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**CHIASMS OF POWER: ART, LAW AND POLITICS
IN THE *CORONATION OF DOM PEDRO II* BY
MANUEL DE ARAÚJO PORTO-ALEGRE**

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ABSTRACT: This paper analyzes, from a legal perspective, the painting of the *Coronation of Dom Pedro II* by Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, as a bidimensional image that brings together four different temporalities: a) the power centered in the past on the image of the dynastic glory of his father, Emperor Dom Pedro I; b) the power centered on the present of the hierarchical organization among the different political groups represented in the painting; c) the power based on the retrospective future of the image of the Constitution and the Prayer Book; and d) the power centered on hope for the future of the Court and the Government, which, surprisingly, is not directed at the person of the Emperor or the Constitution, but at ourselves. Based on the analysis of the relationship between glory and sovereign power (Agamben), we conclude that the painting builds an intelligent visual chiasm about the glory of power, but at the same time subverts that chiasm through the eyes of the characters, which do not acclaim the body of the emperor, neither the Constitution, nor the people, but other complex references of meaning.

KEYWORDS: Arts and Law; Coronation of Dom Pedro II; Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre; Constitution; Imperial Government.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Writers have the freedom to add and remove elements in their literary narratives. So do painters in their paintings. Metaphors, hyperboles, euphemisms of literary language can also happen in pictorial language. However, figurative paintings are not only made of the exaggeration and softening of scenes. Intelligent painters, besides using figures of language, apply their own figures of rhetoric. In this paper, we intend to emphasize the chiasm of the unfinished painting *The Coronation of Dom Pedro II*, by Manuel Araújo Porto-Alegre, from 1845. It is a rebellious painting, innovative amidst the history of artistic representations of the King, and able to establish impressive links between different time scopes and conceptions of the sovereign power in Imperial Brazil.

Chiasma is a figure of rhetoric that hides, into invisibility, the mystical foundation of the correlation it establishes. It makes invisible the paradox of the sovereignty of the sovereign, the power of power, and the law of law. But its power of eloquence goes beyond the mere effect of hiding the lack of foundation in a proposition. It also produces the effect of filling the void of foundation with a self-referential correlation. In the political chiasm, the foundation of sovereign power is the law, but, at the same time, the foundation of the law is sovereign power. This correlationist crossing of propositions with no logical consistency or ontological coherence creates, however, a form of power legitimation that is crucial for it to sustain itself.

The painting by Porto-Alegre accomplishes such chiasm in the visual form. *The Coronation of Dom Pedro II* is an image that helps build this chiasmic foundation regarding the legitimacy of the emperor's sovereign power, but its rebel aspect can also unmake this construction if one observes it more cautiously. The image of Dom Pedro II crowned affirms all the splendor of the ceremony of his acclamation and glory, but at the same time there are also contradictory elements in the painting, which precisely deny the power of that sovereign acclamation.

For many centuries, the dominion of faith justified the sovereign power of kings, which also served as the justification for the dominion of faith (Kantorowicz, 1948 and 1957; Peterson, 1999; Schmitt, 1992; Agamben, 2007). Nowadays, the dominion of Constitutions justifies the democratic view of State legitimacy, which is a condition for the constitutional dominion itself to be legitimate. Behind the chiasm is the mystical foundation of *auctoritas* and *potestas*, which, according to Agamben (2007, p. 10), is glory and its contemporary forms of acclamation, such as public opinion (Schmitt, 1984, p. 323), consensus (Agamben, 2007, p. 283) and, added by us, perhaps the culture of likes and shares on those (anti)social networks.

Constant tension, for example between monarchy and republic, liberals and conservatives, Brazilians and Portuguese, has hidden over the years a characteristic that we can now observe in Porto-Alegre's painting, with the help of analyses by Kantorowicz (1957), Peterson (1999), Schmitt (1992), Burke (2009), and Agamben (2007): the power of glory and the glory of power over the empire's legitimacy. Rituals of acclamation and glorification of sovereign power produce important effects. They reassure the symbols of *auctoritas* and *da potestas*, which sustain, in the visual scope, the mystical foundation of imperial authority. In Porto-Alegre's painting, not only do the hierarchic positions of the characters, but also the glances – or lack of them – expose the pictorial geopolitics of acclamation.

But if acclamation rituals and ceremonies stand for the glory of sovereign power in Porto-Alegre's painting, can we see in this work the portrait of a culture of law whose echoes are still heard? Or did constitutional democracies kill, in the past of monarchical regimes, the sternness, spectacle and ceremony of those protocols, solemnities and liturgies of acclamation and glorification of power? A look at our times allows, if not empirically, at least speculatively, to suppose that sovereign power is, today, above the law and the constitutions themselves, but never above protocols and ceremonials, however disconcerting and embarrassing they may be. Today's presidential kings disdain the fundamental rights enshrined in republican constitutions, among other

things, but take very seriously the rituals, liturgies and ceremonies of acclamation and glorification of their own power.

This article has the purpose of proposing a legal discussion of the relationships established by Manuel Araújo Porto-Alegre in his *Coronation of Dom Pedro II*, as a work of art that brings together, under the unity of the same iconographic organization, four different foundational temporalities of sovereign power: a) the power based on the past of the dynastic glory of his father, Emperor Dom Pedro I and his image; b) the present-centered power of the hierarchical organization between the different political groups represented in the painting; c) the power based on the future retrospective image of the Constitution and the Prayer Book; and d) the power centered on hope for the future of the Court and the Government which, surprisingly, is not directed at the person of the Emperor, but at another sign subtly represented by Porto-Alegre in his painting. Each of these four temporalities corresponds to an aesthetic choice that connects State, legislation and religion, producing that strange trinitarian unity between king, law and faith.

Obviously, our interest in this paper, similarly to that of Kantorowicz's (1957) and Schmitt's (1992), is not only to understand what strange connection between faith, government, and law generated those political aberrations in the first half of the 20th century in Germany and Italy, but also those happening today. It is important, in this perspective, to understand the effect that images, such as that of Porto-Alegre, in the 19th century, produce in our days, in the sense of legitimizing a form of sovereign power. It is important to observe the effect that the sovereign's acclamation provokes, such as those peculiar glances of political characters in Porto-Alegre's *Coronation of Dom Pedro II*, also on the internet's social networks and in the mass media of our days.

Our hypothesis is that not only did Porto-Alegre's figurative painting expose a sophisticated relationship between symbolic elements of the political transformations of the time, but it also announced the importance of public opinion as a functional substitute for the old liturgical rituals of sovereign power consecration, be it a king, an emperor, or a president. In the luxurious Coronation Room, at Palácio do Paço in Rio de Janeiro, the hierarchical position of the characters in the

geopolitics of images by Porto-Alegre does not play the same force of visual eloquence than that from the European tradition of images of kings. The pivotal role, and which constitutes an important transformation, according to our hypothesis, is the introduction of the people, whose glances dialogue with the sovereign's body. The glory of power, as the visual chiasm of Porto-Alegre shows us, is perhaps not in the blood of its successor body of the majestic dignity of its ancestors, nor in the mystical timelessness of its political body anointed by the grace of God, but in the acclamation of the participants.

In order to achieve these results, this paper uses, as a method, a dialogue between the forms of artistic representation of the sovereign in the history of European art of modernity, in order to identify the transformations in the iconographic elements and relationships that the artists performed and the correlations between the political and juridical foundations of power in each era. As a theoretical framework, we start from research by Kantorowicz (1957), Peterson (1999), and Schmitt (1992), to discuss the meaning of rituals in the reading proposed by Agamben (2007).

The Coronation of Dom Pedro II of Porto-Alegre is not simply a figurative painting of the history of imperial Brazil. It is a portrait of the monarchy and its power relations. Some historians refer to it as a sketch or as an unfinished painting. In fact, it is an abandoned work. An unfinished project abandoned both by Porto-Alegre and the Court, by artists and by history. As remnants or traces of a legal culture, the abandoned works tell us more about ourselves than those we keep in the political frames of our history. *The Coronation of Dom Pedro II* of Porto-Alegre is one of those works of art that, precisely because they are marginalized and abandoned, reveal the power of meaning that defines our political culture, either in the 19th century or today.

2 IMITATIO AND DECORUM

The Proclamation of Independence, in 1822, generated, among other things, the necessity to create and legitimize, also on the iconographic level, an image of the Brazilian nation. As important as the representation of the Empire's legal, political and religious autonomy, the

visual personification of the nation became a fundamental political strategy. A different political aesthetic became necessary for the legitimation of the new regime of power.

Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre was an important artist and intellectual of the 19th century. Writer, painter, poet, architect, professor and art critic. He was born in the city of Rio Pardo, Rio Grande do Sul, on November 29, 1806. He studied at the Academy of Fine Arts of Rio de Janeiro in 1826, initially with the intention of training in engineering – since at the time the concept of a school of arts was also related to crafts (Silva, 1865, p. 262), such as architecture and engineering. He became the main disciple of his teacher, Jean-Baptiste Debret (França, 1975, p. 39), with whom he left to study in France for six years.

He returned to Brazil in 1837, due to the *Farrapos* War – the *Farrroupilha* Revolution in Rio Grande do Sul. To protect his mother, he took her to live in Rio de Janeiro (França, 1975, p. 42). On this occasion of his return to Brazil he was appointed professor of Historical Painting at the Academy of Fine Arts in Rio de Janeiro.

At that time, paintings had a figurative intention, that is, a form of documentary representation of historical events. But like documentary photography today, figurative painting at the time was not simply a portrait of reality. Figurative painters constructed their images by carefully selecting the elements and relationships that would be represented, and those that would be excluded from them. As a political framing, the framing of figurative painting was also selective and full of visual metaphors to hyperbolize some qualities of the scene and, at the same time, soften the defects through pictorial euphemisms.

Porto-Alegre was skilled in this artistic genre and one of the most influential intellectuals of the 19th century. As a painter, art critic, founder of the journal *Revista Nitheroy* (Squeff, 2017, p. 378), he helped, along with Debret, Taunay, Rugendas, Lebreton, Pradier, Granjean and others²,

² In the historiography of Brazilian art, it is common to refer to the French Mission as an important milestone in the history of art. It is controversial, however, whether the French Mission had a missionary character, because the French, at the time of Napoleon, were not welcome in Portuguese territory. The shortage of mission artists and the failure, in part, of the project to create the academy of fine arts reinforce the hypothesis that the French mission was not summoned by the crown, but that it would be a group of artists who came on their own, looking for opportunities. However,

to define the identity of Imperial Brazil and its image for the world and for ourselves. Split between the demands of *imitatio* and *decorum*, 19th-century artists sought to depict reality, but they did so carefully, within the paradigm or the aesthetic regime of the time. Debret was a genius in this dialogue between figuration and construction. Porto-Alegre was his favorite student and, like the master, he became an expert in the art of mediating the truth of portraying with the norms of imperial *decorum*.

A typical art form of *decorum* was the pictorial portraying of ceremonials. In the same way that today's ceremonial photographers carefully define the composition a king-president's images, so did the figurative painters of the 19th century construct carefully decorative images of the sovereign's legitimacy. Precisely the relationship between the sovereign power and its source of legitimation appears quite clearly in the images of each era. God, weapons, or the will of the people, whether directly or represented by the constitutional pact with Parliament, the symbols of legitimation were always present in the ceremonial paintings, emphasizing the predominant foundation in each era and minimizing the defects, oppositions and contradictions of power.

In Porto-Alegre's paintings, as well as in Debret's, the foundations of sovereign power are made evident through references to the Constitution and the liturgical procedure of the Prayer Book, but also to the domain of faith represented by the bishops; the weapons represented by the ministers; the dynastic dignity in the painting of the "dia do fico" event, representing his father, Dom Pedro I, at the top of the hall; and the then increasingly important political reference of a sovereign legitimation: the presence of the people.

according to Silva, a historian at the time, the Portuguese court's dissatisfaction with her refuge in Brazil and its pressure to return to Portugal motivated Dom João VI, despite the frightening state of the Kingdom's finances, including delays in payments to public servants, to summon both the French mission of visual artists and architects and Italian singers and musicians to the Imperial Chapel and to found an academy of fine arts, sciences and crafts (Silva, 1865, p. 261-262).

Taylor (1999, p. 138) also identified the growing reference to the people in art, architecture and ceremonials of 19th century France. The transition from monarchy to republic is accompanied by a new visual aesthetic of power. But it is not just the presence of the people in the sovereign's paintings. The effect of visual eloquence appears when the people are portrayed acclaiming the sovereign power. It is the people squeezed at the door of the Imperial Chapel to see and glorify their sovereign. Possibly similar to the effect of likes on social networks, the applause of the audience, or the public opinion in our days, the commonalty's gaze of acclamation symbolically builds and generalizes, for the rest of society, an image of glory of sovereign power.

Imperial ceremonies, like as religious liturgies or the procedural rites of the judiciary, share, in the field of art, a unique symbolic structure of legitimation, which is the visual chiasm of acclamation. The painting of the coronation of Dom Pedro II by Porto-Alegre makes this chiasm explicit, according to which it is no longer possible to know if the emperor's glory comes from the values personified by the characters in the painting or if it is the glory of the characters that comes from the emperor and the privilege of being present at the exclusive, dignified and sumptuous coronation ceremony.

At a first level of meaning, one can identify Porto-Alegre's strategy of decorating the foundation of Dom Pedro II's sovereign power with the image of unity, personified by the characters in the painting, between people, God, weapons, Constitution, dynastic dignity and court/government. But, on a second level of meaning, it can also be observed that the glory of the sovereign is not only in the relationship between the characters and the imperial symbols, but in the gesture of acclamation of the sovereign power. It is a visual chiasm: the characters hail the glory of the sovereign, who glorifies those who hail him.

Nevertheless, there is a third level of meaning in the painting, in which a subversion of the chiasm can be seen. In a disconcerting way, Porto-Alegre painted a scene of Dom Pedro II's acclamation in which no one, with the exception of the bishop, looks at him. The gazes that glorify the sovereign are directed elsewhere. The glimpse of acclamation to the emperor is denied by the artist. But if the characters do not look at the

emperor, what do they look at? What do they hail? Where did Porto-Alegre place the glory of the symbolic kingdom that, in pictorial geopolitics, was the Empire of Brazil in the 19th century?

3 TWO VERSIONS OF THE *CORONATION BY PORTO-ALEGRE*

There are two versions of the *Coronation of Dom Pedro II* painting by Porto-Alegre. One is small and appears to be a study or sketch of the image of the coronation and consecration of Dom Pedro II (Figure 1). The other is a huge painting, measuring 5 by 8 meters and an unfinished image (Figure 2). The *Coronation Sketch* is located at the National History Museum. The huge unfinished painting is in the Varnhagen Room, at the headquarters of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute. Between the draft and the unfinished monumental work, Porto-Alegre left us an important artistic interpretation of the relations between law, politics and religion in imperial Brazil.



Figure 1– Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, *Sketch for the Coronation of D. Pedro II (Estudo para Coroação de D. Pedro II)* (1845). Oil on canvas. Courtesy of the National History Museum.



Figure 2 – Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, *The Coronation of Dom Pedro II (Coroação de Dom Pedro II)* (1840-1845), Oil on canvas. 4,85 x 7,96 meters. Varnhagen Room, Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute.

The two versions of the *Coronation* have important differences to each other. Not only on the aesthetic level, but mainly in the meaning of the relationships established between its elements. These are small but important differences, which we highlight in the following analysis, whenever they become significant for the observation of those pictorial relationships. For didactic purposes, we refer to the two works as if they were the same or as if one were the mirror of the other, as the structure and concept do not differ in both. Two significantly different versions of the same concept, one is a finished draft and the other is an unfinished definitive work.

4 THE GEOPOLITICS OF THE CORONATION BY PORTO-ALEGRE

The reading of a painting could start not by the characters, but by the different forms they occupy the space within the frame. There is a structure of image organization that defines the symbolic places occupied by the characters inside the Room of Imperial Coronation. The Corinthian columns in the background, like those of Renaissance paintings, delimit the hierarchy and the different temporalities inscribed in the pictorial

composition. Before observing the characters in the painting, therefore, it is important to observe the “geopolitics” of the image, that is, the different places in which Porto-Alegre places each social group, symbolically separated by the four columns of the background.

The four columns demarcate five different spaces of occupation in the image, which define a possible hierarchical relationship between the characters. The relationship begins at the base, on the left, and rises towards the apex of the hierarchy, on the right, with the figure of Dom Pedro II, and ends, in the right corner, with the ministers and dignitaries of the Empire. Looking at these five different spaces of power, from right to left, the highest space is that of the Emperor and the ministers of defense and justice, who are just below him, in the second space. In the first space, in the right corner of the image, are dignitaries and members of the Court. In the third symbolic space, there is the place of the Church, in which the bishop appears nearly alone, with the Prayer Book and the Imperial Constitution at his feet. The fourth space is that of the Counselor of the Imperial House and the ministers of finance, foreign trade, navy, and bishops.

The fifth space is the place for representatives and other guests. In the foreground, members of Parliament and other important guests, who go out of focus in the background until, back there, the curious people squeeze in to watch the ceremony.

In the cabin above, isolated from the political space dwelling in the horizontal plane below, the princesses, sisters of the Emperor, and their ladies-in-waiting. On the right side of the princesses’ cabin, behind the columns and the chandelier, is the diplomatic box (Description of the Building, 1841), which was not painted in the unfinished *Coronation* and, in the coronation *Sketch*, is not visible. On the left side of the princesses’ cabin, in the upper left corner of the image, the painting of January 9, “*dia do fico*”, discernible only in the unfinished version (Figure 2). “*Dia do Fico*”, meaning *the day he stayed*, represents the moment when Dom Pedro I decided not to return to Portugal with his father, Dom João VI, and stay to proclaim the independence of Brazil.

However, in addition to this form of hierarchical organization of the different power spheres related to the Empire of Brazil, the Corinthian

columns also separate, as in Renaissance paintings, four different temporalities: a) the present time of the characters who, in their different symbolic places, participate in the ceremony; b) the past time of the emperor's father and the dynasty's glory, represented by Dom Pedro II's gaze at the painting of Dom Pedro I's "*dia do fico*" and by the throne with his symbol and majestic attire; c) the time of the retrospective future of the Prayer Book and the Imperial Constitution; and d) the future time of the child's gaze, the only character who looks at us, who symbolizes hope.

5 THE PRESENT TIME OF THE CHARACTERS

The painting of the coronation has a figurative intention. It would be the equivalent, today, to a documentary photograph. A historical record of an event that happened, to be kept as a visual memory for posterity. According to França (1975, p. 45, translated), the painting depicts "the moment when Dom Pedro II was proclaimed Emperor, on July 18, 1841, by the Archbishop of Bahia, Dom Romualdo Antonio de Seixas". The Emperor is already crowned and holds a scepter in his right hand.

Some of the characters are evidenced by the records of the ceremonial protocols (*Diário do Rio de Janeiro*, 1841a, s/p; 1841b, s/p; 1841c, s/p), others by their positions and symbols, clothes and objects, and several are recognizable by their own complexions. Porto-Alegre was an experienced painter. Either in the sketch or in the large unfinished canvas it is possible to recognize the faces of various characters present at the occasion.

It is interesting that, under the areas symbolically split by the columns, the group of bishops is neither in the left nor in the central area, but between them. The Cross of Christ (which appears only in the *Sketch*) seems to symbolize this mediation between the space of the sacred and the profane. As in Schmitt (1998, p. 24), for Porto-Alegre the Church is the *complexio oppositorum*, the complex of oppositions so comprehensive and elastic that it welcomes masters and slaves, employers and employees, progressives and conservatives. Bishops stand on the threshold between law and power, sacred and profane, the king and God.

The present time of the bodies, organized in the spaces of power defined by the columns, organizes the scene in different political layers.

The columns divide the people, the priesthood, the imperial government, and the emperor. But the present tense is only a first layer of meaning in the picture. There is another, a deeper layer, which dialogues with the past, with the glorious foundations of the emperor's father, Dom Pedro I, the founder of the empire.

6 THE KINGDOM AND ITS GLORY FROM THE PAST

In unfinished of the painting, measuring 743 x 485 cm, from the collection of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute, one can better observe the glance of Dom Pedro II towards the painting of the “*dia do fico*” with his father, Dom Pedro I. In the *Sketch*, which is in the National Historical Museum, this detail is not noticeable, because Dom Pedro II's eyes were erased or peeled off over time

Instead of looking toward the future, Dom Pedro II looks back to the past. But it is not the past of the Constitution, nor of the eternal time of God in the Prayer Book, but to the frame located in the upper left corner of the image. According to a report by França (1975, p. 41), who worked on the restoration process of the work, the image is a painting that depicts the 9th of January, “*dia do fico*”³, which was the first act of foundation of the Brazilian Empire. On the other side of the composition, there was another painting, according to França (1975, p. 41), depicting the cry for independence on the banks of the Ipiranga river, another historical moment of Dom Pedro I's glory. In the *Sketch of the coronation* these two paintings are not visible. In the unfinished *Coronation* it became possible to identify, after the restoration work, only the painting of *dia do fico*.

³ There is a divergence regarding the authorship of the two paintings portrayed on the ceiling of the Coronation Room of Dom Pedro II, about which we have not found further information. According to a report by França (1975, p. 41), who worked in the process of restoring the work of Porto-Alegre, the painting of “*dia do fico*”, located in the upper left corner of the image, was made by Porto-Alegre with the help of José dos Reis Carvalho. However, according to the Description of the Building (1841) published that year, the painting “*dia do fico*” was by Moreaux. On the other side of the composition there was another painting, according to França (1975, p. 41) conceived by Porto-Alegre himself and executed by the painter José dos Reis Carvalho depicting the cry for independence on the banks of the Ipiranga river. However, in the Description of the Building (1841), the painting of the 7th of September, of the cry for independence, was made by Barandier. Also according to the Description of the Building (*Descrição do Edifício*, 1841, translated), the works by Porto-Alegre on the Coronation Room were the paintings “of the two abdications of the Founder of the Empire [Dom Pedro I] and the allegory of the effects of the Emperor's coming of age, as well as other many pieces, which were made by himself”.

In a world split between liberals and conservatives, republicans and monarchists, Brazilians and Portuguese, Porto-Alegre preferred to build the image of an Emperor who looks to the past, as if making a commitment not to the Imperial Constitution of his Father, which is in front of him by the stairs, but to the maintenance of the glorious past of independence.

The imagery of Porto-Alegre's is not very different from the mythological construction of Portugal's glorious past in Camões' *Lusíada*, of Rome in Virgil's *Aeneid*, or in Greece's past in Ulysses' *Odyssey* or, even, in modern totalitarian discourses, which preach the existence of a glorious past to, in the face of crises, summon the people to *make Brazil great again*, to make the country glorious again through the biopolitical segregation of the social groups chosen as culprits. At the time of the coronation painting, the crisis that affected the political elites was the insecurity of their interests, the rebellions, and the danger of breaking with the monarchic regime to, as was happening in the entire American continent, institutionalize a republic.

The image of the Emperor, then, not only symbolized, but personified security, sovereignty, and the territorial unity of the Empire, in the face of the fragmentation and conflicts existing in the Spanish republics. The issue of slavery and deep social inequalities was not put on the agenda then. The political agenda of the time, as was the threat of communism in the 20th century, was the threat of republican fragmentation of the Empire, disorder, anarchy, and other antitheses to conservative thinking in the 19th century. The antitheses of European Liberalism, however, were not problematized in political agendas. Even with several liberals in politics, the regime lived peacefully with slavery, with the "servile element", a euphemistic expression used at the time by politicians and also by Dom Pedro II himself in his Throne Speeches (*Senado Federal*, 2019, p. 497, 630 e 635).

The imperial clothes arranged on a table, in the right corner of the image, also refer to the imperial symbols of his father, Dom Pedro I. The military hat, the green poncho-shaped cloak, the yellow feather ruffle, the imperial sword of Ipiranga and the knight's gloves are his father's majestic

attire. As if the body of Dom Pedro I, although physically absent from the ceremony, was symbolically present through the political embodiment of his symbols.

Porto-Alegre painted not only a portrait of the historical present of the coronation, but also of the continuity between the past, present and future of the empire. The present of the characters separated and organized into political strata by the columns in the background establishes a dialog with the glorious past of Dom Pedro I, founder of the Empire. A past, however, based on an exclusively colonial memory, which ignored slavery, the holocaust of colonization on indigenous peoples, and the deep social inequalities between the different social classes of the time. The empire's past glory was undoubtedly a selective glory.

The imperial badges (the armillary sphere in the hand of the Foreign Minister and the Hand of Justice in the scepter of the Minister of Justice, the imperial flag) are also important political references to tradition, to the always glorious past of a world not yet accustomed to valuing the future. It is important to understand the symbolic function of royal badges as artistic forms to embody an ever glorious, *semper victor* past. The mythologization of the sovereign body happens when the prince always presents himself as a victorious prince (Peterson, 1999, p. 133). Each badge and symbol embody a network of meanings that mark a glorious tradition of the sovereign on which a mysterious trinitarian connection between king, law and faith is built and consolidated.

The Crown with the cross and the zodiacal orbit, the scepter with the dragon of the arms of House Bragança, the sword, cloak, ring, medals of the Orders, coats of arms and shields complement this symbology of the empire's past. The throne is also an important symbol of dynastic rights to succession. It symbolizes the continuity of the crown and royal dignity. Even if the emperor's physical body vanishes in the natural finitude of life, the throne symbolizes the political space over which dynastic descent can continue to exercise everlasting sovereignty.

7 THE CONSTITUTION AND THE PRAYER BOOK REPRESENTING A RETROSPECTIVE FUTURE

The Constitution and the Prayer Book are one on top of the other, as an iconographic paradox, representing the future and the past altogether.

To use an expression by Derrida (1967, p. 14; 1994, p. 88), they embody a “previous future”, a retrospective future: a relationship between the past of political and religious decisions that promise, through normative bonds, the future.

The Constitution, in the form of an unrolled parchment, represents the unholy, modern foundation of sovereign power, which is the pact with the people. The Prayer Book, in the form of an open book, represents the theological, ancient foundation of sovereign power. It is curious how the ceremonial then chose to embody the Imperial Constitution in the form of a parchment, which is an ancient material to represent a modern concept and, at the same time, chose to embody the Prayer Book in the form of a book, which is a modern material to represent an old concept.

The Constitution and the Prayer Book are not simply texts in the semiotic sense. They are scriptures in Derrida’s sense (1967, p. 17). They are powerful symbolic references that connect the signifier’s ideality and historical materiality. They connect past and future, normatively linking time (Rocha, 2013), through an ambivalently religious and political character of the retrospective future of the empire. It is a visual correlation of the texts inscribed in the preambles of the laws and official communications of the Empire, which at the time of the constitutional monarchy of Dom João VI claimed to be the enacted law: “by the grace of God and by the Constitution of the Empire”; or in the representative monarchies of Dom Pedro I and Dom Pedro II: “by the Grace of God and the unanimous acclamation of the peoples”. It is a pictorial form of affirmation, on a visual level, of the Emperor’s majesty.

Three temporalities: the past of his father’s “*dia do fico*”, the present of the consecration, and the retrospective future of a new Brazilian constitutional monarchy, formed not only by the sacred power of the domain of faith, but also by the unholy political power of the constitutional pact with the people. But there is another fourth temporality in Porto-Alegre’s painting. As a disturbing image, no one

⁴ The information that the Constitution is the parchment and not the open book can be found in the description of the imperial badges, published on the eve of the ceremony, in the newspaper *Jornal Diário do Rio de Janeiro* (1841c, s/p) of 07/14/1841. According to the article in the newspaper, the Constitution was written manually on parchment by the calligraphic art of Comendador Varejão, who was a Senior Graduate Officer of the Secretary of State for Justice Affairs.

looks at the newly crowned Emperor. The characters look at each other and only a single character looks at us in the eye: a child, with a naughty, childish gesture, in the lower right corner of the image: it is the look of hope into the future.

8 THE EYES REPRESENTED BY PORTO-ALEGRE

An experienced portraitist, Porto-Alegre knew the value of gazes and the position of the hands in the visual arts. In portraits of kings, where the eyes glance at or where the hands and feet point to is very important. Unlike the consecration of Moreaux, in which all eyes are turned to the Emperor's body, in the Coronation of Porto-Alegre the eyes are dispersed in complex networks of relationships. It is not about random gazing. Experienced artists do not leave their characters' eyes or hands to chance.

The painting of the Coronation is not just a historical record of what happened, but a careful composition of 45 portraits of each of the highest-ranking members of the imperial government of Brazil in 1841. Each character in the painting is thought of as a portrait, integrated both to the hierarchical organization drawn by the Corinthian columns in the background as to the relationships they establish with each other.

More than *imitatio, decorum* plays an irresistible gravitational force here: all the characters need to do well in the painting, with dignity, pomp and authority that undoubtedly surpasses those of the real scene. Nobody is old or obese there, nobody is tired or sweating under their formal clothes, in the heat of Rio de Janeiro. The emperor, who was a 15-year-old teenager, has an adult's body in the painting. A game between scene, scenario and staging to not only connect the being with the should-be, but also with the desire to be.

However, in a disturbing way, in Porto-Alegre's painting no one glances at the Emperor. Undoubtedly, he is in the highest, most important, most enlightened position, and all the lines, shapes and pictorial relationships in the image lead the eye towards him. Everything in the image leads the eye towards the Emperor. But, paradoxically, no one except the bishop is actually looking at him.

We can understand Porto-Alegre's eyes as symbols of acclamation. It is the act of looking towards an object that glorifies it. As in medieval and Renaissance paintings, both the gaze and the direction of the feet and hands are delicate forms of pictorial communication about what should receive our attention in the image. The looks and gestures of acclamation build the glory of sovereign power on the image. Nothing very different from what is done today, in the field of political propaganda, with the construction of the image of candidates being cheered by the people, with the attention of children who, like little baroque angels, glorify the candidate's body. Nothing very different also than the modern acclamation of public opinion (Schmitt, 1984, p. 323), which in the Middle Ages took place in rituals, liturgies and political ceremonials, but today seems to have moved to a much more comprehensive means of dissemination, via forms of consensus in the mass media (Agamben, 2007, p. 283). The political gaze of the characters in the painting are gazes of power glorification.

However, neither does anyone look at the parchment of the Constitution, which is there, solemnly open under the Prayer Book. And nobody looks at the people. The representatives present in the left corner of the image look out of the frame, that is, towards a hidden reference of meaning, which cannot – or should not – appear in the *decorum* of the coronation painting.

The artist painted a monarchic scene in which not only does no one look at the people, but they do not even have faces, they do not even have identities. The people are an amorphous, blurred mass of heads huddled in the background of the image. As in Debret's *Coronation of Dom Pedro I*, the position defined by Porto-Alegre for us, observers of the painting, is that of an important member of the Court, situated in the privileged position of someone standing, at the bishop's height, above everyone else and second only to the Emperor in that political environment. And at the same time, we are in a perpendicular position to the representatives of the people, which places us as participants in the scene alongside these representatives. A clever way of saying that only we, in our position as participants in the painting, can look at the people.

Porto-Alegre draws a portrait of a monarchy centered on the government's *corpus mysticum*, with the people appearing only as a formless, faceless, identityless foundation that no one looks at. But as participants in the composition, in the position of representatives, we, observers of the painting, are also included in it. And maybe we are the only ones able to see the people.

The critical analysis made by Squeff (2007, p. 123) highlights the fact that the emperor was just an ornament of the monarchy, since those who really commanded were the Counselor and Aureliano, leaders of the Joana Club, which controlled access to Dom Pedro II and held enormous political influence. Schwarcz (1998, p. 149) also observes that, due to the emperor's age, he grew up away from the direction and affairs of the state. And one can also assume the influence of other groups, oligarchies, and brotherhoods that operated at the time pursuing their own interests (Ribeiro, 1995, p. 74; Souza, 1999, p. 92; Schwarcz, 1998, p. 185).

The imaginary construction of anarchy as a problem, conflicts, social divisions and the republican threat produced the image of Emperor Dom Pedro II as a symbol of union, cohesion and order. A symbol of the unity of the empire in the face of the conflicts and separatist revolutions of the time.⁵ But Porto-Alegre's perspective speaks louder to us than legal historiography. The imperial government is the sovereign power, self-acclaimed and glorified by the coronation of Dom Pedro II. A power that only looks at itself.

But there is one character who looks at us. In the midst of 45 portraits with scattered looks, a character looks us in the eye. It is none of the authorities present, who just look at each other. Nor is the Emperor,

⁵ It is important to remember that, at the time of the coronation of Dom Pedro II, in addition to the recent experience of the Empire with the revolt *Inconfidência Mineira* of 1789, five declared civil wars were taking place: the *Farroupilha* Revolution in Rio Grande do Sul, *Cabanagem* in the Amazon region and *Revolta dos Malês* in Bahia since 1835, as well as the *Sabinada* in Bahia since 1837 and *Revolta dos Balaios* in Maranhão since 1838. It is also worth remembering that the day before D. Pedro I abdicated the throne, *Noite das Garrafadas*, in 1831, was taking place, among other things, in the nationalist form of the division between Brazilians and Portuguese. People shouted in the streets of Rio de Janeiro: "long live the Constitution" and "long live Dom Pedro II", who at the time was a 5-year-old child, but who, unlike his father, was a native Brazilian. The physiological, infantile body of the future emperor was already legitimized by the glory of public opinion as a symbol of the unity of the mystical body of the empire.

who looks back to his father's glory. It is a child who looks at us in the eye (Figure 3).

The image of a child is a form of personification of the future. It symbolizes the continuity of life, and its gaze represents hope. The two children are in different positions when compared in the *Sketch* and the unfinished *Coronation*. But in both paintings, they are equally naughty and one of them looks at us to say that we, and not the imperial government, are responsible for the future of Brazil.



Figure 31 – Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, *Sketch for the Coronation of D. Pedro II (Estudo para Coroação de D. Pedro II)* detail (1845). Oil on canvas, 108 x 79 cm. Courtesy of the National History Museum.

The glance of acclamation, which glorifies sovereign power, also points to the responsibility for the conduct of Brazil. At the moment of the greatest glory of the newly crowned emperor, in a majestic pose in front of

the throne, with the crown on his head, scepter, cloak and all the imperial symbols, only does the bishop look at him. And he, in turn, looks to the past of his father's glory in "*dia do fisco*". The imperial government looks to itself. The representatives look at something out of frame. But a child looks at us. It is the look of hope in the future. The children of the future do not look at the Emperor, nor at the parchment of the Constitution, nor even at the Ministers and Representatives. The future is us.

9 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The *Coronation of Dom Pedro II* by Porto-Alegre was an unfinished work, abandoned by the painter and twice forgotten by history. Only in 1907 was the artwork found by journalist Ernesto Sena, folded and moldy, in a closet in Paço do Rio de Janeiro (Squeff, 2007, p. 108). But not to say that this erasure was a mere historical accident, the canvas was again abandoned in the basement of the Fine Arts School of Rio de Janeiro in Rio de Janeiro until 1975.

The artist explained the reasons why he did not complete the final canvas. He wrote, in the at the time, the following text, rescued by Galvão (1959, p. 20-21, translated):

The Counselor asked me for one of the rooms of the palace, in favor of the Government, a painting of the Consecration of His Majesty; Four times have I been distracted from that canvas to others, and four times have I returned to it, already unwillingly and very sick, and with a dilated vein in my left arm, because of the efforts I made, without having anyone to help me, and forced myself to grind the paints many times, because I had no one to do it for me, because the only slave I owned, and who served as a free model at the Academy many times, I was forced to send him out, because he intended a crime. I spent two years of horrible moral and physical suffering, with the help of the courage that God gives to a man who is aware of the injustice of other men, and of the state of his country in regard to the fine arts. The Imperial Government demanded the house where I work; I gave it up right away, and rolled up my canvas, like the others, hoping for better luck.

The canvas was rolled up, unfinished, and abandoned in a room, which was later occupied by the Geography Society. Porto-Alegre, burdened by teaching at the Academy and by other jobs, never returned to it. In 1907, Vicente Piragibe, editor of the newspaper *Jornal Correio da Manhã*, arranged for the exhibition of the work at the Fine Arts National

School. After that, the canvas was again abandoned in the basement of the School, “as if it were something useless and worthless” (França, 1975, p. 45, translated).

Restoration work began in 1974 at the National History Museum. The paintwork was bent, dirty, with mold stains and tears in several places (França, 1975, p. 45). As a bare canvas, a painting marginalized by history, it was never a mere iconographic record of a scene from the ceremonial consecration and coronation of the emperor. It was a portrait of the Brazilian monarchy of its time. A portrait in which, behind the sumptuous, dignified, patriotic and majestic surface of the ceremonial, the eyes of the characters point, in fact, to the traces of the power relations of the time.

Despite all the lines and shapes directing the gaze to the body of the newly crowned emperor, in his moment of glory, with all the royal symbols, only the bishop is looking at him. And despite the press leading public opinion, at the time, to the modern and glorious character of that representative monarchic regime, no one is looking at the people, nor at the Constitution. The representatives of the people are looking at something that is out of the frame. It is the visual form of silence. The frame and the passe-partout control what is shown and what is hidden in a painting, what is said and what is silenced in it. The emperor also does not look at the people. He looks at the painting of “*dia do fico*”, his father’s past glory. The ministers, advisers, and other dignitaries who form the government look at each other. The government looks to itself.

Also, no-one is looking at the Constitution or the Prayer Book, despite it being open in front of everyone. The scriptures seem to be more of royal symbols among the many others present in the image than the foundations that embody the covenants with people and with God. The merely symbolic character of the Constitution, without the political commitment to the inscription of laws in the materiality of social relations (Neves, 1992), can be a characteristic also observed, a century earlier, by the artist.

But there is also hope. The child’s gaze of the young nobleman is the only one that looks us in the eye. It is the look of hope for the future,

which points not to the Emperor, to the Constitution, to the people of the time or to the Government, but to us, to our political responsibility.

When looking at Porto-Alegre's painting, we are not at the National History Museum looking at the *Sketch* or at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute contemplating the great unfinished canvas of the *Coronation*. We are inside the Palace Hall, in 1841, along with the other characters. Art, even the figurative art of the 19th century, calls us to partake in it. Our position as observers is not merely contemplative, as we actively participate in the reading of the image, with our history, our culture and our fears and desires. Art is an experience not only for the artist, but also for the observer. It is a call from the artist to participate with him or her in this experience. The verb used by Coli (2001, p. 121) makes perfect sense here: we "attend" an artwork.

The experience of the Emperor's Coronation by Porto-Alegre is the breaking of the rhetorical ellipse of the chiasm of power. At the same time that sovereign power is based on the acclamation of the participants (Church, Parliament, Court, Government and the People), connected to the badges and symbols of the glory of the past, the dispersed gazes subvert the chiasm, stating different references of meaning. The emperor's body remains an important symbol of the unity and eternity of the empire's *corpus mysticum*, but power lies at other verges, much more complex, dynamic and, as can be seen in the eyes of the representatives painted by Porto-Alegre, mysterious, transparent, silent.

The painting does not end where the canvas ends. The frame of the picture does not mark the boundaries of the artwork. The frame is where it only begins. The *Coronation* by Porto-Alegre is one of those works of art in history that overflows the limits of the frame and invites us, through the eyes of a child, to take our responsibility for the future.

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