

UTOPIAS AND UCHRONIAS: PRESENT CONCERNS AND POLITICAL USAGES OF THE PAST

UTOPIAS E UCRONIAS: INQUIETAÇÕES DO PRESENTE E USOS POLÍTICOS DO PASSADO

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ABSTRACT: It is frequently observed, while analyzing the experience of human groups engaged in transforming causes, that the urges of the present do not only direct the look to the past in a sense of diagnosing obstacles to modifying the current situation, but also in order to search for past experiences as inspiration to imagine a renewed future. Assuming this starting point and through bibliographical analyses, the manuscript reflects upon the historical itinerary of the conceptions of utopia and its variant, uchronia, in order to identify how these idealized futures and pasts dialogue with concrete realities and with the interests of specific human groups. Finally, it ponders about the relationship between uchronia and the concepts of “disagreement-diagnosis” and “self-affirmation-inspiration”, in order to categorize the strategies of instrumentalization of the past by transforming interests and by the political praxis of contemporary social movements.

KEYWORDS: Utopia, Uchronia, Social Movements.

RESUMO: Ao analisar a experiência de agrupamentos humanos engajados em causas transformadoras, observa-se que, recorrentemente, as premências do presente não apenas direcionam o olhar ao passado no sentido de diagnosticar obstáculos para modificar a situação corrente, como também na busca por experiências pretéritas que sirvam de inspiração para pensar o futuro. Assumindo este ponto de partida e por intermédio de análises bibliográficas, o manuscrito reflete acerca do itinerário histórico das concepções de utopia e de sua variante, a uchronia, de forma a identificar como estes futuros e passados idealizados dialogam com realidades concretas e com interesses de agrupamentos humanos específicos. Por fim, pondera a respeito da relação entre uchronia e os conceitos de “desacordo-diagnóstico” e de “autoafirmação-inspiração”, de forma a categorizar as estratégias de instrumentalização do passado pelos interesses transformadores e pela práxis política dos movimentos sociais contemporâneos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Utopia, Uchronia, Movimentos Sociais.

1. Utopia

In 1516, Thomas More completed his most remarkable book, *Utopia*. More than 500 years later, *Utopia*, a word he invented, has become a fully known term, assuming both positive and negative connotations. Invoked to encourage or to disqualify, it took roots in general vocabulary, even though many people are unaware of its origin. As a work of an eminently political character, More divided his book into two parts and this characteristic of *Utopia* is not fortuitous, but in fact emblematic.

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The first part consists of a dialogue with his time and space. It reveals Thomas More's disagreement with the lived reality (MORE, 2004, p. 3-46). The author intends to portray England at the beginning of the 16th century, permeated by wars and by the process of expelling the peasant population from countryside, later known as the “enclosure of the fields”. By creating a large number of miserable people, landless and therefore “free as birds” to sell their working force, “enclosures” were, for Karl Marx, one of the essential components of primitive accumulation necessary for England to, centuries later, industrialize, as analyzed in the most historic chapter of *Das Kapital*, which, in turn, mentions Thomas More's work twice (MARX, 1996, p. 336-381). These helpless human beings are portrayed in the first part of *Utopia*, centered on the purpose of denouncing the aspects of reality experienced by More in his time.

In its second part (MORE, 2004, p. 47-167), *Utopia* is erected through the portrait of an imagined kingdom, a non-place, a word created in the Greek language by combining the adverb of negation “ou” with the noun “topo” which refers to space (FERREIRA, 1986, p. 1745). Merging realism and fiction, More expresses the desire to overcome the status quo in England. From the social abysses and violence, that marked his days, to a fantasized island of peace and social harmony located, no wonder, in the New World – which in turn corresponded in the 16th century imagination to a horizon open to multiple unexplored possibilities (FRANCO, 1978, p. 26-27). *Utopia* is, therefore, more than a non-place, more than a mere daydream with no basis for support: it expresses the hope and desire to overcome what is concretely experienced.

Centuries after More and his literary legacy, England laid the foundations for the great economic transformation that, little by little, was engulfing the world and imposing its logic on it. According to Hobsbawm, the Industrial Revolution alongside the French Revolution, in the dual movement that constituted them – bringing economic and political innovations, respectively – gave the contemporary world its essential features (HOBBSAWM, 2014).

The formation of industrial society was, however, a process no less troubled than the period of the so-called “primitive accumulation” that preceded it and characterized the scenario of *Utopia*. Inchmeal, human beings living under machine-modified societies changed their relationship with nature and with time itself. People underwent a profound transformation in their daily lives: from a working time defined by tasks, which in turn

depended on the seasons, on the position of the sun at each moment of the day, to a working schedule set by the clock, with a fixed duration (THOMPSON, 1998, p. 267-304). In addition, long hours, work accidents, terrible wages and very poor living conditions characterized “the situation of the working class in England” (ENGELS, 2010) followed by Western Europe and the United States, in the transition from the 18th to the 19th century.

This epoch is marked by the intellectual production of several thinkers who, similarly to Thomas More centuries earlier, expressed their disagreement with the reality they experienced and elaborated proposals for social models in which the problems identified would no longer exist. They projected a new organization of industrial life, in more harmonious terms and that would allow better living conditions for the working class (SAINT-SIMON, 1821). They conceived egalitarian communities, even designing constructions adequate to the defended principles (FOURIER, 1967). They thought of cooperative forms of production, and ultimately questioned the capitalist order (OWEN, 1991). However, despite the differences that characterize the thinking of each, Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen became some of the most notorious among those who became indiscriminately known as “utopian socialists”.

They did not consider themselves utopians, however, Friedrich Engels defined in these terms the group of thinkers whose ideas he wished to supplant through the elaboration of a new proposal for socialism: a scientific one (ENGELS, 2001). Equally motivated by non-conformism in face of the conditions of his time, the author of “The Situation of the Working Class in England” (ENGELS, 2010) considered the aspirations of those socialists who preceded him incompatible with his transforming projects. For Engels, the lack of a correct analysis of social reality made the created projections unrealizable, hence the parallel with Thomas More's “non-place”. The notion of utopia therefore took on a pejorative sense, such as that of an imaginary world to which those who do not know how to keep their feet on the ground aspire and, consequently, they would not be able to present a viable proposal of socialism.

His outstanding intellectual partner and co-author of the famous Communist Party Manifesto (MARX & ENGELS, 2012), Karl Marx, shared a similar interpretation. For the author of *Das Kapital*, the only way to a viable, renewed and fairer society would be through overcoming the existing society and, consequently, through overcoming its current mode of production. How this necessary and redeeming rupture would take place could only be

understood by unraveling the capitalist engine. Therefore, a scientific method, essential to fulfill these purposes, emerged: the historical materialism, that elevated Marx to the select group of sociologists, together with Émile Durkheim and Max Weber, whose reading became mandatory in most introductory courses in sociological thought.

At various moments in his writing, such as in chapter XXIV of *Das Kapital*, Marx suggests that overcoming capitalism and moving towards a communist society would be the natural course of history in the face of the trends identified by him. The contradiction between, on the one hand, the growing “centralization of the means of production” in the hands of fewer and fewer people and, on the other, the “socialization of work” created by the continuous expropriation of the majority, now subject to a collective labor regime, would lead to the inevitable self-destruction of the mode of production itself: “capitalist production produces, with the inexorability of a natural process, its own negation” (MARX, 1996, p. 381).

However, he does not restrict himself to merely indicating trends in the development of capitalism – the will for transformation is quite explicit. Marx, in several passages, whether in the Manifesto, or even in what is possibly the most scientific of his works, *Das Kapital*, even though concerned with escaping the reverie and unrealism, which he accuses many of his opponents, glimpses and creates projections about the society to come. If the past “was about the expropriation of the mass of the people by a few usurpers” the future was reserved for revolution, marked by the “expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of the people” (MARX, 1996, p. 381).

Thus, depending on the meaning attributed to the term “utopia”, it is possible to consider the communist horizon itself, defended by Marx and Engels in their scientific socialism, also as utopian – with no intention of disqualifying this interpretation. Both “utopians” and “scientific” project and desire non-existent societies – or at least non-existent ones – and look to them in order to question and modify the unwanted conditions of their present. In these terms, it is possible to consider Engels' controversies with the “utopians” as a dispute of utopias, in order to legitimize and develop what he considered more viable, or desirable. Consequently, utopia can be understood in a broader way, as a distant horizon – perhaps unreachable – but one that certainly inspires transformative desires and practices.

2. From the individual to the collective: social interests and the materiality of utopias

Utopias can be literary, fictional creations, set in the future or in a non-existent place that operates as a kind of antipode to everything that one wishes to see changed. Utopias can also be elaborated as projects for social innovations aimed at the near future, as “utopian socialists’” thought. In both cases, they are designed from the mind of a person, therefore, in principle, they are individual productions. However, just as no one escapes the issues of their own times and the materiality of their social existence, neither do utopias reflect the desires and imagination of a sole human being, since this person is not atomized from the rest of society. They represent interests and as such are part of the “mechanisms by which a group imposes, or tries to impose, its conception of the social world, the values that are its own” (CHARTIER, 2002, p.17).

The reality in which people are immersed and interacting is reflected in the production of worldviews, whether in what Bakhtin designates as a “everyday ideology” corresponding to the “totality of mental activity centered on everyday life” as well as in “ideological systems”, understood as the ordered, elaborated spheres of culture such as the arts and law (BAKHTIN, 1992, p. 118). In this way, when thinking about both the artistic production of utopias through fictional literature, as well as the political production manifested in projections of new social models, utopia can be understood beyond an elaboration resulting from individual choices, since any individual is, invariably, an expression of its collectivity, of the social fabric from which she or he comes from. There is a common and shared universe of signs and meanings that allows people not only to interact socially, but also to elaborate understandings about reality.

The social fabric is permeated by a multiplicity of experiences though, and they comprise the specific that exists amidst the general and shared. It is precisely from the idea of “experience” that Thompson understands the formation of popular consciousness, especially that of oppressed social groups. He moves away from a conception, based on Marx, that there would exist real and false consciences of reality, the first corresponding to the true interests of the oppressed groups, while the second, “ideological”, would be a distortion of reality motivated by the domination interests of the ruling classes and foisted on oppressed minds (THOMPSON, 2012).

Thompson considers these conceptions of conscience and ideology to be elitist. After all, how and who would define what would be the truth and the falsification in terms of social conscience? It is implicit, for those who advocate the conceptualization that Thompson criticizes, that it would be up to an intellectuality, generally self-proclaimed revolutionary, to behave as the bearer of truth and its transforming potential. Therefore, this allegedly elite would bring the “good news” to the oppressed groups. For Thompson, the issue would be much more complex than that. He perceives consciousness as the result of the concrete experience of social groups, simultaneously expressing their interests and the conditions of possibility for their realization. In other words, class consciousness is what it is, it is not a matter of qualifying it as more or less true or legitimate. It expresses the individuals' interests, inserted in a certain hegemony and in dialogue with the general configurations of the historical moment in which their experiences are produced (THOMPSON, 2012, p. 269-286).

The sociologist Karl Mannheim, in his book written in 1929 and entitled “Ideology and Utopia”, deepens the understanding of both terms in order to present the concepts that seem most appropriate to him. With regard to utopia, Mannheim works with a very broad notion, perhaps even too broad in some aspects. Utopia is characterized as frankly related to the different projects of society elaborated by the classes that compose it. As a result, utopia would be a direct expression of class consciousness.

An example is the intrinsic relationship between the radical Hussite and Anabaptist religious utopias with the economic interests of the peasantry in the passage from the European Middle Ages to Modernity. The quest to establish the “Kingdom of Heaven” here and now, on Earth, revealed the interests of agrarian egalitarianism of a class that, as previously addressed in the discussion of More's Utopia, was in a historical process of dramatic transformation of its conditions of existence. “The idea of the dawn of a millennial reign over the Earth has always contained a revolutionizing trend”, but it was only at the dawn of Modernity that the chiliastic utopia “joined its forces with the active demands of the oppressed strata of society” (MANNHEIM, 1968, p. 156). In this case, the material interests of a disadvantaged social group find in the yearning for a non-existent society, projected by religious prophecies, the motivation to deny the conditions of the present. The characterization of utopianism as a desire for change in denial of the present is evident, but

Mannheim characterizes not only other forms of utopia that emerged after this one, but also infers an evolutionary meaning to them.

From chiliasm, new utopias emerged. The “spiritualization” of politics had also originated politics in its modern sense, as a “more or less conscious participation of all strata of society in the achievement of some mundane purpose” (MANNHEIM, 1968, p.156). Afterwards, with reference to Enlightenment rationalism, the “liberal-humanitarian” utopia considered the ideas capable of altering history according to the whims of human will. It mainly expressed the interests of the rising bourgeoisie.

Simultaneously, but in opposition to the “liberal-humanitarian” utopia, a conservative utopia, instead of projecting an ideal future, embraced the present as “the embodiment of the highest values and meanings” (MANNHEIM, 1968, p. 167). The advantage of the latter in relation to the previous utopias would lie in its attachment to materiality, to concreteness, although its greatest limitation also resided there. That is because conservative thinking, in its eagerness to prevent change, would seek to naturalize what currently exists, mythologizing it as what actually corresponds to reality and, therefore, could not be modified.

Finally, Mannheim characterizes the socialist-communist as the fourth form of utopian mentality. It would be qualitatively more advanced than its predecessors and would express an evolutionary improvement over them as it would extract the best from each of them. It would represent the interests of the oppressed sectors of society – as happened with the chiliastic utopia. It would aim at a transformed future based on reason as a guide – as proposed by the liberal-humanitarian idea –, but without losing the connection with reality, sharing with the conservative "utopia" the concern to understand the determinations that converged to the formation of the society of the present.

These would have been the utopias that arose since the dawn of Modernity. Since they express different interests, Mannheim considers that there is a competition between utopias, thus being a direct expression of the class struggle and the correlation of forces existing between them. By speculating on the utopia of the future, Mannheim projects two scenarios, as possible results of current social struggles. One of them would at first be disruptive and intensively utopian: the intensification of the class struggle would lead to the ruin of capitalist society through revolutionary ways. In another, capitalism would accommodate itself to the interests of the proletariat, cooling down the class struggle and,

consequently, the utopian mentality. In both cases, Mannheim indicates the end of the utopias as a tendency, either by the end of conflicting classes, in a communist society, or by the end of the conflict between classes, in a humanized capitalism.

Utopia implies idealization, but not of something that already exists, instead, it is a projection of a “non-place” as in More's original proposition. Thus, when conceptualizing utopia as an expression of the interests of the different social classes in dispute, Mannheim seems to incur an excessive extrapolation of the idea of utopia by inserting the desire for conservation into the list of utopian mentalities. In several passages of “Ideology and Utopia”, utopianism is characterized as non-acceptance of the present, implying the desire to establish the non-existent. Consequently, the idea of a “conservative utopia” is antithetical to this proposition. Although utopia is directly related to class interests and projects, it does not equal to them, since not every society project is utopian, only those that do not constitute reality, that are not equivalent to the status quo.

Utopias arise as an expression of concrete interests of different social groups, elaborated from their experiences. This understanding elaborated by the sociologist is indeed relevant, but other elements are uncovered in the analysis. First, as noted, not every social class expresses its interest via a “utopian mentality”. And, furthermore, the utopian mentality can develop from interests other than those of the competing social classes. National, regional, ethnic-racial, gender, or any other interests expressing the diversity of human wills in conflict in a given social formation, can elaborate projections of an idealized society, in the midst of which these desires would be fulfilled.

The conceptions presented by Mannheim are, therefore, open to criticism, like those elaborated even by some of his contemporaries such as Arendt (2008), Horkheimer (1930) and Marcuse (1929). But Löwy, one of the most important scholars of socialist thought today, in *Sociologies et Religion*, emphasizes the contributions of the sociologist to think about the notion of an applied utopia, embodied in the actions and interests of social classes. Accordingly, utopia would only be constituted as such once it was adopted by a social group, becoming an engine in the struggle for social transformations (LÖWY, 2005a, p.28).

This proposal for a comprehensive understanding of utopia, interpreting it as a form of mentality that unfolds into concrete actions, that is, an applied utopia, presents a very interesting analytical potential for understanding the political practice of social movements,

understood as utopian human groupings par excellence. However, what Michael Löwy indicates as problematic is that, if on the one hand the understanding of utopia as corresponding to a utopian mentality embodied in actions points to what is possible to consider as a materiality of utopias, on the other hand, it can be limiting, if it does not take into account the relative autonomy that utopias have in relation to the context in which they were created.

Literary works of fiction; prophetic texts, considered sacred and projections of social models reflect interests and aspirations of their time and of the people directly involved in their production, but, as Löwy observes, it is unpredictable when these ideas of a transformed future may come to animate any collectivity and have a practical effect (LÖWY, 2005a, p. 28). Consider the example of the promise of the return of the Christian messiah, a utopia nurtured by the European peasant wars in the 16th century (ENGELS, 1870), by the gigantic Chinese Taiping Rebellion in the 19th (CHESNEAUX, 1976, p. 28-48) and by numerous messianic movements in Brazil in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (QUEIROZ, 1976).

As this example indicates, the same utopia can be reworked in different circumstances. Therefore, it is possible to dialogue with the concept of refraction, as proposed by Bakhtin. Refraction comes from optical physics and refers to the change in the speed of a light wave as it travels through different physical environments. This is what happens when you put a pen into a glass of water, leaving a part in the air and another part submerged. When looking at the pen, it will be perceived in different sizes and placements according to the different environment. For Bakhtin, the artistic work reflects the conditions in which it was produced – which happens regardless of the conscience of the individuals who elaborated it. As for the reception of this work by the public, it, in turn, will be re-elaborated from the experience of its recipients, thus refracting the artistic production. This is because “refraction is the way in which the diversity and contradictions of the historical experiences of human groups are inscribed in signs” (FARACO, 2009, p. 50). When a given community is united by objective material ties, “the clear and ideologically well-formed development of mental activity” (BAKHTIN, 1992, p. 116) favors the sharing of signs, of worldviews. This seems to be the case when aligning the interests of a given collectivity to a specific utopia, constituting a social movement.

3. Turbulent periods: times of utopias and nostalgia.

China's history is traditionally told with a focus on notions of stability and permanence. Its long-lived dynasties, which recurrently spanned several centuries, mark the eras of the Chinese past. The ruptures, always traumatic, are understood as the result of serious deviations, which should be rectified by the loss of the "mandate of heaven" and the transfer of power to better rulers (CHESNEAUX, 1976, p. 12).

However, one of the risks of understanding historical dating through dynastic durations is that of blurring the transformations that occurred throughout them. The Tang dynasty ended in the 11th century, but already in the 8th century, the An Lushan Rebellion (755-763 CE) provoked a profound destabilization in society and in the balance of power (BOL, 1992, p. 108-147). The economic base had changed, the regional hegemony of northern China had been supplanted by the predominance of the southwest, economically more stable and less vulnerable to the harmful effects of fragmentation and conflicts in the border regions (BOL, 2008, p. 7-42).

In a context of crises and intense changes, discontent and the desire for renewal manifested itself in the emergence of new ideas. Men like Han Yu, Liu Zongyuan and Ouyang Xiu expressed their deep disagreement with the configuration of society of the time. They preached the urgency of changing the course of the Tang dynasty. In the extreme, they despised the effects that long-standing philosophical-religious traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism would have had on Chinese society. Ouyang Xiu came to characterize Buddhism as a plague that sickened China for over a millennium (BARY & BLOOM, 2000, p. 593).

In response, despite the longing for rupture and change, it was precisely in the past, in Chinese antiquity, that these thinkers sought a reference for their transforming utopia – which gave this generation the nickname of Ancient Style Movement (BOL, 2008, p. 52-56). From the experiences of the Shang and Zhou dynasties, supposedly founded by "wise kings", through the administrative innovations of the criticized reign of Qin, to Han, the predecessor of the Tang dynasty, they all brought examples that it was possible to do differently and thereby change the configuration experienced by them. The innovations would draw directly from the sources of the past, in particular, from the thought of Confucius and his followers such as Mencius (BOL, 2008, 61).

Centuries later, after the fall of the Tang Dynasty in 907 and the rise of the Song Dynasty to power in 960, in the mid-12th century, this appeal to the past to transform the

present gained new impetus in the neo-Confucianist movement. For Peter Bol, neo-Confucianism effectively configured a social movement as individuals who shared an identity, composed of a set of ideas and practices, mobilized by thinkers such as Zhu Xi, came together and carried out collective actions in order to expand its influence on society – building temples, electing its heroes, organizing new spheres of political and social action and promoting the formation of intermediary institutions between the government and families, thus contributing to putting the relationship between the State and society in new terms (BOL, 2008, p. 110).

Perhaps this example is insufficient to indicate as a tendency to search for experiences and ideas from the past in contexts of crises and intense transformations. Perhaps it is better to consider another case, now in the Western world: nineteenth-century Europe. As previously discussed, since the dawn of modernity, the continent has undergone accelerated changes. The process of expropriation and reconfiguration of land ownership, accompanied by productive changes arising from agricultural improvement, led the English population to a growing dependence on the market, which became an imperative. This process, for the American historian Ellen Meiksins Wood, would be the basis for the development of capitalism, which would have an agrarian origin (WOOD, 2001, p. 75-112).

Capitalism, especially after industrial development, would give the market an unprecedented role in human history and practically all spheres of social life were piecemeal phagocytosed by its logics. The transformations were not restricted to the scope of material production, but profoundly affected habits and customs as well. As highlighted by Michelle Perrot, an expert in the history of private life, the economic transformations caused “a progressive distance between the home and the workplace” (PERROT, 2009, p. 15). Even the family model changed, breaking with the medieval clan reference and giving way to the nuclear family. The new model was supported by changes in legislation during the Napoleonic period that formalized the replacement of the birthright laws of inheritance by the division of assets benefiting the other children, thus contributing to the fragmentation and reduction of family groups in a more restricted nucleus. In the nineteenth century, the domestic daily life experienced in the bourgeois home, during the so-called “Belle Époque”, would serve as a counterpoint to the world of intense competition in public life, a kind of harmonic and hierarchical refuge for the wealthy man (HOBSBAWM, 2015, p. 161).

This harmony of the home, in turn, was only made possible by the process of domestication of women, which, according to the German sociologist Maria Mies, would have occurred in parallel with the primitive accumulation of modernity, confining women to the domestic environment and giving them the exclusive responsibility for the tasks inherent to it (MIES, 1986, p. 74-111). As an effect, in the nineteenth century, bourgeois women were extremely oppressed and suffered from psychological ailments such as the so-called "hysteria". Women from disadvantaged social strata had a different experience: they were burdened by the double workday, which, according to Thompson, submitted them to a working time defined both by daily tasks, such as that of the previous eras, and to a working schedule set by the clock time, of the industrial era (THOMPSON, 1998, p. 287).

Women and men, increasingly dependent on the market to sell or buy labor and to acquire from it all the goods necessary for survival, had their routines intensely modified in relation to the generations that preceded them. Whether in the lives of the working-class or bourgeois family, cultural transformations were profound. The absolute truths, which for hundreds of years provided a stable worldview and horizon of expectations (KOSELLECK, 2006), were gradually shaken.

As Benedict Anderson observes, universalism and Enlightenment-based rationalism provided the contemporary world with a principle and orientation consistent with the new political and economic organization, but left unattended other human needs, shaken by the great transformations and crisis of the great cultural systems of the past (ANDERSON, 2008, p. 35-70). Several human societies, for generations, perceived themselves in a self-centered way, based on unquestionable truths and continuities. This is the case with the great sacred communities. The use of Latin language and Chinese ideograms by European Christendom and the Middle Kingdom, respectively, made it possible to connect wide regions under the same signs, giving these communities a notion of oneness and universality. But the world that had been increasingly connected since the dawn of modernity gradually brought down what had seemed to be absolute until then: the religious community and the dynastic realms.

From the increased awareness of human diversity, including the diversity of beliefs propitiated by the commercial Renaissance, until the emergence of the Enlightenment in the 18th century, several transformations contributed to the "disintegration of paradise". From then on, as the historian highlights, "religious faith declined, but the suffering it helped to

alleviate did not disappear” (ANDERSON, 2008, p. 38). The hardships of human life such as tragedy, illness and death have not been resolved by rationalist secularism. Nor would the problem of finitude as opposed to the desire for continuity find a non-mystical solution. But nationalism, as a nineteenth-century phenomenon, would be able to activate deep feelings of identification and belonging, and operate the “secular transformation of fatality in continuity”: the individual can die, but it perpetuates itself in the nation, which does bear an “immemorial past” and an “unlimited future” (ANDERSON, 2008, p. 38).

Nationalism would be a response to an increasingly disenchanted world. An appeal to a feeling that did not only link the individual to the “motherland” in an emotional relationship, but also a reaction to the extreme rationalization and quantification that shook peoples’ lives. The phenomenon of Romanticism, whether in its literary expression and in the other arts, or in its political expression, voiced a reaction to the changes lived by human being of the nineteenth century. As Löwy observes, Romanticism would consist of a broad cultural movement which, despite the expressive differences concerning the political ideology embraced, in addition to highlighting the “essential role of affective bonds and feelings” (LÖWY, 2008, p. 13), it shared a “nostalgia for pre-capitalist societies and an ethical-social or cultural critique of capitalism” (LÖWY, 2008, p. 12). Whether in its reactionary versions, as in Catholic nostalgia for the medieval period, or in its revolutionary versions, as in socialist thought that was inspired by various past community experiences, “the pre-capitalist past is adorned with a series of virtues (real, partially real or imaginary)” (LÖWY, 2008, p. 13).

Thus, based on the examples presented, it is possible to imagine that turbulent moments and intense transformations that occur in a short period of time may create a favorable condition, an especially fertile ground, for the development of utopias. But not only that, the cases previously mentioned indicate that the desire to change, which takes shape especially in circumstances of history acceleration, is accompanied by the need to delve into the past and seek inspiration from it.

If, for Mannheim, utopias take shape from the aspirations of specific social groups, for Löwy, the diversity of romantic thought is also the result of the different interests that permeate nineteenth-century society. Although nostalgia for pre-capitalist societies is the general shared characteristic, different slices of the past are selected by different groups. That

is because depending on the intellectuals' social interests, a different past is chosen in order to embrace as an inspiration for change (LÖWY, 2008).

Hobsbawm observes that the past serves as “a standard or model for the present, a deposit and repository of experience, wisdom and moral precept” (HOBSBAWM, 2013, p. 29). This would be the traditional sense of the past, but in contexts of accelerated changes, the way of life of peoples' immediate ancestors is not reproducible. Reaction to changes would, however, take different forms, as well as different “model” pasts. “Conservative” alternatives, or perhaps it would be better to call them reactionary alternatives, generally refer to the near past, which would precede the “disturbing” changes in the supposedly natural order of life.

For some individuals and social groups, however, this near past does not serve their transforming yearnings though. The changes they want to implement take them significantly away from it. However, paradoxical as it may seem, the need to have in the past a sense of “collective continuity of experiences remains surprisingly important, even for those more focused on innovation and on the belief that novelty equals improvement” (HOBSBAWM, 2013, p. 27). Hobsbawm explains in terms of an “ancestor search” the attachment of modern Marxist revolutionaries to past revolts such as the Spartacus-led slave uprising in Rome or the English Protestant movement of the “Diggers” led by Winstanley (HOBSBAWM, 2013, p. 27-28). Even historically distant and, for the historian, doomed to failure, “the feeling of belonging to a long term tradition of rebellion provides emotional satisfaction” (HOBSBAWM, 2013, p. 28).

This “emotional satisfaction” in the search for ancestors, responsible for boosting a kind of “optimism of the will” (GRAMSCI, 2011, p. 195) is present in the thinking of intellectuals, whether they are the revolutionary Marxists, mentioned by Hobsbawm, or the neoconfunctionists studied by Bol. But not only. Social movements, understood as collectivities imbued with utopian thinking par excellence, relate directly to the past, guided by their transforming yearnings. Regardless of the intensity with which it is evoked, it is observable that the utopian mentality recurs to the past in order to legitimize its goals and, therefore, in several cases, nostalgia for the past is converted into hope for the future.

4. The Ucronia

Uchronia is certainly a much less popularized term than utopia. The word uchronia derives from a neologism elaborated in 1857 by Charles Renouvier (2013) who, in 1876, titled his book: *Uchronie (L'Utopie Dans L'Histoire): Esquisse Historique Apocryphe du Développement*. In this novel, Renouvier presents uchronia as a kind of alternative or counterfactual history that unfolds in the past. By altering the choices made by historical figures in positions of power, the course of events changed drastically. A series of doings that started in the second century in the Roman Empire would shape a new reality in which Christianity would not have been successful in taking root in the Western world.

As in Utopia, we realize that the imagination about a non-existent society dialogues with frustration with reality as it is. The denial of the present also expresses a desire to experience something different, however, instead of projecting an idealized parallel world, Renouvier creates a new past in his narrative and this, consequently, “flows out” into a better present.

Christianity is characterized as the most intolerant of the eastern sects. Approaching and combining with Roman political authoritarianism, this new religious expression would bring disastrous results. History is portrayed as an ongoing conflict between democratic liberalism and oppressive religious despotism. For Renouvier, it is the first of them that he would like to see victorious, and that is what he does in his *Uchronie*.

Pietro Terzi noted that the novel dialogues quite clearly with the political context experienced by the French thinker before he wrote the book, notably during Napoleon III's repression of the Roman Republic in 1849. Sympathetic to this brief liberal experiment that tried, without success, to replace the Papal States with a democratic republic inspired by the Roman past, Renouvier identifies precisely in French Catholics the main base of support for the reaction (TERZI, 2020).

Furthermore, Terzi ponders that, when considering the course of history as a result of the choices made by historical individuals, Renouvier elaborates a conception of history centered on the notion of contingency. In opposition to deterministic perspectives, he primarily attributes to the individual the capacity for historical agency – the will as the main driver of social transformations (TERZI, 2020). This voluntaristic perspective, in turn, dialogues with the political goals and anxieties embraced by the author of *Uchronie*, for whom the

defense of individual freedom and reason would be the path to the victory of the democratic liberal current against the oppressive religious despotism.

Gavriel David Rosenfeld observes that the imaginative and speculative exercise on the past, a “counterfactual history”, has been elaborated at least since Ancient Greece, considered the cradle of Western historiography. Herodotus wrote about the possible consequences of a Persian victory against the Greeks in 490 BCE. Titus Livy imagined what the results would be in a scenario of confrontation between the Roman armies and Alexander the Great. None of this has happened historically, but for Rosenfeld this kind of counterfactual questioning was a component, albeit an implicit one, of historical thinking. That was how it worked in historiography until the 19th century. With the advance of scientific thought, History gradually moved away from this speculative exercise. The search for historical objectivity guided the scholars in an attempt to reproduce the reality of the past precisely as it happened. This ambition, difficult to achieve, to say the least, had the consequence of redirecting the production of uchronic narratives to other spheres of intellectual production – especially to imaginative literature. It would be in this field that Renouvier's work itself was positioned (ROSENFELD, 2005, p. 5).

After World War II and, especially from the 1960s, Rosenfeld identifies a significant growth in the production of alternative history novels. The reasons for this are diverse, from the very drama of the war and the issues it raised, such as the crisis of political ideologies in the West after 1945. These events helped to spread a perspective that everything could have played out differently in the past, which would evidence the contingent character of History. Such questionings favored a series of academic reexaminations and revisionisms that aimed to distance themselves from any interpretation understood as deterministic. In this way, a loophole was opened for counterfactual speculation to gain respectability even among historians (ROSENFELD, 2005, p. 5).

Rosenfeld thus considers that there is a tendency for alternative stories to gain more and more space and take on a variety of different narrative forms. Those produced by historians and other academic scholars generally take the form of sober analytic essays, while those produced by novelists, filmmakers and playwrights take a more overtly fictional form through the use of familiar narrative devices such as plot development, setting and character interpretation. In shared, these “analytic” and “fictitious” alternative histories explore how

the alteration of some variable in the historical record would have changed the general course of historical events, calling it a "point of divergence" (ROSENFELD, 2005, p. 4).

In a chapter of *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories*, one of the most relevant studies in Oral History, Alessandro Portelli used the idea of uchronia as elaborated in science fiction to understand and analyze the narratives of several of his interviewees (PORTELLI, 1991, p. 99-116). As he explained in "Uchronic Dreams: Working-Class Memory and Possible Worlds", uchronias, in science fiction, portray a past that did not actually happen or an imaginary present, resulting from this fictional past. Stories like: "What if the Nazis had won World War II, how would reality be like?", such as the speculative exercise played by Rosenfeld's book (ROSENFELD, 2005), are a recurrent theme in literature and cinema.

However, the interesting thing about Portelli's work was that he did not seek uchronias as an object of research, nor did he intend to speculate on a counterfactual past. It was the uchronias that came to the historian, who identified them by analyzing interviews carried out with elderly members of the Italian Communist Party. When talking about their life experiences and political activism, the interviewees described imaginary situations, events that did not actually happen in their past.

Rather than interpreting these narratives as mere lies or simple senile hallucinations, Portelli decided to go beyond this simplistic observation. He realized that they revealed the desire that events would have taken another course, that the Italian Communist Party itself had taken another path. Uchronia would arise, therefore, from a disagreement with the events of the past. It would thus manifest, at the present time, in the desire for an alternative history in which the route considered correct and in accordance with the wishes and hopes of those individuals would prevail. It corresponds to an image of what did not happen, but if the events had happened otherwise, it could have been real.

It is also an exercise in imagining situations in the past that had the potential to reverse the position of historical "winners" and "losers": a vision of what the present would be like if a certain project, which was actually defeated, had, on the contrary, prevailed. In this way, uchronia corresponds to the imaginary extension of an interrupted, aborted past. From this interruption, which can be associated with what Rosenfeld refers to as a "point of divergence", the imagination of the interviewees constructed a new "history", a compensatory story to make up for certain frustrations in life as it actually occurred.

Although individual and subjective, through “subjectivities’ crossing”, the oral sources may evidence the common desires and beliefs that permeated a social group. And “what the informant believes is indeed a historical fact (that is, the fact that she or he believe) just as much as ‘what really happened’” (PORTELLI, 1991, p. 66).

Following this line of thought initiated by Portelli, who extrapolates uchronia beyond science fiction tales, identifying it in these imagined pasts that express, in individual narratives, frustrated collective desires, it is also possible to extrapolate the meaning of uchronia beyond fictional narratives about the past. As pointed out in the previous sections, especially with regard to the neo-Confucianist Movement (BOL, 1996, 2008) and the romantic movement (LÖWY, 2008), certain historical configurations, with emphasis on periods of accelerated social transformation, were beneficial to the emergence of a set of ideas that searched in the past for inspiration about how things should be in the present. Thus, it is possible to identify a uchronic relationship with the past in these intellectual productions, as they aim to rescue preterit experiences to modify present, therefore, playing a utopian role.

5. The experience of oppression: the past as a better time, the future as the hope of redemption.

According to Löwy, the romantic Walter Benjamin presents, in his brief thesis “On the concept of history” (BENJAMIN, 1987), from 1940, the notion that “from the point of view of the vanquished, the past is nothing but an endless series of catastrophic defeats” (LÖWY, 2002, p. 204). As “a nostalgic for the past who dreams of the future” (LÖWY, 2002, p. 199), Benjamin denies the idea of progress as a superior form and, identifying himself with the egalitarian experiences of fighting oppression, considers himself their heir and responsible for their rescue. In his thesis, the past appeals to the present for redemption, it is necessary to commune with the vanquished, to participate in the “secret meeting, arranged between the previous generations and ours”, because those previously defeated left us “a fragile messianic force” that, despite of fragile, it offers the “revolutionary opportunity to fight for an oppressed past” (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 231). Messianic redemption would come precisely through a rescue of this past, transformed into a renewed future.

Therefore, in this case, uchronia does not manifest itself in the imagination about how things could have been, a counterfactual history elaborated from a certain “point of divergence” that would invert the historical relationship of winners and losers. The uchronia,

in Benjamin, is launched into the future and becomes utopia as a political project, a guiding horizon of society. This is a characteristic and recurrent form of relationship of social movements with the past.

Reflecting on the case of oppressed social groups in Latin America, Justin Paulson considers that the memory of a relatively close pre-capitalist past allows them a more critical look at the continent, capable of questioning the limits of the notion of progress: “movements can start by saying 'this is not progress, at least not for us’”. At the same time, the desire for change would point to alternatives referenced in previous social experiences, “rooted in a memory of difference that offers a set of resources for imagining the future” (PAULSON, 2010, p. 36). No wonder the force that the memory of the quilombola past, the native peoples and the messianic uprisings exerts on the mystique of Latin American social movements nowadays¹.

As in Benjamin, the recent past is far from being associated with the optimism of progress for a significant portion of the Indigenous movement in America. On the contrary, it is perceived as a catastrophe of apocalyptic dimensions. According to Geoff Goodwin, “Indigenous collective memories of oppression and exclusion are fonts of resistance, providing a basis to connect past and present struggles to construct alternative futures” (GOODWIN, 2021, p. 232). The European conquest of the continent operates as the destruction of a much better world, which, in turn, is projected in the hope of a future superior to the present.

In an article published in the science fiction and fantasy magazine *Uncanny*, entitled “Postcards from the Apocalypse”, the writer Rebecca Roanhorse discusses the relevance of speculative fiction as an expression of the political struggle of the native population of America. These artistic productions, which became associated with the term “Indigenous Futurism”, whether in literature or in cinema, consist of the imagination of an alternative

¹ However, it is important to note that, as mentioned a few sections before, nostalgia for the past is not always aligned with the interests of subordinate strata of the population. Reactionary utopias also make use of the past as an instrument of legitimation, given, in the Brazilian case, the nostalgia for the period of the Military Dictatorship by the national extreme right in recent decades (LIMA, 2019, p. 77; OLIVEIRA, 2020), or even the curious, and apparently anachronistic, phenomenon of neo-monarchism (DETONI, 2021). Also noteworthy is the interesting study by Matthew Lyons on male tribalism, referring to misogynistic male movements, present mainly in the United States, but also identified in other countries, that seeks for a virile past in experiences such as those of Vikings and Spartans, for example, in order to inspire them to fight feminist agenda from nowadays (LYONS, 2019). I intend to expand the reflections presented in this manuscript, including analyzes about these and other uchronic manifestations in contemporaneity, in future publications.

reality in which the heritage of the native population is projected in a utopia that repositions the massacred past in an idealized future. For Roanhorse, indigenous authors express in their speculative fiction the particular condition of their peoples, who “stand with one foot always in the darkness that ended our world, and the other in a hope for our future as Indigenous people”. The conclusion of the article is emblematic: “We are rising from the apocalypse, folding the past into our present and writing a future that is decidedly Indigenous” (ROANHORSE, 2018).

If Indigenous Futurism is a recent cultural manifestation, the uchronic reference to the indigenous past to think about an emancipatory and revolutionary project is older. José Carlos Mariátegui, Marxist intellectual and one of the main exponents of revolutionary romantic thought in Latin America, according to Löwy (2005b), perceives in Inca communitarianism – and not in the institutions of the Andean State – an Indo-American model that could guide a socialist future (MARIÁTEGUI, 2005).

The same is true for Afrofuturism, of which Indigenous Futurism is a beneficiary. A cultural movement with growing expression in the United States, it proposes an art that is engaged with the desires of the country's black population. It is a range of artistic productions – cinematographic, literary, musical, plastic arts – that imagine societies of the future, but directly connected to the African past. According to Ytasha Womack, in the midst of Afrofuturist expressions, “maybe you’ll hop into a parallel universe with a past that reads like a fantasy or a future that feels like the past.” (WOMACK, 2013, p. 2).

The film “Black Panther”, a prodigious Marvel production, directed by Ryan Coogler and released in 2018, is an emblematic example: set in the imaginary Wakanda, a nation hidden in the heart of Africa that, maintaining ancestral African culture, thanks to its purposeful isolation, was able to escape the scourge of the Atlantic diaspora and became the most technologically advanced country in the world. Hence, the film adopts a uchronia that assumes the idea that African nations would have the potential for a much more promising future than the one that was historically relegated to them. The desired past, interrupted by modern slavery and its effects on the continent, takes shape in a utopian society ahead of its time, therefore futuristic, which emerged from this uchronia, created in fiction from a point of divergence: the isolation and subsequently Wakanda autonomous development.

The political implications are quite evident, as advocates Womack, “Afrofuturism is a great tool for wielding the imagination for personal change and societal growth”. The proposal would be, through art, to stimulate transformative actions that would generate a transformed future which, in turn, needs to “pull from the best of the past while navigating the sea of possibilities to create communities, culture, and a new, balanced world” (WOMACK, 2013, p. 191). Since “the inequities that plagued the past and play out in the present cannot be carried into the future” (WOMACK, 2013, p. 192) it would be necessary not only to imagine, but to move towards a futuristic utopia: “Yes, the future is now” (WOMACK, 2013, p. 193).

6. Time and politics: denying the present, building the future, drawing inspiration from the past.

The French historian Jean Chesneaux launched in 1976 the provocative essay *Du Passé Faisons Table Rase?*²(CHESNEAUX, 1995). In this book, Chesneaux understands History as an active relationship with the past, since it is the present that imposes its guidelines when revisiting the experiences of other times – “each one chooses their past, and this choice is never innocent” (CHESNEAUX, 1995, p. 24). The inherently political sense of historical making is evident in this statement. It is precisely the problems and the different interests around the urgencies that the lived reality imposes, those to question and summon the past in search of solutions and legitimacy.

Responsibility and commitment to the truth are the ethical bases of historiography, warned Eric Hobsbawm in “On History”, affirming the need to avoid the passions of political identity from the historiographical analysis (HOBSBAWM, 2013, p. 13-24). But these principles are not to be confused with an alleged neutrality or the overflight gaze proclaimed by positivist thought. The knowledge of the past is a “hardly disputed zone”. History is intrinsically related to social practice and as such “it is never above the fray”, exhorts Chesneaux (1995, p. 24). Henceforth, both historians insist that if the present is going wrong, we need to ask the past for answers.

If these observations are valid to comprehend and guide the historiographical analysis, they are equally applicable to understanding the relationship that social movements establish with memory and history. Utopian human groups par excellence, individuals gathered precisely because they share dissatisfaction with aspects of lived reality and urgent

² The English translation is entitled “Pasts and futures: or, what is history for?” and it was launched in 1978.

desires for transformation, social movements have in common the longing to change the present – and precisely because of that, they are extremely thirsty for the past.

The disagreement with existing reality makes it urgent to study what has already happened in order to investigate the origins of current problems and to recognize possible causalities. But past experiences can serve as inspiration, articulating past and future in a curious arrangement that mixes the nostalgia for other times with the hope or promise of a better future. Whether in the works of fiction or in the strategic projects of social change embraced by communities, *uchronias* and *utopias* – idealized pasts and futures – relate to each other.

Therefore, among the political usages of time and history by social movements, there is the critical use of the past, which serves to understand the circumstances experienced in order to support the challenge to the current order. But in addition to this diagnostic function, there is a specific and recurrent way of utopian appropriation of the past, which is characterized by a *uchronic* search for inspiring social experiences that could potentially contradict current hegemony.

To assemble and act, social movements recurrently need to answer the question: “why are we like this currently?”. And this “we are” refers both to society in its broadest aspect, in which they are inserted and in which they wish to act, as well as to the very collectivity they organize in the struggle for social change. The inquiry into the past, based on the urgency of the present, thus assumes two instrumental functions to political practice that could be synthesized in two conceptual pairs, with different functions, corresponding to the disagreement-diagnosis and the self-affirmation-inspiration (PENNA, 2016, p. 102-103).

The first pair might be related to what Boaventura de Souza Santos calls the “cold current of structures: an emotional dimension”, present both in individuals and in societies, which allows them to become “aware of the obstacles” to the desired goals (SANTOS, 2007, p. 58). It may also dialogue with the writings of Antônio Gramsci, expressed in his letters sent from prison. For the Italian intellectual and socialist political leadership, human beings contain “in themselves the source of their own moral forces” capable of mobilizing the will to achieve certain ends and, through it, avoid what he calls the “vulgar states of mind”: pessimism and optimism. On the contrary, it would be necessary to combine and overcome both feelings, developing the capacity to be “pessimistic with intelligence, but optimistic with will”.

(GRAMSCI, 2011, p. 194-195). This “pessimism of reason” is directly related to one of the political uses that utopian groups make of the past: the function of disagreement-diagnosis. And, as in Gramsci, it may not exist without the combination with the “optimistic of the will” when looking at the past times.

The social movements, as inherently contentious groupings, are in opposition to aspects assumed to be undesirable in the present. This disagreement drives the craving for transformation and, to make it effective, they also need to research for the origins of the problem and make a diagnosis. This first historical visit movement, translated by this disagreement-diagnostic conceptual pair, is generally primarily related to the understanding of what is external: society; the country; the world; or even “the other”, the political adversary or enemy, the one with whom one disagrees. It is hardly a matter of “looking inside” the group itself, but rather focusing on the social space in which it is understood to be acting on.

As an expression of “awareness of obstacles” and “pessimism of intelligence”, this negative look at the past has a predominantly rationalist posture, which intends to apprehend the reality in order to diagnose the problems. The exercise is to understand capitalism, whiteness, patriarchy, heteronormativity, or any other aspect of the lived reality with which there is disagreement. The attempt to carry out a realistic understanding of the “problem”, making use of reason for this, does not mean, however, the complete exclusion of the “pessimistic” imaginative and speculative exercise.

If the enemy remains victorious or wins, a bleak scenario can be projected. Rosenfeld observes that “alternate histories typically come in the form of both fantasy and nightmare scenarios” and that they are configured as such due to the political instrumentalization of the past in function of the political agendas of the present (ROSENFELD, 2004, p. 11). It is also possible to identify in the experience of utopian groupings the imagination about what the world would have been like if their worst enemies had prevailed. This is the case, for example, of anti-fascist movements that project the disastrous effects of a Nazi-fascist victory in World War II, a kind of “negative uchronia”, or, a dystopia in the past, imagining a modified present. Although historically defeated, the permanence of authoritarian political tendencies as opponents justified this imaginative exercise as a warning.

But for some human groups, the past itself, and not an “alternative history” about how it could have been, takes the place of materializing the tragedy that drags its effects into

the present. The history of modern slavery and the African Diaspora provides an example. The past is the nightmare, it is the dystopia displaced in time, a “dyschronia” for the heirs of that historical experience. Like the Holocaust, it has already happened, but remembering it remains as a warning, as well as the dystopia projected into an apocalyptic future, cautioning that unwanted aspects of the present, if not overcome, could generate the inverse of a utopia, not a dream, but a nightmare, at least for some part of society.

These “negative” uses of the past, however, by acting as a warning and presenting what is not wanted, are linked to the conceptual pair of greater emotional appeal, the one who asks for something, presents what is desired. This is the “self-affirmation-inspiration” function of the past, linked more directly to the dimension of Santos’ “warm current” and to the “optimism” necessary, according to Gramsci, to “set in motion all reserves of will to be able to break down obstacles” (GRAMSCI, 2011, p. 195).

Utopian groupings not only oppose a certain ordering of the present, but also configure themselves, erecting their values, principles and objectives. However, by asserting themselves as transformative collectivities, the search for precedents that confer legitimacy and even a sense of viability to the espoused causes is recurrent, and possibly necessary. As Hobsbawm states in relation to the importance of history for innovative projects, “the shape of the future is glimpsed through the search for clues in the past development process” (HOBBSAWM, 2013, p. 36). For social movements, past experiences would not only serve to identify trends in the future, one of the possibilities presented by the British historian, but would also contribute to the group's self-construction process. The self-affirmation-inspiration function can be understood as a more internal relationship with the past than the perspective of disagreement-diagnosis. It is now a matter of looking inwards, the objective is to develop from the examples of the past that converge with their own desires, to reach the chosen future.

In this function, the uchronias play an important role in the history of social movements: the pursuit of inspiring societal experiences that contradict the current hegemony in its central aspects. Feminist movements may seek inspiration for female insubordination in past matriarchal societies, which would prove that women's place in society was not always downgraded to men's; socialists may have in “Primitive Communism” a confirmation that social inequality is not inherent in human nature and the existence of

African societies with sophisticated commercial organization until the beginning of modernity would confirm to pan-Africanists that Africa and its inhabitants were not previously doomed to catastrophe. In this sense, the appeal to the past operates as a search for precedents, for possible experiences that legitimize utopias, that subsidize, provide directions for transformation projects: new models inspired by old experiences.

The present appears as the interruption of the realization of the utopia launched in the past. In *uchronias*, circumstances understood as favorable in remote times were aborted for some reason, the frustration due to their interruption can manifest itself in imagining what it could have been like, but it can also materialize in a project for the future. The past that failed to become true, or rather was interrupted, the *uchronia*, becomes a projection for the future, the still non-existent one, which is utopia: "the gift of awakening in the past the sparks of hope" (BENJAMIN, 1987, p. 224)

Both in its negative form, of disagreement-diagnosis, and in its positive form of self-affirmation-inspiration, the past is instrumentalized for the political practice of social movements. Therefore, in order to understand the trajectories of these groups, compiling events, actions performed and achievements is not enough. Since political action cannot do without a historical reflection, paying attention to the meanings that individuals and collectivities attribute to the past and how they relate to their present actions and their agenda can be fruitful for studies aimed at understanding the history of social movements. Utopias and *uchronias* are directly linked to shared concrete interests and operate as relevant instruments for analysis by indicating, beyond the deeds, the desires, dreams and inspiring references that motivated them.

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