

*The role of media in the deconstruction of Portuguese Empire
The case of Cipriano Barata*

Luiz Carlos Ferraz Manini

Universidade Estadual de Londrina, Brazil

0383

The Asian Conference on Arts & Humanities 2013

Official Conference Proceedings 2013

Abstract

This article intends to discuss how the media, in their particular expression of print journalism, contributed to the construction of certain realities that shaped Brazilian independence, thus deconstructing the Portuguese Empire in America. To that end, we made some discussions about the emergence of the press. its arrival in Brazil, and the way the journalist Cipriano Barata, by appropriating certain interpretations of the Enlightenment, assisted in public discussions that took place in this turbulent time the country's history.

Introduction

The printing press in the western world arose in the fifteenth century, a moment in which can be established the transition from a world marked by the Middle Ages to what has been called the Modern world. While the temporal boundaries that establish this transition are questionable, one should realize that many processes in the cultural, economic, political and social set up took place, generating this new configuration. Thus, the appearance of the printed word does not occur in a vacuum, but in a particular context of the establishment of new structures, which appear in a completely connected structure. Benedict Anderson called it the emergence of print capitalism, a particular phase of European development in which the media played a key role, that was the establishment of new market relations, by influencing and promoting, for example, religious change, by boosting Reform, or, in the cultural level, the shift from a predominantly oral society to a new context of written culture (2008, p. 71).

However, we cannot think the emergence of the press only from the economic point of view, which Anderson even hints in his work. We need to think it as a product of culture, embedded in a web of relationships that connect to politics, social organization, among others. Thus, attention should be paid to the study of the press as a preferential source for knowledge of ideas in a period about the world, but also understand that the analysis of their material conditions of production, the intended audience, the forms of reading, are fundamental aspects to this understanding. (CHARTIER 2007, p 38).

In Brazil, the emergence of the press was a late phenomenon, occurring only in the nineteenth century, but whose installation has made several changes to occur or to consolidate. As Isabel Lustosa says, " A imprensa foi, na transição de Reino Unido para país independente, o laboratório onde tiveram lugar embrionárias e imprevisíveis formas de competição política " (2000, p.16). In the words of the same author, "Com o progresso econômico viera também o intelectual. A abertura das mentes era facilitada pelo acesso a obras antes proibitivas por serem tão raras e tão caras, além de literalmente proibidas pelo próprio obscurantismo da Coroa portuguesa" (2000, p. 24). Although José Marques de Melo approach various aspects that have contributed to this delay (2003, p. 113), reinforcing an already established vision from the important study by Nelson Werneck Sodré (1973), it can be said that the political changes of the early nineteenth century are influenced by the emergence of this form of communication.

In this context, several characters have gained prominence, since they were responsible for the emergence of public opinion, and may be treated as a new literate elite, who settled in the country. As Marco Morel says, " é na criação de um espaço público de crítica, quando as opiniões políticas assim publicitadas destacavam-se dos governos, que começa a se instaurar a chamada opinião pública " (2011, p. 30). It is in this particular context that comes a new figure that Morel calls "escritor patriota, difusor de idéias e pelejador de embates e que achava terreno fértil para atuar numa época repleta de transformações " (p. 31).

A character

Among the many journalists who produced debates in this period, we found the figure of Cipriano Barata. He was born in the state of Bahia, in 1762 or 1763, since there are two records for this event. His father was a lieutenant and, like her mother, white people, who constituted a representative of a middle class whose acting was long neglected by the Brazilian historiography. Thus, one of the ways to change this social situation, which was not absolutely comfortable within a society marked by a dichotomy between land masters and slaves, was the opportunity to study in Europe at French and Portuguese universities in particular, like the case of Coimbra. At this location, particularly, Brazilian students had contact with the ideas of Enlightenment that was spreading across Europe. However, the path followed by the Portuguese Enlightenment differed in stimulating scientific and economic activities in order to strengthen the royal power.

This concept, also present in the reformulation of the idea of royal power, through the action of the Marquis of Pombal, was based on the ideas of authors such as Italian jurist Carlo Martini, which defended the natural law theses, stating that the society was founded up from their set of needs, and for its satisfaction, this social body need the figure of the king, who commands based on the law and encouraging scientific and commercial activities, thus building the design of the so-called Civil Empire. However, we should not assume that such a view comes unchanged for Brazilian students who attended the university, since their own conceptions of the world comes loaded from the context from which emerge, namely the American colonial world. Again, these ideas will be absorbed and restructured in accordance with specific mental utensils. So reading the Enlightenment made by Brazilians passes through two different screens: the Portuguese context and the colonial origin of the students.

Barata studied at the University of Coimbra in the period after Pombal's reforms, which reinforces the character of its illustrated formation. After his return to Brazil, he was indicted and arrested on suspicion of being a mentor of a social movement called Conjuração Baiana, an emancipacionist movement occurred in Bahia in 1798. This movement followed some lines of ideals already launched in Minas Gerais, nine years earlier. It proposed independence, but also had several concerns, like the French Revolution in 1789. Thus, the historiography devoted to see this movement more like a social concern, which is quite different from the movement in Minas Gerais, nine years earlier, which had already proposed independence, but that was composed by its land owners and rich men, instead of poor people, like at Bahia. After his arrest and subsequent release in 1800, the biographical aspect of Cipriano Barata is taken by a vacuum, since there are very few documents of that period. We can assume that at this time he acted as a doctor and sugar cane farmer, in which one of the few documents available would be a letter to a friend, which, among other things, refers to blacks in Brazil, saying it is not possible to rely on this "African bastards". This passage in particular could raise numerous discussions on the effective participation and involvement of Barata in the 1798 conspiracy, since it would be inconsistent with the movement participants composition, mostly blacks and mulattos. However, Jesus Martin-Barbero, in his study about the media, presents an interesting passage in which it takes the ideas of people, class, mass and popular culture, trying to understand the audience to which they relate communication theories. In the beginning of his work, Barbero said that, in Enlightenment age, the people is understood as an instrument of

power legitimacy, and not as a set of people who have a visceral and deep connection with the earth and a common destiny, ideas that would prevail under Romanticism (1997, p. 24). This people, despite their vital role in limiting royal power, is also seen as a formulation which is intended to be overcome, due to their ignorance and superstition. The people is necessary, but it's not understood in its autonomy and creativity, ideas that later it would be given in studies of popular culture. Thus, the thought of Cipriano Barata links to this kind of thinking, even if, on a personal level, he does not present particular sympathy for African people, what is relatively common in a slave society.

However, we can not underestimate the extent of Barata's influence during this period, since as the time that unfolds in Portugal the Liberal Revolution of 1820, his name will be chosen as a representative of his state in the Cortes that were formed. Along with other members chosen at Bahia, he embarked towards Europe with the aim of defending the interests of his state, and, just after the reluctance of the Cortes to await the arrival of Brazil Deputies, he began to advocate an effective "Brazilian cause".

After a tumultuous participation in the Cortes, during which he physically assaulted a Brazilian deputy because of their pro-Portugal positions, Cipriano Barata returns to his country in the end of 1822 and cannot land in Bahia due to the conflict that unfolded between local troops and the forces of General Madeira de Melo. At that moment, he settles in Pernambuco, where edits and publishes his newspaper, called Sentinel of Liberty.

A context

The newspaper's publication is only possible because of the changes caused by the coming of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, in 1808, in the context of the Napoleonic wars in Europe. Beset by the threat of declaring war on England, because the Continental Blockade, the Portuguese opted for transmigration towards America, setting up an unprecedented situation in the colonial setting. The presence of the king and his entourage in America caused the phenomenon called by historian Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias as the "internalization of the metropolis", what is meant in the sense that the royal family also brought to the country its statal bureaucratic structure and create a new social environment, in which the inhabitants of Brazil began to meddle in public affairs and thus seek upward mobility in a context marked by the relationships derived from the Old Regime (2005).

In this scenario, seriously modified by the presence of the Portuguese nobility, some innovations emerged, such as the creation of the Royal Press, responsible for the emergence of the first publications in Brazil. Although José Marques de Melo, as well as other authors claim that such a move was not a novelty (2003 p. 142), we can say that this experience is configured as the first authorized by official power. Serving initially as a channel for disseminating news about the royal family and the role of the king, the press is controlled by censorship, a situation that lasted until 1820, when the Revolution erupts in Portugal. Encouraged by liberalism and sense of abandonment that was raging among the Portuguese, the Cortes were assembled and made several demands, as the immediate return of the king to Europe, at the risk of losing the

throne, the request for approval of a constitution, and amid such huge changes, also demanded the return of Brazil to its former colonial status. Also appeared in the set of requirements the need of press freedom, which was granted by the king in 1821 and became effective also in the colony. This way, it opened up the possibility of a public discussion of ideas, which contributed to the emergence of public opinion in the country, a phenomenon spurred by the huge amount of papers that emerged at that time, bringing to the public the policy discussions, so far restricted to small groups that monopolized power.

In this context, all existing political ideas found their place amidst this public space for discussion, as called by Marco Morel (2003). These thoughts were expressed through a particular kind of printed media, which characterized as the stage of manual printing, in the timeline proposed by Nelson Werneck Sodré (1973, p. 34). These early newspapers have particular characteristics, such as being affordable to most of people; its small format; having a fickle periodicity; being hand-made, usually by only one individual, called the editor. It also featured a virulent language, bringing to the printed media many of the expressions found in the informal oral language, showing that the two universes do not dissociate completely.

The political stance of these newspapers followed two basic lines of ideas: in one hand, discussing the possibility of union with Portugal, in maintaining the situation of United Kingdom established in late 1815; on the other hand, advocating the separation of Brazil from Portugal. These positions became more or less strong due to the events that unfold in the Cortes and also because of the political positions taken by D. Pedro. However, it must be realized, as Isabel Lustosa points, that the periodicals of this period not only reported about the events, but produce facts (2000, p. 16)

So, one could call the staying of prince D. Pedro in Brazil, which was consecrated as the Dia do Fico, as one of the first facts produced by the press. In that event, the significant position taken by Pedro at that moment, was just possible thanks to various signatures obtained by the group headed by Gonçalves Ledo and José Clemente Pereira through their newspaper, the *Revérbero Constitucional Fluminense*. Another key moment in the process leading to independence concerns the installation of the Constituent Assembly.

Conceived as a place for the discussion of the bases that would form the new society and the new Brazilian State, Renato Lopes Leite highlights how the role of the newspaper *Correio do Rio de Janeiro* was decisive for this event. In his words "a consequência da ação pública veiculada pelo periódico *Correio do Rio de Janeiro* acabou desencadeando o processo de convocação da *Assembléia Constituinte e Legislativa do Brasil*" (2000, p.25).

In this sense, one can say that the whole process of independence is marked by the discussions that took place among the periodicals, which brought the political discussions into the realm of public discussion. Werneck Sodré pointed out that the role of the press in that period was developed primarily in places where political activity had greater relevance (1973, p. 122). Thus, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Bahia, Pernambuco, were provinces in which this activity became more important. So we find Cipriano Barata. at Pernambuco, founding his journal in 1823, and also participating in the discussions that permeate the political landscape. However, in the

strict view of the dates, its publication would be after the *fait accompli* of the *Sete de Setembro*, but one should reopen discussions on the meanings and markers of Brazilian independence.

When we talk about the subject of the independence of Brazil, there are several questions that historiography raises and has raised over almost 200 years. What would have been your fundamental milestones? In that time we could actually say that Brazil has become really free? There is a whole history of independence that takes several dates and facts as landmarks, like the works of Caio Prado Junior, which holds that freedom of Brazil is established at the time when the colonial system bonds are broken with the opening of the ports to the friendly nations, in 1808. After the end of the commercial monopoly, Brazil would maintain only one loose and unimportant connection to its metropolis, which would break soon. A more traditional historiography, in its conservative background, preferred to see the September 7th, 1822, as the founder of Brazilian liberation since D. Pedro, at that time, decided by the breaking of ties with Portugal and declared independence, at the banks of the Ipiranga creek. However, as stated by Eduardo Romero de Oliveira, such date only becomes important by the time of the abdication of the emperor, in April 1831, because, until this epoch, the October 12th, the emperor's birthday and the date of his coronation, was seen as the founder moment of the country (2005, p. 61).

However, we believe that independence has developed over the years too, as a process and not just in the form of a "fact", as Cecilia Oliveira pointed (1999, p. 13), since the very concept of independence that encouraged the participants of the liberation movement is linked to the construction of a state that can guarantee the rights of the population, even if in this discussion there is a clear distinction between those who may be considered citizens and those who will be limited to the non-citizens category. That would be done by the establishment of a Constitutional Charter, which had the intent of limiting the powers of the Emperor, to ensure a greater exercise of freedom to the people. It is understood that even the conception of the people that prevails at the moment could be debatable, but this discussion does not fit within the limits of this work.

Thus, we understand that the newspapers published by Barata still falls within that process, which could be completed in 1824, at the time it establishes a Constitution for Brazil, founding this new society based and regulated by the laws' action.

A newspaper and its discussions

The *Sentinel of Liberty* was released in April 1823, amid the struggles for the liberation of Bahia, Barata's homeland, as well as in the process of accession of the provinces of Rio de Janeiro's command. Once Cipriano Barata was a sharply critical of the direction the government was taking, he was imprisoned for long periods, which explains the stages of fragmentation in his newspaper. However, we should remember that, despite the intermittency in the publication, this journal is a publication whose duration becomes remarkable, since it will remain being written until 1835. In its first phase, it has 66 editions, which extend until November 1823, when he is arrested. A very striking feature of the newspaper *Sentinel of Liberty* is its

construction, since the writer shows a story, a fact, and about the same he weaves opinions, often quite critical, which take up most of the text. The subjects on which he writes are varied, since the subject of street lighting in editing May 15, 1823, until political issues in which he compares the ministry of Joseph Boniface to the work of the Marquis of Pombal in Portugal, in the periodic of May 28, 1823.

There are some excerpts from Cipriano Barata's newspapers we selected in this first moment of its publication in order to analyze the discussion that it promotes, in line with the process that was being developed in Rio de Janeiro. On June 25, 1823, Barata launches its *Sentinel* #24, which begins with a important statement, that shows the impact the newspaper has had on his formulations of a particular nation project. So says the editor: "Muitas são as pessoas que abençoam a nossa Sentinela da Liberdade porque dizemos verdades, gritando contra coisas tortas a fim de que se procurem os meios de melhoramento" (2009, p. 289). It is an important passage in regard to the character of the periodicals of the time acquired, in order to intervene in reality and even educate the people, pointing out the problems that exist in the country, in order to alert the authorities to do something about it. In what follows, Barata makes a compliment to the military officers who have worked for the good of the country, citing the state of Pernambuco. It is one of the important distinctions that appear in his work, since it always refers to the Fatherland as the place of birth, and that is the expression that ends up being dominant in his texts. Subsequently, cites that Deputies from Ceará that are traveling to Rio de Janeiro, to take a seat in the Constituent Assembly, and this news adds a critic to a member of the entourage. In this passage, whose criticism is irrelevant at this point, Cipriano hints at one of the points of his political views, stating that "se em uma Revolução o povo reassume sua autoridade e os seu Direitos imprescritíveis, e destrói o seu Governo, aniquila os Reis, as Leis e tudo velho para criar o novo, segundo sua Soberana Vontade" (p. 291). To explain his vision of the Revolution, the author demonstrates that if the people do not have their rights guaranteed, they have the right to seek the reformulation of all forms of government, deposing royal authority, remaking the laws, in order to maintain these same rights. Barata takes his inspiration on John Locke's theory, of what is the revolution and about the government guidelines that must be followed. More than that, it promotes a public discussion, when removes this thoughts from the pages of books and brings it to the newspapers, to be seen, heard and discussed among the readers.

In another quote, the author takes up the importance of the provinces' fight against the former Portuguese government, highlighting the character of the independence that Brazil had been gaining. Benedict Anderson points out that a major feature in the discourse of and about nation formation is its supposed antiquity, compared with its real novelty (2008, p. 31). Therefore, it is necessary to reaffirm a particular past that opposes the situation that seeks to be validated in the present. Barata seems to confirm this hypothesis by highlighting past while the attitudes of Portugal, which had made Brazil a hostage in its colonial situation, stating "ódio ao Governo Velho, à Aristocracia de Fidalgos e ao Despotismo Ministerial" (p. 292), marks that the author wants to highlight in the past in order to create a new identity for the country that is arising, which would be possessed of "absoluta e perpétua independência" (p. 292). In yet another newspaper, Cipriano Barata brings this issue about the past to the discussion, as on 26 July 1823, when his text is a harsh criticism against celebrating the birthday of D. João VI, highlighting an ancient practice that should be forgotten, because it fits with what he wants to create for the country, forgetting about old habits.

This passage also emphasizes the sovereignty of Brazil, which by virtue of their wealth and capabilities, should not need to wait for "cerimônia quimérica das Nações Européias, chamada reconhecimento" (p. 292)

However, the passage that draws the most attention is referred to the role of the Emperor and his legitimacy when he says: ""E assim os mesmos Brasileiros, só por sua vontade, escolha e graça, fizeram que o Senhor Dom Pedro I fosse promovido igualmente ao posto de Imperador por maneiras extraordinárias e de salto" (p.293). In another publication, on July 23th, the author would place this issue again in slightly different terms, saying "pois um Rei ou Imperador, seja qual for, na presença de uma Nação, é poeira, é fumo, é vapor, é mero nada" (p. 348). It is emphasized the Emperor's condition as a instrument, since his choice and legitimacy resides in the people, which is sovereign and puts the ruler in its position, "para servir de Chefe do nosso Poder Executivo, segundo as leis fundamentais que nós todos fizemos e lhermos por meio de nossas Cortes liberais, Soberanas e livres" (p. 293). One should note that the choice of some words are crucial, as the idea of serving, since sovereignty resides in the people, that can therefore make laws they deem necessary and give them to the ruler, that can do nothing more than that, namely, to represent his people.

There is also, as might be found in another passage, no preference for D. Pedro to be the Emperor, not being recognized the dynastic question as a needed basis for his power, since the people, free and sovereign, "poderia escolher outra qualquer pessoa estranha e dar o posto ou Ofício e dignidade de Imperador se as circunstâncias o encaminhassem a esse fim" (p. 293).

In this troubled time of separation of Brazil from Portugal, and establish new bases for the independent country, leap to the eye such propositions, working towards building a new political legitimacy, through the action of a people, who chooses and dignifies their rulers, but that is also free to change them if it is necessary. It is this people, through their discussions and exposure to ideas that "fez a independência do Brasil e que criou o seu novo Império" (p. 302), as Barata would state in a newspaper published on July 2, 1823, a remarkable date on the process of liberation of his homeland, the state of Bahia.

Some final statements

These brief considerations concerning the words of Cipriano Barata, in his newspaper, gets into a larger process, that is the Brazil' independence . In several editions of his newspaper, the journalist reaffirms the idea of the sovereign people, whose power assured the monarch in his position. Takes up several times the question of the need to respect the laws that should start from the Emperor, responsible for the care, safety and quiet of the nation. We realize that, contrary to what some historians claim, that the positions of Barata did not fit in a Republican bias, and also disagreeing to the prosecution of some contemporaries who came to call him a Jacobin.

Barata expressed in his writings, as pointed out by the brief examples above, a notion of natural law inherited from the study in Portugal, where the Enlightenment served to a very specific purpose. In its reading, we can see the new filter that this theory is inside, to constantly reaffirm that the Emperor is necessary, but cannot put himself above the law, since that emanates from the people and serve them, and the ruler must be the instance which articulates that power. Thus, we can say that through Cipriano Barata's works, still little explored in Brazil, we can discern the fundamental role played by the media in the deconstruction of the Portuguese empire in America, bringing to the public these so far private discussions, the role of the emperor, the origin and legitimacy of laws, among other subjects. Barata was persecuted and spent long years in the empire prisons, but the seed that was launched, in search of freedom, cheered the spirits of the time, even if it was not, at first, the winning project.

References

- ANDERSON, Benedict, 2008. *Comunidades Imaginadas: reflexões sobre a origem e a difusão do nacionalismo*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- BARATA, Cipriano, 2008. *Sentinela da Liberdade e outros escritos (1821 - 1835)*. Organização e edição Marco Morel. São Paulo: EDUSP..
- BARROS, Mariana M.e MOREL, Marco, 2003. *Palavra, Imagem e Poder: o surgimento da imprensa no Brasil do século XIX*. Rio de Janeiro, DP&A.
- BRIGGS, Asa & BURKE, Peter, 2006. *Uma história social da mídia: de Gutenberg a Internet*. 2. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar Ed.
- CHARTIER, Roger, 2010. *A história ou a leitura do tempo*. 2. ed. Belo Horizonte: Autêntica Editora.
- DIAS, Maria O. L. S, 2009. *A interiorização da metrópole e outros estudos*. 2. ed. São Paulo: Alameda
- LEITE, Renato L, 2000. *Republicanos e Libertários: pensadores radicais no Rio de Janeiro (1822)*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira.
- LUCA, Tânia R. & MARTINS, Ana L. (Orgs), 2011. *História da Imprensa no Brasil*. São Paulo: Contexto.
- LUSTOSA, Isabel, 2000. *Insultos Impressos: a guerra dos jornalistas na Independência (1821 - 1823)*. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras.
- MARTIN-BARBERO, Jesús, 1997. *Dos meios as mediações: comunicação, cultura e hegemonia*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora UFRJ.
- MELO, José M, 2003. *História Social da Imprensa: fatores socioculturais que retardaram a implantação da imprensa no Brasil*. Porto Alegre: EDIPUCRS.

OLIVEIRA, Cecília H. L. S. , 1999 *A astúcia liberal: relações de mercado e projetos políticos no Rio de Janeiro (1820 - 1824)*. Bragança Paulista: EDUSF e ÍCONE.

OLIVEIRA, Eduardo R. A idéia de Império e a fundação da Monarquia Constitucional no Brasil (Portugal - Brasil, 1772 - 1824). In *Tempo*. n. 18, v. 1, pp. 43 - 63

SODRÉ, Nelson W. , 1973. *História da Imprensa no Brasil*. 4. ed. São Paulo: Mauad.

The logo for 'iafor' is centered on the page. It consists of the lowercase letters 'iafor' in a light blue, serif font. The text is enclosed within a circular graphic composed of two overlapping, thick, curved lines. The upper-left portion of the circle is a light red color, while the rest of the circle is a light blue color, matching the text. The lines are slightly offset from each other, creating a sense of depth and movement.

iafor

