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## THE IMPERIAL METEOR: TIME AND VELOCITY IN PEDRO II'S JOURNEY OF 1876-7

### Abstract

This paper analyses the timekeeping practices of Dom Pedro II, Emperor of Brazil, during his journey abroad in 1876-7. The emperor's preoccupation with scheduling, speed-traveling, and time management is understood here as part of a global context of comparisons between nations within nineteenth-century ideas of progress and universal history. Journalists reported on his journey internationally, focusing on his restlessness, for which they referred to him as an *imperial meteor* – one who travels the world with unparalleled speed. This study puts Dom Pedro II's journey outside the national history narrative, placing it in a global perspective. In this way, it is possible to understand how foreign media and the global context of national comparisons of progress in the second half of the nineteenth century took part in the making of the 'Yankee emperor', a modern king with progressive values. Dom Pedro, a singular actor who binds the image of monarchy to modern temporality, helps us understand the global phenomenon of the growing preoccupation with mastering time.

**Keywords:** Brazilian Empire, Dom Pedro II, modern monarchy, history of time and temporality

### I

What was supposed to be a large meteor, traveling at a terrific speed, was seen in Europe a few nights ago; but it was afterwards ascertained to have been only Dom Pedro on his travels, the diamond on his shirt front causing the mistake

*Norristown Herald (The Wichita City Eagle, 17 August 1876).*

Dom Pedro II (1825-1891), Brazil's second and last emperor, had travelled several times within his empire before journeying abroad in the 1870s. During the first decades of his reign, he had already

visited the north and south of his homeland.<sup>1</sup> The monarch's being-everywhere, the ubiquity of his physical presence, was undoubtedly an expression of the imperial political intention to maintain the symbolic unity of the fairly new Brazilian nation-state.<sup>2</sup> These journeys also served the investigation of the civilisational level of the empire's peripheries. When performed abroad, such investigations made foreign nations objects of comparison, and his ubiquitous presence was a form of cultural diplomacy in which he acted as the embodiment of progress and civilisation. To do so, he had to represent specific modern values. The one that is studied here is the mastery of time (which implies practices of timekeeping, speed of action, productivity, and "being like a meteor").

The South American monarch went abroad for the first time in 1871, when he visited the most important cities and capitals in Europe and North Africa, showing to foreign eyes the embodiment of the Brazilian monarchy: its sovereign. When he left Brazil again in 1876, the emperor was already acquainted with European ruling houses and had previously developed networks of friends in the scientific and literary worlds. In this new journey, he decided to add to his itinerary not only the United States, but also various places in the Old Continent that he had not yet visited, such as the Ottoman Empire, Russia, and Scandinavia. Count Arthur de Gobineau (1816–1882), who accompanied him during a part of this trip, reported on his royal companion as someone who wanted to see everything, to see so much that he would even constantly complain that he had no time.<sup>3</sup> The entire journey abroad was followed by newspapers from across Europe, while also receiving special attention from those in America, which

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<sup>1</sup> Pedro II was crowned at the age of fifteen in 1841, and ruled until the republican coup d'état in 1889. Until the 1860s, Brazilian imperial politics still focused on consolidating internal peace and external borders. As a part of those politics, the emperor visited vast tracts of his homeland, journeying far and wide from north to south.

<sup>2</sup> Lília M. Schwarcz, *As Barbas do Imperador: D. Pedro II, um monarca nos trópicos* (São Paulo, 1998), 357.

<sup>3</sup> Letter from Dom Pedro to Gobineau, Rio, 5 Nov. 1872, in George Raeders, *Dom Pedro II e o Conde de Gobineau, correspondências inéditas* (São Paulo, 1938), 99–100. Gobineau was another nineteenth-century master of comparisons. In 1863, he published his infamous essay on the inequality of races. He was a French minister in Brazil in 1869, when his enduring friendship with the emperor began.

helped forge and spread the world-famous persona of the monarch and his progressive tendencies: his aversion to ceremony, his interest in international media, his intellectual skills, and his ability to move fast from one place to another. These constitute the focus of this paper: how the monarch attempted to see everything and be everywhere was entwined with a new form of obsession with scheduling and timekeeping.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the world, in its Western aspect, was ontologically shaped by imperial nation-states. Each process of nation-building sought to develop its own constitutive narrative that was believed to represent the unveiling of its national history. Furthermore, the national *being* of these states belonged to a Universal History, which evolved towards universal progress.<sup>4</sup> This global imperial situation enabled comparisons between different parts of the world relative to the place each one occupied in the timeline of that unified historical process. Comparisons informed hierarchies and led to a binary division between nations that were progressive ('civilised') or backward ('barbaric'). Sebastian Conrad affirms that through such an understanding of global synchronicity in world history, time allows the production of new differences between progressive and retrograde within a civilisational hierarchy. To master time, meant "to be in time, to work by the clock, and not to waste temporal resources was equated with civilisation, and [in these lines] the agents of colonialism turned into missionaries of the clock".<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the nineteenth century, new practices of time management and acceleration were entangled with the progressive and empty time of the so-called modernity.<sup>6</sup>

This paper studies the importance of those practices of managing time in the constitution of Dom Pedro's identity as a progressive monarch. Furthermore, it studies the features which the performance of timekeeping adds to his identity: mobility acceleration, affinity with

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<sup>4</sup> Carlos Henrique Armani, *Discursos da nação: historicidade e identidade nacional no Brasil em fins do século XIX* (Porto Alegre, 2010), 13.

<sup>5</sup> Sebastian Conrad, "'Nothing Is the Way It Should Be': Global Transformations of the Time Regime in the Nineteenth Century", *Modern Intellectual History*, xv, 3 (2018), 834.

<sup>6</sup> Reinhart Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, transl. and introd. Keith Tribe (New York, 2004), 96.

technological progress, hard work, ubiquity, etc. In this way, I investigate how global media took part in the building and spreading Dom Pedro's image abroad. American newspapers, especially the influential *New York Herald*, transformed Dom Pedro into a global celebrity as an American monarch who mastered the art of travelling and timekeeping. However, their exaggerations provoked a reaction from satirical and penny press newspapers, mainly in Brazil and the UK, which furnish critiques of the fetishisation of a foreign monarch and the overstatement of superior bourgeois/Yankee values in the emperor's outlook, respectively. To conclude, I turn the analysis back towards Dom Pedro's American image of a high-speed traveller epitomised by the metaphor of the *imperial meteor*, which reveals the crucial nature of the relation between time and space for understanding late nineteenth-century aesthetics of acceleration.

## II

Between his first and second journeys abroad, the emperor was widely perceived as a civilised ruler of an uncivilised empire. The possession of civilisation was inherently a part of the emperor's identity because he was a European-bred monarch descended from both the Habsburg and Braganza dynasties. Therefore, his relationship to time and temporality could be easily aligned with those of the Western European and North American civilisations. As time in the nineteenth century turned into an object of measurement, the emperor's embodiment of *go-ahead* values, such as punctuality, became part of his pursuit of the highest form of temporal productivity in accordance with that new form of temporality. This incarnation of progress, however, was antithetical to the temporal configuration of his South American empire, still reliant on slavery and civilisationally backwards. Comparative accounts from the period make this contradiction even more evident.

Owing to the publicity surrounding the emperor's planned visit to the US, James O'Kelly (1845–1916) – a *New York Herald* (NYH) reporter, Irish veteran of the French Foreign Legion, former war correspondent, and later, a member of the House of Commons – was sent to Brazil to investigate the preparations for the journey of 1876–7.<sup>7</sup> Dom Pedro wrote O'Kelly on 26 March 1876, which was remarkable

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<sup>7</sup> Paul Magid, *The Gray Fox: George Crook and the Indian Wars* (Norman, 2011), 288.

because he represented “the royal splendor of dynasties of the Old World as well as the strength and wealth of one of the most wonderful nations in the New World”.<sup>8</sup> When referring to the emperor, the reportage sounds strikingly complimentary. However, the division between civilisation and backwardness represented by the North and South Americas becomes apparent in the follow-up of the article. The presence of the Brazilian emperor was expected to add opulence to the grand spectacle of the progress achieved by the New World, something that only a monarchy could provide and which could not be replicated by the US government. Yet, to the *NYH*, the Brazilian monarchy represented a backward nation. It was an exotic place, rich in colour and pristine nature, that resembled a dream landscape from *Arabian Nights*. Compared to Brazil, the United States was “richer and stronger. We [North Americans] owe it to our Saxon blood and to the further fact that nature demands industry and courage from our peoples to build an empire on these rocky shores”. In contrast, “in Brazil, more than in most tropical countries, the energy of man is stifled by the profusion of nature”. To the *NYH*, the US represented the modern version of the Roman Empire, while “Brazil seems destined to become a modern Indian Empire”.<sup>9</sup>

Even in the court and its surroundings, understood as Brazil's most civilised location, forms of dealing with time and movement did not seem as sophisticated as in the Global North. The *NYH* evidenced this backwardness through a detailed account of James O'Kelly's visit to Rio de Janeiro. This account sought to provide information about the emperor and his empire as a series of pre-journey reportages presenting the person of the monarch to the American public. The reportages, which started with summary descriptions of the Brazilian monarchy and its history, ended up as adversarial and personal critiques of the Brazilian incapacity for mobility due to its temporal inadequacy.

Capacity for mobility and organisation is among the main features of advanced Western nations. The nineteenth-century supremacy of the West – both Europe and the United States – was intrinsically related to the increasing connectivity between distant places. This stemmed from faster forms of transportation and communication,

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<sup>8</sup> *The New York Herald*, 26 Mar. 1876.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

which limited the distance between the centre of an empire and its peripheries and colonial domains.<sup>10</sup> Due to this shortening of distances, the spatialised differences between places like east and west, periphery and centre, and south and north, became more evident. Historical backwardness could then be put to the judgement of civilised eyes.

O’Kelly’s temporal misfortunes began the morning when he had to move from the capital to a town nearby to look for the emperor. Even though capitalists have established a railroad connection with a passenger train years before, says the reporter, “no one could tell what were its hours of departure or whether more than one train ran daily”. He did not refrain from describing the absurdity of what he saw: “the hotel people thought the trains left every morning at seven, but were not sure whether the departure at that hour took place from the ferry in Rio or from the station, which is on the side of the bay, some miles from the landing place”. Appealing to the hotel director, “as this was a very vital point”, his frustration only grew when the manager described the history of the line’s construction, without a word “about the time of the departures or any mention made of an office where the necessary information might be obtained”.<sup>11</sup> Faced with such uncertainties, and the absence of street cars, he commenced his walking “press pilgrimage” to the local station.<sup>12</sup>

Encouraged by Dom Pedro’s willingness to meet the foreign journalist, and already having had a private audience with him in Petropolis, O’Kelly was determined to try his best to see the emperor again. He took this entire Brazilian temporal mess surrounding his pilgrimage as a patience test: “With this end in view, the correspondent had travelled in hot haste from Petropolis to Rio and had found on arrival that the Emperor had already set out at five o’clock in a special train”. O’Kelly was unprepared for such infrastructural barriers and was openly impressed by such a mastery of time, allowing the emperor to move like no one else in the country. James O’Kelly labelled the monarch’s “most exasperating fashion of moving about unexpectedly” as “imperialism in rapid motion”.<sup>13</sup> Dom Pedro, posed the *NYH*,

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<sup>10</sup> On Barak, *On Time: Technology and Temporality in Modern Egypt* (Berkeley, 2013), 20.

<sup>11</sup> *The New York Herald*, 21 Feb. 1876.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

[a]rrives at Rio for a council or to give an audience. Next morning the journals chronicle his departure by some very early 'special train', and before he has much more than time to reach his destination and take lunch, as one might imagine, you learn that he has returned, transacted some important piece of business, and has again, Will-o'-the-Wisp-like, disappeared. Everyone says he has a constitution of iron, and judging from his constant movement from Rio to Petropolis, from Petropolis to Rio, with occasional dashes up to Nova Friburgo [sic], there can be no question about his constitutional vigor. This activity, though desirable in correspondents, is, to say the least, sometimes embarrassing in a king.<sup>14</sup>

Like "the Royal Will-o'-the-Wisp", Dom Pedro moved swiftly from one part of his empire to another. Moving fast was a positive characteristic for a journalist and foreign correspondent; for a monarch, nevertheless, it was at the least embarrassing. In his search for the lost monarch, the reporter did not explain why crowned heads were moving around so fast within their domains, as had become evident. At that moment, from O'Kelly's perspective, Dom Pedro could not be seen due to the empire's technological backwardness and the emperor's fast-moving skill. A monarch should stand still, visible, up there somewhere, to every subject. Not long after, during Dom Pedro's voyage, James O'Kelly would craft the image of the always-moving *American Emperor*, which would turn Dom Pedro into a globally visible phenomenon on the pages of the *NYH*.

### III

*The New York Herald* was the most printed newspaper in the 1870s. Its editors were associated with conservative politics, supported the Democratic Party, and had solidly anti-Catholic convictions. Gordon Bennett Jr (1841–1918), the paper's wealthy proprietor and main editor, often reported news related to politics and his other main interests: travelling, exploration, monarchies, and royal journeys. He is believed by historians to have run a vast media empire that reached Paris, New York, and, for some time, London.<sup>15</sup> In the Old World,

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Simone M. Müller, 'Media Tycoons and their Global Public: The Case of Gordon Bennett and the *New York Herald*', in Valeska Huber and Jürgen Osterhammel (eds), *Global publics: Their power and their limits, 1870–1900* (New York, 2020), 66.

“he socialized with the old continent’s royals, such as Emperor Wilhelm II of Germany. He belonged to a class of white men of European background who could make the entire world spin at their bidding”.<sup>16</sup> Like James O’Kelly and Dom Pedro II, Bennett was a global actor.

During the emperor’s visit to Philadelphia, the monarch wrote his daughter, the princess regent:

I recommend you read the *New York Herald*, which publishes everything about my trip with as much accuracy as circumstances may allow. The American minister in Rio and others should receive it. . . . The *Herald’s* travel notes were written as under steam power, and they only stop been written in order to produce a narrative of what exactly happened during the trip.<sup>17</sup>

This meticulous account of a monarch’s daily life was not unique in the history of monarchies. The recounting of a royal’s schedule was a common practice in newspapers in Victorian England, which contributed to the making of Queen Victoria into the *first media monarch*.<sup>18</sup> It was also customary in Russian newspapers of the second half of the nineteenth century to publicise the appointments and happenings in the life of its royals. In both cases, the crowned heads turned into imperial and national celebrities, reinforcing the bourgeois image of public and private lives of modern sovereigns. However, the press turned Dom Pedro into a global celebrity and, simultaneously, a royal detached from royalty.

*The New York Herald’s* adulation and fascination with the emperor, as expressed in its coverage of the journey, seemed excessive to other newspapers. *The Cairo Bulletin* accused Bennett of sending a correspondent to “dog” Dom Pedro every step of the way, “reporting every word he says, even the most trivial and common-place remark he addresses to any member of his suite”. Documenting many of the events involving the emperor would cost “the *Herald* at the rate of two hundred dollars per column”.<sup>19</sup> Such criticism was also expressed in Brazil. *O Mosquito*, a popular Brazilian illustrated magazine of the time, included a satirical portrayal of the *NYH’s* correspondent to highlight the same questions

<sup>16</sup> Müller, ‘Media Tycoons and their Global Public’, 64.

<sup>17</sup> Dom Pedro II to Princess Isabel, Philadelphia, 11 May 1876, in D. Pedro II, *Diário de viagem aos Estados Unidos* (Petrópolis, 1876).

<sup>18</sup> John Plunkett, *Queen Victoria. First Media Monarch* (Oxford, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> *The Cairo Bulletin*, 16 May 1876.



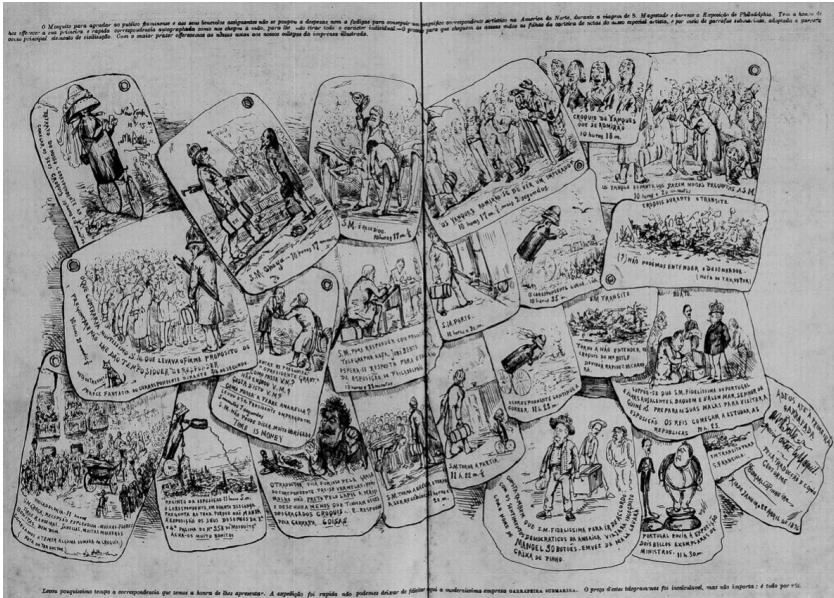


Fig. 1. *O Mosquito*, 22 Apr. 1876. A representation of the speed of the news, which reached Brazil quickly thanks to the bottle, “our main element of civilisation”.

that *The Cairo Bulletin* posed.<sup>20</sup> On 22 April 1876, the Brazilian paper published an illustrated parody of the *NYH*'s reports on Dom Pedro's daily schedule. In a cluster of images depicting the emperor's doings throughout an entire day, he is not the only one obsessed with time (Fig. 1). This obsession is shared by the journalist. The *NYH*'s correspondent appears as “Mr. Bottle” (literally a bottle on a bicycle following the fast-moving monarch). Each event is depicted in a card with a title or comment and the time at which it occurred, for instance: “HM reception, 10:17 1/2 am”, or “The Yankees were delighted to see the emperor. 10:17 ½ and another 2 seconds”, or even, “HM could not say thank you, Time is money!”

Famous for his representation as a Yankee emperor, demonstration of republican and democratic values, and his aversion to pomp and luxury, the monarch garnered a multitude of admirers during the American part of his journey.<sup>21</sup> Even before his arrival in England, it

<sup>20</sup> *O Mosquito*, 5 June 1876.

<sup>21</sup> *O Mosquito*, 10 June 1876.

was already thought in Great Britain that the emperor had pushed this image of humbleness and industriousness to a limit. His travelling style was seen as a source of trouble for his hosts and contributed to making him something of a comic figure. A story that became popular and exemplifies the above concerns an event that the emperor attended right after arriving in Philadelphia. He was present at a party offered by a certain Mr. Childs, where he made the acquaintance of a professor “who was rash enough to express a wish to show him some College. Dom Pedro immediately replied, to the Professor’s amazement and alarm, that he would be there next morning at half-past 5 . . . . [A]lthough he did not leave the party till near midnight”, he managed to be there on time in the morning. “Whether the professor ever got to bed or to sleep, with the prospect of having at such an hour to show his establishment at the best advantage to an Imperial visitor, I have not yet heard”.<sup>22</sup>

The emperor’s rapid pace allowed him to traverse the US remarkably quickly. A foreign newspaper marvelled: “It is estimated that Dom Pedro traveled 20,000 miles from the time he left Rio until departure from New York for Europe, a daily average of 180 miles”.<sup>23</sup> Another publication speculated that if anyone could go “around the world in eight days”, it would be him.<sup>24</sup> Such statements underscore the foreign admiration for Dom Pedro’s capacity for mobility. As the anecdote quoted in the opening of this article suggests, the emperor and his illustrious royal diamond could have been mistaken for a colossal meteor, hurtling across the globe at a terrific speed.<sup>25</sup> His fame in the US was indeed that of an “imperial meteor”. Another newspaper opined:

That imperial meteor, Dom Pedro, disappeared in the eastern horizon on the 12th, which is to say that he sailed for Europe on the Cunard steamer *Russia*. The illustrious salamander hasn’t seemed to mind the weather, but scooted around during the last two weeks with unabated energy, doing up his sight-seeing. I presume that no other of the titled personages who have visited this country, ever treated our proffered attentions so cavalierly or ingratiated himself with our people so thoroughly.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> *The Mail*, 10 July 1876. The article was reprinted in *Boston Spa Journal*, 14 July 1876.

<sup>23</sup> *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 16 July 1876.

<sup>24</sup> *The Saline County Journal*, 25 May 1876.

<sup>25</sup> *The Wichita City Eagle*, 17 Aug. 1876.

<sup>26</sup> *The Middletown Transcript*, 22 July 1876.

His speed, his energy for travel, and the power of his analytical gaze were all idolised by American citizens, making him into an ideal type of progressive man of his time. "He has made us [Americans] feel that here was a monarch who was more than a gorgeous dummy, and his rapid, comprehensive trip, paying his own bills and asking no favors of anybody, was just the kind to enlist American sympathy".<sup>27</sup> As he was not simply a pompous monarch living off of public appearances but one whose deeds made him approachable to the common man, the American press described his visit as a successful act of cultural diplomacy. Thus, the media made as much use of the emperor as the emperor made of the media. Both sides received something in this relationship. Moreover, it is not a coincidence that the birth of the global and mass-circulation presses and Dom Pedro inhabited the same century. In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the arrival of steamships, telegraphs, and railroads all over the globe allowed both the emperor of Brazil and the printing press to overthrow older conceptions of time and space and make them outdated.

The Centennial Exposition in Philadelphia in 1876, the first Universal Exhibition on the American continent, was a significant opportunity for comparing the progress of nations in the nineteenth century. Dom Pedro II's unofficial yet diplomatically significant presence at the Centennial provides an example of how the temporalities of the monarch and of the modern press were exceptionally similar. Dom Pedro II was one of the very first people to visit the exhibits every morning. Being in a place that attracted knowledge-seeking and curiosity, his early hours and mobility were not the only features that stood out in Philadelphia. The emperor went everywhere, "examining each object as if he were a student 'cramming for a competitive examination.'"<sup>28</sup> Dom Pedro was here bestowed with his *imperial gaze*, which had something of a scholarly analytical power. Naturally, the emperor and other progress-hunting visitors gravitated to those parts of the exhibition that embodied industrious and mobile qualities. Therefore, their centre of gravity was the Machinery Hall. In this room, which gathered objects representing the world's most advanced technical progress, Dom Pedro "made a special study of the Walter Press, under the able guidance of Mr Jones, whose paper, the *New York*

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> *The Mail*, 10 July 1876.

*Times*, is everyday printed upon – sometimes to the extent of 4,000 copies or thereabouts”.<sup>29</sup> The encounter between Dom Pedro and the Walter Press reveals a similarity between them: an aesthetics of acceleration.

In *The Mail*'s report of the occasion, there is almost something of a hybridisation of the image of the monarch and the printing press machine. Both had the same features: they represented velocity, knowledge, and hard work. After reporting on the power of Dom Pedro and his gaze over space and time, the English paper suddenly moves its focus from the monarch to the capacities of the machine, which “does not work continuously or at any specified time but is started at odd intervals to run for a minute or two”. As much as the emperor was a most avid sightseer, this object was one of the most attractive sights in the exposition. It did not attract only the eyes of the emperor, but just like Dom Pedro II, the press, when it moved, caused a “sudden rush of people from all parts of the Machinery Hall, the moment they hear the press in motion”.<sup>30</sup> The emperor's gaze and the working machine had faced each other as major attractions of the Centennial. It was not usual for the general public to see such a rapid and technologically advanced printing press at work. Similarly, it was not usual for the public to see an emperor at work. The press' productivity and novelty were materialised in the body of the machine, as much as the body of the emperor represented ubiquitousness and mobility.

Thousands of copies were printed under the eyes of the visitors in the Machinery Hall. It was “amusing to see the fixed, fascinated stare of amazement with which the crowd watched harmless sheets of white paper metamorphosed into that formidable instrument, an American newspaper, by the action of one machine”. Four pages printed every second attracted the crowd's eyes, but there was something special about the American crowd; they were superior to the average sightseers, “and much of the curiosity the press excites is sufficiently intelligent”. A piece of evidence supporting that fact was the prevalence of newspaper reading in the United States at that time. New York, as highlighted in *The Mail*, was a place where this practice was so widespread that papers were “sold by dirty and barefooted

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

people, mere children sometimes".<sup>31</sup> Even though many people did not understand anything about the machinery and its functionality, every day, more and more people signed up to watch the printing press on the move. With the machine in Philadelphia, applicant visitors could also freely obtain an edition of the *New York Times* printed by the Walter Press. This giveaway became so popular that people fought for copies of the free paper at the time of its distribution.<sup>32</sup>

Just like the worldwide reports on the emperor's journey, the printings from the Walter Press were spread simultaneously over various parts of the globe. *The Mail* correspondent did inquire if such an approach of giving away free copies of the journal could "not purely [express the valuable democratic and] philanthropic desire for [the] diffusion of useful knowledge".<sup>33</sup> Just like the emperor's intention of vastly spreading a positive view of his imperial monarchy by hiding behind a democratic veneer, the promotion and dissemination of knowledge through the press had its own imperial and/or colonial implications, spreading its hegemony and influence as far as it could reach. Just like both the press and the monarchy in England profited from the representation of the court on the news (one, politically, and other economically), in the United States, the media served the Centennial exhibition, as much as the exhibition was a convenient occasion to promote the press.<sup>34</sup> In the latter case, as similar temporalities converged, Dom Pedro took advantage of both the media and the exhibition as much as they took advantage of him.

#### IV

Due to his fame as an enthusiast of technological progress, the emperor proved to be open to an industrious improvement and systematisation of life. This allowed *Funny Folks* to make fun of the emperor's dependence on the newly popularised chronograph. Satirically describing the emperor's day, the journal states:

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<sup>31</sup> *The Mail*, 10 July 1876.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> John Plunkett, 'A Media Monarchy? Queen Victoria and the Radical Press 1837–1901', *Media History*, ix, 1 (2003), 3.

I am able to be so exact about time, thanks to Benson's chronograph, of which I spoke. Bam Retiro [*sic*] carries this about with us wherever we go, and it's his duty to time our movements; and as I have on occasions to run it very fine on account of conflicting engagements, I really could not get on without it.

Bom Retiro (1818–1886), the emperor's most frequent travel companion, carried a rather heavy but substantial symbol for that journey: the Benson chronograph. J.W. Benson (1826–1878) was the official watchmaker for several royal families in Europe; among his clients was Queen Victoria. Clocks and watches were important objects that reflected the emperor's travel style. Ordering his day meant following a precise timetable and knowing how long he spent in each place he visited. In the schedule of the emperor of the satire, everything was carefully timed and reported on in hyperbolic details, marked by hours, minutes, and seconds. Indeed, in 1877, the emperor was invited for an appointment with the Scottish goldsmith James Aitchison, another watchmaker of the Queen. Amongst numerous invitations from that year to see the most diverse inventions, the watchmaker's request seems to be one of the few that the emperor replied to positively.<sup>35</sup> Whether he attended the appointment is not known. However, it confirms the widespread familiarity with his interest in such objects.<sup>36</sup>

This perception of time as something to control (over astronomical time) was one of the main features of societies considered civilised and modern, as opposed to the traditional and barbaric ones, whose temporality was perceived to be attached to nature.<sup>37</sup> Linear time, together with science, truth, and objectivity, is a concept that is considered progressive in modern times because its implementation facilitated the partitioning of the past and the present, of nature and of society.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Arquivo Histórico do Itamaraty, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, James Aitchison to the Brazilian Minister, Edinburg, 16 July 1877, doc. 1521.

<sup>36</sup> Dom Pedro was also interested in timekeeping and time precision due to his interest in recent advances in astronomy. The monarch had a personal astronomic observatory, where he kept his own horological devices, such as a seventeenth-century sundial and a noon cannon. The imperial family also owned numerous modern clocks and watches of various provenances. See Francisco Marques dos Santos, 'O leilão do Paço de S. Cristóvão', in *Anuário do Museu Imperial* (Petrópolis, 1940), 151–316.

<sup>37</sup> Koselleck, *Futures Past*, 96.

<sup>38</sup> Bruno Latour, *Jamais Fomos Modernos. Ensaio de Antropologia Simétrica* (Rio de Janeiro, 1994), 66–9.

This separation allowed such personalities as the emperor of Brazil to observe and analyse everything in a clear, quantified, and therefore, more objective way. As the tools for such control, the chronometer and the clock were material symbols of civilisation as much as the steam engine, the telegraph, and the railroads. They were behind and/or above all these technological inventions because of their capacity to ensure discipline and order.

In Britain, Dom Pedro's representation as an obsessive planner became a source of anecdotes and satirical stories. His daily affairs became the target of ridicule, such as the article in *Funny Folks*, a satire of the emperor's diary made by the *Punch*, and a satirical poem reflecting the overscheduling and obsessive timing of his day, published by the *Truth*, all during his visit to England in 1877. According to the *Punch*, the motto of the emperor of Brazil was "Here, there, and everywhere".<sup>39</sup> This motto could well apply to his entire journey. His passage through England was "something like a holiday", extremely active and focused on intensive sightseeing. The performance of being in a hurry and living in accordance with a progressive disciplining of time, which was something positive for the emperor and for the American press, became a joke for the English.<sup>40</sup> His hurry to make the most of his day was also made fun of.

The emperor sought to wake up as early as he could, often visiting institutions by surprise in the early hours. Waking up early in the morning was also a practice the Brazilian emperor followed back home. The daily activities of the Brazilian court started particularly early, and Dom Pedro grew up under an intense routine of studies from 7 am to 10 pm. In 1877, *Punch* dubbed his active mornings "Imperial Hours", in which he was always ahead of everyone else. A satirical illustration published in the magazine condensed accounts of his early hours which had been circulating in the media since the US trip, – among them, a story from his stay in Berlin in 1876, when he even woke up the German Kaiser by surprise.<sup>41</sup> The illustration presents a group of people rushing to compose themselves at the unexpected early coming of the emperor (Fig. 2).

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<sup>39</sup> *Punch*, 30 June 1877.

<sup>40</sup> *Truth*, 21 June 1877.

<sup>41</sup> *The Mail*, 10 July 1876; *Boston Spa Journal*, 14 July 1876; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 12 May 1877; *The Jasper Weekly Courier*, 1 June 1877; *Dodge City Times*, 2 June 1877; *The Evening Star*, 16 Aug. 1876; and *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 11 May 1877.



Fig. 2. Imperial Hours: “This is a Tyburnian Interior. The Hour is early – for that Meridian. And the tragic episode depicted is the result of a simple announcement by the footman – ‘lease, M’m, here’s the Hemp’ror of Brazil!’” *Punch*, 1877.

## V

Did any one feel our end of the earth tip up when Pedro, Emperor of Brazil, landed at New York last week?

(*Marshall County Republican*, 20 Apr. 1876)

While travelling, Dom Pedro represents at the same time the institution of monarchy, the New World, and a backward nation called Brazil. To be accepted as someone embodying progressive values, the emperor had to present and be represented as someone who mastered specific virtues: among them were mastery of time and punctuality. Mastering time also meant mastering space. His capacity to be in touch with the newest changes in a world in constant acceleration allowed him to be seen as having an inhuman, even cosmic capacity for mobility.

Studies on practices of timekeeping and mobility in the second half of the nineteenth century, when Phileas Fogg’s trip around the world in 80 days was in the collective imaginary, also inevitably mention



the period's imperial power relations.<sup>42</sup> Comparisons appear to be at the core of the composition of Dom Pedro's identity in contemporary media. When Dom Pedro II moved around the world, which was composed of competing empires and nations, and encountered other royals, comparisons were unavoidable.<sup>43</sup> He was part of a global trend of monarchs driven to mobility. Royals in nineteenth-century Europe adopted travels, visits, and diplomatic encounters as a part of their international politics.<sup>44</sup> The movements of imperial monarchs were important for conferring public legitimacy to their rule. In Dom Pedro's case, being a celebrity and a public persona was part of being a crowned head, as was being progressive through his attitudes towards progress and technology. Combining these two sides meant the reconciliation of the traditional and the contemporary.<sup>45</sup> It allowed the body of the emperor to carry simultaneous temporalities, one that came from his dynasty and was inexorably in his blood, attached to the past, and another that was progressive, transformative, and inclined towards the future.

The popularity of Dom Pedro's scheduling practices may speak not only to his own perception of time and preoccupation with embodying progress but also to how other countries perceived such practices of dealing with time. Because they came from a ruler from outside of the so-called civilised world, these practices were used as a point of reference for other countries to determine their own place in the global hierarchy of nations. Brazil was recognised by the US, its northern counterpart, and Dom Pedro's Yankee-like, active behaviour and pursuit of an aesthetic of acceleration brought him nearer to the civilised Republicans. However, this would not have been possible without his meteor-like mobility during the journey – that is, without changing the old pompous monarchic rituals into a mastery of time management and embodying of velocity. Like a cosmic event, Dom Pedro is a property of the journalistic world, globalised by technological

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<sup>42</sup> David Lambert and Peter Merriman, 'Empire and Mobility: an Introduction', in Lambert and Merriman (eds), *Empire and Mobility in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 2020), 10.

<sup>43</sup> Vanessa Ogle, *The Global Transformation of Time 1870–1950* (Cambridge, 2015), 13.

<sup>44</sup> Johannes Paulmann, *Pomp und Politik: Monarchenbegegnungen in Europa zwischen Ancien Régime und Erstem Weltkrieg* (Paderborn, 2000), 22.

<sup>45</sup> Maria Cristina Marchi, *The Heirs to the Savoia Throne and the Construction of 'Italianità', 1860–1900* (New York, 2022), 176.

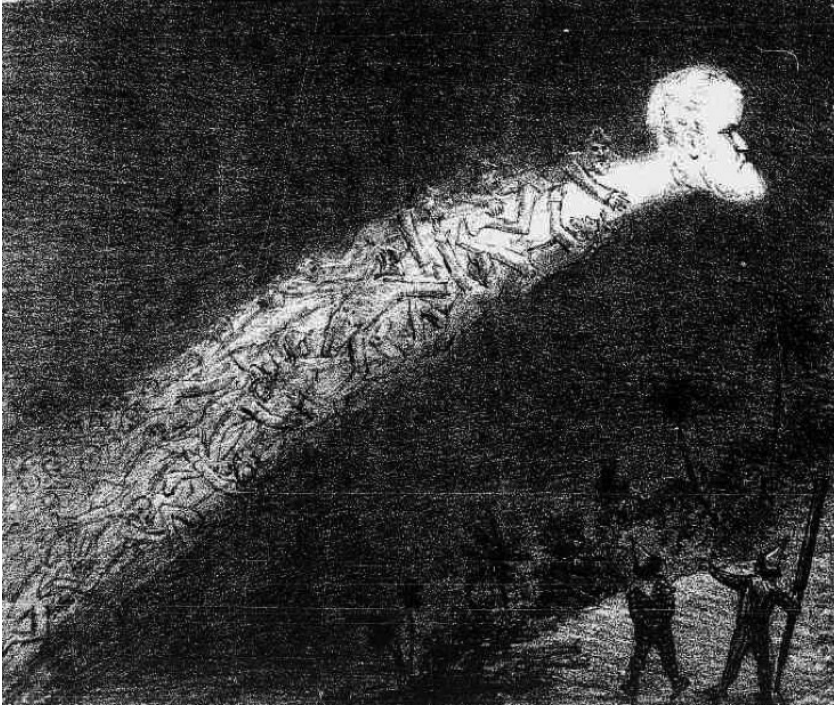


Fig. 3. Angelo Agostini, 'The Imperial Comet', in *Revista Illustrada* (1882).

advances, and matched by the body of the printing press for its speed and production of ubiquity. In 1882, at the apparition of the Great Comet, illustrator and publisher Angelo Agostini recovered the cosmic metaphor of the emperor and satirically wrote about "The Imperial Comet": "history will tell one day that a shiny star tore apart the firmament, leaving behind a luminous tail". The comet is Dom Pedro II; its tail, the "aulic flatterers that he drags wherever he wants" (Fig. 3).<sup>46</sup>

The presence of the imperial meteor did not last long. A meteor is only visible to the naked eye for a moment. The heavenly body's passage through the skies proves the possibility of moving through space at such a high speed. Another aspect of the meteor is that while it is visible, it is, in a way, ubiquitous – for its brilliance or for the power of its impact. When accompanying the noun *meteor*, the adjective

<sup>46</sup> *Revista Illustrada*, 1882.

*imperial* refers to a crowned head, a monarch, his highness, the sovereign, who, with his meteoric greatness, can embody a power capable of holding together and uniting a territory.<sup>47</sup> In the above sections, we saw examples of how the cosmic image of a nineteenth-century monarch was cultivated in the media, and of the variety of temporal coordinates involving this image. When exaggerated and pushed to the limits of the absurd, the characteristics that comprise such an image can turn into objects of critique. However, the astonishment of the public by these meteoric travel features and progressive values was constantly present in press reports. A new form of royal image was being established, an American one, and both the global traveller and the press were responsible for building and consolidating it.

*Proofreading by Antoni Górny*

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<sup>47</sup> Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, i (Chicago, 2009), 289.