

JUAN BAUTISTA ALBERDI AND THE EMPIRE OF BRAZIL CROSSED VIEWS ON THE CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONS IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the writings of Juan Bautista Alberdi about the Empire of Brazil from the viewpoint of Intellectual History and Crossed Histories. Its intention is to explore the effects of such “crossed views” for constructing representations of identity and of Argentina and Brazil as nations in the 19th century. It explores Alberdi’s views about the Empire on two occasions: the years 1840/50, of his exile in Chile, and the 1860’s/70s, of the Paraguayan War. The paper focuses on his changing images and views about the Empire of Brazil throughout his life, in addition to their interweaving with the nation-project he developed for the Argentine Republic, and with the domestic and foreign policy issues of these countries.

KEYWORDS

Empire of Brazil – Argentine Republic – Nation-building – 19th century – Paraguayan War – Juan Bautista Alberdi.

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JUAN BAUTISTA ALBERDI E O IMPÉRIO DO BRASIL OLHARES CRUZADOS SOBRE A CONSTRUÇÃO DAS NAÇÕES NO SÉCULO XIX

RESUMO

O artigo analisa os escritos de Juan Bautista Alberdi sobre o Império do Brasil na chave da História Intelectual e das Histórias Cruzadas, com a intenção de explorar os efeitos dos olhares cruzados para a construção das representações identitárias e das nações da Argentina e do Brasil no século XIX. A análise explora as visões de Alberdi sobre o Império em dois momentos: os anos 1840/50, do seu exílio no Chile, e os anos 1860/70, da Guerra do Paraguai. O texto centra-se na exploração das mudanças nas imagens, olhares e visões desse autor sobre o Império do Brasil ao longo de sua vida e seu entrelaçamento com o projeto de nação elaborado por ele para a República Argentina, e com as questões das políticas interna e externa desses países.

Palavras-chave

Brasil (Império do) – Argentina (Republica) – Nação – Século XIX – Paraguai (Guerra do) – Juan Bautista Alberdi.

JUAN BAUTISTA ALBERDI Y EL IMPERIO DEL BRASIL MIRADAS CRUZADAS SOBRE LA CONSTRUCCION DE LAS NACIONES EN EL SIGLO XIX

RESUMEN

El artículo analiza los escritos de Juan Bautista Alberdi sobre el Imperio del Brasil en la clave de la Historia Intelectual y de las Historias Cruzadas, con la intención de explorar los efectos de las “miradas cruzadas” para la construcción de las representaciones identitarias y de las naciones de Argentina y Brasil en el siglo XIX. El análisis explora las visiones de Alberdi sobre el Imperio en dos momentos: los años 1840/50, de su exilio en Chile, y los años 1860/70. El texto enfoca los cambios en las imágenes, miradas y puntos de vista de este autor sobre el Imperio de Brasil a lo largo de su vida y su entrelazamiento con el proyecto nacional que elaboró para la República Argentina y con los temas de política interna y externa de estos países.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Brasil (Imperio del) – Argentina (República) – Nación – Siglo XIX – Paraguay (Guerra del)– Juan Bautista Alberdi.

Introduction

The theme of “crossed views” involving Latin-American men of letters who ventured in country journeys, experienced the exile or simply held an interest in the Empire of Brazil has been a constant focus of scholars of comparative Intellectual History and other subfields of Intellectual History. In recent decades, these subfields were consolidated as key spaces of historical inquiry, particularly in transnational histories, crossed histories and cross-cultural connections.

The intense circulation of these intellectuals, politicians, travelers, publicists and scientists throughout the Americas in the 19th century has been known for a long time. That circulation meant not only spatial displacements, but also the emergence of spaces of sociability where many ideas were shared, appropriated and resignified in special and specific contexts of national construction and emerging identities. It is also known that the Brazilian Empire was an object of interest and study among Hispanic Americans in the 19th century on account of the Empire’s independence-process singularities, of the fact that it was the only constitutional monarchy of the Americas, and of the continuation of slavery as one of its pillars.

For the past twenty years, historians have increasingly discussed the attempts to focus beyond the frontiers of modern Nation-States. Their debates questioned the proposals of traditional Comparative History to include conceptions such as Connected Histories, Transnational History³ and Crossed Histories. I believe nineteenth-centu-

3 A vast literature of Transnational History (including the present study) discusses the contradiction of applying a transnational focus to the historical contexts of emerging nations. In particular, see PEYROU, Florencia; MARTYKÁNOVÁ, Darina. Presentación. *Revista Ayer*, n° 94. Dossier: La Historia Transnacional. Madrid: Marcial Pons, Ediciones de Historia, 2014. p. 13-144; BAYLY, Christopher et al. AHR Conversation: On Transnational History. *American Historical Review*, 11, 5, (2006). p. 1441-1464; ALBA, Carlos et al (eds.). *Entre espacios. Movimientos, actores y representaciones de la globalización*. Berlín: Walter Frey Verlag, 2013.

ry historiography is an extremely fruitful field for this critique of the national dimension. Its study as a period of “fluctuating nationalities”, with its nascent ideas and national project-experiences, when notions of national boundaries were rather fluid, requires indeed the effort of reaching beyond the traditional view of comparative history based on the national dimension.⁴

This explains the choice of focusing on Crossed Histories. This historiographical lens allows us to examine “relational procedures”,⁵ i.e., procedures that point beyond the traditional historiographical approaches to consider historiographical comparisons, crossed references, interlinkages and the surmounting of national limits in the selection and treatment of historiographical objects.⁶

The notion of *intersections* is a key element in works such as the present one, which are attentive to the circulation of ideas, persons and visions, since it breaks with a simplifying, unidimensional and homogenizing outlook, to defend a multidimensional approach capable of recognizing plurality and the complex relations that arise from it. The option of Crossed Histories focus shows that beyond insisting in the comparability of objects, this study is mindful of the

4 See PRADO, Maria Ligia Coelho. América Latina: Historia Comparada, Historias Conectadas, Historia Transnacional. *Anuario n° 24, Escuela de Historia, Revista Digital n° 3*, Facultad de Humanidades y Artes (UNR), 2011-2012; PRADO, Maria Ligia Coelho. Repensando a História Comparada da América Latina. *Revista de História*, 153, 2005.

5 This expression is used by ZIMMERMANN, B.; WERNER, M. Pensar a História Cruzada: entre empiria e reflexividade. *Textos de História*, v. 11, n. 1-2, 2003, p. 83-127.

6 See CONRAD, Sebastian. *What is Global History?* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016; PREUSS, Ori. *Bridging the island. Brazilian's views of Spanish America and themselves, 1865-1912*. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2011; PREUSS, Ori. *Transnational South America. Experiences, ideas and identities, 1860-1900s*. London: Routledge Press, 2016; BARROS, José D' Assunção. *Histórias Cruzadas: considerações sobre uma nova modalidade baseada nos procedimentos relacionais. Anos 90*. Porto Alegre, v. 21, n. 40, dez. 2014. p. 277-310.

reciprocal or asymmetric perceptions, entangled processes and their mutual influences.⁷

The focus on the interconnections, intersections and links among intellectuals and men and women of letters, along with their networks and ideas, has been showing that – in contrast to a quite widespread view among Brazilian historians, essayists and scholars, who insistently deny relevant contacts and cultural exchanges that occurred among the country and its Hispanic-American neighbors in the 19th century – Brazilian intellectuals, journalists and politicians always looked at the neighboring populations of the continent with almost as much interest as they looked at Europe or the United States. These studies have also drawn attention to the crucial role of the attempts to compare one's experience with the experiences of populations at once so similar and distinct, for the construction of the national self-image of Brazilians. And they allow us to consider the emergence of a regional discourse on identity capable of transcending the frontiers of nations – without ignoring the consolidation of Nation-States and their identities in the second half of the 19th century – to construct an alternative discourse based on a possibly shared Latin American or South American identity.⁸

Based on this approach, this paper analyzes the writings of Juan Bautista Alberdi on the Empire of Brazil with the aim of exploring the effects of “crossed views” for the construction of the representations of identity, and of Argentina and Brazil as nations in the 19th century. The paper examines Alberdi's views of the empire on two occasions: in the 1840s and 50s, during his exile in Chile, and in the 1860s and 70s, as the Paraguayan War unfolded. The documental analysis, from the standpoint of Intellectual History, allows concentrating our

7 GOULD, E. H. Entangled Histories. Entangled Words: the English-Speaking Atlantic as a Spanish Periphery. *American Historical Review*, June 2007. p. 765-786.

8 Such is the case, for instance, of the above-mentioned works of PREUSS, Ori. *Bridging the island. Brazilian's views of Spanish America and themselves, 1865-1912*. Op. Cit.; PREUSS, Ori. *Transnational South America. Experiences, ideas and identities, 1860-1900s*. Op. Cit.

work in the changes of Alberdi's images, outlooks and views regarding the Empire of Brazil in the course of his life, and their interlinkages both with the national project he envisioned for the Argentine Republic and with the domestic and foreign policy issues faced by the two countries. Our analysis is mainly focused on the nation and State-project debates held in the long period of time that spans from the first decades after the independence-revolutions to the consolidation of their republican models in the second half of the century – their enduring elements, changes, innovations and resignifications –, which led, in turn, to the construction of a new political vocabulary and converted America into the greatest political laboratory of the century.⁹

The research¹⁰ and the results of this paper corroborate the hypothesis that Rio de Janeiro – as the Empire capital, its pivotal harbor

9 For a theoretical and comprehensive debate on the issue of nations and nationalism in the Americas, see, in particular: ANDERSON, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso, 1991; GELLNER, Ernest. *Nações e Nacionalismo*. Lisboa: Gradiva, 1983; the papers of CHIARAMONTE, José Carlos. *Metamorfoses do conceito de nação durante os séculos XVII e XVIII*; HERZOG, Tamar. *Identidades modernas: Estado, comunidade e nação no império hispânico*. In: JANCSÓ, István. *Brasil: Formação do Estado e da Nação*. São Paulo: Ed. Hucitec; Ed. Unijuí; Fapesp, 2003; HOBBSAWM, Eric J. *Nações e Nacionalismo desde 1870*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1991; SÁ, Maria Elisa Noronha de. *Civilização e Barbárie. A construção da ideia de nação: Brasil e Argentina*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Garamond, 2012; PALTÍ, Elías. *La Nación como problema. Los historiadores y la "cuestión nacional"*. México: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2003; SMITH, Anthony D. *The Nation in History. Historiographical Debates about Ethnicity and Nationalism*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000; PAMPLONA, Marco Antonio & DOYLE, Don (orgs.). *Nacionalismo no Novo Mundo a Formação de Estados-nação*. Rio de Janeiro: Ed. Record, 2008.

10 This paper is a product of a post-PhD research entitled "Um olhar sobre o império do Brasil: viagens, exílios e impressões de letrados argentinos sobre o Brasil do século XIX" ["A look at the Empire of Brazil: travels, exile and impressions of Argentine men of letters about Brazil in 19th century"], which I carried out in the second semester of 2015 at the Center for Intellectual History of the University of Quilmes, in Buenos Aires, under the academic supervision of Prof. Jorge Myers, with a CAPES Senior Intern Scholarship. Another product of this research was the publication of my article "Ojeada sobre el Brasil: impressões de Sarmiento sobre o

and a necessary transit point in steamer routes between South America and Europe, or the United States – became an important center and a pole of attraction and circulation of Latin American intellectual elite-figures in that period. Another relevant point is that many studies are available on the travels of Sarmiento to the United States, Europe and Africa. However, with a few rare exceptions, little has been written so far about his travels to Brazil, and even less about the travels and exile periods of other intellectual Argentines of his *Generation*¹¹ to the country. The same can be said about the exile of Rosas' opponents in the same period; much has been written about Montevideo and Santiago, but Brazil – and Rio de Janeiro in particular – is rarely mentioned as a highlight and a relevant destination.

Império do Brasil em meados do século XIX” [“Ojeada on Brazil: Sarmiento’s impressions on the Empire of Brazil in the mid-nineteenth century”], in SÁ, Maria Elisa Noronha de (org.), *História intelectual latino-americana: itinerários, debates e perspectivas*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora PUC-Rio, 2016. The article analyzes the images on the Empire of Brazil in the writings of Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, especially in his articles published in *El Mercurio* and *El Progreso* in 1842 and 1844, which were gathered in volume VI (“Política Argentina 1841-1851”) and volume XIII (“Argirópolis”) of his *Obras Completas*.

- 11 See AMANTE, Adriana. *Poéticas y políticas del destierro. Argentinos en Brasil en la época de Rosas*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2010; Adriana Amante. Brasil: el Oriente de América. In: MYERS, Jorge; BATTICUORE, Graciela; GALLO, Klaus (orgs.). *Resonancias románticas: ensayos sobre historia de la cultura argentina 1820-1890*. Buenos Aires: Eudeba, 2005; PAGLIAI, Lucilla. Alberdi y el Brasil en los escritos del Ciclo de la Guerra del Paraguay: las funciones de una función en bloque. *Revista Digital Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*. Coloquios, 2009, La Guerra del Paraguay: historiografías, representaciones, contextos, Anual del CEL, Buenos Aires, Museo Histórico Nacional 3-5 de noviembre de 2008; DALFRÉ, Liz Andréa. O diagnóstico de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento sobre o Império Brasileiro em 1842. *Oficina do Historiador*, Porto Alegre, EDIPUCRS, v.7, n.1, jan./jun. 2014, p. 177-194; BRUNO, Paula. *Martín García Meróu*. Vida intelectual y diplomática en las Américas. Quilmes: Universidad Nacional de Quilmes Editorial, 2019; MERÓU, Martín García. *El Brasil intelectual. Impresiones y notas literarias*. Buenos Aires: Félix Lajouane Editor, 1900.

Juan Bautista Alberdi was a participant of the so-called *Generation of 37*, an Argentine intellectual circle¹² that included Juan Maria Gutiérrez, Esteban Echeverría, Vicente Fidel López and Sarmiento, among others. The *Generation of 37* emerged in the period when Juan Manuel de Rosas ruled the Republic of the Río de la Plata (1829-1852) and vehemently opposed his government. As Jorge Myers points out,¹³ this *Romantic Generation* is known as the first intellectual movement in search of an Argentine national identity. It was initially a strongly cohesive group with an unusual level of institutionalization considering its time and region. It was defined as a literary and intellectual ‘party’ by its members, who imagined that it was able to substitute the political parties then struggling for power. They considered their mission to be the intellectual completion of the revolution set in motion at the material and political level by the previous generation. “Since almost all of them were born between 1805 and 1821, they conceived themselves to be the children of the *May Revolution* in charge of a providential mission: developing and implementing the second stage of the Independence-Revolution, renewing the ideas that should follow after the revolution by arms, with the central aim of

12 On the *Generation of 37*, see MYERS, Jorge. La revolución en las ideas: la generación romántica de 1837 en la cultura y en la política argentinas. In: GOLDMAN, Noemí (org.). *Nueva Historia Argentina. Revolución, República, Confederación (1806-1852)*. Tomo 3. Buenos Aires: Editorial Sudamericana, 1998; HALPERÍN DONGHI, Tulio. *Una Nación para el desierto argentino*. Buenos Aires: Editores de América Latina, 1997; HALPERÍN DONGHI, Tulio. *Proyecto y construcción de una nación (1846-1880)*. Buenos Aires: Editora Espasa Calpe Argentina S.A./Ariel, 1995; BIAGINI, Hugo E. *La Generación del Ochenta. Cultura y Política*. Buenos Aires: Editorial Losada S.A., 1995; KATRA, William H. *La Generación de 1837*. Buenos Aires: Emecé, 2000; BOTANA, Natalio. *La tradición republicana*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 2ª ed., 1997; ROMERO, José Luis. *Las ideas políticas en Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2ª ed., 2008; WASSERMAN, Fabio. La Generación de 1837 y el proceso de construcción da la identidad nacional argentina. *Boletín del Instituto de Historia Argentina y Americana “Dr. Emilio Ravignani”*, Tercera serie, n. 15, 1er semestre de 1997.

13 MYERS, Jorge. La revolución en las ideas: la generación romántica de 1837 en la cultura y en la política argentinas. Op. Cit., p. 384.

grounding a new national identity on revolutionary values”.¹⁴ Thus, differently from the insurgent actors of 1810, the men of 1837 strongly relied on ideas as an essential basis for reforming Argentina. The nation appears throughout their works as a common and key problem – a typical Romantic issue of a new country –, whereas their key task would be to attain an adequate level of knowledge about their reality in order to define their national identity.¹⁵

Alberdi and the Empire of Brazil during his exile in Chile (1840s and 50s)

1.1 “*En Río de Janeiro*”: on route to exile

The first references to Brazil in Alberdi’s writings appear in the narrative of his return to South America on route to his exile in Chile, after an initial travel to Europe, as he arrived in Rio de Janeiro in mid-December 1843.¹⁶ Its original handwritten text is part of a blue-cover booklet that belongs today to the *Archivo Alberdi* at the Furt Library in Estancia Los Talas in Luján, Province of Buenos Aires.¹⁷ It is not a diary in narrow sense, but a set of quite personal annotations, frag-

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ For a comparison between Brazilian and Argentine Romanticism, and an analysis of how distinct aspects of European Romanticism were appropriated and resignified in the American context, see: RICUPERO, Bernardo. *O Romantismo e a Ideia de Nação no Brasil (1830-1870)*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2004.

¹⁶ ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. En Río de Janeiro. In: *Escritos Póstumos*. Memórias y Documentos. Tomo XVI. Buenos Aires: Imprenta Juan Bautista Alberdi, 1901, p. 9-29. The poem *El Éden*, written by Alberdi and Juan María Gutiérrez and later published in Chile, appeared during this travel. The poem recalls the adventures of both authors as they crossed the ocean towards Europe in 1843.

¹⁷ *Archivo Alberdi*. Biblioteca Furt, Los Talas, Luján, Provincia de Buenos Aires.

ments and observations without a guiding thread. They are mostly original *escritos de viajero*, i.e., traveler notes that intimately resonate the features of a truly romantic writer: sincerity, eloquence, a confessional mood and the lack of inhibitions as one speaks about his emotions.¹⁸

Such traveling accounts can be traced to a consolidated genre of traveler guides and almanacs commonly found in the Iberian-American world. They are part of a long-established traveler-culture,¹⁹ which itineraries were defined by a clear demarcation between the inner elements from one's place and culture of origin, on the one hand, and, on the other, outer elements that include all things previously alien to such origin. In this sense, the travels and narratives written in moments of such radical experiences such as the exile and the fluid contexts of Nation-States in construction are marked by complex, tortuous and at times enigmatic features, in addition to the ambivalence found both in the traveler and the cultural territories he is transiting through.²⁰

In this first set of documents from the 1840s, Alberdi is a young exile who lives first in Montevideo in the period from November 1838

18 PAGLIAI, Lucilla. Alberdi y el Brasil en los escritos del Ciclo de la Guerra del Paraguay: las funciones de una función en bloque. *Revista Digital Nuevo Mundo, Mundos Nuevos*, Coloquios, 2009, La Guerra del Paraguay: historiografías, representaciones, contextos, Anual del CEL, Buenos Aires, Museo Histórico Nacional, 3-5 de noviembre de 2008, p. 2. <http://nuevomundo.revues.org/55609>.

19 Regarding this genre of guides and almanacs for travelers, following a long-established tradition of the traveling culture, see: CLIFFORD, James. *Routes. Travel and Translation in the late Twentieth Century*. Boston: Harvard University Press, 1997; PRATT, Mary Louise. *Os Olhos do Império. Relatos de viagens e transculturação*. Bauru: Edusc, 1999; PRIETO, Adolfo. *La literatura autobiográfica argentina*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor da América Latina, 1982; PRIETO, Adolfo. *Los viajeros ingleses y la emergencia de la literatura argentina. 1820-1850*. Buenos Aires: Sudamericana, 1996; VIÑAS, David. La mirada a Europa: del viaje colonial al viaje estético. In: *Literatura argentina y realidad política*. Buenos Aires: Centro Editor de América Latina, 1992.

20 MYERS, Jorge. Prólogo. In: *Rumbos patrios: la cultura del viaje entre fines de la Colonia y la independencia*, MYERS, Jorge. (ed.). Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 2011, p. 9-45.

to April 1843, and then in Chile, as a result of his opposition to the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas, who since 1829 was in power in the Argentine Republic. This narrative contrasts with the later moment that will be analyzed in the second part of this article, when Alberdi is already a more mature man living in Paris, after the recognition of Argentina's political and territorial integrity, in a context of friendly relations with the European powers. In this later period, he enjoyed the company of high officials of the French Empire, of the monarchies of England and Spain, and of the Pontifical Court.

Alberdi lived most of his life outside Argentina, and once described it in his self-biography as “[the life] of a man abroad, who did not leave his country”.²¹ The fact he had lived in other countries for many decades did not dishearten him, and he made a point in asserting that his thought was always and exclusively dedicated to Argentina. He thought his absence from the home country was a necessary condition for thinking with freedom, considering the then current atmosphere of intolerance in the Argentine provinces. Thus, he believed his writings were valuable in connection with the fact they were produced in freedom. For him, the fact that each country had its own “political and literary tribune in its neighboring Republic” was like a blow of fortune for young American nations. In this sense, he deemed it unavoidable to be forced to participate in this special intellectual entity he ingeniously dubbed “the nomad and floating province” of *émigrés*.²² It was such a condition of expatriate and foreigner in relation to one's own homeland, according to this notion, that endowed him with a particularly privileged vantage point for examining the construction of identities in the emerging nations of the Americas in the 19th century.

In late 1843, Alberdi landed in Brazil for the first and only time, in Rio de Janeiro, on a rainy afternoon when he described his state of

21 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. Autobiografía. In: *Grandes escritores argentinos*, Alberto Palcos (dir.), tomo X Buenos Aires: Jackson Editores, 1953, p. 27-64.

22 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. Loc. Cit.

solitude, melancholy and uneasiness. But he still noted and commented on the beauty of the Guanabara Bay and its landforms. He stayed at Hotel Europa and sought to find out more about the Argentines in town. He was surprised at the news that there were actually many of them around, and, in particular, at the news that poet José Mármol his *Asociación de Mayo* colleague – lived at the same hotel, while Bernardino Rivadavia – the old unitarian leader – was undergoing a self-prescribed home retreat and refused visits.

His initial account describes the city of Rio de Janeiro as a chaos of dazzling colors and sounds. The streets were narrow and straight; dark at night, and loudly festive in the daytime, with a profusion of sounds from different instruments: organs, pianos, clarinets and flutes, producing a “philharmonic furor”. The sun of the tropics appears to devour all things, and the local heat is compared sometimes to the heat of a woman’s body, “sweet and destructive”,²³ and sometimes to a hell. He dislikes the fruits sold in the streets, which smell he compares at times to the sweat of slaves. He affirms Rio de Janeiro is “the romantic city *par excellence*”,²⁴ planted within the most beautiful and magnificent disorder, amidst hills where buildings and villas are constructed.

His impressions about the local inhabitants are always negative with depictions of their physical traits and remarks about their customs and culture. Brazilians seem to him rather poor, mean and sad. Women are black, small, weak, poorly built and dull; their only beautiful features are their “tropical eyes”. As to the condition of women, he sees them as degraded and abject individuals; the unhappiest beings of the world in this country, since they are submitted to the despotism and tyranny of their husbands.

The climate – a topic repeatedly mentioned in his analyses about Brazil – would render both men and women small, malformed, pale, weak and languid in their physique. It also forced locals to live in an

23 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. En Río de Janeiro. Op. Cit., p. 17.

24 Ibidem, p. 26.

open campaign against countless physical malaises that continually affected them, such as bugs, erysipelas, eruptions and swellings. Only blacks, who then performed all tasks involving mechanical and material strength in the industry and agriculture, could withstand their effects.

Regarding the slavery of the black race, he stated:

In this country, a rather impotent and lean race was not able to fit into its needs and found in a crime the solution for the problem of its living: from the ardent African climate, it fetched a savage race and turned it into a slave and an instrument, to the point of even displacing itself through its feet and producing everything through its hands.²⁵

For Alberdi, blacks in Brazil were at once the most disgraced and the happiest of all beings, since they alternately served as instruments of carnal delight and became the victims of murder, while working as beasts of burden. Moreover, black slaves were used in all tasks. For him, the close coexistence of these two races – whites and blacks – under the same roof, instead of encouraging blacks to learn with whites, led whites to assimilate black customs and be infected with barbarism. On their turn, the *mulatos* [the brown children of blacks and whites] were seen as an intermediate and rising social group including clerics, lawyers, judges and physicians.

Alberdi criticizes locals for exalting all things French, while not even being capable of doing it well, since they looked anything but French: “Brazilians are apes of the French”.²⁶ He describes Brazilians as serious, ceremonious and characterized by a purportedly aristocratic trait. They all own a coach, slaves and servants, but their homes are dirty and poor. In a few words, they live from appearances.

²⁵ Ibidem, p. 12 e 13.

²⁶ Ibidem, p. 12.

After attending a sung mass at the emperor's chapel, Alberdi describes him as "a vulgar, shoddy and rustic" person whose figure caused him a poor impression. The local audience, in turn, was impolite and behaved as if they were in a concert, showing their backs to the altar, talking aloud about their businesses and even applauding the music at times. He states that the emperor's court and entourage had many ridiculous, puerile and ugly features. He contrasts the ceremony to the "severity and simplicity of our republican customs",²⁷ and expresses his criticism of monarchies by affirming: "A monarchy in America! What could possibly refute the possibility of its existence more than what we see here?"²⁸

At a certain point, he discontinues the narrative on his impressions about Brazil to reflect on the situation of the Argentine Republic under Rosas. While affirming he is not a unitarian, he criticizes Rosas' attempt to convert his actions into national glories that may contribute to the country's progress and common good without providing it with its real needs in the form of stable and solid institutions.

This was the only time Alberdi visited Brazil and wrote about a first-hand experience with the country's Empire. To reinforce and expand on his negative view of Brazil, he relates Rio de Janeiro (a part of it) with the entire Empire. This allows him to draw observations by fitting the entire Brazilian territory into his partial experience – in other words, this allows him to make generalizations about it without having detailed knowledge about the country's customs or its social and demographic structure. Along his life path, he did not express any interest in learning about the Empire of Brazil in a more comprehensive and detailed way. This is the thesis of Lucila Pagliai, who refers to Alberdi's perspective as an *en bloque* viewpoint.²⁹

27 Ibidem, p. 16.

28 Ibidem, p.16.

29 PAGLIAI, Lucila. Op. Cit.

It must be highlighted that these travel notes from early 1843 contain themes such slavery, the decadent monarchy, the tropics and harsh climate, which reappeared in Alberdi's later texts as he analyzes the reasons that could explain the expansionist policy or hegemonic vocation of the Empire *vis-à-vis* its Río de la Plata neighbors. As will be shown further, these themes recurrently appear in new forms, in more depth or with new aspects both as a result of the political motivations and intentions amidst the context in which they are written, and as a result of the form of writing employed as he composes them either in the form of essays, private or public letters, newspaper articles, pamphlets and others, to substantiate his line of thought.

1.2 Alberdi's exile in Chile

After spending 51 days in Rio de Janeiro, Alberdi departed for Chile on February 6, 1844. The travel mood, in his own words, left him lethargic and depressed due to his status as an exile who did not know what to expect from the future. It was during this period that he wrote, as a scape valve, a burlesque poem that later would become a play entitled *Tobias o la cárcel a la vela* ["Tobias, or prison by candlelight"].³⁰ Brazil is depicted in this play in a much lighter and good-humored fashion than in his booklet.

Alberdi reached Valparaíso on April 15, 1844, to begin his long exile in Chile. A few days later, he made his debut in the Chilean press by circulating the second set of texts on Brazil that will be examined below: the articles published in the newspaper *El Mercurio de Valparaíso* on April 21, 23 and 24 under the title "*El Imperio del Brasil y las*

30 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. *Tobias o la cárcel a la vela*. In: *Obras Completas*. Tomo II, Buenos Aires: Imp. Lit. Y Enc. de La Tribuna Nacional, 1886, p. 343-387.

Repúblicas Hispanoamericanas” [“The Empire of Brazil and Hispanic-American Republics”]³¹.

Before examining their contents, it is relevant to consider the situation of Alberdi and other exiles of Argentina’s *Generation of 1837* in the Chilean intellectual environment. Alberdi lived for eleven years in Chile, from April 1844 to April 1855. After revalidating his law practitioner permit before the recently established University of Chile with the thesis “*Memoria sobre la conveniencia y objeto de un Congreso General Americano*” [“Memoirs on the convenience and objectives of a General American Congress”],³² he began working as a lawyer in important cases decided in Santiago and Valparaíso.

Meanwhile, he played an extremely important role in the Chilean press and contributed to the emergence of what one may call a Trans-Andean public opinion. A prolific writer, he wrote over 200 articles in periodicals from Santiago and Valparaíso – the city where he lived. With other exiled colleagues such as Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, he engaged himself in Chilean domestic politics and sought to study and understand the country that was receiving them. The experience he acquired in the discussion and emergence of a republican and free-trade culture in Chile doubtlessly served as a basis for constructing the constitutional ideas he would soon propose for the Argentine Republic. The central product of this period was his book *Bases*,³³ which was published soon after Rosas’ fall in 1852. As a result of his ability to understand the reality, he was offered many positions in the public

31 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista Alberdi. El Imperio del Brasil y las Repúblicas Hispanoamericanas (El Mercurio de Valparaíso, 21, 23 y 24 de abril de 1844) in: BARROS, Carolina (comp.). *Alberdi Periodista en Chile*. Buenos Aires: Imprenta Verlap, 1997, p. 53-63.

32 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. Memoria sobre la conveniencia y objeto de un Congreso General Americano. In: *Obras Completas*. Tomo II, Buenos Aires: Imp. Lit. Y Enc. de La Tribuna Nacional, 1886, p. 387-413.

33 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. *Bases y puntos de partida para la organización política de la República Argentina*. In: *Obras Completas*. Tomo III. Buenos Aires: Imp. Lit. Y Enc. de La Tribuna Nacional, 1886.

administration by Chilean leaders, and, subsequently, by Argentine rulers.

As well as many colleagues of his generation, Alberdi was fully aware of the key role of the press as a privileged medium for disseminating ideas and influencing the public opinion in the 19th century. That's why his articles in periodicals and magazines often appeared as a series or chain of arguments necessarily leading to a set of final remarks that summarized them and drew conclusions. This is the case of his articles about the Empire of Brazil published in *El Mercurio* of Valparaíso, which will be analyzed below. With the aim of finding a place in the society and making one's ideas more tangible, effective and long-lasting, it was common for authors to gather and reprint in the form of pamphlets their articles previously edited and published in periodicals.

As Alberdi arrived in Chile, he found a combative and lively local journalism “a journalism of ideas” that played a key role in the ongoing political disputes. The period of his stay in Chile coincided with the two presidential mandates of Manuel Bulnes (1841-1846 and 1846-1851). Bulnes was the successor of Joaquín Prieto, whose government was characterized by an administrative model Alberdi considered as an example for defining the mission of a conservative party in America. The discussions, changes and advances attained by these governments were published in the Chilean newspapers, magazines and other periodicals. The press role as an arena for political and party debates was its very *raison d'être*. Until 1844, in addition to some ephemeral daily news outlets, three leading periodicals were solidly established in the country: *El Araucano*, *El Progreso* and *El Mercurio*.

El Mercurio – the newspaper that published Alberdi's articles on Brazil – was then the most important of all Chilean newspapers. Founded in 1827, it belonged since 1842 to Santos Tornero. But as most publications, it was subsidized by a yearly official subscription of the government. Many Argentines wrote in it and were members of its editorial direction. *El Mercurio* was doubtlessly the press outlet most closely linked to Alberdi in the key moments of his life in Chile, even

though the periodical *El Comercio de Valparaíso*, founded by him in 1847, also played a central role in his trajectory.

Another highlight is the singularity of Alberdi's experience during this stage of his exile in Chile. Differently from his period in Montevideo, he seemed now more attentive to the political experiences of construction, institutionalization as a nation and progress in this new country. Chile was already then an institutionally consolidated republican State with a constitution enacted in 1833 a quite distinct stage in comparison to the situation of instability experienced by its Río de la Plata neighbors. In addition to drawing from the Chilean constitutional example in his reflections and proposals for Argentina, it was in this period that he began formulating the view that "governing is populating", which would soon appear so strongly in his *Bases*. The theory of a vital transplantation from Europe to America, resulting from a gigantic population trend capable of transposing the necessary customs to the new continent, was then supplemented by the vindication of an industrial free-trade society.

In this stage of his life, he concentrated his intellectual capacities in continuing his national project. The downfall of Rosas had to be the first step in this process. The Argentine intellectual's evident intention in his publications from this period was to alert the countries close to the borders of Rosas' Argentina about the perils of his expansionist ambitions in South America. Argentine exiles seemed then to share the viewpoint that the Brazilian Empire could be useful for their national political aims. This was the likely reason behind the fact that Brazil was the theme of Alberdi's first publication in exile.

A key element to be pointed out was the difficult relations between the Empire of Brazil and the Rosas government, which was involved since 1839 in the so-called *Guerra Grande* ["Big War"] against Rivera's Eastern Republic of Uruguay. During the conflict, in February 1843, Rosas began a siege of Montevideo that would last for nine years (until 1851). During this period, Uruguay remained split into two governments: Montevideo, on the one hand, was governed by the *Colorado* party and Rivera in the form of a "*Gobierno de la Defensa*" ["Defense Government"] supported by Argentine exiles, by unita-

rians and by the English and the French; the rest of the country, on the other, was ruled by Oribe and the *Blancos* under the “*Gobierno del Cerrito*” [“Little Hill Government”], supported by Rosas.

In those days, the Empire of Brazil experienced a great dilemma. For Brazil not only officially recognized Rivera’s cabinet under siege in Montevideo as the legitimate government, but also considered it the only possibility of keeping the independence of Uruguay in face of the danger posed by Rosas and his Uruguayan ally Oribe. On the other hand, since 1836, the same Rivera was an ally of the Farroupilha rebels in Brazil’s southern province of Rio Grande do Sul, who became a clear and present threat to the country’s government. Such conflicting interests – quelling its southern uprising while upholding the independence of Uruguay against Rosas’ expansionism – can explain the Empire’s position of neutrality, which was strongly criticized by Argentine exiles amidst the clashes of the Rio de la Plata region. In the early 1840s, while conservative political forces sought to dispel the ghosts of territorial dissolution, inherited from the period of regencies, it was extremely important for the Brazilian government to pacify Rio Grande do Sul. To attain this aim, it needed to count on the willingness or, at least, on the neutrality of Oribe and Rosas. But it was still concerned with the increasing power of Buenos Aires’ governor and its possible extension on the Eastern Republic.

It is in this context of interwoven and complex relations among South American countries that we must analyze the articles gathered under the title *El Imperio del Brasil y las Repúblicas Hispanoamericanas* [“The Empire of Brazil and the Hispanic-American Republics”]. These articles are quite distinct from Alberdi’s private travel writings linked to his stay in Brazil in January 1844. Now, he adopts a favorable public stance towards the Empire by analyzing the role of monarchic Brazil within the South American republican setting.

The first of these articles, dated April 21, 1844, initially seeks to demonstrate the importance of the Empire’s geographical location in South America and of the need to establish a continental congress to bring together all young nations of the continent. The article draws attention to the need to strengthen a Pan-American consciousness

– in its context, a feature apparently ahead of its time – and defends that diplomatic relations among the republics and the Empire would be beneficial for all neighboring States. It even mentions a certain “law” in connection with the international relations of European States and how it would serve as a basis for international political interactions in the Old Continent, and an example for America.

The article then emphasizes the civilized, pacific and conservative character of the Brazilian State in contrast to the armed politics of the Río de la Plata republics. It presents an interesting view about the monarchic regime as a form of government, which will be resumed as a highlight in Alberdi’s maturity writings, by stating that monarchy in itself is not a shameful system – bearing in mind that the most highly esteemed governments of the moment are the monarchies of England, France, Austria and so on. The article also reminds that the American Revolution of 1810 was originally less a republican movement than an emancipation-thrust, proved by the fact that many authors who participated in it did consider adopting monarchy as their regime of government. Thus, the issue of form would be then subsidiary, while the key issue would be the fight against the “humiliating, unfair and abominable Spanish rule, to which the American populations were submitted”. In his words, “becoming free [from such domination] was their open and uniform vow, and little did it matter under which regime”.³⁴ For these reasons, Alberdi did not see grounds for criticizing the Brazilian monarchy, nor justifications for linking this form of government to a lack of political freedom – as if freedom were only a product of republican regimes.

In his words about slavery – a reality he always condemned –, Alberdi is mild on this occasion, and states that despite its existence in Brazil, it would not annul the legitimacy of political freedom in the country. As if trying to temper his own argument, he states that “civil slavery involving a certain caste brought from abroad does not invalidate the fact of its political freedom; for the same phenomenon

34 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. *El Imperio del Brasil*. Op. Cit., p. 54.

can be seen in the United States of North America, where the number of civil slaves is seven times higher than in Brazil”.³⁵ It seems, here, that Alberdi is forging his personal feelings in regard to Brazil in the name of his political cause.

His effort of carrying out a comparative analysis in this article is a remarkable example of “crossed views”-procedure, and of a transnational perspective that allows those men of letters to reflect on an “other” at first glance so distinct as the Brazilian Empire, while conceiving their own national projects. In this regard, Alberdi concludes:

The revolutionary movement sought the triumph of the rights to property, literacy, public expression, elections, petitioning and purchasing. Too late would it proclaim such goals, though, in Brazil; for they have existed there for a long time. In one word, the symbol of the revolution was said to include progress in terms of social advances. But who would ignore that civilized life, progress and institutions are universally professed there? Revolutionaries strove for political changes, and Brazilians have attained them too. (...) They proclaimed independence: Brazilians did proclaim it too. They casted away the foreign powers: the same expulsion was carried out by Brazilians. New nations rose: Brazilians, on their turn, conceived a new and brilliant political association. Are not Brazilians corresponding in full measure, in this regard, to the children of Republican States?³⁶

In his second article, dated April 23, 1844, he insists in the notion that despite the fact that Brazilians embody a family totally apart and distinct from the Hispanic-American family, the country’s monarchical power was still as American as all other republican powers built in America after their independence from Spain. His analysis is focused on Rosas’ possible intention of attacking the Empire, on the isolation

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 55.

³⁶ *Loc. Cit.*

this would generate for Argentina and on the impossibility of repeating in Brazil the local occupation and siege promoted by Rosas in Montevideo. Brazil had also managed to remain stable, without civil wars. It was a superior country in terms of population size and sea power, and it would surely be aided by England – a country with which Brazil maintained essential commercial relations. A conflict with the Empire would result in a confrontation with its imperial navy, which was stronger and held a superior strategic position compared to Uruguay and the States around the Río de la Plata.

In his final article of this series, published on April 24, 1844, he points to the Argentine Republic as the primary antagonist of stability in the Southern Cone and analyzes the potential advantages for the Empire of Brazil of waging a war against the dictatorial power of Rosas. Alberdi notes that Brazil would still lack the military power amassed by Hispanic-American republics as a consequence of their belligerent passion and experience, first during the struggles against Spain, and later in the course of their constant and recurrent civil wars. For Alberdi, wars will be unavoidable and would help affirm the nationality of each emerging State. Therefore, Brazil should be prepared to participate in such contests, and a war against Rosas could help increase the warring spirit the Brazilian Empire was lacking.

Another benefit the Empire could reap from a conflict with Buenos Aires was a possible state of domestic instability, leading to additional space for promoting its regional strategic elements. The article ends with an alert about the danger of Rosas' victory in the Eastern side and expansion of his rule from Montevideo to the Brazilian provinces in contact with the Río de la Plata basin. The war against the dictator could also force the Empire to free its slaves – a measure that would certainly be adopted by Rosas himself. Thus, these would be Alberdi's fair reasons for warning States in search of balance – in his view, an essential basis for the international American system.

Alberdi is diplomatic and sensible in his depiction of the Brazilian Emperor. On this occasion, a clear contrast can be seen between the public and private facets of his writings: public adjectives such as “young” and “hopeful” now substitute the private “shoddy” and “vul-

gar”, mentioned above in connection with the memories of his travel to Rio de Janeiro. Alberdi also tries to sensitize his potential Chilean readers to his own cause, by comparing the practices and personal figure of Rosas with those of Andrés de Santa Cruz and the War of the Peru-Bolivian Confederation,³⁷ in which Chile was involved and Santa Cruz was defeated. Alberdi affirms that Rosas may face the same fate of Santa Cruz by trying to exercise dominion over the new States, and that these States would applaud the destruction of a system meant to continue general Bolívar’s mean ambition to centralize South American power in the hands of one people.

It is interesting to point that Alberdi presents himself before the Chilean press as a *connoisseur* of the Empire’s domestic situation and of its strategic foreign policy objectives. He is fully aware of the role of the press as a political battlefield and shows from the outset that he will use it as a means to attain his political aims. In this case, the Empire becomes a quite useful tool for Alberdi’s attempt to draw attention to Rosas’ activities and their potential effects on the neighboring countries.

Also published in 1844, Alberdi’s “Memoirs on the convenience and objectives of a General American Congress”³⁸ – the thesis with which he obtained his license to work as a lawyer in Chile – points to the advantages of having positive relations with Brazil and praises again the Empire’s monarchical system and the high cultural level of its elites. The thesis also analyzes the advantages of a harmonious foreign policy towards Brazil and raises the notion of international cooperation among the young nations of the region.

³⁷ The Peru-Bolivian Confederation was a short-lived confederate State gathering Bolivia and Peru into one nation from 1836 to 1839. For this period, Peru was divided into a North-Peruvian and a South-Peruvian State. The Confederation’s only president was Bolivia’s previous president Andrés de Santa Cruz. It was dissolved after its defeat in the Battle of Yungay by a coalition that included Argentina, Chile and insurgent Peruvians.

³⁸ ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. Memoria sobre la conveniencia y objeto de un Congreso General Americano. Op. Cit.

This thesis achieved some international recognition and its first part was translated into Portuguese and published in the Brazilian press in 1845 by *Ostensor Brasileiro* with the title “*Memória sobre a conveniência e objetos de hum congresso geral americano, lida ante a Faculdade de Leis da Universidade de Chile, para obter grao de licenciado, por J. B. Alberdi*” [“Memoirs on the convenience and objectives of a General American Congress”, presented by J.B. Alberdi to the University of Chile’ School of Law as a requirement for the licentiate degree in Law”].³⁹ Surely this translation is another proof of the intensity with which ideas did circulate among the emerging and consolidating South American nations.

The Empire of Brazil in Alberdi’s writings on the Paraguayan War in the 1860s

In the 1860s, Alberdi publishes a new cycle of combative writings on Brazil, in which he mercilessly attacks both the Empire and the new government established in Buenos Aires under the leadership of Bartolomeu Mitre. In these text, he vehemently criticizes the Paraguayan War (known as War of the Triple Alliance, Great War, and Paraguay’s Guasú War) the longest and bloodiest conflict in the history of Latin America. The belligerent parties involved a Triple Alliance formed by Mitre’s Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay against Paraguay under the leadership of Solano López. The conflict lasted from late 1864 to march 1870 and led to the death of thousands of men and women in battles and epidemics – most of them, Paraguayans. Paraguay

³⁹ *Ostensor Brasileiro*, n. 37, Rio de Janeiro: Biblioteca Nacional do Rio de Janeiro, 1845.

was demographically and economically devastated and occupied by the allies.⁴⁰

Alberdi – now, a man in his 50s – was living on the occasion in Paris under delicate circumstances. He was removed from his previous position as the minister of foreign relations of the Argentine Confederation, and the previous government owed him two years of salary from his term of office. Bartolomeu Mitre’s refusal to pay for his time of office made it even more difficult for him to return to America. Embittered and frustrated, Alberdi directed his ardent enthusiasm to these combative texts.

In the years of the war, strongly polarized opinions were expressed about it in the Argentine press. The country’s public opinion was split between its supporters and opponents. Alberdi was one of the conflict’s most passionate critics. He expressed his views and opposed Mitre’s positions in Buenos Aires newspapers such as *La América* and *La Unión Americana*. Mitre and his supporters, in turn, launched a press campaign to demonize Solano López through a narrative in which the aim of the war efforts was to liberate the Paraguayan population from the claws of a tyrant. This narrative both harnessed and reinforced a dualistic view among men of letters, who contrasted an allegedly civilized to a barbarian nation, and presented Argentina as a republic since its birth, whereas Paraguay was depicted as a sum of cruel tyrannies, which pinnacle had been attained by Francisco Solano López.⁴¹

The articles published by Alberdi on the Paraguayan War in the 1860s were gathered into a book edited in 1869 in Paris with the title *El Imperio del Brasil ante la Democracia de America. Coleccion de los últimos Escritos dados à la luz por Don J. B. Alberdi* [“The Empire of Brazil and Democracy in America. A Collection of the final texts brought to

40 BARATTA, Victoria. *La Guerra del Paraguay y el proceso de construcción de la identidad nacional argentina (1864-1870)*. 2013. 335 p. Tesis de doctorado - UBA, Buenos Aires, 2013, p. 10.

41 *Ibidem*, p. 105-108.

light by Don J.B. Alberdi”].⁴² The volume gathers articles such as the two examined below, which are specifically linked to Brazil’s participation in the War: “Las Disensiones de las Repúblicas del Plata y las Maquinaciones del Brasil” [“Dissensions among the Río de la Plata republics and the machinations of Brazil”], of March 1865; and “Los Intereses Argentinos en la Guerra del Paraguay con el Brasil” [“Argentine interests in the Paraguayan War with Brazil”], of July 1865.

The first of these articles, “Las Disensiones de las Repúblicas del Plata y las Maquinaciones del Brasil”, is practically militant in its tone. It was originally published as an anonymous text, with the intention of eliminating any factor that could be taken personally in Alberdi’s exposition, or simply to avoid disclosing its authorship to guard him against attacks to his writings. Soon after its preface, he affirms the writings’ attempt to resist, protest and oppose Brazil’s traditional plan, which would be now renewed “with grim proportions, to rebuild its empire in detriment to the populations, the land and the honor of the Río de la Plata republics.”⁴³ Alberdi sees the Paraguayan War as a serious threat of a possible Bourbon restoration in America, carried out by Brazil, and therefore defends the end of the war. For him, a proof of it was the fact that Don Pedro II [the Brazilian Emperor, Peter the 2nd,] had recently appointed the Count d’Eu – a Bourbon prince and the husband of his daughter and heiress to the throne, Princess Isabel – as General in Chief of the Paraguayan Campaign. Erecting a throne in South America in territories conquered from republics that were liberated from the Bourbon family in 1810 seemed to be a restoration of the same government defeated by the May Revolution sixty years before. And America could end up experiencing such re-appearance as a type of ill-fated monarchical counter-revolution:

42 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. Prefácio. In: *El Imperio del Brasil ante la democracia de América. Colección de los últimos Escritos dados a la luz por Don J. B. Alberdi*, Paris: Imprenta A.E. Rochette, 1869.

43 *Ibidem*, p. II.

European monarchist action will penetrate the part of this continent with a population of 24 million Americans of Spanish origin through the worst of all customs, that is, a country Portuguese by race, with an African-like climate and a largely African population, inhabited only by two million men of European origin, which society is accommodated by the institution of civil slavery.⁴⁴

Alberdi states that the war is more in the interest of Brazil than of its neighbors, and explains the alleged reasons behind it. First, due to the fact that Brazil is not a country capable of giving the Río de la Plata populations the elements of civilization and prosperity it lacks, as a consequence of its own situation as a former Portuguese colony, and because it is also in need of an intelligent and hard-working population, in addition to funds, industry, arts, sciences, manufactures, machinery, and the uses and inspirations found in more well-educated and civilized countries. Nor could the Empire serve the interests of its neighboring republics in terms of domestic peace, republican government, centralism, civil equality without slaves, universal freedom of inland navigation or direct foreign trade, since these things would antagonize the Empire and lead to its very ruin.

For him, the backdrop issue glossing over the entire Paraguayan war is the need to rebuild the Brazilian Empire –menaced by the suppression of slave trafficking, the imminent abolition of slavery and the urge to occupy uninhabited lands with European races, among other reasons – by purchasing territories inhabited by new European groups supported by princes with the same trans-Atlantic origin. The pre-conditions for such reconstruction of the Empire would be the suppression of more than one republic from South America, the conquest, and the re-appearance of the Bourbons in America – which Alberdi calls a ‘counter-revolution’. These factors would all run against

44 *Ibidem*, p. XLIX.

the revolutionary heritage and tradition of an independent Hispanic America.

Alberdi analyzes the elements he considers to be illusory, but favorable, so Brazil may proceed with such reconstruction: the fragility of its allies, the comparative inferiority of Paraguay; and the magnitude and might of the Empire. Brazil appears as a promoter and a great beneficiary of the split between Buenos Aires and the other provinces – a fact leading to a weakened Argentine Republic. But he believes the “disease” resulting from such division will not last long and Argentina will become a strong centralized government following the natural course of life, “according to which a society needs a common government for its common and general life as a nation and a civilized State, because the entire political civilization of a country resides in the institutionalization of its national government (...)”.⁴⁵ Surrounded by neighbors with unitary States – Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil and the Eastern State – the Argentine Republic would need, in his view, to unify its national power in order to survive and resist the threatening power of Brazil.

Alberdi resumes his discussion on the importance of the independence-revolutions and of the consolidation of republican regimes in the entire continent as “a constitutive part of the common heritage of all civilized peoples”,⁴⁶ to denounce the anachronism of Brazilian interests and threats in its attempt to copy the old Portuguese conquest-politics. He draws a constant parallel between Paraguayan resistance and the independence fights of American countries against Spain, and affirms that Brazil did not predict how the war, in the course of time, would express its true nature as a liberation or independence conflict by Paraguay.

Alberdi discusses one of the main justifications of Brazil and its allies for waging war against Solano Lopez, namely the need to free the Paraguayan countryside from the tyranny of its government. For

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, p. XIX.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem*, p. XXV.

him, the course of the war refuted such hypothesis, as the Paraguayan people resisted and supported their government. Thus, “Paraguay proved to Brazil that its obedience is not the obedience of a slave, but the obedience of a people willing to be free from the foreign element”.⁴⁷ For him, this was the South American way of conceiving freedom – instead of toppling the national government of another country to give it a government considered illegitimate by its population.

In the final part of this long preface, Alberdi analyzes the relations between Brazil and its monarchical government, on the one hand, and the climate of the tropics and its resulting expansionist needs, on the other. He states that Brazil’s real enemy was neither Paraguay, nor the Eastern Province, the republican system or abolitionism. Instead, its real enemy would be its torrid climate, which precludes the acclimatization of European man and the feasibility of its civilization.

Alberdi also holds Brazil responsible for three serious crimes: the war, slavery and the conquest. He condemns slavery and states that turning a human being into an “agricultural machine” is a triumph of barbarism and backwardness. He also states that instead of asking Europe’s industrial civilization for war machines to destroy the cities of civilized America, Brazil would profit more from asking Europe for machines in order to produce, engender and build its national aggrandizement without resorting to the crime and dishonor of slavery.

Alberdi concludes his preface by affirming that the role of Brazil in America is not yet defined by Brazilian statesmen, but the force of events would end up impelling it to its original character and meaning. Thus, Brazil would join the concerted American reality, of which it is already a party, to fulfill the destiny of its fundamental revolution – to which its emancipation from Portugal serves as a prelude.⁴⁸

47 *Ibidem*, p. XXXIV.

48 *Ibidem*, p. LXXII.

The first text of the compilation, “Las Disenciones de las Repúblicas del Plata y las Maquinaciones del Brasil”, was published in March 1865. It begins with a chapter on Brazil, which inquires about the Empire’s aims in the Río de la Plata. Its answer is that Brazilians occupy a beautiful and vast territory, but are confined to a torrid zone only inhabitable by African races, which countryside remains inaccessible as a result of a lack of communications. Hence the Brazilian need to conquer neighboring territories around the Río de la Plata with a temperate climate more suited to European white races. Such areas would be also more appropriate to the production of food and to ensure prompt access to the tributaries of the Río de la Plata.

These needs, in addition to a historical and traditional proneness by the Empire to expand its limits to the Río de la Plata and its tributaries, stood and still continue to stand, in Alberdi’s view, at the roots of all local conflicts since the time of colonization and up to his days. For this reason, he affirms:

The issue for Brazil is neither the form of government, nor race and nationality, nor the political issue, and even less is it a matter of specific persons, or compensations or remedies for past grievances: the issue is even more serious than all these things; it is about security, subsistence, population and civilization, life and death for Brazil.⁴⁹

Alberdi sets out to examine in this text the expansionist and conquest-needs in the interest of the Empire’s population, subsistence and security. As to its population, he points out that the vast extension of the Brazilian territory produces a relatively deserted country. Therefore, the problem at hand is not a lack of space, but a scarcity of inhabitable and useful lands for white men. The tropical soil and

49 ALBERDI, Juan Bautista. *Las Disenciones de las Repúblicas del Plata y las Maquinaciones del Brasil*. Op. Cit.

the suffocating heat – quite similar to the African conditions – would explain the use of black slaves, i.e., individuals accustomed and resistant to them. Yet, slave trafficking is destined to disappear, bringing about the need to populate Brazil with free white men. It can be pointed that in the same year, 1865, the Civil War was in course in the United States, and slavery was over in those territories. Still regarding population, Alberdi reminds of the unsuccessful record of colonization in and immigration to Brazil, to conclude that in the absence of white settlers to populate its territories, the natural solution would be a search for temperate areas in order to attract these groups.

As to subsistence, he argues that hunger, yellow fever and cholera are constant problems which force Brazil to project itself outwards in the attempt to conquer its neighboring territories. The same heat that renders its land uninhabitable for white settlers also renders it inadequate for livestock rearing and grain production. Alberdi blames large landowners and export-agriculture for the situation of hunger that befalls the country. “Instead of allotting a part of the land to produce grain and livestock for the subsistence of its population, [landowners] concentrate their entire production on sugar, tobacco, coffee, tea - the crops that enrich them in detriment to the working population, who dies from starvation”.⁵⁰ These would be the unquestionably harmful colonial practices kept by Brazil after independence, which prevent it from introducing European settlers in the parts of its territory with a potential to receive them.

Alberdi concludes his argument on the causes of the Empire’s need to expand by analyzing the issue of territorial security. Extending its limits to the Río de la Plata and its tributaries would be one of the Empire’s most effective ways of ensuring the possession of its current territories. The Río de la Plata republics include the lower part and the mouth of three great rivers: the Paraguay, the Paraná and the Uruguay River. Despite the fact they are Brazilian at their heads and in long stretches of their course, they enter the territories of

50 *Ibidem*, p. 8.

other countries as they become larger and navigable. The higher parts of these three large navigable stretches comprise the most beautiful provinces of the Brazilian Empire – the only, according to him, capable of acclimatizing Europeans and ensuring a future of greatness, civilization and progress.⁵¹

In the next chapter, Alberdi carefully analyzes the situation of the Eastern State of Uruguay, which has been since long a cause of embroilment between Brazil and the Argentine Republic. He resumes the old record of occupation on the Eastern Banks to recall what led Brazil to seize those territories in 1826, and the actions of the Argentine Republic. He compares those days with the moment of his writing to affirm that the Argentine Republic is not a unitary country under Rivadavia's government, which fought Brazil for the Eastern Province in 1826. At this moment, the Argentine Republic is a federation of two countries comprising two large historical blocks: Buenos Aires, on the one hand, and the provinces on the other. Here, the issue of the Republic's domestic politics becomes prominent as an additional element of Alberdi's reflections on the Brazilian position in the conflict.

In the chapter that follows, he states that in order to understand any aspect of the domestic and foreign policies of the Argentine Republic, it is absolutely necessary to consider and grasp the abiding divide between Buenos Aires and the provinces. For him, there are two governments: one led by General Bartolomeu Mitre, which sees itself as the one National Government and seeks to rule the nation based on the hegemony of Buenos Aires; and another in the provinces. In his attempt to keep the provinces powerless *vis-à-vis* Buenos Aires – and Buenos Aires, on its turn, *vis-à-vis* his presidential powers –, Mitre would seek to profit from a possible alliance with Brazil and with an Eastern government back by both. This allowed him to assume that while a war is being waged against Paraguay, another war is also in course between a part of the Argentine Republic and another

51 *Ibidem*, p. 10.

part of the country; and that his allies and, particularly, the Empire of Brazil, are beneficiaries from such situation.

The penultimate chapter of the text focuses on Paraguay. It emphasizes that the Paraguayan territory is landlocked within Brazilian lands and surrounded by two rivers – the Paraná and Paraguay rivers –, which could be seen as two large entrances to the Brazilian inland, or the only communication channels between the countryside and the capital Rio de Janeiro. Paraguayan contact with the provinces of Mato Grosso and Rio Grande do Sul could also mean a threat of contaminating these provinces with the idea of breaking up from the Brazilian territory.

Alberdi radically inverts the discourse that justifies the war as a fight between civilization – represented by the Allies in the Triple Alliance – and barbarism incarnated in Paraguay, by stating that:

Paraguay stands for civilization, since it fights for the liberation of the rivers from the traditions of colonial monopolies; for the emancipation of inland countries; for the noble principle of nationalities; and for the balance not only of the Río de la Plata, but also of the entire South America. Since all South American republics, except for Chile, are countries that share borders with Brazil, each Paraguayan victory is a victory for all of them; and each Brazilian triumph is a loss for them in the American balance of power.⁵²

Alberdi stresses some positive points about Paraguay: the country has a small population, but this population comprises a free and homogeneous people; diversely from Brazil, half of its inhabitants are not slaves; its army is numerous, disciplined and includes educated, courageous and controlled soldiers; the country is not publically

52 *Ibidem*, p. 38.

indebted; it is not divided by partisan disputes or civil wars, and has not experienced anarchical periods.

The final chapter discusses the “general interests committed in the War of the Río de la Plata”. Regarding continental interests, it identifies a hovering threat over the Río de la Plata countries: the risk of being absorbed by the empire of a Portuguese race by and large altered through its mixture with the black race. Alberdi also identifies a Brazilian threat “to the social principle of civil liberty”, which he regards to be a general American principle expressed via freedom of trade and inland navigation. These two elements, in turn, are required for populating, enriching and civilizing America, but are not recognized in the Brazilian laws. European interests in America, in turn, would be more concentrated in freedom of trade and in the security of Europeans living in the continent. And freedom of trade would be threatened by those who controlled trade –Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires – against those whose existence hinged on freedom of trade: Montevideo, Paraguay and the inland provinces beyond the Argentine coast.

The second essay of the collection, “Los intereses argentinos en la Guerra del Paraguay con el Brasil”, was written in July 1865 as a set of eleven letters. Alberdi uses it as a chance to emerge from the anonymity of his previous publication, “Las Disensiones”, and present a reply to the many poignant critical comments he received from some of his friends in the Argentine press, who accused him of treason to his homeland in exchange of money, positions or even governmental ambitions.

Alberdi defends himself by affirming that a war abroad can be a very useful way of overlooking domestic problems. Such is the case, for him, of Mitre’s Argentinian government and its attempt to denounce a conspiracy against the homeland in the ideas of men such as himself, who oppose an “antipatriotic localism - one even more antinational than foreign localism”, as is the case in Buenos Aires. For him, such localism professed in Buenos Aires makes an alliance with Brazil against Paraguay, but the ongoing war is not an external war.

Instead, it is a well-known civil war reality between Buenos Aires and the Argentine provinces.

Final Remarks

The choice of examining the texts of Argentine men of letters such as Juan Bautista Alberdi about Brazil is a fruitful path for knowing how their ideas and works circulated throughout their spaces and dialogued among themselves and with the wider context of the proposals that shaped the emerging nation-States of America in the 19th century. Above all, one may notice how these writings contain some valuable views on themes such as monarchy, the Empire and slavery, and nature and race issues, among many others, revealing their significant impressions and the way these intellectuals grasped the Empire of Brazil – a quite peculiar “other” standing as a counterpoint to the republican national projects they vindicated for Argentina. In this sense, beyond being only a space where they developed their ideas on the “other”, Brazil was for “Argentines” a space in which they developed their ideas about themselves.

Alberdi’s writings about Brazil were without a doubt essential for the project developed and experienced by him and the members of the *Romantic Generation of 1837* in their effort to construct a nation, or national identity, in Argentina. In America – or for many writers in America –, Brazil seemed to combine exotic and familiar aspects as a fundamental point for the pilgrimage of young learners, since it converted itself into the “continent’s other within”. The “Argentines” were constantly building a political reading of this “other”. Their effort is visible in their continuous criticisms and remarks about the governmental, cultural and social distinctions they noticed between Brazil and Argentina.

This work with the “crossed histories”-perspective allowed relativizing and adding complexity to the crystallized view that Hispanic-American men of letters only saw Brazil as a slave-based empire identified with a monarchist and conservative Europe; as well as the established view that in the eyes of the Brazilian learned elites of the

19th century, the neighboring republics represented anarchy, disorder, barbarism and political instability.

The strong implicit and explicit presence of Brazil in Alberdi's writings of the two periods analyzed above strengthens Lucila Pagliai's thesis that the Empire took on the rhetorical category of an antagonistic entity in his written works, serving his discourse with a status of 'excluded middle'.⁵³ Yet, and as an apparent contradiction, despite always citing and referring to the Brazilian domestic politics in the construction of his arguments, Alberdi does not seem interested in learning more about it, including the disagreements among its distinct parties, ideas and leaders. Conversely, based on the belief that the fate of a nation is shaped by its international relations, Alberdi plays with his analyses as if he were standing before a chessboard. Brazil performs the role of an active antagonist to his ideas and projects on this board, not only in his remarks about the Argentine nation and South America, but also as an object of reflection and active engagement in the diplomatic efforts in connection with America in Europe.

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53 Pagliai, *Alberdi y el Brasil en los escritos del Ciclo de la Guerra del Paraguay*, p. 5.

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