

Time gazettes: history records?

Vintist press' contributions to the semantics of historical times on the context of Brazil's Independence

Gacetas del tiempo: ¿documentos para la historia? Las contribuciones de la prensa vintista para la semántica de los tiempos históricos en el contexto de la independencia de Brasil / Gazetas do tempo: documentos para a história? As contribuições da imprensa vintista à semântica dos tempos históricos no contexto da Independência

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the contributions of the vintist press on the conception of possible Brazils at the dawn of the 19th century. It questions the construction of a semantics of historical times in the discourses conveyed by the newspapers such as the *Astro da Lusitânia* and the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, which evoked figurations of the past to approach the present, as true potency launched on the uncertain future.

Keywords: Brazil's Independence; press' history; theories of history; XIX century; conceptual history.

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza las aportaciones de la prensa vintista a la concepción del Brasil posible en los albores del siglo XIX. Cuestiona la construcción de una semántica de los tiempos históricos en los discursos transmitidos por periódicos como *Astro da Lusitânia* y *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, que evocaban figuraciones del pasado para acercarse al presente, como verdaderas potencias lanzadas sobre el incierto futuro.

Palabras clave: Independencia del Brasil; historia de la prensa; teorías de la historia; siglo XIX; historia de los conceptos.

RESUMO

O artigo analisa as contribuições da imprensa vintista para a concepção dos Brasis possíveis na aurora do Oitocentos. Interroga-se a construção de uma semântica dos tempos históricos nos discursos veiculados por jornais como o *Astro da Lusitânia* e o *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* que evocaram figurações do passado para abordar o presente, como verdadeiras potências lançadas sobre o futuro incerto.

Palavras-chave: processo de Independência; história da imprensa; teorias da história; século XIX; história dos conceitos.

Introduction

In the first half of the 19th century, Brazil was still to be built, either as an independent state or as a national community; unitary or diverse, federalist or centralizing imperial power, of a civilizing process. In this sense, there is a prolific debate about the extent of the influence of new European political ideas and technologies on the paths, not only of Brazilian political emancipation, but that of the whole American continent, if not the entire Western civilization.¹ Thus, we intend to weave a brief reflection based on the transdisciplinarity that, from the philosophies of history, also travels the anthropological path of theories to the imaginary, in order to ensure a greater understanding to the historical time dynamics in the place and time in which they are constructed: in the mediation between the individuals and the social, political and cultural context that surrounds them. Marco Morel recommends caution regarding this explanatory scheme. According to the author, interpretations of contemporaries to those times, events and pamphlet-style newspapers “could be polysemic”, not linear or evolutionary (Morel apud Luca; Martins, 2008, p. 37). Without disagreeing with his thesis that it is necessary to relativise the overvaluation of the performance of reading on historical agents, let us resume his interrogation of the newspapers’ own influence in the dynamics of the constitution of independent Brazil: “would there be, then, that univocal and almost immediate relation (that is, with *no mediations*) between Enlightenment, native elites and independence?” (p. 38, emphasis added). After all, what was the role of the printing press on the formation of the idea of independent Brazil?

We would like to answer it not with our words, but with those of José Antônio da Cruz Ferreira Tezo, henceforth cited as Father Tezinho,² and Antônio Marques da Costa Soares, both respectively editor and director to the newspaper called *O Conciliador do Maranhão*, which ran through the streets of São Luís and beyond, from April 1821 to July 1823 (Pinheiro, 2016, p. 103).

The great political events of nations, which must one day enter the pages of History, must be minuted by contemporary and disinterested witnesses, so that Posterity

1 We talk about names like Marshall McLuhan, Junger Habermas and Peter Burke in works such as *The Gutenberg Galaxy*, *Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* and *A Social History of the Media*, among others.

2 Like many Brazilian priests at that time, Father José Antônio da Cruz Ferreira Tezo (known then as Father Tezinho) accumulated several professions besides ecclesiastical, being a merchant, owner of an apothecary where he sold the loose editions and subscriptions of the newspaper. He was, later, elected deputy for the second legislature to the Constituent Cortes of 1820, for the Caxias’ district, where he enjoyed great influence due to the publication he headed (Elyel, 2022, p. 53).

may evaluate the merit or demerit of their collaborators [...]. But as these [the Historians], even though they are contemporaries of the facts, cannot witness them in all the territory of the Nation whose history they write, they lack documents more truthful than those of a tradition almost always suspect. And this is one of the useful purposes of newspapers. Another even more essential one is that of acting as mediators between the Governments and the Peoples, the *maximé* in the extraordinary crises which always give rise to changes in the political system of a State. By a newspaper the people know the steps that governments follow to rule them; and these are instructed on the feelings with which those look at their deliberations.³

What nation is this, whose history Father Tezinho proposes to minute from a newspaper launched in São Luís do Maranhão? What history is this? What tradition? What mediation? Was their aim in writing to mediate the relationship between “the Governments and the Peoples”? Or do they seek to construct senses of government and people in front of these forces, sometimes antagonistic in our history, by “instructing” each one of them to the feelings and deeds of the other? For if “the printed papers travelled, crossed seas and ‘made travel’ their readers” (Morel, 2008, p. 38) not only by the space made smaller and smaller between regions, continents, seas and oceans, but also by the very dimensions of time, as the passage above begins illustrating so well – of editors aware that they were writing not only for the present, but also legating their words to the future –,⁴ what kind of process goes unnoticed when we look at the reduction of simplistic approaches concomitant not only to Independence, but also to the press, not only as a tool to transmit the political ideals of a literate elite, but as a constitutive element of a very complex social and temporal dynamic, which was fed by the convergence “between oral and written expressions, between literate and illiterate cultures” (p. 39)?

Evidence of this can also be found in *Às armas, cidadãos! Panfletos manuscritos da Independência do Brasil*, a collaboration between José Murilo de Carvalho, Lúcia Bastos and Marcello Basile (2012), presenting a rare and representative collection stored in the Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty. Originating from Rio de Janeiro, but also from Bahia and Portugal, these “little papers”

3 O *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 1, n. 1, Apr. 15th, 1821.

4 Curiously it would take more than 150 years until, in the words of Tânia Reina de Luca, “the number of works that used newspapers and magazines as a source for the knowledge of the history of Brazil” started to grow, even though it was already recognised, along the 20th century, the need to write the history of the press, “it was reluctant to mobilise them [newspapers and magazines] for the writing of History through the press” (Luca; Martins, 2008, p. 111, emphasis added).

[“papelinhos”] (as the authors called them) suggest that the debates concerning the independence process then overflowed from the literate circles, from the elites holding economic and political power to exercise any kind of interdiction to the discourse, also penetrating other media and even presenting spelling mistakes, in a simpler style than the printed one: “They used direct and cutting sentences, intended to cause impact on the reader or listener and to facilitate the understanding of the message” (Carvalho et al., 2012, p. 24).

Gazettes of the time

Seven months after inaugurating the *Conciliador do Maranhão* with his pertinent reflections on the usefulness of the printed papers for the political life of any nation “where liberal ideas are admissible”⁵ and also for History, it would be up to the press to minute the great events of the nation, that is, to write “in small print and in a hurry to be later slowly transcribed in larger print” (Bluteau, 1712, p. 500) by the historian. According to Father Tezinho’s understanding, it was up to the press to register the successes and failures of that time to future generations. He claimed that “the newspapers or gazettes of the time were documents for history and that the vote of a credited writer seduces posterity”.⁶

In that case, the clergyman was referring to Hipólito da Costa’s interpretation in his *Correio Braziliense*, about what happened in São Luís at the time of Maranhão’s adhesion to the constitutional cause and the acclamation of Governor Bernardo da Silveira as head of the province’s provisional government in detriment to the election of a junta defended by a minority in the city council at the rise of that year 1821. Nevertheless, what draws attention in this excerpt is the status conferred by the priest to newspapers, especially in a period marked by historiographical trends contrary to those asserted by him. Was the priest criticizing the “almost always suspicious tradition”⁷ of the Enlightenment historians who disregarded the ancient and medieval historiography in favour of their own history of the scientific spirit, considering “modern times as the only rational ones in history” (Meneguello, 1997, p. 68)? A history that was thought as apart from superstitions, the construction of heroes and the aggrandizement of battles - as Tezinho himself does when reproducing

5 O *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 1, n. 1, Apr. 15th, 1821.

6 O *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 1, n. 40, Nov. 28th, 1821.

7 O *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 1, n. 1, Apr. 15th, 1821.

a proclamation by Major Rodrigo Pizarro, exalting the portuguese founding myth of the Ourique's Battle and the heroic figure of Afonso Henriques, with his additions as an observer of the historical process underway in Maranhão, as we shall see later on. Was he criticizing that history made *a priori*, as “when Kant proposes a *nature's plan* organizing and guiding history” (Menezes apud Kant, 2010, p. 105, emphasis in original)? Was he criticizing, as Marc Bloch would do more than a century later, the scholars “who have no taste for looking around them neither at men, nor at things, nor at events” (Bloch, 2009, p. 66)?

Despite a letter from the Provisional Junta that governed Maranhão's province back in 1823 telling us that, among other possessions, Father Tezinho had exactly 416 books in his private library (As Juntas..., 1973), we have no documentary evidence that he had contact with the writings of Kant and Voltaire concerning the course of history, nor it is likely that he was reading Hegelian philosophy of history when Hegel himself was still delivering his lectures at the University of Berlin on the “only thought that philosophy brings to the treatment of history is the simple concept of Reason” (Hegel, 2012, p. 55). Even so, José Antônio da Cruz Ferreira Tezo did not seem to completely reject Enlightenment methods, since he was concerned with the importance of recording factual testimonies (minuting the great events of the nation, i.e., writing “in small print and in haste to be later slowed down in larger print” (Bluteau, 1712, p. 500). The aim was to bequeath these factual testimonies to historians so that they could interpret and criticise them, assessing “the merit or demerit of their collaborators; taking advantage of some lessons of virtue and heroism to imitate them, and knowing of the crimes of vileness of others to detest them”.⁸ However, as the excerpt itself indicates, the pedagogical character of the story that Tezinho wanted to sketch escaped any definitive classification. On one hand, he valued the testimony of his own observation of the facts, but he also opened himself – and the vehicle he wrote – to all inhabitants of that province, who, “animated by the same principles [of impartiality, frankness, and truth], want to tell us everything they know about the facts”.⁹ On the other hand, he judged the didactic character of his writings and of history itself to be imperative, departing precisely from the philosophical tradition - responsible for breaking with the pedagogical nature of the previous school - which he seemed to criticize, in order to place himself in favor of the history as *magistra vitae* (Koselleck, 2006, p. 41).

8 O *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 1, n. 1, Apr. 15th, 1821.

9 O *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 1, n. 1, Apr. 15th, 1821.

Seeking to define his approach once and for all, therefore – as well as any tradition he might profess – would be to limit it, unless we think not only of Tezinho, but also of other editors from that time, such as Joaquim Maria Alves Sinval, of the *Astro da Lusitânia*, or Zeferino Vito de Meirelles, of the *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, among so many other thinking individuals who wove in the pages of the press this plot, as the protagonists of the Kafkaesque tale that Hannah Arendt uses to illustrate that “only insofar as he thinks, that is, insofar as he is timeless [. ...], man in the full reality of his concrete being lives in this temporal gap between the past and the future” (Arendt, 2016, p. 39). Arendt indicates as one of these men Alexis de Tocqueville in his *On Democracy in America*, himself contemporary of José Antônio Ferreira and other Luso-Brazilian writers. And the fact that they were contemporaries reinforces the impression we have, seeing them equally situated in this cognitive fissure, although each case in the Luso-Brazilian universe had its own particularities, inherent to the dynamics of this peripheral region both in space and in historical time circumscribed to Western civilization.

We do not consider this own dynamic to have a pejorative sense, of backwardness before “the ‘entirely new’ world” and its need for “a ‘new political science’” (Hartog, 2015, p. 129). José Antônio da Cruz Ferreira Tezo’s way of perceiving and interpreting the historian’s sources, historical time and the making of historiography detaches from the methodical tradition that would become hegemonic in the nineteenth century. Differently from the Father’s expectation, newspapers were relegated to the category of supporting actors whose records were understood to be fragmentary and even distorted to the detriment of official documents which, in the methodic historiographical perspective, excelled in “objectivity, neutrality, trustworthiness, credibility, besides being sufficiently distanced from their own time” (Luca, 2008, p. 112). And, even if the *Annales* revolution, a century later, had broken with this tradition, the “minutes of Father Tezinho”, as newspapers and magazines would be more credited as historical sources, in Brazil, only in the mid 1970s.

Thus, we resume the question made previously: what is this History claimed not only by the editors of *Conciliador*, but also of the other newspapers produced in Brazil in this period? Written by men as disparate as two Maranhão’s officials in the service of an absolutist government that was staggering down a precipice and a liberal Luso-Fluminense professional, it is impregnated, nevertheless, with classical metaphors and references to the Enlightenment that almost obscure the view of something even more ingrained in the documentary corpus. Namely, notions of what to do and of the time to be that directly refer to

historical time as “a magnitude that changes with history, and whose modification can be deduced from the variable coordination between experience and expectation” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 309). A time that moves in its own way, seeing an expanding horizon of expectations to which past experiences began to no longer serve as a macrosocial model, although they were evoked – and even proposed, in a possible future scenario – to be imitated or detested. In short, a historical time that is culturally constructed, and that, “in each epoch, determines a specific mode of relationship between what is already known and experienced as past and the possibilities that are launched to the future as horizon of expectations” (Jasmin apud Koselleck, 2006, p. 9).

Attending to the testimony bequeathed by the newspapers published in Portugal and Brazil between 1821 and 1823 it is easier to understand the dynamics of this relationship, when, for example, among 283 occurrences in the *Astro da Lusitânia*, the keyword “history” is related 239 times to meanings that evoke the space of experience, not only of the Luso-Brazilian circumstantial universe, as when stating to be “evident in the face of our ancient History that our elders reserved to themselves the important right to impose taxes”;¹⁰ but also Western, when conjuring the most diverse figures and regions of history to attribute to the experience a character not only didactic, but also of “universal teacher of men”.¹¹

After a detailed survey of the term history in the referred periodicals, constituted by a first step of research, reading and classification of the keyword “history” in the search engine on the Biblioteca Nacional’s digital hemeroteca, we recognize the conceptions of history conveyed in the newspapers, classified in four distinct senses: literary (referring to the most singular and comprehensive use of the term), traditional (of the events and characters immortalised in the pantheon of memory, whether for their merits or defects), didactic (which carries in its core the lessons of the past) and progressive (tied, in one way or another, to the idea of the future, or of novelty, of lack of precedent in certain acts). Respectively, the first three classifications relate directly to senses that evoke the space of experience, understood as “the current past, the one in which events have been incorporated and can still be remembered” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 309) while the last one corresponds to senses imbricated in the horizon of expectations as proposed by Koselleck.

10 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 1, n. 1, Oct. 30th, 1820.

11 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 3, n. 138, Aug. 1st, 1822.

Arguing about the degeneration of those who have the power, the author to the *Astro da Lusitânia*, Joaquim Maria Alves Sinval postulated in November 1820 that “the experience and the History of all ancient and modern Peoples show us that the Supreme Power is more proper to corrupt than to form the heart and the spirit”.¹² Consonant, in form, to the *Astro* was João Soares Lisboa in his *Correio do Rio de Janeiro*, when stressing that “the absolute Monarchy” would be:

An evil of its nature, and it only ceases to be so by a rare and short accident. Sad truth, which the history of all peoples and the experience of all times opposes to the imprudence of those doctrines where the praise of the past betrays the pretensions of the future”.¹³

However, a closer look will soon reveal that Silva Lisboa carried in *Correio do Rio*'s discourse ‘the pretensions of the future’, expectations which, in this case, were obstructed more by the ‘praise of the past’ than by using it as a model. In short, past experience was beginning to be disassociated from future expectations and, more than that, was proving to be an obstacle, a boulder in the path of “civilization and its march”.¹⁴

The angel of progress

Ironically, *Semanário Cívico* from Bahia highlighted this march of the civilization only once in its editions, and when it did, it was by transcribing a Spanish periodical disapproving of Mexican independence. With his back to the future of independence, in its edition n. 49, from January 31st, 1822, the editor in charge of Bahia's newspaper, Joaquim José da Silva Maia, reproduced a speech taken from *El Universal* from Madrid, which, in its edition n. 216, of August 4th from the previous year, commented on the following to the emancipation process of New Spain.

The revolution in New Spain, whether one observes it in its origin, its course, or analyses it in its present reaction, is an inconceivable phenomenon in politics,

12 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 1, n. 4, Nov. 6th, 1820.

13 *Correio do Rio de Janeiro*, year 1, n. 2, Apr. 11th, 1822.

14 *Correio do Rio de Janeiro*, year 1, n. 35, May 21st, 1822.

which is ignorant of the history of nations. It is not the efforts of peoples resisting slavery, nor the heroic impulses of oppression, less the frank and generous movement of legal freedom and individual security. It is a retrograde step in the march that the human race follows. It is a contradiction of the luminous principles which philosophy has spread throughout the universe. It is an impotent but voluntary obstacle to the progress of the century. It is, finally, a direct contact to make New Spain a slave or dependent on some foreign power.¹⁵

A comparison between the original speech (found in the Biblioteca Digital Hispânica) and Silva Maia's translation revealed that there are no profound alterations made by the Bahian writer, except for a few highlights.¹⁶ The most noteworthy of these references is to the "premature emancipation" and the "independence" of New Spain, painted by the Iberian writer as the uprooting of the "*tierna criatura del regazo amoroso de la madre que á sus pechos lo sustenta*".¹⁷ Added to the aforementioned excerpt, however, one can note, in addition to Silva Maia's defense of the premature state of the colonies of the New World – Spanish and Portuguese –, so that they aim to march with their own forces towards civilization, a correlation in itself between the progressive and linear conception of the human race in the Enlightenment. This becomes crystal clear when, among other passages, we can observe the revolutionary movements of the Americas described as "the regression of the Enlightenment, the return of the barbarian centuries",¹⁸ possibly in relation to the pre-Columbian period. Thus, they presented an authentic conception at their core, seeking to adapt tradition, to drag it along and balance it as they could in the increasingly larger gap – although not entirely unmanageable – between the weight and security conferred by the authority embodied in experience and the guiding thread of historical continuity itself. However, if, in *Between Past and Future*, Hannah Arendt is right in arguing that "the destructive distortions of tradition have all

15 *Semanário Cívico*, year 2, n. 49, Jan. 31st, 1822.

16 For comparison, here it follows the original speech in Spanish: "*La revolución de Nueva España, ora se observe en su origen, ora se siga en su curso, ora se analice en la actual reaccion, es un fenómeno inconcebible en política, que desconoce la historia de las naciones. Ella no es aquel noble esfuerzo de pueblos que resisten la esclavitud; no los heroicos sacudimientos de la opresion, no tampoco el movimiento franco y los impulsos generosos de la libertad legal y de la seguridad individual; és sí un paso retrógrado en la marcha que sigue el género humano; es una contradicción de los principios luminosos que la filosofia ha derramado sobre el universo; es un obstáculo impotente, pero voluntario á los progresos del Siglo; es al fin un conato directo y egecutivo hácia la esclavitud y dependencia estrangera*". *El Universal*, year 2, n. 216, Aug. 4th, 1821.

17 *El Universal*, year 2, n. 216, Aug. 4th, 1821.

18 *Semanário Cívico*, year 2, n. 49, Jan. 31st, 1822.

been brought about by men who have had the experience of something new, which they have tried almost instantly to overcome and resolve into something old” (2016, p. 56), Joaquim José da Silva Maia, José Antônio da Cruz Ferreira Tezo and the editor of *El Universal* (among others), could do no greater disservice to their own cause of unification by attempting such a concomitance. Ultimately, these cognitive-temporal elaborations about history undermined, at that moment, any authority based on the principles of tradition, even if some publicists and other men of letters situated in this fissure of vintism sought the path of moderation – perhaps the most arduous and, just perhaps, also the most fruitless –, as indicated by their manoeuvres to link independence with disorder and even regression.

And there would be no history left to be told of past expectations that did not surpass psychic reality (Koselleck, 2006, p. 314), were it not for these testimonies carved by the implacable march of a chronological time that, instead of regurgitating, has swallowed so much. It is not surprising, therefore, that such conceptions, that such testimonies have ‘been lost in time’ and the past has moved away, even if individuals like Father Tezinho and the editor of *El Universal* have perceived it slowly moving away on the wings of a first angel of history driven by the storm of progress (Benjamin, 2019, p. 14) that announced it then as good News through his trumpet, well along the lines of the timbre that we find in *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*.



Figure 1 – The angel of progress, announcing *Diário*'s first editions. Source: Digital Hemeroteca of the Biblioteca Nacional

In this sense, it is flagrant the Spanish editor's words that echoes in the pages of the *Semanário*, inquiring:

But if this did not happen and the past catastrophe was erased from time and memory, if the vivid images of horror could be wiped out from the aching hearts, if the general oblivion of sensitive souls, like an eternal tombstone, would cover forever the warm ashes and the still smoking blood of so many thousands of innocent victims. If, at last, an uninterrupted series of deeds, disproving fears, would guarantee personal security and re-establish the lost confidence, is New Spain in the state of strength, of virility, of lights that it needs to work independently of the Metropolis and to figure worthily among the great powers of the old and the new world? Here, Americans, is the great political problem that must be solved before compromising the interests of the state and venturing the fate of the Religion and the Homeland.¹⁹

Portuguese and, as far as we can see, Spanish newspapers abounded in puerile, progenitorial images to explain the reasons why they advocated against independence in the New World. And from what we have seen of *Astro da Lusitânia*, maybe this was a legitimate concern, among many others, such as the well-reasoned judgment that Unity creates strength, for the metropolitan state, mainly, but also for the colony, or in the specific Luso-Brazilian case, for the *corpus politicum* shaped by the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and the Algarves. Despite several concerns on the commercial policy that was being created for Brazil in Lisbon – such as the revision of the trade treaty of 1810 with Great Britain and other fruits of a protectionist conception that intended the “domination of the Cortes over Brazil in the precise sense of subjecting it politically and economically to Lisbon for the benefit of Portugal's economic recovery” (Rocha, 2009, p. 119) –, it is difficult to imagine that the colonialist Machiavellianism (p. 16) of the same Cortes was greater than the examples of recent history, such as that which *Semanário Cívico* transmitted us about Mexico. Expectations for the future, in America, seemed to distance themselves more and more from the experience of the revolutionaries of Oporto. Or, in the words of Raimundo Faoro, over here, “European liberalism was contaminated with a new content that disfigured it in essence and in form” (Faoro, 2001, p. 266).

The rupture with the Metropolis represented a traumatic new beginning for which the precedents of history would no longer serve as models to be

19 *Semanário Cívico*, year 2, n. 49, Jan. 31st, 1822. Emphasis in original.

imitated, even if their didactic character resisted when compared to the weight of a tradition that was frayed even in its European cradle, as reported the *Astro* when it stated:

The People regained their Sovereignty. It has no ancient Cortes, because one of our Kings extinguished them and the present one never recognised them. It has no pact with him, because our grandfathers trampled him under foot. It cannot, therefore, bind us by a broken bond, nor convene Cortes that do not exist and that, ceasing to be an integral body of the Monarchy, have been reduced to a negative entity that can only figure in the antiquities of our history today.²⁰

As we can see, when talking about the ancient method with which the Cortes took shape in Portugal, Joaquim Maria Alves Sinval evoked tradition in a critical sense and to criticise it, despite the majority meaning of this tradition still figuring as that which gave solidity to the sociocultural fabric and at the feet of which the acts of the present were deposited. Nonetheless, such a solid base seemed to erode in the naked eye before the untimely gale of redemptive insurrections, such as those in England, “whose history is a continuous revolutionary list, begun and sustained to defend our Liberties. This England whose Constitution was won by force of revolutions and not by *spontaneous concession of Kings*”.²¹ That is, of a progressive *continuum* that carried freedom on its wings, beyond the negligence of those responsible for its maintenance.

Now all that remains for us to do is to see the future unfold! Even so, it is not that the use of history in these newspapers was linked to the conception of the future only as an indication of interpretations of it as a linear and unstoppable march. Rather, it points to a deep concern with posterity, with the morality of present action. In short, with the acts that “for their importance and greatness marked the most beautiful age of our history”.²² Similar to the project of transferring the Lisboner court to American lands and, after 1808, the expansion of a great empire on European terms in these lands, such conceptions of time were nothing new in the 1820s. Commenting on the uprising that had also begun in Oporto against the French occupation in 1809, *Gazeta do Rio de Janeiro* stated that “the most important event, which can raise the glory and dignity

20 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 1, n. 24, Dec. 14th, 1820.

21 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 2, n. 131, Apr. 28th, 1821. Emphasis in original.

22 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 2, n. 184, Jul. 25th, 1821.

of a nation, was reserved to perpetuate in posterity the illustrious name of the Portuguese heroes and mark in the fastnesses of this beautiful and opulent city the immortal epoch of its restoration".²³

One can see here a dimension, maybe more empirical – and, for this very reason, more tragic – of the future that is related in many of these records to an awareness of the weight of their actions in the judgment of future generations. And this dimension would have been much greater than the metaphysical one, inherent to the idealisation of history itself as an inclement judge, an executioner. Here, Clio took on almost gentle, perhaps intercessory, features. However, if history so soon did not represent that inescapable dimension of becoming, the same cannot be said of freedom. We speak, finally, of disparate conceptions, which keep in its core different visions of reality that sought to record some Luso-Brazilian publicists as Father Tezinho and Zefferino de Meirelles, which in July 1821 transcribed in the following poem a peculiar record of this condition to the people addressed above.

Like a new play from the Delphic Lute
Rises pulsed to the air by my hands
And ravishes minds and hearts?
Like an harmonious song never heard before
More than the swans on the Ionian Sea
A sonorous voice that in neglect
Had lain for long time, now sings?

I wonder if Belona's beacon will again
The fields ignite
And adorn the hands of Victory once more
With eternal laurel the front Lights?
May this voice sing again, as it once did,
the immortal values that swallow and prostate
The unrighteous and foul beast!

May once again in the Temple of Memory
Rise a high standard to the name unbroken

23 Gazeta Extraordinária do Rio de Janeiro, year 2, n. 4, Oct. 3rd, 1809.

Of those heroes covered in blood and dust
 Who freed the Fatherland from this burden!
 Aye, gentle Clio, thou who enlightenest me,
 Thou of the great valour declare unto me the portentous causes!²⁴

Possibly in reaction to the oath taken by King João VI to the foundations of the Constitution on February 1821,²⁵ *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* reproduced a poem by Miguel de Sousa Melo e Alvim.²⁶ Peculiar in every way – whether because of its insertion in a newspaper that most often played the role of informing meteorological data and commercial advertisements, or due to the distance of the aforementioned correspondence and the semantic content of it – such poetry offers us an opportunity to glimpse the relations that Miguel Alvim and Zeferino Meirelles' contemporaries maintained with the historical time in which they were inserted, revealing the way they understood events in the light of a new order of things and of the civilising process it was gestating at the time.

It is interesting to note that in the first three stanzas of the poem, its author insists on a recurrence of motifs to allegorically paint images related not only to the revolutionary rupture initiated in Oporto and all the constitutional expectations that it brought in its wake, but also to the revival of Freedom in the *continuum* of time, to be fulfilled, almost prophetically, in the voice of History, which before being manifested by the figure of Clio, or even of memory, is made manifest by the divinatory chant intended by the author in the first stanza that directly alludes to the temple from where the Pythoness announced the terrible misfortunes of the tragic King Oedipus (Sophocles, 2013, p. 144). Temple made of the “laurel branches” (Graves, 2018, p. 276) that were to crown the Enlightenment through the hands of Victory, beyond the lightned beacon of Belona, and where, in order to prepare to consult with the priestess, one had to drink water from the fountains of the Lethe, “which will help one to forget the past and also from another nearby fountain, called the Water of Memory,

24 *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, year 1, n. 6, Jul. 7th, 1821. Emphasis added.

25 Despite being published on July 7th, 1821, at the end of the poem it is dated May 1st, 1821, which leads us to believe that it was produced in response to the events of February 26th for singing to the “free Constitution that the Great King grants to the Luso Empire”.

26 Head of the Navy in 1821, Miguel de Sousa Melo e Alvim became president of the province of Santa Catarina at the end of the First Reign and a State Counsellor. He also joined the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro - IHGB [Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute] in 1839 as a correspondent member, although the institution's website states that he left no published work in History or Geography (IHGB, 2021).

which will help one to remember what's have been seen and heard" (p. 278). This was the voice, the song, lying in neglect, that the poet invoked to address history. And he continues, rising:

Do I dream or do I see it? O wonder, O amaze!
I am lifted up to the air,
I cross the orbits of the stars and the divines!
Gazing upon the fenced edge,
With thunderous shrill on the hinges,
Sublime hatch:
Behold, the concrete lair
Where the Fates dwell!

Already dissipating the mists of the future!
O glory, O good without equal! I see the destinies
Of the nations of the Earth!
By the Ganges and the Nile, sad rivers!
The fierce despotism for a long time
Must still thy inhabitants shackle,
Mankind's shame!

And thou, O ancient motherland of freedom!
O venerated Greece! You strive in vain
To break the fetters that put you in pain!
To the Brutes, to the Cattans, I see thy Mother
Raising her majestic face
And on the fields of Italy again
Brightly dawn shining!²⁷

Taking into consideration that "philosophy, from Plato to Hegel, was not of this world" (Arendt, 2016, p. 50), but of a higher world, we see precisely Miguel Alvim's lyric self transcending the globe and the orbit of the stars to, entering the abode of destiny, see the future of the entire Old World as a temporal total-ity endowed with logical meaning. But if, for Arendt, such a conception of a

27 *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, year 1, n. 6, Jul. 7th, 1821. Emphasis added.

universal history undermined any claims to traditional authority, we cannot help but look at this rhetorical piece with special interest. It was, after all, an elucubration that took account of the historical *continuum*, but with no discredit to the weight of the paternalistic, eschatological, monarchical tradition on which luso-brazilian culture was still based upon. From east to west, more than the sad fate of the places through which he passes, he describes the hovering of Liberty as a “laughing dawn” that awoke “the peoples yearning to enjoy a liberal condition” also in Gaul, Germany, Spain and in the “western plains” where the “fortunate Nation” exulted happily for the concession that John VI made when he swore that Constitution to be made by the:

August Assembly convened
 Of selected men from this vast empire
 Presided over by Minerva, the wise
 There to dictate the enlightned laws, there to inspire,
 To lay the foundations of such unshakable Monument,
 To stand *the centuries that arrive*,
 Despite Saturn's *wrath*.

We recognize in these authors, and especially in the publicists who, in addition to reproducing the speeches of others – whether they were letters, poetry or debates on the tribune – vectors of that acceleration which Koselleck attributes to the modern times through the philosophies of history, but which we believe was not set in motion necessarily and exclusively by men such as Voltaire and Hegel, but also by Marat, Hipólito da Costa and publicist priests, whether they were the monarchic Tezinho or the republican Caneca. It was these men who did not just want to wait for the future, as if waiting for Judgement Day. They wanted – and they did – not only to accelerate the future, ensuring, with the technology at their disposal, “the acceleration of a field of experience that was fully adequate to them” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 37), but they also accelerated the advent of what they called in their newspapers – and many still with dismay – democratic government.²⁸ For, “the [political] Portuguese regeneration began in a Democratic party, and did not progress for lack of public opinion”.²⁹ Roughly speaking, modern political making (political action) fosters a different

²⁸ Like the aforementioned *Correio do Rio de Janeiro*, where “democratic” can be understood as “popular”, liberal. *Correio do Rio de Janeiro*, n. 27. May 10th, 1822.

²⁹ *Correio do Rio de Janeiro*, n. 27. May 10th, 1822.

paradigm from that specific to Western society in the Ancien Regime; a pluralist, or public, paradigm, as the periodists of the Eighteenth Century wanted.

Hannah Arendt credits the theorization of this “extended mentality” (Kant, 1952 apud Arendt, 2016, p. 18) to Kant and points out that “the field of [modern] Politics is that of dialogue in the plural that arises in the space of speech and action – the public world – whose existence allows the appearance of freedom” (p. 21), although we prefer to think of it as a permission not of appearance, of revelation, but of construction. Of a freedom exercised and understood as alterity, in the interaction with the other “and not in the metaphysical dialogue of the self with itself” (Idem, *ibidem*). From Voltaire, Kant and Hegel is bequeathed to Marx himself and to a whole theoretical and philosophical tradition so much to the taste of the Eighteenth Century and, as the editor of the *Conciliador do Maranhão* indicated, also from:

Athens, Sparta, Lacedemonia and Rome still occupy today a distinctive place in the brilliant theatre of history in spite of the caliginous course of so many ages; if someone, a sensitive reader, friend of men and of freedom still today waters with nostalgic tears those happy pages in which are read the respectable names of the restorers of freedom in Greece and Rome; if even today the universe, admired and full of respect and gratitude, still speaks with venerable respect and sweet emotion the names of the philosophers and legislators of the nations that have done such good to the human race by detesting barbarism and promoting the happiness of their kind. What place, sirs, what distinguished place awaits the generous Portuguese nation in the annals of immortality for the great deeds it has just accomplished? And what radiant crown of unfading glory will gird the heads of the Cabreiras, the Sepúlvedas, the wise men and the philosophers who, in the most august and tremendous assembly, seek to develop the principles of reason and justice?³⁰

However, it should be noted that these transformations and ruptures precipitated from the French and Industrial revolutions and definitively established in the Luso-Brazilian universe by the Liberal Revolution of Oporto, do not result “that the future is terminally subtracted from any teaching that comes from history. What happens is that the teachings move over a temporal platform understood from a different theoretical point of view” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 144). In this sense, it is even possible to observe the much more abundant

30 *Conciliador do Maranhão*, year 2, n. 80, Apr. 16th, 1822.

incidence of “histories” than of history in the periodicals, as the occurrences in *Astro da Lusitânia* indicates.

And why? Because new expectations come, finally, to add new experiences, if not for the coefficient of acceleration of change, which Koselleck identifies from the French Revolution on, which could be felt in the Luso-Brazilian universe, and in the entire New World, since the Napoleonic Wars.³¹ It will be useful to pay attention to the two main categories throughout the excerpts taken from *Astro da Lusitânia*, *Conciliador do Maranhão*, *Semanário Cívico* and *Diário do Rio de Janeiro* which, as seen above, are embedded with the most diverse experiences, not only concerning those circumscribed to the Luso-Brazilian universe, but also to Western civilization.

The importance of this second point lies in the fact that the space of experience – or spaces, as we intend to address here – not only “jumps over chronologically measurable times” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 311), but also over the very spatial boundaries. And when these spaces, these hills and moors full of experience, are finally abruptly limited by the steep slope that descends to the edge where the waters of all expectation find the temporal horizon distorted and greatly enlarged by the acceleration of unprecedented events, only freedom – when not yet history – as “inescapable dimension of the becoming” seemed to oblige “every social action to assume horizons of future expectation that inscribe it as an unfolding consonant with the temporal process” (p. 11).

Records for history

For those who tend to see even the ruptures and displacements as punctual events in a particular timeline, our argument makes even the observation of the acceleration coefficient embodied by the notion of Progress, as attested by the discourse of the Journal years later when stating that “the Press will contribute much to the development of the Enlightenment and to the progress of instruction”.³² And why not, also of history, or the conception of history as progress? Decades had already passed since the independence of the United States, followed by the French Revolution and all its developments, in and outside

31 This acceleration of time seems more tangible to us, especially after the great social, political, cultural, philosophical and technological trauma of the brief 20th century, defined by historians such as Hobsbawm through its wars and purges, most of the times ethnic in character, but which ended up having a global reach, both geographically and mediationally speaking, not to mention the numbers of casualties (Hobsbawm, 1995, p. 150).

32 *Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, year 5, n. 5, Oct. 6th, 1825.

Europe. Still, experiences - feasible or not - from a centuries-long past clumped together with many others and even expectations that, over time, grew old in new experiences, in good and bad examples, “to form a whole in which many strata of earlier times are simultaneously present, without reference to a before and an after” (Koselleck, 2006, p. 311). It would be impossible to narrate or describe a history, from the perspective of its own temporality, without access to categories referring to the space and time addressed. That is why the expressions “space of experience” and “horizon of expectation” are so important.

Until the advent of modernity with the bourgeois revolutions, one could consider the gaze that Janus projects over those vast plains of fertile ground of the most varied experiences as the guiding thread of all future hopes and yearnings, especially while Christian rationality remained firm enough to limit the – then tenuous – line of the horizon that separated personal collective, generational and historical experiences from expectations in a future that, when it was not seen in temporal decline towards the Apocalypse, was largely seen through natural time, the meteorological and astronomical cycles with which the working classes of the Old Regime lived their lives (Koselleck, 2006). Yet Koselleck’s more general conceptualization of expectation fits even this context, since “expectation is realized in the today, it is present future, directed towards the not-yet, towards the untried, towards what can only be foreseen” (p. 304). Or, in our mythological metaphor, the face of Janus which, from the plains, ponds and marshes of the past, directs its gaze beyond, exactly to the horizon line from where the future rises, whether this future is the next harvest, the next king, the Last Judgement, the progress of an economy in eternal growth, the promise of a minimal state, or the utopia of a classless society.

And even if both exist in this “instant of cognoscibility” known as the present, such categories never coincide, so that one cannot presuppose the future from past experiences, even if these present enough parallels for the temptation of causality for its own sake to creep into the analysis. Yet cause-and-effect relations have been the driving force of historical practice for centuries, when - as quoted above - experiences and expectations were bound together more closely by the characteristic temporalities of the pre-industrial *Ancien Régime* with its own systems of representations – as concerns not only the *Ancien Régime* but to every historical period, as Baczkó³³ demonstrates – embedded in the social

33 “In the system of representations produced by each epoch and in which it finds its unity, the ‘true’ and the ‘illusory’ are not isolated from each other, but on the contrary are united in a whole by means of a complex dialectical game. It is in the illusions that an epoch nourishes about itself that it manifests and

imaginary which, according to Le Goff, is related in conflict with the prevailing ideology, in this case the Christian one, represented in several editions examined as the “Divine Providence” which, according to Joaquim Maria Alves Sinval, “in all times [. ...] has chosen the peoples of the Spanish peninsula to be instruments of its high destinies”.³⁴

Commenting on the warlike threat of the Holy Alliance against the constitutional movements in Portugal and Spain, the writer also glimpsed more than a political-ideological dispute, or a conception of historical time, but the peculiar Luso-Brazilian political mentality – perhaps also Iberian, or even Catholic, or Latin – imbued with a singular perception of the world that tends to superimpose to the concreteness of the real-material in the field of politics a sense impregnated with the real-imaginary of a religious nature. This aspect, which makes us see the congruence of the same phenomenon from different perspectives, but, even so, susceptible of equanimous association as long as they concur, as concepts, to better analyse the sources and understand the past events which they bequeathed record, as the *Astro da Lusitânia* continued, in that same edition of 1823:

Who would have believed, before seeing it, that the peoples of the peninsula would be the only ones on the continent who, from the beginning to the end of the universal struggle, would have resisted the gigantic power of the extraordinary man who subdued all those forces you fear and who lost everything after deserting from the army of reason? What would Europe be then without the example of constancy set by the peninsulars?

Who would believe, before seeing it, that those cities which Providence had marked out for distribution among all nations the immense riches coming from the new world, which increased their commerce and civilization and, consequently, made the happiness of Europe; in those same cities, Cadiz and Lisbon, the same Providence would have wanted the rights of man, an incalculable moral wealth, which promises to make the happiness of the whole human race, to be proclaimed by the representatives to the peoples of the peninsula.³⁵

From the Age of Discovery to the guerrillas imposed on Napoleon, Sinval painted in vivid colours the picture destined by “providence” – another image

hides, at the same time, its ‘truth’ as well as its place in the ‘logic of history’” (Baczko, 1985, p. 303).

34 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 3, n. 11, Jan. 15th, 1823.

35 *Astro da Lusitânia*, year 3, n. 11, Jan. 15th, 1823.

for history or even progress here in this explanation – to take place under the auspices of the Iberian peoples. To understand the change perpetrated from the eighteenth century onwards as temporal, it is necessary to address, even if briefly, some of the cognitive-temporal shifts described by the vintist editors and that, for Koselleck, was only possible thanks to the conception of the concept of progress. Thus, he states that there was “the discovery of a new horizon of expectations”. However, terms like “displacement”, “rupture”, even “destruction”, of the *continuum* of history, of this human-ordered space-time structure may serve better, since, as argued above, historical time seems to possess dimensions that go beyond – while not ceasing to relate to these, however – philosophical and technological advances. Walter Benjamin’s contribution is interesting, when it reminding us of two things in the fifteenth thesis on the concept of history. The first concerns this very structure, when he evokes the images of the calendar and the clock to demonstrate how “the day with which a calendar begins functions as a device for concentrating historical time” (Benjamin, 2019, p. 18), the attitude of the revolutionaries in 1792 in introducing a new calendar being therefore understandable, while years later, in 1848, they would have shot against clocks in the towers “to suspend the day” (p. 19). And the second Benjaminian contribution to the semantics of historical time, if we may say so, would be in the recognition of the political affectivities in this process, by stating that “the consciousness of destroying the *continuum* of history is proper to the revolutionary classes at the moment of their action” (p. 18). If we cannot consider the periodists cited as “revolutionary classes” in the most common sense of the expression, it is certainly possible to conjecture about their places and the relevance of the discourses they produced to shift historical time at the moment of their political and discursive action.

Conclusion

Going back to the question we posed at the beginning of the analysis, what would have been the role of the press in the formation of the idea of an independent Brazil? The answer, as well as the question, is given in the polyphony of meanings and interpretations that each researcher may have, considering the profusion of productions, of social actors in the past and in the present, but, keeping to the current explanation, we restrict ourselves to its role in the institution of new temporalities by updating and superimposing diverse temporalities to the one we studied at first and even to the one we live in. If, as Walter Benjamin and theoreticians from the most diverse fields of knowledge

claim, the “absolute” time – *illud tempus* – is characterized by the re-signifying actualization in the present instant, the reader will have to forgive us for saying that the story told here started from two chronologically distinct times but actualized in the instant of narration.

In fact, even the instant with which we play plays with us, as an elusive, cunning particle, not to say a trickster before those who recognize it in one of the flashes of this *creatio continua*. It is also up to the historian, when peregrinating through the realms of memory, the imaginary and all the phenomena that go through it, to pay attention to the spiral structure of time that Michel Maffesoli describes as a “cycle of renewal of values” (Maffesoli apud Boechat, 2014, p. 19) present in history and which embrace in themselves not only cognitive values, but also sensitive ones, and in general catapulted into the luminous fields of consciousness by condensed emotional images-remembrance which is the starting point for an understanding of our collective motives, most often unconscious, but not for this reason neutral to impact on our material and objective reality.

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