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## Now-time (Jetztzeit), History of the Present Time and Contestado War

### Rogério Rosa Rodrigues

Professor at the Department of History and the Graduate Program in History, area of concentration History of the Present Time, in the Center for Human Sciences and Education of the Santa Catarina State University (UDESC).

Florianópolis, SC - BRASIL


[lattes.cnpq.br/1738939950525949](http://lattes.cnpq.br/1738939950525949)

[rogerclio@gmail.com](mailto:rogerclio@gmail.com)

 [orcid.org/0000-0002-5189-7095](https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5189-7095)

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## Now-time (*Jetztzeit*), History of the Present Time and Contestado War<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

What is the relationship between the ideals of an egalitarian community in the beginning of the 20th century and children's drawings in the 21st century? Is it possible to address the History of the Present Time from the perspective of a suspended time, which is neither a process nor a repetition? Through the testimony of a German friar, made in 1913, and 3 children's drawings produced in 2020, both about the Santa Irmandade do Contestado, I propose to think through the possible connections between history of the present time and Walter Benjamin's categories called 'now-time' (*Jetztzeit*) and 'dialectical image.' My assumption is that the ideals of the Santa Irmandade do Contestado reappear in children's drawings produced by school students in one of the municipalities that were the ground of the conflict. Finally, I propose to expand the repertoire of analysis and reflections on the multiple temporalities that go through what, in the French historiographic tradition, has been called History of the Present Time.

**Keywords:** Now-time; history of the present time; dialectical image; history teaching; Contestado War.

## Tempo-do-agora (*Jetztzeit*), História do Tempo Presente e Guerra do Contestado

### Resumo

Qual é a relação entre os ideais de uma comunidade igualitária do início do século XX com desenhos infantis do século XXI? É possível abordar a História do Tempo Presente a partir da perspectiva de um tempo suspenso, que não é processo nem repetição? Por meio do depoimento de um frei alemão, de 1913, e de 3 desenhos infantis produzidos em 2020, ambos sobre a Santa Irmandade do Contestado, proponho refletir acerca das possíveis conexões entre história do tempo presente e as categorias de Walter Benjamin denominadas "tempo-do-agora" (*Jetztzeit*) e "imagem dialética". Minha hipótese é a de que os ideais da Santa Irmandade do Contestado reaparecem em desenhos infantis produzidos por estudantes de escolas de um dos municípios que foram palco do conflito. Ao fim, proponho ampliar o repertório de análise e reflexões a respeito das múltiplas temporalidades que atravessam o que, na tradição historiográfica francesa, tem sido denominado História do Tempo Presente.

**Palavras-chave:** Tempo-do-agora; história do tempo presente; imagem dialética; ensino de história; Guerra do Contestado.

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*Historical fragments are the remnants of an explosion.  
The present of the past.*  
Susan Buck-Moors

## Introduction

On December 12, 1913, a German friar went to the village of Taquaruçu, in the plateau region of Santa Catarina, Brazil, to convince men and women to leave their community under the pretext that there existed an organization against the laws of the Church and the Republic. His name was Rogério Neuhaus. The community he visited had been newly founded by former believers in a healer named José Maria, hereinafter identified as Santa Irmandade do Contestado. The Santa Irmandade's collective ideal had as its principle the motto "those who own it grind it, those who don't own it grind it, too. And so everyone is equal," that is, in this society everyone would have food, land to grow, and dignity. Its members believed in the resurrection of the monk José Maria, dead more than a year ago, after being chased by political leaders from Santa Catarina and being attacked by the Paraná security regiment in a border region between the two states<sup>2</sup>.

In the Santa Irmandade built in Taquaruçu, decisions were shared and a complex everyday life ritualization system was set up, including prayers, collective readings, task division, and work shared by peers. It is against this model of society, at the same time political and spiritual, that Friar Rogério Neuhaus mobilized his energy and authority. His argument was that, as a vocation pastor, he cared and wanted the good of his herd; therefore, knowing that police repression of the community was imminent, he had taken steps to dissuade people from returning to their homes. We do not know for sure how many people were gathered in Taquaruçu on that December 12, 1913, but, according to the report made by the Franciscan friar, there seem to be a few dozen, including the leaders identified by him as fanatics.

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<sup>2</sup> The confrontation took place on October 22, 1912, in the episode that entered the annals of history as the 'Batalha do Irani.' This episode was analyzed in detail by the researchers Gabriel Kunrath (KUNRATH, G. C. *Não tivemos outro jeito, ou morríamos ou nos defendíamos: uma análise acerca da Batalha do Irani (1912)*. 2020. Dissertação (Mestrado em História) – Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Pelotas, 2020) and Celso Vianna Bezerra de Menezes (2015).

The Santa Irmandade de São José e São João<sup>3</sup> Maria had been created as an alternative to the life of economic and political exploitation, in that context, represented by the power of colonels, the presence of a railroad construction company, as well as the lumber company and the land colonization company installed in the region<sup>4</sup>. The Church, another domination link in this group, claimed to be a mediator between God and men, but also between official authorities and common men.

It is in this context that Friar Rogério Neuhaus addressed the newly founded community of Taquaruçu. The dialogue he had with people from the Santa Irmandade serves as a starting point for us to think through some central elements of the rebellious struggle of believers in João and José Maria, better known as Contestado War. This historical episode has as its official mark the period between 1912 and 1916, generally associated with the repressive approach of the Brazilian State to a group of rebels who inhabited a region disputed (contested) by the states of Paraná and Santa Catarina. Such an association between the repressive approach of the State, the political and economic forces, and the rebellious resistance is an integral part of the history of the Santa Irmandade, but I believe it places the rebels' ideals in a field of action that ends up highlighting more the actions of the repressive agents than the proposals, ideas, and values of the community itself.

Without denying or minimizing the power of political and symbolic destruction of the State's repressive forces, I propose to think through the

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<sup>3</sup> Although the believers gathered to celebrate the possible resurrection of José Maria, the healer killed in the Batalha do Irani in 1912, they also celebrated the strength of the holiness of other wanderers who were named as João Maria. They circulated around the region since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century with similar practices: blessings, recommending medicines, baptizing children, counseling family members. The presence of these wanderers constituted a tradition that the anthropologist Tânia Welter (2018) called 'joanina,' that is, a belief based on the prophecies and practices of the monks João and José Maria, which are still alive today.

<sup>4</sup> There is a vast historiography that emphasizes these people and institutions. It is mobilized throughout the text, for now it is worth highlighting 5 authors of reference works: Oswaldo Rodrigues Cabral (CABRAL, Oswaldo Rodrigues. *A campanha do Contestado*. 2. ed. Florianópolis: Lunardelli, 1979); Maurício Vinhas de Queiroz (QUEIROZ, Maurício Vinhas de. *Messianismo e conflito social: a guerra sertaneja do Contestado, 1912-1916*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Ática, 1981); Duglas Teixeira Monteiro (MONTEIRO, Duglas Teixeira. *Os errantes do novo século*. São Paulo: Duas Cidades, 1974); Paulo Pinheiro Machado (MACHADO, Paulo Pinheiro. *Lideranças do Contestado*. Campinas: UNICAMP, 2004); and Márcia Janete Espig (ESPIG, Márcia Janete. *Personagens do Contestado: os turmeiros da estrada de ferro São Paulo – Rio Grande (1908-1915)*. Pelotas: Editora Universitária/UFPEL, 2011).

strength of the past in the present, highlighting the way in which the Santa Irmandade's clamors and world projects have erupted in our present time and gained prominence and visibility in children's drawings. As the starting point of this analysis is supported by a testimony by the enemy of the men and women who had built the Santa Irmandade, I claim what Walter Benjamin called an analysis against the grain. Michel Löwy (2005, p. 74) defined this analysis proposal as "going against the current of the official version of history, opposing it with the tradition of the oppressed persons." The challenge is to extract from the winner's narratives, in this case the narrative of Friar Rogério Neuhaus, strategies, tactics, and experiences of the men and women who lived in the holy city of Taquaruçu.

In addition to the rebellious experience registered in the Franciscan friar's text, it is necessary to think of how this struggle reappears, a century later, in narratives by children who live in the same region. My assumption is that the ideals of the Santa Irmandade that were repressed at the time of the conflict reappear in children's drawings in a context of danger and death that haunts our century immersed in political and sanitary chaos, which is also moral, economic, and environmental. In this aspect, I claim 2 categories outlined by Walter Benjamin when building his theses on the concept of history, namely: the now-time (*Jetztzeit*) and the dialectical image. Finally, I highlight the relevance of these 2 categories to broaden the repertoire of analysis and reflections regarding the multiple temporalities that go through what, in the French historiographic tradition, has been called History of the Present Time (HPT).

### Living in another century

The Santa Irmandade may be thought of as the constitution of a community of equals, with a rebellious political-religious nature, based on the belief of popular monks and traditional saints, which wanted to found a new time in the world. A new world seen as a society ruled by a new temporality, but not for that reason outside the present in which they lived. Life in this new age of the world required more than contemplation and praise of sacred precepts. It was necessary to refound society, establish a new routine, new rituals, a new organizational model.

As Duglas Teixeira Monteiro (1974) observed, the men and women from the Contestado saw that to wait for the new world meant to fight for it. More than that, it involved making it concrete in the time and place they chose. It was not, therefore, a community built to wait for salvation on its own. Our challenge, as 21<sup>st</sup> century historians, is to identify these common values in the documents prepared by those who wished to repress that community. That is why the account of the encounter by a Franciscan friar, of German origin, along with Taquaruçu inhabitants proves to be important, since, even though this is a register of the winner's memory, it opens up the possibility for us to find out dreams, wishes, and worldviews held by those who lived there. What the religious narrative shows us is, among other things, the community's political and social strength, as well as its rootedness in extremely complex beliefs and arguments. It is worth following, *pari passu*, the reproduction of the dialogue that the Catholic Church representative makes of this contact, as it starts from the attempt to break with the winner's narrative and locate some issues specific to the Santa Irmandade; it also includes deconstructing the rhetorical and narrative strategies that the friar construed, which have been crystallized in the official memory of the event.

*Scene 1: "You will be killed by bullet and sword"*

Friar Rogério: I wish you well, that's why I arrived here yesterday, I came under heavy rain, at night, risking my own life that I'm ready to sacrifice for you. In fact, I see you walking into danger. I invite you to come and attend the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and then each one of you to go home to take care of your work and your family. If you don't do it, the government will intervene, and you will be killed by bullet and sword (SINZIG, 1934, p. 72)<sup>5</sup>.

Neuhaus's account begins with his own declaration of authority. By claiming that he was ready to sacrifice his life for those men and women, he included himself in the Catholic Church's lineage of martyrs, but he also places

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<sup>5</sup> The report by Friar Rogério Neuhaus was originally published in the pages of the magazine *Vozes*, under the title "Os fanáticos do sertão: deploráveis frutos da educação religiosa (correspondência especial para Vozes de Petrópolis, por uma testemunha ocular)", Curitiba, 12/12/1913. In 1934, this account was compiled and published in a book by another friar of the same religious order. His name was Pedro Sinzig. This was the version referred to.

himself at the same level as the healer José Maria who died, a year ago, fighting for his male and female comrades in the historical episode called Batalha do Irani. The invitation/monition to attend the mass is another attempt to intimidate community members and nullify the authority of the healer monk, who governed the formation of that brotherhood. The sentence ends with a threat: either you accept the order or you will be killed.

*Scene 2: “Nobody suffers here”*

The old man Euzébio replied:

– Here I can’t answer anything: only our boss and commander can do it. [...] – We are under the protection of Our Lady, thank God!

– Then the said chief and commander, Euzébio Ferreira dos Santos’s came to me, with a visually hallucinated face, and said at point-blank range:

– What do you want here? Get out, you dog, otherwise you will be beaten!

Soon large numbers of individuals surrounded him, all armed with swords and large machetes.

– Who are you? I asked in turn.

– I’m the boss here.

– So, be so kind as to ask all these people to get out of this region, because otherwise they will all suffer.

– No. Nobody suffers here. Only you will die right here (SINZIG, 1934, p. 72).

In addition to the pejorative sentences that the religious man chose to call people (hallucinated, fanatics, menacing persons), it is interesting to retain what we can learn regarding this community’s organization and worldview. The social structure consisted of a leader, in this case a teenager. Neuhaus speaks of the boy Manoel’s grandparents, but we are informed by other testimonies from the time that there were also older and more experienced people who advised him, as well as an honor guard called ‘Pares de França’<sup>6</sup> which was possibly organizing itself at that first moment in the holy city of Taquaruçu<sup>7</sup>. Therefore, although

<sup>6</sup> The so-called Pares de França (Peers from France) were a special guard created by the healer José Maria at the time he lived with the men and women who followed him. In the second Taquaruçu, this guard would be recovered and, over the years, it took various functions. For a more detailed study of Pares de França, see the study by Márcia Janete Espig: ESPIG, Márcia Janete. *A presença da gesta carolíngia no movimento do Contestado*. Canoas/RS: [s. n.], 2002.

<sup>7</sup> This is the second Taquaruçu because before he died, in October 1912, the healer José Maria had been in the region at the invitation of the old man Euzébio and his family. He left the community after being politically persecuted. A year after his death, the new Taquaruçu is built by the former

Manoel was the commander, we know that, in the Santa Irmandade, this command did not have unlimited powers. It is enough to observe the active voice of men and women who appear in this report to verify that it is a command that examines and decides collectively<sup>8</sup>. No less important is the presence of the machetes and swords reported in this narrative. They were made of wood and bear witness to the ritual nature of the Santa Irmandade's political-military organization. A ritualization that instituted a new routine for the daily lives of men and women who were there. There was not a single activity that was not ritualized, i.e. that was not resignified according to the new desired world order. Within this new routine, instituted by the rationale of breaking with the previous time of oppression, the power of priests was nullified. People would no longer have to comply with their orders, nor do people seem to fear their threat.

### *Scene 3: "Priests are worthless"*

Seeing the menacing attitude of the fanatics, with their machetes and swords raised, I replied:

– You must respect the priests, who are the ministers of God. Our Lord watches us, and if they even touch me, he will punish them all.

Then they began to slash the earth with their sharp weapons, shouting:

– Die!

I repeated:

– Respect the Father!

To which the commander replied:

– We must respect the priests of good life, but you're a crow (referring to me), a highwayman who attended dances on the Rio do Peixe Railroad.

[...]

At this moment, the commander's mother roared:

– Priests are no longer worth anything today!

Meanwhile, the old man Euzebio, raising an old machete, added:

– We are living in another century: Freedom! (SINZIG, 1934, p. 72).

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believers. A thorough and well-documented account of the first Taquaruçu and the figure of José Maria is available in Gabriel Kunrath's MA dissertation (KUNRATH, G. C. *Não tivemos outro jeito, ou morríamos ou nos defendíamos: uma análise acerca da Batalha do Irani* (1912). 2020. Dissertação (Mestrado em História) – Universidade Federal de Pelotas, Pelotas, 2020).

<sup>8</sup> For further details on the history, authority, and leadership roles in Contestado, see the research studies by Paulo Pinheiro Machado (2004) and Cristina Dallanora (2020).



Non-submission to the priest's authority is expressed in a radical way. It is said that he is worthless. That is because, in addition to being called a dog and a crow, he was identified as a wanderer, a good living man, a highwayman. It is worth noticing that these negative representations – related to death (crow), partying, and good living (dances) – all lead to the fact that they are related to the Rio do Peixe Railroad, i.e. to the materialization of the railway company that represented economic modernity, but which in the real local life expropriated land, exploited the labor of local inhabitants, and even subsidized the construction of one of the largest lumber and land colonization companies in that region<sup>9</sup>. It was against this world that the believers rose up. The freedom they claimed affirmed that, within the holy city, no one would die, no one would starve, no one would be exploited. The new century would be collectively built in and for the present time. Its inhabitants would no longer admit taking orders from priests, nor would they submit to the exploitation of the railroad and everything that it represented.

*Scene 4: "Now go tell your partners what you saw here"*

– If you do not accept my advice and if you do not withdraw, I say my last goodbye in life, because you're gonna die.

[...]

– Don't do this!

And he didn't. But seeing I could not convince these fanatics of their error, I withdrew in my turn, while the old man shouted at me:

– Crow!

While the woman screamed:

– Go now and tell your partners what you saw here.

And then I learned that that little woman had said that it would have been better to murder me right there (SINZIG, 1934, p. 72).

<sup>9</sup> It is the Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company, a multinational with great political and economic power in the region. Several studies have been carried out on it, among which I highlight: Alexandre Assis Tomporoski (TOMPOROSKI, Alexandre Assis. *O polvo e seus tentáculos: a Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company e as transformações impingidas ao planalto contestado, 1910-1940*. 282 p. Tese (Doutorado em História) – Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, Centro de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas, Florianópolis, 2013); Todd Diacon (DIACON, Todd A. *Millenarian vision, capitalist reality: Brazil's Contestado rebellion, 1912-1916*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1991); and Delmir Valentini (VALENTINI, Delmir. *Memórias da Lumber e da Guerra do Contestado*. Porto Alegre: Letra & Vida; Chapecó: Ed. UFFS, 2015).

One cannot fail to register the woman's role in this statement. Querubina appears more than once and always in a very outrageous way. It is she who affirms that in the community, the priest's cassock – or rather, the Catholic Church's power – had no shelter. Even though she was referring to a specific type of religious person (those of good living, highwaymen, those who attended dances on the railroad), it is still a major break. If the Santa Irmandade saw itself as a community ruled by Catholic saints, how could we understand the annulment of the official religious' power? In this case, it is necessary to register that Querubina and her husband, Euzébio, were former believers in the monk José Maria. They met him in life and even hosted him. Therefore, they were among the oldest and most important believers in his holiness.

If we take into account that the new time of the world was prepared under José Maria's inspiration and guidance, we can affirm that the highest authority in that community, hence, was the monk. He was present by means of dreams and signs of nature and rule along with São Sebastião and São Jorge. Traces that were interpreted and passed on to believers. That is why Friar Rogério began his rhetorical onslaught by asserting his authority and the Church's authority above all.

This helps us to grasp the break with the Church, but it does not place us in the radical attitude of Querubina, who, in addition to confronting Friar Rogério rhetorically, even proposed his execution. This proposal was based on her intuition that the friar would hand everyone over to the police authorities. More than that, he would ally himself with colonels, soldiers, and 'jagunços' in the fight against the Santa Irmandade. Her voice, virtually equaling that of the general commander, ends up saying to the religious man: leave and announce to the others what you have witnessed here<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> It is not a case of idealizing or romanticizing the women's role in the Contestado. Chauvinism was, and is, structural within the Santa Irmandade. As Paulo Pinheiro Machado correctly pointed out: "special emphasis should be given to the invention of the 'Holy Frame' or the 'Holy City,' which is justified by the creation of a new society project advocated by the 'sertanejos,' having its community and anti-capitalist features overtly formulated. However, the 'Holy Frame' relied on the resurgence of extremely strict norms of conduct, based on the authority of men and the elderly, even when psychic children and women took the decision-making role in local power. It is not an environment to be idealized, since sexist relationships and gender violence were recurrent, both in the strongholds and in the surrounding society. The recovery of a creative

## Setting the scene

There are many details to explore in this conversation, reproduced, it is worth remembering, by the enemy's pen. However, regarding the arguments of this text, I highlight:

1. The unity of the Santa Irmandade was rooted in the power of the saints. In the document, the Virgin Mary was claimed, but at other times São Sebastião, São Jorge, São José Maria, and São João Maria are invoked;
2. The idea of founding a new temporal order, which appears in the immediate response of this community in another century, that of breaking away from the political and religious structures that subordinated them to the harmful elements of life. The cry "Freedom!," as uttered by the old man Euzébio, seems to echo a collective wish that is not only based on the expectations of those who were present. There are centuries of domination by exclusion of land ownership, of economic, political, and religious exploitation that called for freedom along with their voices. In the new century established by the men and women from this community, there would no longer be a place for exploiting priests who were living a good life. Perhaps that is why the friar – and apparently all those who resembled him – was identified as a bird related to death (crow);
3. The complete ritualization of activities within this new time brotherhood that appears, in some elements, highlighted by the friar: the use of machetes and wooden swords, the way in which decisions were made, the leadership given to a boy we would identify today as a teenager, the way machetes and swords scraped the ground and were raised to the sky;
4. The last element that I highlight is the spatial identification of the railway as a place of shelter from evil: the dances attended by crows, exploiters, bad people. As one of the icons of progress and modernity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the São Paulo-Rio Grande Railroad brought to the men and women of the Santa Catarina plateau a succession of problems

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social experience should not be idealized to the point of covering up problems that exist in any society" (MACHADO, 2017, p. 77). However, it is noteworthy that women were the greatest devotees of João and José Maria and that thanks to them the belief in the monk remains current on the Santa Catarina plateau to this day, as we notice in the documentary film *Terra Cabocla*, directed by Márcia Paraíso (PARÁISO, Márcia. *Terra Cabocla*. Florianópolis: Plural Filmes, 2015).

that began with the expropriation of the lands of former squatters, went through the collusion between directors and farmers in the region, until the construction of the Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company,, a lumber and foreign colonizing company that, in addition to devastating native wood and bringing the local economy to an end, destined almost exclusively for sale of land to European immigrants and migrants or people of European origin.

The traumatic experiences of land expropriation and labor exploitation experienced by some people from the Santa Irmandade made them sense what the capitulation proposed by the Franciscan religious man meant: arrests, humiliation, and, on the edge, the disruption of this new time collectively opened for them.

What we notice in this document, besides the social organization and community ideals of the Santa Irmandade, consists in a project to disrupt what Ivone Gallo (1999) called an egalitarian dream. The attempted kidnapping, by official authorities, of the believers' right to live in a new community, belonging to a new century. They had not only ideals, but their own social organization. They identified their enemies and wished to break the old ties that bound them to the colonels and to the yoke of land colonization and lumber and local labor exploitation companies, such as the Brazil Railway Company and all its subsidiary companies.

It is the strength of these proposals, highlighted by me in the deviant interpretation tested above, that I propose to instantly immobilize that moment in order to recognize part of the ideals, existing there 107 years later, i.e. in the year in which a pandemic braked part of the socioeconomic rain that carries the planet. A reappearance taking place in the minds of other individuals (children), mediated by another institution (school), and materialized in another type of document (drawings). However, before presenting these images, I believe it is worth contextualizing them.

## The school, the child, and the past

### *Remote learning in times of pandemic*

Due to the coronavirus pandemic, in 2020, I started to remotely interview teachers who work in schools located in municipalities that were once affected by the Contestado War. In this context, I had the opportunity to learn a little bit about the history of the Escola Trinta de Outubro, located in Lebon Régis, Santa Catarina, as well as follow up, via social network services, part of the projects that these professionals had been developing remotely along with their students. In the same social network service, there was also the Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado, a social entity created in the city to publicize and value the past of the Santa Irmandade among the common men.

This association organizes, annually, an event entitled Contestado Week<sup>11</sup>. This mobilizes the school community and is an integral part of the official calendar of Lebon Régis. Due to the pandemic, the Contestado Week, usually celebrated in winter (August), has been postponed. Trying to minimize the impact of the unfeasibility of this event, the Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado has promoted a drawing contest about the conflict. It was carried out in partnership with the Municipal Department of Education and Culture. This was an interdisciplinary activity with collaboration of all schools located in the municipality. Teachers from the fields of arts, Portuguese language, history, among others, were mobilized to encourage students to make a drawing and publish it on the association's official page on the *Facebook*. That is how I became aware of a set of approximately 300 images, mostly drawn in A4 paper format. A valuable material, as it brought the experience of narrating the Contestado's past through images – far, therefore, from the traditional structure of the narrative/essay text. They were drawings produced by children, teenagers, young people, and adults<sup>12</sup>, narrating the Contestado from the perspective of those who

<sup>11</sup> Although configured as a legal entity in 2018, the creation of the association precedes that year. Its main activity is called the Contestado Week. On the official *Facebook* page it is stated that, in 2021, its 7<sup>th</sup> edition will take place, therefore, it has been operating at least since 2014 (ASSOCIAÇÃO CULTURAL CORAÇÃO DO CONTESTADO, 2021).

<sup>12</sup> Although mostly produced by children and teenagers, some drawings were also made by young people and adults attending Youth and Adult Education (Educação de Jovens e Adultos [EJA]). And there are some drawings made by children from the Association of Parents and Friends of the Exceptional (Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais [APAE]).

live in one of the sites that lived the egalitarian world experience wished by people like those who Friar Rogério tried to disperse.

Diving into these children and youth's representations was key for a scholar interested in the links between past and present, because despite an attempt to update the memory of the Contestado made by some social movements, as a rule, municipalities in the Santa Catarina plateau have a problematic relationship to the history of the Contestado<sup>13</sup>. Due to the strength of a campaign to foster ethnic identity as a vector of social and economic progress in Santa Catarina that has profound ramifications in the region, the alleged pioneering role of European migrants and immigrants is generally explored and argued for rather than the presence of Indian, black, and caboclo populations in the midwest of Santa Catarina.

In this set, the Contestado appears both as a phenomenon of banditry and fanaticism, as a moment of exaltation in the history of the great colonels, politicians, and soldiers who took part in the repression of the conflict. As correctly highlighted by Emérson Dias de Oliveira and Nilson Cesar Fraga (2016, p. 157), “the name of the municipality [officialized in 1959] was a tribute to Gen. Gustavo Lebon Régis, from Santa Catarina, who, on the occasion of the Contestado War, was Secretary General of the State of SC and plotted the first attack on Taquaruçu.” To what extent do the drawings produced in the context of the pandemic take a position on these issues? Before analyzing them, it is worth introducing some historical aspects of Lebon Régis.

### *A municipality in search of its history*

The municipality of Lebon Régis, Santa Catarina, Brazil (Figure 1) has a population of around 12 thousand inhabitants (IBGE Census/2018) and agriculture and cattle raising are its main economic activities. According to a report on the

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<sup>13</sup> Regarding the complex relationship between the remnants of the Contestado and the memory of the Santa Irmandade, see Rogério Rosa Rodrigues (RODRIGUES, Rogério Rosa. A solidão das testemunhas: trauma, memória e história do Contestado. *In*: BORGES, Viviane Trindade; RODRIGUES, Rogério Rosa (orgs.). *História pública e presente*. São Paulo: Letra e Voz, 2021; and RODRIGUES, Rogério Rosa. Nas águas do esquecimento: o movimento do Contestado e o dever de memória. *In*: PRIORI, Angelo; GRUNER, Clóvis Mendes (org.). *Contestado: 100 anos de uma guerra sem fim*. Curitiba: Editora ANPUH-PR, 2016. p. 29-53).

Now-time (Jetztzeit), History of the Present Time and Contestado War  
Rogério Rosa Rodrigues

city hall's official website, “the municipality is a state and national highlight in the production of various crops, such as tomatoes, garlic, apples, pine trees, and onions. The latter, incidentally, is considered the best in Brazil” (LEBON RÉGIS, 2019). Located in the west of Santa Catarina, 360 km away from Florianópolis. The official website, under the responsibility of the municipality, states that Lebon Régis (Figure 1) “was one of the main stages of the Contestado War, which is considered the greatest Brazilian armed conflict of all times” (LEBON RÉGIS, 2019). The same website highlights that “the biggest battles [of the Contestado] took place in Lebon Régis’s lands.” It is also noted that, on January 10, 2018, the municipality was “legally and morally” recognized as the Heart of the Contestado, because, in addition to having hosted the ‘great battles’ already mentioned, “it concentrates the greatest amount of historical sites referring to the centenary war” (LEBON RÉGIS, 2019).

Figure 1. Map of Lebon Régis.



Source: Santos (2021).

Although the narrative aligns the municipality's past with a perspective of history in tune with great deeds and great monuments (which is an integral part of an official rhetoric generally common to state bodies of this nature), it is worth highlighting that the links between the history of the Contestado and the history of the municipality have been the result of a very recent political action that goes beyond the official political practice, because the region has two major movements that update the history of the Contestado for the community: the Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado and the movement struggle for land, a member of the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Terra [MST]), which has a significant number of families in rural settlements guaranteed by the Brazilian National Institute for Colonization and Agrarian Reform (Instituto Nacional de Colonização e Reforma Agrária [INCRA]).

The Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado<sup>14</sup> has been created to foster educational, cultural, and tourist actions aimed at praising the history and memory of the Contestado in the municipality. This association has a major mentor and creator, Mr. Carlos Silva. Through a successful partnership with the Department of Education and Culture of Lebon Régis, as well as scholars of the Contestado War, the association has played a significant role in shaping a new historical culture about the event and its rootedness in local culture<sup>15</sup>. Its initiative is not only seeking to identify the memory places and historical sites in the region, but also to make the event mentioned above happen, the so-called Contestado Week. It takes place annually and consists in music, dance, and theater festivals,

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<sup>14</sup> In 2018, the Association was registered as a legal entity. This officialization took place to guarantee that it could compete for public notices and also to delimit its objectives and purposes. Its registration as a legal entity can be confirmed through the website: <https://www.informecadastral.com.br/cnpj/associacao-cultural-coracao-do-contestado-30566778000123>. Accessed on: Apr. 20, 2021. To check the numerous activities undertaken by the association even before it has been formalized through the CNPJ, the best resource is its official page on the *Facebook*. Available from: <https://www.facebook.com/Coracao.Contestado//> Accessed on: Apr. 20, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> In 2019, I was invited to participate in the 1<sup>st</sup> Contestado Congress in the municipality of Caçador. On that occasion, Mr. Carlos Silva participated in a roundtable with community leaders and scholars and introduced the association to the public. At the end of the event, participants (students and teachers) were invited to visit the Contestado historical sites located in Lebon Régis. At the time, we were accompanied by the mayor and Mr. Carlos was our guide. I report this episode to highlight the good relations of the association to the political power, the university, the schools, and the scholars of this conflict.



horseback riding, visits to historic sites, etc. Its importance is such that it entered the city's official calendar and has caught the attention of education professionals from other municipalities, as well as it has appealed to academic researchers.

Since the 1980s, Lebon Régis has been the stage for social movements fighting for land. According to data from a collective survey coordinated by Maurício Aurélio dos Santos<sup>16</sup>, the work of the MST has contributed to changing the land tenure structure in Santa Catarina. In Lebon Régis, there are 211 families distributed in 7 agrarian reform settlements, as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** – Distribution of settlements

Settlement	Area (ha)	Ordinance and date	Number of families
Rio Timbo	718.5432	287 - 04/01/87	44
Córrego Segredo I	228.3478	906 - 06/28/88	15
Córrego Segredo II	408.5846	1393 - 10/20/88	26
Rio dos Patos	844.9900	1551 - 11/30/88	49
Rio Água Azul	374.8160	Res. 025 - 04/29/93	26
Conquista dos Palmares	416.1383	045 - 11/06/96	32
Eldorado dos Carajás	212.8968	03 - 02/17/2003	19
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>3.204,3167</b>		<b>211</b>

Source: Santos (2021, p. 9).

Given the above numbers, it is possible to infer that part of the economic success of the municipality of Lebon Régis is due to the farmers of the rural settlements in the region. They are men and women who fight against land tenure concentration and, as well as the branch of the MST in western Santa Catarina, claim the memory of the Contestado as a key factor in the struggle for land. This helps to understand some of the significance that the municipality has achieved

<sup>16</sup> A part of the report of this research has been published on the internet: SANTOS, Maurício Aurélio dos. *O assentamento Rio dos Patos – Lebon Régis (SC): da luta pela terra à luta como pequeno produtor rural (o contexto histórico)*. Available from: [http://www2.fct.unesp.br/docentes/geo/bernardo/BIBLIOGRAFIA%20DISCIPLINAS%20GRADUACAO/GEOGRAFIA%20RURAL%202016/GRUPO%20M5/ENG\\_2006\\_046.pdf](http://www2.fct.unesp.br/docentes/geo/bernardo/BIBLIOGRAFIA%20DISCIPLINAS%20GRADUACAO/GEOGRAFIA%20RURAL%202016/GRUPO%20M5/ENG_2006_046.pdf). Accessed on: Apr. 20, 2021.

in agriculture and livestock, so clearly highlighted on the official website of the City Hall of Lebon Régis; but it also takes us into the atmosphere of updating the struggle for land that recognizes and appreciates the experience of the Contestado rebels within these settlements. It is worth noting, as an example, that, in the group of schools in Lebon Régis, that called 'Trinta de Outubro' is located in the settlement 'Rio dos Patos,' about 15 km away from the city hall. In this context, finding approximately 300 drawings, produced by students who live in the region where men and women of the Santa Irmandade lived, worked, or passed, informs us that it is not a mere coincidence to verify the strength that the memory of this conflict still has in the local society, up to the point of being embodied in school activities such as the 2020 drawing competition.

Finally, in the set of 300 drawings, I propose to highlight 3. This choice was based on our research problem, namely, the presence of the dialectical image, as conceived by Walter Benjamin, as an element of suspended historical time at the moment of its recognition in the present. Identifying children's drawings as elements that disrupt what Benjamin calls the triumphal procession, where winners trample on losers, will be the challenge to be solved. To what extent such drawings escape the stereotypes recurrently found in course materials, affirmed and reaffirmed in the historical culture of the Contestado, i.e. the challenge posed. Furthermore, the entire analysis was carried out by asking how sensitive these drawings were, or not, in relation to the claims of people like Euzébio, Querubina, Manoel and others more present at that encounter described by Friar Rogério Neuhaus.

To answer these questions, I resorted to Benjamin's proposal of freezing these two moments, in order to make them unique in themselves, suspending them in time. Starting in this way, I seek to see to what extent this encounter not only resumes the interrupted projects of the community that the Franciscan friar tried to disperse, but also updates some of the wishes, ideals, and projects of an egalitarian world, as voiced by the members of the Santa Irmandade that Friar Rogério brought back to life in his testimony.

## Sensitive cartographies of a war

### *Scene 1: The line, body, and arrangement of things*

Like those ancient maps, which, in an attempt to classify and represent the world beyond the Mediterranean, created cartographic representations where the top and the bottom shared the same world, so we have drawing 1. It requires the viewer to bend the head, handle the sheet, and pay attention to the two worlds that face each other. Changing perspective, depending on the movement to handle the drawing, messes up the alleged natural order of things.

**Figure 2.** War cartography.



Source: Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado (2021).

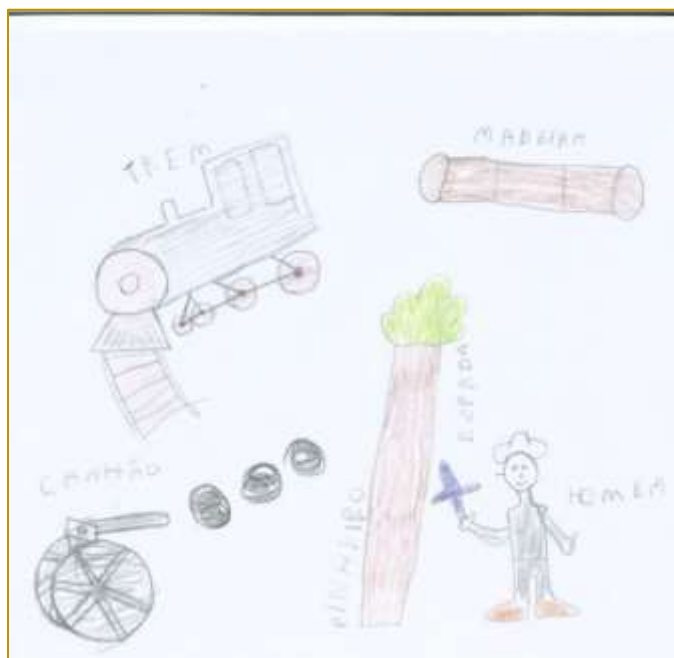
In drawing 2, the bodies are distinguished only by the weapons they carry: machine gun, Winchester, and even an airplane are included in the war scenario. Among the believers in the Santa Irmandade, there were swords and machetes,

such as those that appear among the local men and women. The emphasis on the disproportionality of the military apparatus between the two groups already places us in the possible criticism of those who speak of a confrontation between rebels and repressors.

The natural scenery appears totally devastated. Only one or two trees can be seen in the glare. The railroad line is almost like the Equator Line. This cuts the map of that war. Railroad, I do not think it is absurd to say, which is also the one mentioned in the 1913 document as the source of the region's ills. Animals, plants, objects, and people are carefully colored, including a red thread on the ax that is in a person's hand [whose blood?]. The railway line is the only one that remains in cold graphite, lacking colors, hope, and beauty.

### *Scene 2: Naming is giving life*

**Figure 3.** Anima.



Source: Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado (2021).

We all know a child who, standing in front of a small toy horse in her/his hand, points it at an adult and says: H-O-R-S-E. This seems to be a gesture of recognition and an attempt to bring to life (animate) this object at the same time. An ability that children naturally exhibit. In the drawing above (Figure 3), the child

gathered seemingly dispersed elements on the sheet of paper: cannon, pine tree, man, sword, wood, and train. There is no single way to narrate what this drawing has to tell, since, apart from the affirmation of the thing in itself of the objects, nothing is predetermined. I propose the following observation itinerary: the train that brings the cannon, the cannon that shoots at the man, the man who hides behind the pine tree with a sword in his hand (a sword that is also a cross), and the pine tree that is turned into wood, and wood that will be transported in train cars.

Some central elements of the sertanejo struggle of the men and women from the Santa Irmandade do Contestado appear here. The disproportionality in the weapons of the repressive forces compared to those of the rebels, the criticism of the devastation of the region's native pine trees that were turned into wood and sold abroad by the multinational Southern Brazil Lumber and Colonization Company, progress, represented by the locomotive, as partner in the destruction and death caused by the forces of repression. Children's perception arrived before the official narrative praised technological progress.

### *Scene 3: The ethereal and the apocalyptic*

**Figure 4.** Die and born again.



Source: Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado (2021).

The drawing above (Figure 4), in turn, takes us by the colors. Again, two temporal orders are shown, having the railroad tracks as dividing lines. Like the representation of the globe, the blue color predominates. It is almost a spherical shape that is outlined in blue. But on the one hand, the century of the Santa Irmandade, with its simple houses, almost as if floating in the celestial universe. Would this be the time of freedom wished by Euzébio, Querubina, Joaquim, and many others denounced by Friar Rogério? On the opposite side, the sky blue disputes space with the cemetery that houses the dead. They are simple graves, containing only a cross and a stone: it is the time of war and death.

The colors chosen to represent death are the same as those used on the railroad: brown and black. There is no room for life in these landscapes: no people, no animals, no plants. It is the ethereal and the apocalyptic. However, some yellow blurs attract attention in cemeteries. They are ghosts that come out of the tombs and head towards the ethereal. Ghosts that represent the hope that dying in the fight was not in vain. In the belief of the Contestado rebels, those fallen in combat did not die, they passed away, i.e. they met the celestial beings to strengthen the struggle of their peers.

### History of the Present Time and new temporalities

How does all this relate to HPT, or more precisely, how could we connect this early 20<sup>th</sup> century history to the theoretical and methodological assumptions of HPT? We are certainly not talking here about the last catastrophe, the defining category of HPT as proposed by Henry Rousso (2016). The Brazilian military dictatorship, I believe, occupies that place.

Surely, there is not just one entry for an HPT study on the Contestado War. The most familiar paths to us, scholars situated in this field of research, might be to think about something like the past that does not pass by<sup>17</sup>. An experience

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<sup>17</sup> Rousso (2009, p. 208-209) states that “this conception that the past remains always present provides us with a great debate, which brings discussion and controversy, as it is a new regime of historicization. There are not many cases in History, in the past, where it was produced in this way. I believe that the practice of historians of the Present Time cannot be seen outside of this context. It’s not simply a way of writing Contemporary History, it’s a little more than that.”

that is still alive in prayers, blessings, herbal cures, holy waters, and so many other practices in which the belief in monks is still alive<sup>18</sup>.

Another way may be using the past<sup>19</sup>, after all, the history of the Contestado has been claimed by the police and the army (always in the sense of glorifying their dead), as well as by the sons and daughters of the oligarchies that descend from the politicians of that time<sup>20</sup>. Also regarding this use of the past, we may address the claim that social movements have made of the struggle for land, placing Contestado and Canudos as a reference and origin.

There is also the possibility of analyzing the multiple overlapping temporalities between this Contestado's past and its presence in memory and in present-day history. A past that refers to an experience in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but which is also rooted in the tradition of wanderers and healers who have been there since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A past based on the practices of violence and repression that political elites aimed at social movements, which precede and go through the Contestado, in the indigenous and Afro-Brazilian heritages that exist in healing rituals and social organization, in the use of reading Charlemagne's feat and so many other temporalities that refer to the Contestado experience. This analysis approach could place us on the HPT path based on the contributions by Reinhart Koselleck (2014) in the way he addresses the so-called 'time strata.'

However, as already announced, I propose to go hand in hand with Benjamin, which does not mean invalidating other paths, but recognizing the legitimacy of other approaches to discuss the past, in general, and the

<sup>18</sup> In this regard, it is worth mentioning the documentary films produced by Márcia Paraíso, *Terra Cabocla* (PARAÍSO, Márcia. *Terra Cabocla*. Florianópolis: Plural Filmes, 2015) and *A Maravilha do Século* (PARAÍSO, Márcia. *A maravilha do século*. Florianópolis: Plural Filmes, 2019), as well as the doctoral thesis by Tânia Welter (2018).

<sup>19</sup> In this current, there are the studies by Viviane Borges: BORGES, Viviane T. O tempo abre as portas a quem sabe esperar: usos do passado e embates do presente no percurso da exposição realizada na penitenciária de Florianópolis (SC). *Esboços*, Florianópolis, v. 21, n. 31, p. 236-250, ago. 2014.

<sup>20</sup> Studies addressing the creation of museums and archives on the Contestado in Paraná and Santa Catarina have explored the links between the wish to guarantee the winner's narrative beyond the time of repression of the conflict. See: SILVA, Luiz Carlos da. *Museu do Paraná e Santa Catarina: formas de lembrar e esquecer a Guerra Sertaneja do Contestado (1912-2012)*. 2017. Tese (Doutorado em História) – Universidade Federal do Paraná, Programa de Pós-Graduação em História, Curitiba, 2017.

Contestado, in particular. The choice for this philosopher is due to his particular analysis of historical time. A perspective that leaves behind the idea of process, evolution, or even synthesis (in the sense that it inaugurates a final, better, or definitive interpretation of what happened). What he sees as now-time (*Jetztzeit*) and dialectical image provides us with an opportunity to broaden the conceptual repertoire of addressing history in general and HPT in particular. Thus, I focus on these two categories and then interconnect the moment when Friar Rogério met the believers in José Maria, in 1913, and children's drawings produced in 2020.

The first challenge posed by Walter Benjamin's perspective on historical time is that the latter is addressed as a presence and not as a place situated in a specific time, nor as an evolving force that guides us in the present. A presence that comes to us not as a process, but as an image, therefore, as a precise moment that refers to something that happened, but that, for various reasons, was disrupted. This has great consequences for a historical approach, since, as a critic of the idea of social progress, the philosopher sees that the past is made of timeless moments that drive into the future the appeals of everything that was not possible to fulfill in their own time.

In thesis XIII, he claims that "the representation of some progress of humankind in history is inseparable from the representation of advance in this history covering a homogeneous and empty time" (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 116)<sup>21</sup>, i.e. insisting on the idea of progress falls within the winner's logic, as it perpetuates a sense of historical time that values ideas such as progress and gradual improvement of humanity, historically construed by and for a certain social class. Thinking through Benjamin's critique of this concept of time, Michel Löwy (2005, p. 118) states that "what is at stake in the debate is far from being purely theoretical and philosophical. It is, Benjamin emphasizes, a certain practical attitude, which combines the optimism of progress with the absence of initiative, passivity, immobility."

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<sup>21</sup> Quotes from Walter Benjamin's theses "On the concept of history" were taken from the version published by Michel Löwy in *Walter Benjamin: aviso de incêndio. Uma leitura das teses "Sobre o conceito de história,"* translated by Jeanne Marie-Gagnebin and Marcos Lutz Müller (2005). Any translation other than this one will be mentioned in a footnote.



Against the progressive and procedural idea of history, the philosopher proposes the *kairós*, defined by Löwy (2005, p. 119) as “‘full’ historical time, in which each instant contains a unique chance, a singular constellation between the relative and the absolute.” These unique moments survive as shattered images that can be recovered by humanity through a certain harmony between the present and the past. For this recognition to occur, it is necessary not only affinity, but also the tenacity of knowing how to recover it in its fugacity, since, as the philosopher himself warns in thesis V: “the true image of the past passes quickly and furtively” (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 62). This implies, as emphasized by Augusto Carvalho (2018), both the suspension of the idea of time as progress and the idea of the present time as a transition.

As highlighted by Francisco Pinheiro Machado, the ethical-political dimension of this conception of the past is full of consequences: “on the one hand, history is no longer understood as a mere chronological juxtaposition of facts, but as a kind of search or struggle in the present for happiness” (MACHADO, 2013, p. 25).

In the wake of Walter Benjamin’s thought, the establishment of this moment, the instant of knowability, or the now-time (*Jetztzeit*), is not continuity with the needs of the past (which would lead to operating with the idea of progress or evolution), nor an impression of the present towards the past (presentism). It is a (re)encounter put into practice through the wish of the dead, who, by having their projects suppressed, appeal to someone in the future to redeem them from what they were unable to accomplish. An idea that can be found in thesis II, where the philosopher states that “the past carries with it a secret index by which it is sent to redemption,” in which he complements: “if so, a secret encounter is then marked between the past generations and ours. So, we were expected on earth” (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 48).

It is, therefore, an encounter wished by those who were prevented from fulfilling their collective desires in building a better world, an encounter that is updated every day, which can take place in a decade, a century, or a millennium. The redemption it potentially promotes is, as Löwy (2005, p. 51) reminds us, “just a very small possibility that you have to know how to grasp.”

The now time is a suspended, frozen instant, which disrupts the flow of progress and updates the past from the irruption of the image of the past into the present in a moment of danger. Its saving ability is aimed at both the living and those who have passed away. According to thesis VI, the *Jetztzeit*, in this sense, is a unique experience that presents itself as the exact moment when the subjects of the present seize a memory “as it flashes in an instant of danger” (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 65). It is not a matter of synthesis between two historical moments, nor of evolution, nor of temporal determination. As interpreted by Augusto de Carvalho (2018, p. 151), it is the “non-synthetic threshold between what was and what is. The past according to this temporality of the *Jetztzeit* is updatable; it has the power to become act and presence, always.”

If the past is unique and un-repeatable, if it can be accessed through fleeting images that erupt in the collective memory of our time, the update put into practice through this encounter will not be an origin and transition to something in the future either. As highlighted by Carvalho, in the excerpt above, it can be both act and presence. Hence, it also sets a new image and becomes part of a constellation of singular histories that the historian has to recognize.

In this regard, I come back to Augusto de Carvalho’s reflections when he claims that:

The connection between past and present in the now-time of its knowability clearly expresses the alchemical nature of Benjamin’s idea of time, as there is no pure past, much less a pure present, but only a time, the now of its knowability, whose functioning is explained by the mechanism of the dialectical image (CARVALHO, 2018, p. 155).

Without a past, nor a pure present, the gain we can extract in recognizing this type of operation in HPT is not only in breaking with the logic of a homogeneous and empty time that Benjamin tells us about, but in allowing us to amplify the instruments and categories of analysis of the living force of the past in the present, removing it from its condition as a place of truth, a space for the accumulation of history or even a place that repeats itself in the present. As the aforementioned historian Augusto de Carvalho (2018, p. 168) reminds us, according to this philosopher, “the past is a force, not a place.”

The now-time (*Jetztzeit*) is not, as already said, a presentist time, nor a time coordinated only by the needs of the present, even less a time ideologically oriented to the current moment. But an encounter that takes place between the present and the past and that represents the updating of these two moments starting from the dialectical image. Also quoting Francisco Pinheiro Machado:

In each of these current situations of danger emerges, like lightning, the memory of oppressive situations in the past, whose unfulfilled call for liberation or happiness takes on a new relevance, so that they have an effect in the present as something remembered. This tension is, according to Benjamin, the real object of a historian (MACHADO, 2013, p. 29).

At this point, I would like to draw attention to how Benjamin, in his theses on the concept of history, exhorts the historian to action.

And it is as a project that discusses the ethical and political dimension of a historian's work that I would like to conclude my defense of the importance of Walter Benjamin's reflections for researchers in the field of HPT. According to Jeanne Marie Gagnebin, in the ethics proposed by Walter Benjamin it is up to the historian to take the role of a scrap iron seller narrator, i.e. the one capable of collecting the debris left as spoil by the winner. She states that "the narrator and the historian should convey what tradition, official or dominant, precisely does not recall" (GABNEBIN, 2006, p. 54).

In thesis VI, Benjamin states that: "only that historian who has grasped this will have the gift of fanning the spark of hope in the past: even the dead will not be safe if the enemy wins. And this enemy has never failed to win" (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 12)<sup>22</sup>.

In this statement, the philosopher warns us about our responsibility, as historians, especially towards silenced voices and all disrupted hopes. However, more than that, also with the role we must take of interrupting the transmission of the winner's version, in not passing on the narratives that make them the heroes of history. In thesis VII, Benjamin calls for us not to identify with the winner, that we do not behave as the turn-takers, i.e. as "the heirs of all those

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<sup>22</sup> I chose here the translation by João Barrento. Editora Autêntica, 2016.

who, someday, won” (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 70). Taking one of the many images used by this philosopher to refer to the past, we need to interrupt the triumphant procession of winners, we need to interrupt the transmission of their narratives, as they are not only the consolidation of domination over the living, but also the reaffirmation of the barbarism inflicted on the dead.

In light of this, Benjamin proposes that the historian abandon the idea of neutrality and, in turn, take a stand. Taking a stand, in this sense, is to abandon the procession of winners and tune your meanings to those now instants, as they may be occurring in the present time. If, as François Bédarida (2003) warns us, one of the important dimensions of HPT is the ethical and moral responsibility of its practitioners towards the needs of their own time, what Benjamin comes to alert us is that, if we want to interrupt the flow of homogeneous and empty that perpetuates the victor’s victory in time and space, we need to put the brakes on the train of history and take the responsibility of working so that the living and the dead are redeemed from the violence that prevented their dreams from being fulfilled.

The defense that the historian’s activity is capable of intervening in reality, that it is a political action and, as such, can be revolutionary, connects Benjamin’s thought to HPT in an absolutely current way, as it seems to be necessary in the face of attacks to knowledge and to the dead. Added to this is the challenge of thinking through the extent to which his conception of historical time requires the exercise of recognizing the revolutionary role that the past potentially has in the present. In other words, it gives a political dimension to the past and, therefore, to the historian, which seems to be a good instrument for reflecting on the attacks that history, the dead, the past have suffered. To conclude, I return to something that the philosopher registered in thesis XVIIIa:

The revolutionary chance proper to each historical moment is confirmed by the political situation. But it is confirmed not least by the key power of that moment over an entirely determined, hitherto closed compartment of the past. Entry into this compartment strictly coincides with political action; and it is through this entry that political action, however annihilating it may be, can be recognized as messianic (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 134).

## The encounter between past and present

It remains now to retake the moment of the encounter between Friar Rogério Neuhaus and believers in the healer José Maria, as well as children's drawings produced in 2020, to advance my argument for the idea of dialectical image and now-time (*Jetztzeit*) as a major contribution to broadening the temporal perspectives of HPT.

What these drawings provide to historiography is to recognize a subtle opening of historical times in which the cries of the dead, expectations, disrupted projects invade the present time. However, this presentation is not done mechanically, as a simple bibliographic research, nor as a mere reproduction of what children saw or heard in course materials or social network services. What we see is a constellation formed by a moment when the ideals of a repressed community are updated in the present.

Those who look at these drawings with attention and are used to Benjamin's texts, as well as those who know the Contestado's historiography, will recognize a spontaneous eruption of the dream of believers from that time in these images. Something like an involuntary memory that flashes into the present takes shape in the imagination and is embodied in drawings filtered by children's sensibility of those who live in territories that were once the scene of a community dream that was disrupted.

We cannot forget that these drawings "happened" in the middle of a pandemic, while a fire destroyed the Pantanal of Mato Grosso and leaders of social movements fighting for land were murdered. Nor can we disregard the role played by the school and its teachers in this encounter between times that come to us in the form of children's images. It was through the partnership between the schools and the Associação Cultural Coração do Contestado, as well as the struggle for land held by the MST, that children were encouraged to imagine the past of the Santa Irmandade. Teachers encouraged the students, advised the research on images and helped in making the drawings. The association publicized them, making them leave the school environment and, via social network services, reach audiences far from the Lebon Régis community. This

brings us to the key role of school and education, even in complex times such as those of distance learning brought about by the coronavirus pandemic.

Furthermore, it is necessary to emphasize that the history of the Contestado was already an integral part of school activities even before the proposal that gave rise to these drawings. It is present in the narratives of the settlements of rural workers living in the municipality and nearby regions. For many settled families, the Contestado is not just an object of the past to be seen or remembered, it is a struggle experience from which stems the strength and hope of many of them in finding dignity and recognition.

To define this encounter as a now-time (*Jetztzeit*) and the images that sprung from it as dialectical images, i.e. adopting a Benjaminian perspective to address them, is to construct new meanings where the winner's narrative dominated before. A meaning that may not be the one attributed by children or even by the teachers and other community members. However, this operation is part of the role that the philosopher himself attributes to the historian by claiming, in thesis XVII, that, unlike the additive procedure of historicism, what is articulated by a materialist historian is constructive:

Where thought suddenly stops in a constellation saturated with tension, which gives this constellation a shock through which it crystallizes as a monad. In this structure that thought recognizes the sign of a messianic immobilization of happening, in other words, of a revolutionary chance in the struggle for the oppressed past (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 130).

Following the interpretative paths opened by Löwy, these monads “are concentrated in the historical totality” through which it is possible to build constellations that disrupt historical continuity. Thus, this question is not so pertinent: did children know they were causing a fracture in the time of progress? Were they aware that, by making these drawings, they were recovering the ideals of the Santa Irmandade? The role of recognizing this moment as a monad belongs to the historian, it is an integral part of his task and even his obligation, if he is identified with the unrevenged wishes of people who, in the past, had their dreams disrupted.

As registered by Benjamin in thesis VI, “it is important to historical materialism to capture an image of the past as it unexpectedly presents itself to the historical subject at the dangerous moment” (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 65). Unexpectedly, here too, it can be translated as: without him [the subject] being aware of it<sup>23</sup>. This connection is made by the historian and is an integral part of his ethical and political commitment to both the living and the dead.

Not being aware does not mean that the symptom, or even the presence of something, cannot be recognized there<sup>24</sup>; a symptom of the desires of people of the past that were repressed, such as the expectation of the men and women from the Santa Irmandade who collectively interrupted, even if momentarily, the forces of progress, oligarchic politics, and official religion.

Such recognition of the past as a symptom, noticed in children’s drawings by an HPT historian, allows this professional to build meanings to what has been historically articulated, as this is materialized in the narratives made by the drawings. However, what is symptomatic or unconscious in these drawings is not the emergence of the railway, of war technology such as the cannon and the revolver in the soldier’s hand. These elements are inseparable from the narratives that the winners produce about the Contestado. The irruption of the past in children’s drawings is in the way the railroad was presented as the antithesis of progress. It manifests itself in the palette of colors chosen to represent the railroad tracks as the same ones in the cemetery where those named as Euzébio, Querubina, and Manuel are buried. The idea is that time is fractured by the tracks of this same road. It appears in the contrast between the new world (egalitarian, harmonious, and promising) and the world of disorder, death, and devastation. This opposition is made both by the subjects and objects included on each side, and by the tones indicating life and death in children’s representations.

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<sup>23</sup> The thesis by Augusto de Carvalho (2018), already mentioned above, makes an excellent connection between Walter Benjamin’s concept of history and Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytic theories. Another intellectual who makes this connection is Didi-Huberman (DIDI-HUMERMAN, Georges. *Diante do tempo: história da arte e anacronismo das imagens*. Belo Horizonte: Ed. UFMG, 2015).

<sup>24</sup> Within the scope of this text, it was not possible to address the concept of history as a symptom, however, I highlight that authors like Augusto de Carvalho (2018) and Didi-Huberman (DIDI-HUMERMAN, Georges. *O que vemos, o que nos olha*. São Paulo: Editora 34, 1998) have analyzed Walter Benjamin’s concepts of history in the light of Freudian categories in which the idea of symptom appears as a common element between the philosopher and Freud.

It is also a symptom of the fact that all this coincided with the way in which the old man Euzébio, the boy Joaquim, the old woman Querubina and all the other men and women in the Santa Irmandade saw the world and the presence of the railway. This may seem like something unimportant, but if we recall that much of the course material, or even the historical culture about the Contestado available to students, does nothing more than praise modernity and progress<sup>25</sup>, the way the drawings interconnect past and present cannot be thrown into the common grave of a simple reproduction of what they read, saw in material illustrating the war and on social network services. The drawings are against the funeral procession that continues trampling the dead, as they are critical of all the turn-takers who remain faithful to the dominant narratives.

The now-time (*Jetztzeit*) established by these drawings is not torn from the memory of a history that, we know, was assigned as a school task by teachers. In the case of children's drawings, this revolutionary power occurs because drawings allow us to contest another dominant narrative: that of school and childhood as a mere place and time of reproduction. Through these drawings, we are taken by surprise by the creativity, sensitivity, and updating the past in the present. The encounter between these children and the history of the Contestado, materialized in the drawings, is unique, therefore, timeless. It is the instant of knowability.

In the case of the drawings, I recognize affinities that relate to violence against rural people. Affinities that denounce, in lines, colors, and shapes, the political and economic exploitation that motivated the rebellion of men and women in the Contestado. A violence that haunts children and adults who live in the countryside, goes through the ages, and has accomplices in the past and present. Thus, these drawings are at the same time unique and universal, since, if they denounce unique experiences, they do not cease to wish the redemption of all these ills. A redemption that seems to go beyond the region's borders,

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<sup>25</sup> Rogério Rosa Rodrigues demonstrates this connection between course material and praise of progress in his analysis of paradidactic material distributed by the Santa Catarina state government in public schools. On the subject, see: RODRIGUES, Rogério Rosa. Nas águas do esquecimento: o movimento do Contestado e o dever de memória. In: PRIORI, Angelo; GRUNER, Clóvis Mendes (org.). *Contestado: 100 anos de uma guerra sem fim*. Curitiba: Editora ANPUH-PR, 2016. p. 29-53.



especially when it denounces the environmental devastation, the murder of innocents, and the exploitation that is metamorphosing into progress.

The fact that the inauguration of a now-time (*Jetztzeit*), as it appears in these images, took place as a drawing is also noteworthy. One of the most complex issues in the narrative of the history of the Contestado concerns the need to account for many experiences that took place almost simultaneously and that are also repeated, therefore, in an expanded time that is singular and eternal. Since we are catechized by the narrative that privileges the succession of facts over time, how to build a writing that allows us to talk about the railroad, the international lumber company, the land colonization companies, the monks' tradition, the local political disputes, the cases of betrayal and love, the extraction of wood and yerba mate, colonelism and healing practices, the presence of foreign immigrants, Afro-Brazilians, and Indian descendants inside and outside the Santa Irmandade? How to do it, I repeat, so as not to isolate and hierarchize each of these elements? How to register it in a narrative that is not progressive and cumulative?

The drawings, more than written texts, allow for an effect of presence in these narratives that bring us closer to the universe of these children, as well as to the atmosphere of the Contestado War. At the same time, the drawings move away from narratives that praise progress and succession, as well as escape the wish for totality, for narrating everything that happened and as it actually happened. This is so because they focus on precise moments of that historical experience and do not shy away from taking a position on it. A position that is related to empathy with the losers and that comes to us creatively, in a gesture of childish play through drawings that emphasize the pleasure of playing, without, however, making concessions to the 'the then winners.'

The creative dimension of childhood, toy, and education is also among Walter Benjamin's reflections. The philosopher highlights that although the children's world is impregnated with adult myths, conceptions, and truths, children are capable of deconstructing these naturalized notions in a creative and spontaneous way. In the text "Toys and Games," published in 1928, he states that "not a few of the oldest toys (ball, bow, feather wheel, kite) have somehow been

imposed on children as objects of worship, which only later on, and certainly thanks to the power of children's imagination, became toys" (BENJAMIN, 2009, p. 96). Turning into a toy can be interpreted here as desecrating the objects offered by an adult. And this, says Benjamin, is due to "the power of children's imagination."

The author deconstructs the idea that toys and playing are a creation 'for the child' rather than a creation 'of the child.' To do this, he contrasts, in the children's universe, the idea of imitation to that of repetition, i.e. instead of working with the concept that the toy's meaning is given only by older people, that the act of playing is a mere imitation of the adult world, Benjamin emphasizes a children's ancestral compulsion for playing, for "once upon a time," for repetition. By making this connection between repetition and compulsion, the philosopher quotes psychoanalysis by saying, literally:

The obscure compulsion for repetition is here in the game no less powerful, no less cunning than the sex drive in love. And it was no accident that Freud believed he had discovered a "beyond principle and pleasure" in this compulsion. And, in fact, any and all deeper experience wishes insatiably, until the end of the world, repetition and return, re-establishment of the original situation from which it took the initial impulse (BENJAMIN, 2009, p. 101).

If we return to children's drawings about the Santa Irmandade do Contestado, we observe that what we have in front of us is not a mere imitation of what children have seen elsewhere, but the pleasure of retelling a story, dismantling it and desecrating it from the myths of progress. By narrating the Contestado's past, repeating and transforming the symbols that adults construed to represent it, children not only took possession of this past, but also played with it. Thus, there is another worth quoting observation by Benjamin (2009, p. 101): "an adult, when narrating an experience, relieves his heart of the horrors, enjoys double happiness. A child goes back to creating for himself the whole lived fact, he starts all over again from the beginning."

In addition to the pleasure of repetition, and the gesture of playing with the past, what else is childlike in these drawings? The colors selected from the palette available in their school arsenals and the ability of children's imagination

to reconfigure something presented as a myth. Like the child who turns the broomstick into a horse, the ball into a doll, and the cardboard box into a hat, what we find in these drawings is not only the remainder of a memory of the rebellious past that flies over the region, as the affirmation of a creativity that does not fail to announce what it wants for the world in which it lives: more equality, less devastation, an end to violence.

If the images of the Contestado produced by children present themselves to us in lines, colors, and shapes that we identify as childish; if they come to us as a repetition of what has already been seen, what has already happened, it is because they have been shaped not as an imitation of the past, but as an irruption into the present. The line, the shape, and the colors shape the content, not the other way around. And this is not a minor element, as this is one of the strongest aspects of this narrative. It is for and because of the drawings that we immerse ourselves in the Contestado universe. They are like windows that open sometimes to memory, sometimes to history, sometimes to the past, sometimes to the present. It is the drawings that put us in contact with children's imagination and allow us to identify involuntary elements that connect to the perspective of believers in the Santa Irmandade. Thus, the drawings are at the same time the presence of the past in the present and the act of fixation, or (conscious or unconscious) recognition of this encounter at the moment of its realization. They are also, as already said, wishes and hope for a better world.

## Final remarks

Childhood is the place of creativity, sensitivity, and intuition. These qualities will not always manifest in the children, but once worked on, once socially and collectively stimulated, they can guarantee positive outcomes. When Benjamin speaks of an involuntary memory that flashes into the present and is recognized by it, I think that this recognition requires a certain predisposition, a certain sensitivity that childhood potentially holds within itself in a privileged manner. It is through intuition that this fleeting glimpse of the past can be captured at the dangerous moment in the present. As a philosopher who anthropophagizes materialism, Walter Benjamin does not disregard the fact that such elements,

which may be part of what he calls spiritual, need to be associated with materials. In thesis IV, on the concept of history, Benjamin states that “the class struggle, which a historian used to reading Marx always has before his eyes, is a struggle for gross and material things, without which there are no fine and spiritual things” (BENJAMIN, 2005, p. 58). In formulating this thesis, the philosopher does not oppose, nor hierarchize, between material and spiritual conditions. What he proposes is a research ethics that invites the historian not to neglect factors such as courage, humor, confidence, cunning, firmness and, I add, intuition, in his analysis.

Given this warning, this question is worth asking: how to be willing to study, draw, acknowledge, and recognize oneself in the struggle of the Contestado rebels who were hungry, homeless, unhealthy, deprived of a school? In order to make encounters between past and present, such as the one registered in children’s drawings about the Contestado, feasible, it is necessary to ensure that today’s children have a home, food, land, toys, transport, i.e. that they have the material conditions without which they would not show the refined and spiritual conditions necessary to arrive on time for this encounter promised more than a century ago by figures like the old man Euzébio, the boy Manoel, the old woman Querubina, and other men and women who met in Taquaruçu, in 1913, to found the new time of the world.

If we think that the victory of the Contestado winners has also been a victory for memory and narrative, what is shown in these drawings is a presentification of rebel’s needs, capable of capturing our attention, directing our gaze towards the fight, creating a rift capable of putting into question the victorious narratives of the dominants. An element that, I believe, can be enhanced by the alliance between school and university, between history teaching and historiography. When this historiography is ethically and politically committed to the people of the past, when it is combined with some primary assumptions of HPT, it can play the role that Benjamin prophesied for the partnership between materialism and theology.

The encounter between past and present in its configuration as a dialectical image is not so simple to happen, as it is easier to follow the

procession of current narratives, especially when they multiply in spaces accessible to students such as social networks and even some memory places that bring along with them ready-made narratives that identify more with the winner than with the dreams of the men and women who had their projects disrupted. Recognizing that this encounter took place from a children's perspective, i.e. it was captured by children, in fact, by the children of men and women who fight for the land and who inhabit a small area of ground formerly occupied by people from the Contestado, has something to tell us about the role of school and childhood in the contemporary world. That HTP can be prepared to register this moment seems to be a task as urgent as it is necessary.

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