married life,” and who wanted to dedicate “all their time to the minors,” along with the salary offered not being the most inviting. Finally, Merton praised the State for having preferred to create new asylums in rural zones, which were dedicated to a more pragmatic approach: education and correction for work. Reports from the authorities responsible for administering the institutes for minors had a recurring concern: to exalt the success of the ‘treatment’ imposed on the interned children by relating it to their insertion into the labor market. Among the destinations of the minors “hired” or “placed” in the labor market were public works enterprises, hotels, armed forces, Civil Guard, Firefighters, commerce and urban sanitary services. Leonídio’s project seemed isolated in a dangerous utopia. Removed from the market, the worker trained in its workshops would be unprepared for the demands of a competitive society. But the City of Minors wasn’t the end of the utopian vision of Leonídio and other physicians and legal scholars; its realization would be directly linked—although not subordinated—to a similar initiative of a less therapeutic and a more preventative character.
The creation of a Laboratory for Juvenile Biology was conceptualized following the experience with the Laboratory of Criminal Anthropology created in the properties of the Institute of Identification in Rio de Janeiro—an organ of the Civil Police in the Federal District. It was imagined as a “technical-scientific” recourse that would help the police and the courts in the identification and classification of minors. Unlike the fate of the previous project, the Laboratory was effectively initiated thanks to the cooperation of judges in the capital city and legal strategies in terms of a singular interpretation of the Code of Minors that provided for similar prerogatives. A project of Deputy Pedro Aleixo systematized the use of technical assistants to the judges in the carrying out of tests on minors submitted to the judgement of the courts: “the examinations of mental, anthropological, psychological and pedagogical health can be processed by technicians of certified competency, designated by the Judge [who] will be responsible for inquiring after and examining the physical, mental and moral state of minors who appeared before the judge, and at the same time the social, moral and economic situation of the parents, guardians or those responsible for his/her care.”

Articles distributed in periodicals specializing in criminology demonstrated that, more and more, psychology and psychoanalysis would be invoked and “auxiliary sciences” in the detection of delinquent personalities. As emphasized by Judge Burle de Figueiredo—one of the masterminds of the Laboratory of Juvenile Biology—it was not always the case that the figure of the abandoned minor corresponded to the lawbreaking minor. How could they differentiate small transgressions from precocious delinquency? Studying material collected by the Service of Ortofrenia and Hygiene, through an analysis of some cases, the physician and anthropologist Artur Ramos called attention to the fact that practices such as theft and lying in children did not have the same connotation as it had when practiced by adults.
constituted what he called a “pre-moral phase.” Therefore, the causes of these apparent “infractions” could be connected to ‘poverty,’ ‘loss or absence of love,’ and ‘moral abandonment’ which, invariably, was related to the ‘sexual functions.’ However, his study would not limit itself to the so-called ‘infractors’ and ‘abandoned minors’; Ramos observed this type of practice in 73% of “children with a normal intellectual level.” The problem did not have biological or particular hereditary causes, but nonetheless it was certain that the family setting was decisive in the way that these children had their ‘small infractions’ treated.\(^{35}\) Particularly in the area of education, the presence of Artur Ramos as head of the Service of Ortofrenia of the Federal District would give a major incentive to research into the area of applied psychology for school instruction, complementing the first actually anthropometric studies initiated by Fróes da Fonseca, Bastos de Avilla and Maria Júlia Pourchet. Studies on nutrition and tests of knowledge were implemented with the purpose of collecting differential responses to pedagogical stimuli. The idea that certain groups of children carried within them relevant racial and ethnic variations can be detected in the attention given to the ‘black child’ and to the ‘children of Jews.’\(^{36}\)

With this purpose in mind the Laboratory of Infantile Biology was finally inaugurated as an agency of the Children’s Tribunal in the Federal District in 1936. It was intended for the thorough study, from a “medical and anthropological” perspective, of abandoned and delinquent minors “with the objective of determining the physical and mental causes of juvenile criminality in Brazil.”\(^{37}\) Its installation was preceded by discussions that reveal what would serve as their ‘mirrors.’ For Leonídio Ribeiro, that ideal was not only deeply desired but also compared to other institutions and initiatives. There, assistance did not consist of a philanthropic effort, but of one that was preventive and eugenic in character.

“Social assistance in its fascist conception fundamentally diverges from our way of understanding charity. It does not concern itself there with protecting the interests of a
man, in isolation, because everyone always looks for something higher, for the common good, which is the health of children and mothers. To obtain this desired end, only one sure recourse has been found, and that is a broad campaign of social assistance, carried out through the action of a phalanx of educators and doctors. The ‘Italian Campaign for the Protection of Maternity and the Child’ does not concern itself with the momentary relief of suffering in the poor and deprived classes, because it envisions a vast program that is initiated when the child is still in its mother’s womb, and which will only conclude when the individual has attained complete physical development, to be transformed into a man and, what is more, a citizen, who has the moral and physical conditions to defend the family and the fatherland well.”

Such were the data that Leonídio imagined could be precociously detected among ‘abandoned children’ and ‘lawbreaking minors’: “alarm signals’ of such predispositions, that could be of a morphological, functional or psychic nature.” To the juvenile judge, José Burle de Figueiredo, fell the task of giving juridical and administrative life to the institution, and to Leonídio, the direction of the new Laboratory. A year after it was installed, the director gave an account of the first data collected. In that year 700 children were examined. Among the first 200, Leonídio observed, “there wasn’t a single one that was completely sound, so riddled were they with diseases such as tuberculosis, syphilis, worms and psychological disturbances of every sort.” Due to this, the first measure to be taken after minors were detained—the exam—should be followed up with medical, educational, and job guidance. Before being sent to ‘educational’ institutions, the minors should be subjected to various tests and specialized exams, preceded by a detailed process of identification. This material would constitute the card that would accompany them in their pilgrimage through the rehabilitation services.

In this project Leonídio broadened his interests and concerns with respect to prevention and recidivism. For this end he stressed the need for psychological analyses and for family supports, as mechanisms that would re-orient the minors, distancing them from ‘delinquency’ without loss of their freedom. Judge Burle de Figueiredo contended that the
Laboratory should operate ‘cleanly and impartially’ and not according to the orientation of a specific medical-legal ‘school,’ given that both social and ‘hereditary’ causes would be associated with the majority of cases studied. He prescribed, therefore, that its organization be subdivided into three sections. The first, for anthropology, would be intended for “biological and medical research, investigations into the influence of organic and constitutional factors, predispositions, attitudes and tendencies, with installations for identification and anthropometry.”

In the second section, the children should be subjected to psychotechnic and psychological exams, “for the study of psychological phenomena of childhood and adolescence, and the determination of their job aptitude.” Finally, there would be the sociology section, encompassing “investigation and research into the social and environmental causes of the conduct of problem-children.” Aside from its “original function”—prevention—the Laboratory thus conceived an integralized assistance as a result of medical evaluation. In 1938 the new director of the Laboratory reported a series of measures to the Minister of Justice that were intended to simplify what he called the “trajectory” of the minors through the institution. Once they had been sent to the Juvenile Court, whether coming from the streets or other asylums, the children should be subjected to evaluation and classification by the Laboratory’s technicians, seeking a “medical-psychiatric-pedagogical-social diagnosis” with “indications for treatment, instruction and employment appropriate for each case.” The result would be described on a card that would accompany the minor to whatever institution he/she would be sent.

“for each minor…a card will be organized with the following data: name, parentage, age, color, nationality and entry date. With this card the minor would go to the Identification Chamber. From there he/she would go on to the Office of Social Assistance. The latter would collect information on the life of the minor, hereditary antecedents, prenatal conditions, nursing, teething, walking, language acquisition, illnesses, schooling, work
conditions, conduct on the job, wages, family make-up as well as its respective sanitary and economic situation.”

Reflecting the gap between the plans and the actual routine of the institution, a complex set of political pressures, criticisms and protests sharply reduced its desired range of activity. Instead of an auxiliary organ for the Court’s decisions, it became an appendage of an already existing institution as well as a target of denunciations about mistreatment and administrative chaos. Once placed within the Sete de Setembro Institute, the Laboratory lost its centralizing character and its activities declined in visibility. Faced with a diminished number of reports remitted to the tribunal, the judges could do little due to the lack of resources. As Alencar observes in the 1937 Report on Activities, “limiting its function of indicating to the Juvenile Court the best course to be followed for each minor examined, its recommendations could not be carried out due to the simple fact that the said Court does not have at its disposition a hospital, a vacation colony, or even establishments offering specialized instruction. Thus failing in its practical objectives, the Laboratory will be transformed into a purely scientific research institute, manifesting the paradox of subordinating an organization of this type to the Ministry of Justice and not to the Ministry of Education, as would make more sense.” Alencar concludes the report by recognizing the relevance of this initiative that “has received applause from national and foreign specialists that have visited it, as well as the Laboratory being awarded, in a message from the his excellency the President of the Republic, the classification of ‘model institution of its type.’” Even after having its functions restricted, it sought to create, with the aid of the Ministry of Education, a “Center of Euphrenia” and a “class of abnormal children” based on that experience.
The conditions for the rehabilitation of the Sete de Setembro Institute and for the accompanying medical and psychological work of the LBI cannot be gauged exclusively from the articles and reports published by its directors.\textsuperscript{45} In a memo directed to the Minister of Justice, Francisco Campos, the institute’s director informed him of a serious incident that had occurred on the grounds of the institution. The ‘minor’ Alcides “interned here for the second time (…) and who has been given the diagnosis of epilepsy in work-up no. 1304 of the Juvenile Biological Laboratory, in an unforeseeable impulse, even after he had been appropriately medicated and subject to the vigilance of a direct attendant (…) and the inspector of students (…) tossed his colleague Wilson, age 8, from the veranda of the infirmary to the floor of the patio, then threw himself over as well. Although medical help arrived immediately, Wilson died and Alcides was interned in a psychiatric hospital. In the letter, the Director’s main concern was to attest to the “affection” and urgent care given to the two children, as well as, of course, the benevolent action of the institution, which agreed to pay all the expenses of the funeral for the dead minor.\textsuperscript{46} In an evaluation containing detailed data on the high cost and low ‘productivity’ of the Laboratory, Judge Sabóia Lima criticized the scope and expense of a project guided by a “theoretical” plan whose results were merely statistical. He suggested that its budget be invested in agricultural colonies and vocational institutes.

Finally, within this campaign for surveillance/discipline, one can perceive some issues that had the power to produce a synthetic movement of regeneration of the “Brazilian child,” continually reactivated in particular contexts, thanks to the polyvalence and authority of its promoters, and the urgency of their debate in a moment of renewed nationalist posturing. I am speaking of eugenics and of the attempts to conceptualize, classify and understand the body and the personality of minors that, due to their social condition and biological constitution,
would pollute the formation of the ‘Brazilian race.’ The ‘fabric’ that resulted from that intersection of ideas, discourses and practices, is not something that was manifested exclusively in the mechanisms of police and judicial control. Its existence was more powerful on the planes where it crystallized: in the models of representation, in the plans aborted by administrative incompetency, in the homogenizing ideals of national sentiment—inclusive and selective—and in the extolling of the enlightened powers of science. Even so, its presence was not limited to the plane of representations. That analytical perspective is useful because it permits us to perceive a common image in these efforts in the field of prevention of juvenile criminality, one that is imprecisely shared, but intelligible in all the forms of interlocution—that of the (re)construction of the nation.

Concluding remarks: the body of the nation

A well-known toy factory founded in Brazil in 1937—Estrela—would definitively popularize the celebration of the “day of the child” in 1960 by promoting a contest entitled “The Week of the Healthy Baby.” Although the day of the child had become an official holiday in 1924 under the influence of doctors and eugenic educators, it is precisely in the 1930s that a strange symbiosis took place between the question of childhood and the question of the nation, seen within a biological focus. Initially dedicated to the festivities to commemorate the discovery of America, the 12th of October came to combine two important civic celebrations: the Day of the Race [Raça] and the Day of the Child. Beyond the obvious interpretations regarding the semantic possibilities posed by the simultaneity of these events, there is much left to explore about the biologizing representation of “impoverished youth” in Brazil. Upon commemorating
the day of the child in 1936, the São Paulo police officer Carvalho Franco exalted the values of the “Brazilian race,” stressing the need for an pedagogy of the “healthy body”: “what we want to cultivate is a physically and spiritually balanced race through a cultural/physical method that is rich in its moral principles.”

In spite of its utopian character, the experiments with correction and cure glimpsed by the doctors, jurists and anthropologists influenced by biotypology and by eugenics during the 1930s in Brazil who I described in this essay ended up manifesting themselves in other spheres of representation with regard to the contours, nature, appearance of the body of individuals—nationals—and their links with the body of the nation. The historian Alcir Lenharo made reference to the construction of a national vision founded especially on physical-moral values. For him the metaphors of blood and the body, utilized in texts and official pronouncements, were evidence of an attempt to reinforce an image in which the national order would only be possible through a movement of integralization. The body/homeland is the result of a fusion whose overall harmony depends on the contribution and organization of the parts. The blood/people that flows in this body is also the sum of the various ‘elements.’

The metaphor of blood has important implications for understanding the experiments described here because it stitches a disciplinary and aesthetic ideal on the body, at the same time that it makes explicit how this arrangement is linked to notions of health and illness. The diseased body is the body that is not suited for labor. The blood that flows in it, in its turn, should obey a movement of circulation and renovation: a regenerative circuit. This regeneration is particularly effective in bodies that, although innocent, foretell the pernicious action of degenerative pathologies: children. For this, there are certain fluids that are desirable as their formative elements, those that in the words of Oliveira Vianna contain elements of “solubility.”
Or, to return to Afrânio Peixoto’s metaphor, fluids that can integrate themselves into the “national plasma.” The formative ‘elements’ of the nation should merge so as to constitute a single blood/people.⁵⁰

Alcir Lenharo also produced a reading that placed in relief the singular character of that chemical that fertilizes, generates and establishes the Nation, with comparisons to other qualities attributed to blood: “blood-semen, principle of life. Blood-sickness, carrier of destruction and of shame, menace of death. Collective blood—signal of the possibility of violence. Healthy flood, healthy nationality, healthy worker. Pure blood, pure race. Blood and social menace: the same dreadful menace as the surreptitious invasion of venereal diseases that circulates through political discourse, always to evoke a danger of infiltration by ‘ideological and racial absesses’ in the nation’s body (...) that could potentially be an infiltrating element to corrode the health of the nation. In that case, blood is deployed as a scientific instrument; the biological gains broad ascendance over the psychological, in such a way as to determine the moral and cultural integrity of the citizen. Blood the realm of race.”⁵¹ But rather than being property of each ‘element,’ purity is the result of a certain type of mixture and of integralization. Purity is above all aesthetic and eugenic. The national project implies an aesthetic subversion and should alter the nature of each ‘element.’ Overall, it implies an extreme parsimony with regard to the contributions [dosages] of different ‘bloods.’

The sickness and the flaws of heredity can be perfectly identified in the discourse that criminalized certain habits. If on the one hand there is an explicitly biologizing dimension, on the other hand it is disseminated by the social corpus and permits ‘sociological’ explanations. As long as that logic might be raised to the level of legal formulations, it persists as a universal ideal, molded in a vision of the nation as a ‘republic of citizens.’ At the same time, habits are
what transforms individuals into citizens. No less marred by contradictions, they constitute two distinct visions on which rest the legal apparatuses that seek to account for them, whether of citizens or of individuals. Still exploiting the quotation from Lenharo, it is possible for us to imagine that the salubrity of blood and semen—the renovated propagation—should obey a set of norms and prescriptions as to the ‘conduct’ of individuals. The eugenicist propaganda in Brazil teaches us to see both the physical-moral illnesses and the social ones as susceptible to cure. The ‘social cure’ transforms sick persons into workers, the necessary condition for access to the full enjoyment of ‘citizenship.’ The ‘medical cure’ produces, through research, description and identification, a biotypological map. From there it thus proceeds to a minute process of description of bodies, measuring the parts, describing the internal process of secretion and production of hormones, so as to compare, produce tables and graphs. Individualization thus becomes the reverse of ‘citizenization.’"52 While the former tends to break away from the chains of serialization, from equality and from homogenization, ‘humanizing’ treatment and its conception, the latter must transcend the particularisms, the human, biological and cultural vicissitudes, and broaden its scope of vision. Through an approach that increasingly ‘humanizes’ legislation, it succeeds in drawing the State and the individual closer in order to produce the sacralization. What results from this ‘encounter’ mediated by specific laws is a strong people and a strong nation. The idea amounts to reverting to the universalizing pretense of liberal discourse that permits individuals to be atomized in a society split into classes of appropriate types, of social nature and of distinct biologies, and to treat the differences as they present themselves. Or rather, to treat differently those who are different, those who have been degraded by the State, by atavistic constitutions, by misery and by idleness.
NOTES

1 Piragibe, Vicente.1938 *Infância Abandonada e Delinquente*. Arquivos de Medicina Legal e Identificação 8: 119-128, p.128.


8 Ver, por exemplo, os trabalhos de Alfredo Russel, *Penas de educação, menores criminosos e estabelecimentos onde devem cumprir pena* (Conferência realizada em 13 de setembro, Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil, 1916. s/e), e do juiz Sabóia Lima, titular do Juizado de Menores do RJ nos anos 20 e 30(entre eles, por exemplo, *A Infância Desamparada*, 1939).

9 Moraes, Evaristo de. *O testemunho infantil e juvenil perante a justiça (tema official)*, p.9.

10 Idem.

11 Na documentação do Gabinete de Identificação e Estatística da Polícia Civil do Distrito Federal mantida pelo Arquivo Nacional há, desde o início do século, uma série de "mapas da movimentação semanal do gabinete" nos quais menores são classificados por gênero e idade. Ver, por exemplo, "Relação dos menores remetidos para essa repartição por efeito da circular nº 9109 de 7 de dezembro de 1905". Arquivo Nacional, Ministério da Justiça e dos Negócios Interniores(agona em diante AN,MJNI), GIFI 6c 180.


14 Peixoto, Afrânio. *Clima e Saúde - introdução bio-geográfica a Civilização brasileira.*


17 Vianna, Adriana de Resende.1999 *O mal que se advinha: polícia e menoridade no Rio de Janeiro, 1910-1920*


21 Problemas de saúde advindos da entrada precoce no mercado de trabalho, cita trabalhos de Bastos d’Ávila, Jansen de Melo e Manoel Ferreira sobre comparação entre dados antropométricos realizados em crianças e adolescentes no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos (60-1).


26 Se para o segundo elemento, inúmeros estudos, se não enfrentaram propositivamente as imagens racializadas da nação, ao menos se debruçaram numa leitura crítica da forma através da qual elas aparecem no pensamento social ou na tradição literária, os parcos estudos sobre as utopias e projetos em torno de um *Brasil Moderno* pouco ou nehuma atenção deram a tais vínculos. A literatura sobre o assunto e temáticas conexas no plano da produção literária e do ensaísmo é extensa. Me limitaria a chamar atenção apenas às suas mais significativas e mais recentes excessões. Entre estas estão, por exemplo, o seminal e já clássico *Literatura como Missão*, de Nicolau Sevcenko; *A Belle Epoque Tropica*, de Jeffrey D. Needell; e a coletânea


28 Ribeiro, Leonídio. 1938 A Criança e o Crime. Arquivos de Medicina Legal e Identificação 8: XXXVI-LIX, p. XL. Depois de visitar instituições correcionais, psiquiátricas e de assistência aos menores na Itália e em São Paulo, Leonídio Ribeiro reconhece o exemplo paulistano que "convém aos interesses do Brasil e de nossa raça". Vale notar que embora a influência italiana tenha moldado de forma definitiva o projeto em questão, o debate sobre os modelos mais apropriados de instituição para o 'tratamento' de menores foi mais abrangente. Durante os primeiros anos da República outros modelos foram discutidos. Em 1930 o governo federal autorizou o Juíz de Menores J. C. Mello Mattos a viajar para os Estados Unidos [a fim de] visitar estabelecimento de menores abandonados. AN, MJNI, GIFI 4a 44.


30 Como modelo de implantação de atividades de lazer previa-se a construção de estádios e cinemas: "Como diversões educativas, projectamos um cinema para os menores e um casino para os funcionários. O cinema junto ao campo de esportes e o casino junto a administração". In Caiuby, Adelardo. 1938 Exposição feita pelo arquiteto A. Caiuby, p. 320.


33 AN, MJNI, Escola Quinze de Novembro. Relação de alunos que tiveram colocação de 1932 à 1938. Rio de Janeiro, 1 de agosto de 1938, Caixa 361.

34 Lei 65, de 13/6/1935 - artigo 3º ao artigo 147 do Código de Menores, citado em AN, MJNI, Relatório da Diretoria Geral de Contabilidade, Despesas com Assistência aos Menores, Caixa 370.

35 O 'sentimento de culpa e inferioridade', a punição infringida, a falta de afeto e, enfim as relações da criança com seus pais, bem como com a escola, atuavam como um elemento 'desencadeador' de distúrbios psíquicos e comportais. Ramos estava particularmente preocupado não exatamente com o 'delito' praticado por crianças, mas com seus mecanismos de correcção: "era preciso esclarecer e advertir pais e professores acerca das distinções entre atos 'pré-morais' e 'pré-criminais". Ramos, Artur. "A pré-delinquência infantil: os furtos na idade escolar". Arquivos de Medicina Legal e do gabinete de Identificação, 9(17):450-474, 1939.


37 Ribeiro, Leonídio. 1938 A Criança e o Crime. Arquivos de Medicina Legal e Identificação 8: XXXVI-LIX, p. LIV.
Idem, p. XXXVIII.


Segundo as informações enviadas ao ministério da justiça em 1937 o volume de menores que passaram pela instituição chegou a 255. Entre eles “23,93% de caráter bom, 8,63% caráter instável, 1,96%mendicantes, 2,74%mítômanos, 2,34% perversos, 6,27%vadios, 1,17% alcoolatras”. AN, MJNI. Instituto Sete de Setembro - Relatório Anual.


52 Termo cunhado por Luiz Fernando Dias Duarte em ‘Vicissitudes e limites à cidadania nas classes populares brasileiras’ *Revista Brasileira de Ciências Sociais*, 22(8):5-19.