

## The forms of history in the nineteenth century: the regimes of autonomy in Brazilian historiography

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The *forms of history* is not a neutral expression. It alludes to the more general questions about the forms that history can take, in disciplinary terms,<sup>1</sup> to the content of its discourse,<sup>2</sup> or to the design, structure and physical ontology of historical material (form before content).<sup>3</sup> In other words, the *forms of history* lead the historian to self-reflection in relation to the modalities of the research (the institutional situation, concerns and methods), the writing and the dissemination of history.<sup>4</sup>

In Brazil, the *forms of history* have become, but not under this name, a fruitful field of study since the 1980s. The *history of historiography* seemed, a little later, to scholars of these issues, an adequate semantic alternative to express the new research that emerged from this epistemological uneasiness. Especially concerned with the modern origins of the union between written history and the formation of national states, one of the driving forces in this field was the critical review of developmentalism models.<sup>5</sup> The relationship between written history and nation was questioned as ideological, and there was belief in the possibility of an ideologically free discourse or, at least, one committed to an emancipation project. This language of ideological criticism, essential to the strengthening of social sciences in Brazil, gave way, in historiography, to generalised criticism of the forms of historical discourse.

The epidemic spread of this criticism coincided with a difficult and potentially rich moment in Brazilian society: the opening of the political system and the end of the civilian-military dictatorship in 1985. In parallel, we must add the gradual and continuous growth of graduate programmes in history and in the humanities, a process that began in the 1970s and was consolidated in the 1990s. In fact, the dominant discourse among historians transitioned from a “language of ideology” to a “language of invention”, which helped dissolve a long tradition of questioning Brazilian “modernity”, in favour of descriptive procedures, concentrated on a less theoretical and supposedly more empirical historiography.

Intellectual production in Brazil in the early decades of the nineteenth century was marked by the progressive historicising of the concepts of nation, history and literature, like the effect of a time-acceleration experience, which, in turn, reflected and signalled a more general process of conceptual articulation and accommodation that was evident in

other countries, both European and Latin American.<sup>6</sup> The concept of nation, as it applied at the time, was linked to a specific notion of temporality as an intrinsic quality, immanent to reality. A lead or supporting actress in a romantic piece, at times farcical or tragic, adapted to local circumstances, the nation would emerge as a category of reflection most suitable for grasping this historicity in its most evident and unique manifestations. This set of transformations revolves around what Reinhart Koselleck designated the *experience of history* in modernity, whose scope would exceed the epistemological territory to condition, in a longer and more noticeable way, all forms of elaboration of the past.<sup>7</sup>

The connection between nation and history thus seemed indisputable and indissoluble. However, from a global point of view, the relationships between the concepts of history and nation were not homogeneous nor even symmetrical. In Brazil, although there is some consensus among historians that “in the years following independence, and throughout the nineteenth century, a historiographical construction was gaining consistency”, with the objective of “giving the imperial state that was consolidating amid resistance a support base consisting of traditions and an organised vision of what would be its past”,<sup>8</sup> there is still a large disparity between the studies on the emergence of the state and the nation as political, economic and cultural institutions and the research on the constitution of the concept of history.

Our proposal is to go beyond this axiomatic formulation. Therefore, we propose an inversion of its assumptions and ask ourselves *when a conception of history was founded in Brazil*, and how history becomes a knowledge of itself, that is, a subjective category of awareness,<sup>9</sup> to then become the depository of knowledge about the nation, its primordial or most visible object throughout the nineteenth century.

What the latest research seems to indicate is that the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB), created in 1838 in order to standardise historical production in Brazil and the writing of history, was not only, nor even mainly, a factory of ideologies.<sup>10</sup> A closer look at the process of formation of modern historical discourse reveals intentional and unintentional movements to autonomise the practice of the historian and intellectual. This movement towards modern standards of autonomy cannot exhaust the diversity of nineteenth-century intellectual life, but it certainly was a structural feature of great importance. Therefore, we must understand that the historical phenomena and processes that were heading in the direction of a formal discipline were, at the same time, those that allowed and restricted the newly forming standard of autonomy.

In this article, we seek to understand the existence and dynamics of these autonomy regimes in four parts or scenes. In each scene we analyze moments of controversy and discursive disputes over the place, functions and limits of the historian and the writing of history. Ultimately, we hope to leave the reader with the impression of the permanence of a dialogue concerning the limits of representation of the past in the nineteenth century, and how, in these conflicting dialogues, one can better understand the modes of production and the diversity of modern historiography. It is not our intention to give an exhaustive and complete analysis of all relevant authors and works, but to highlight some controversial moments that we believe are representative of the different regimes and forms of historical discourses in the beginning of nineteenth century.

## *Scene I: The compilation, modernity and crisis of representation: from the history of Portugal to the history of Brazil*

The most influential general history of Portugal, until Alexandre Herculano's work, whose first volume dates from 1846, was extracted and continued from a collective project of universal history compiled for the British publishing market in the second half of the eighteenth century. Translated into a number of languages, the *Universal History* served as the basis for several other "national histories" in a context where people and governments wanted to have their past within close reach.<sup>11</sup> In the Portuguese case, this transposition began with the translation by António Moraes Silva, a Luso-Brazilian, published in 1788. With the *História de Portugal* (History of Portugal), Moraes' effort was not a synthesis, but analytical. He translated and annotated the philosophical history essay added to the French edition of the *Universal History* and advanced the timeline to add new chapters to the original text.<sup>12</sup>

Above all a commercial project focused on the flourishing book market, the ancient and modern parts of the *Universal History* are separated by the great transformations of the eighteenth century, since the work announced in 1729 had two parts: the first, *Ancient History*, was published between 1736 and 1744, and the second, *Modern History*, between 1759 and 1765. The scholars gathered by the British publishers illustrated a new type of erudite professional ready to meet the demands of a project that involved a certain taste for risk. George Sale, John Swinton, George Shelvocke, George Psalmanazar, John Campbell and Tobias Smollett, among others, represented a kind of scholar very different from the dour intellectuals gathered in the royal academies of the ancien régime. It fell to Campbell to compile, among other sections, the history of Portugal from the reports of chroniclers, historiographers and church histories. The compilation practice, enabled by a model of yet diffuse authorship, would collaborate in deepening the modern experience and, ambiguously, in the emergence of new historiographical and authorial standards that would later collide with compilatory practice.

In the writing of history, compilation attended the demands for democratisation of knowledge about the past, but, as practiced in the *Universal History*, it presupposed a certain stable horizon in its representation. It was believed that one single history could arise from the collaboration of various authors, and that this same history would simply be continued into the present, with new chapters and sections. And indeed, that is what happened over the course of different editions of the collection or the national histories highlighted from the set, such as the case of the *História de Portugal*.

In the early nineteenth century, still two more editions or continuations of this *História de Portugal* were produced from the original created by Campbell. One organised by José Agostinho de Macedo in 1802, in which he included a chapter on the reign of Dona Maria I, and another in 1809, edited by Hipólito José da Costa. In the edition by Hipólito, for the first time, instead of uncritically maintaining the expansion of the project, the editor felt the need to rewrite the part dedicated to the reign of Dona Maria, replacing the chapter by Agostinho de Macedo with one of his own. This episode is perhaps the most obvious document on how the crisis of representation and transformations in the experience of history would problematise this model of writing, leading to both a new conception of authorship, and to the modern need for the

continuous rewriting of history.<sup>13</sup> In the preface, which opened the first controversy that we will deal with in this article, Hipólito justifies the unexpected attitude stating that “the same facts touch different people differently, and each one relates to them according to the impression that they make on him”.<sup>14</sup>

Various topics that would be mobilised further on are gathered in this small fragment. The diversity of views due to the increasing pace of the transformations that turned the history of the present into a battlefield, the uncertainties about the writer’s ability to maintain impartiality, and the readers or audience as the deciding court. Whether in the present or at some future point, the reader is the centrepiece in judging the different versions of history that now seem inevitable. In this scenario, authorship became a constituent element of representation itself, since this unique point of view altered the impressions concerning the same facts.

On landing in Brazil in 1808, the Portuguese court, and a considerable part of the empire’s leadership, knew that the local past should be increasingly incorporated into this process of controlled modernisation of the experience of history. It was no longer possible to limit the interest and the audience; it was necessary to dispute the narratives. It is in this context that we can interpret the histories of Brazil, or produced in Brazil, by authors such as Luís Gonçalves dos Santos, Ayres de Casal, José da Silva Lisboa, José Bonifácio de Andrade e Silva, Balthazar da Silva Lisboa, among others.<sup>15</sup> These accounts sought to produce the feeling that the future was under control, that the past still made sense and contained experiences that, although hidden, could be revitalised in the signification of the present.<sup>16</sup>

From the structural point of view, this Joanine historiography allowed the men of Brazil to have at hand increasingly broad summaries of its histories. Even if mobilised to produce affective support and recognition of royal authority and the united kingdom project, these texts also produced the side effect of a larger view of the differences between Brazil and Portugal.<sup>17</sup> Also in this perspective we can understand the grand project of a history of the Portuguese empire developed by the British historian Robert Southey. Ramos’ research has shown that the grand *History of Brazil* published by Southey between 1810 and 1819 was initially part of this larger project. Designed to defend the unity of the Portuguese world, it would also be used to build a Brazilian identity that was distinct from the Portuguese.<sup>18</sup>

The reform project found its limit in 1820 with the constitutionalist revolution in Porto. The physical division of the state in 1808 gave greater impetus to the national project that would integrate the peripheries of the empire, but the speed of events revealed the structural difficulties in producing a community of interests and feelings in such discontinuous territories. The result was the bifurcation of the process of nationalising these realities. Beginning in 1822, Brazil and Portugal would have to reconfigure this legacy in distinct national projects, eliminating the possibility of a development similar to what the British produced during the eighteenth century with the convergence of Scotland, England and Ireland.<sup>19</sup>

The new political situation of 1820 led to an expanded freedom of press and expression, compared to the absolutist monarchy.<sup>20</sup> The model of the intellectual reformer protected by, and attached to, the state, in a situation of the controlled circulation of

opinion, gave way to a wild process of learning and negotiation of autonomies and legitimacies. This situation would directly affect the conditions for the writing of history. The need and the desire for history was growing, whether on the part of civil society or that of the state. The struggle for recognition of Brazilian independence led the government, now a constitutional monarchy, to recruit domestic and foreign scholars capable of producing narratives of national affirmation.

From the point of view of society, to know the national history became a requirement for the full exercise of citizenship. The debates in the recently opened national parliaments demanded that the nation's representatives articulate the historical process in defence of their agendas. The European intellectual market, particularly the British and French, experienced a moment of great demand for historical accounts that interwove and instructed an increasing number of readers in the historical matters of the new nations emerging around the world.

Reports produced by Europeans about newly independent Brazil fed the foreign and local markets; they also catered to the interests of the ruling classes in their search for new forms of legitimacy and direction. During the diplomatic negotiations for the recognition of independence, the Brazilian government apparently commissioned the French historian Alphonse de Beauchamp to write a history of Brazil's independence in order to demonstrate its legitimacy. A year earlier, in 1823, government agents had also hired Angliviél de la Beaumelle to champion the Brazilian cause, which resulted in the publication of a report on independence under the title "On the Brazilian Empire".<sup>21</sup> According to Medeiros, the texts produced by the French consolidated the idea that independence was not the result of a planned revolution, but the only choice for Brazil against the oppression and injustice of the Portuguese Cortes. Also, young Ferdinand Denis, apparently meeting market demand, would write a first draft of a history of Brazilian literature, launching the project of cultural independence.

As it turns out, it proved difficult to separate the projects promoted and financed by the state from those that arose through authorial interests or those of the book market and its new readers. The fact is that existential interest deepened in a new type of history, that was broader and less founded in formulas or traditional examples. New metaphors like the "diorama", which connected new forms of an integrative vision with the analysis of the historical situation, exposed the newly available field of experience.<sup>22</sup> While they were reading the sentimental serials in the footnotes of the newspapers, including in Brazil, these men also needed to educate their feelings to comprehend the new historical world in the making.

## *Scene II. 1825–1838: the public questioning of the relationship of the "historian" and state*

In 1825 Dom Pedro I commissioned José da Silva Lisboa, the viscount of Cairu, to write the history of Brazil's successes under independence.<sup>23</sup> At variance with the emperor's order, Cairu planned to write a general history of Brazil, with a plan for ten volumes.<sup>24</sup> In the design, he adopted the vision of a slow historical evolution towards independence already visible in Southey's work, chosen as a "guiding light" for his own.<sup>25</sup> The first

volume of the work, published in 1827, deals with the Great Navigations and the Discovery of Brazil, connecting the national history with large illustrated narratives. But what draws one's attention in this volume and the other three that were published is the continuous effort to debate and evaluate the works available at the time on the history of Brazil. Cairu wrote his version while battling with competing interpretations, thus highlighting the increasing difficulty in producing a consensual and stable account of the history of Brazil.

An episode from 1830 is quite emblematic of the deteriorating conditions for writing history. The political and financial crisis of the empire was used by its adversaries as a pretext to undermine the continuity of the project. Some senators had proposed cutting the funding for a scribe who assisted the historian.<sup>26</sup> Viscount de Alcântara opened the debate, arguing that the amount budgeted for the scribe be restored.<sup>27</sup> He said cutting it was unfair, after the nation chose Cairu to write its history, a history that it needed. The clerk received 365 milreis annually, an amount considered very low for a public employee at the time. Opposing him was Senator Nicolau Vergueiro, who, despite insisting on the cost-saving aspects of the cut, did not fail to indicate his doubts about the relevance and legitimacy of the project, since he considered the writing of history a private subject, in which the state should not interfere. He also questioned the validity of a contemporary history written by its protagonists, "because men are always swayed by the passions that surround them, without sensing this themselves: so this is speculation from the man of letters, not the government, and therefore should be eliminated."<sup>28</sup>

As it turns out, conceptual views on the relationship between historical writing and governments, and even the conditions we would now call epistemological, were raised in the debate. In his defence, Cairu stated he could not agree with the claim that contemporary history could not be true. He said that he followed the example of other great contemporary writers who had written about the successes of Europe and America based on well-known, authentic documents. He pointed out that the two volumes he had published received positive reviews in the press. The Senate itself had not identified an error or bias: "Historic faith has a criterion of truth founded on a reasoning unlike that of the naysayer." He recalled that even though Tacitus discredited the contemporary stories of the Roman empire because they were contaminated by fear, the current times were different and free debate in the press would guarantee the correction of any errors or inaccuracies in his account.<sup>29</sup>

Further in his defence, he argued that his work was not only or primarily about recent events of the "Brazilian revolution", but a general history. Here we see how he was divided between the pressures from Pedro and his cabinet to address the independence period, and that from various other social sectors who were reacting to the government attempt to create an official version of events. We know that after publishing the first part of his work on the Discoveries, Cairu was pressured by the government to abandon his original plan and immediately address the recent events. The Senate reaction reflected this change of direction. Although the document appointing him to write the history was explicit about the need to concentrate on recent events, in the Senate debate Cairu tried to downplay this interpretation, stating: "Besides, my job was to write the General History of Brazil, and not just the specific history of its revolution."<sup>30</sup> Then, he tried to clarify further that the scope of this first draft was merely "to collect the scattered", not to write the "philosophical history of the country".<sup>31</sup> His reflection turns back to the ancient world,

which he criticised for its lack of contemporary history. He cited the case of European kings, such as Charles V of France and the kings of Portugal, who were careful to appoint chroniclers to write the histories of their reigns, thus countering Vergueiro's key argument that writing history should be a private affair.

The controversy demonstrates the growing importance of history for social and political life, but also the institutional and epistemological difficulties that the new demands posed. How could the material conditions for writing this modern history, increasingly based on documentary research, document collections, multiplicity of references and facts, be ensured? What role do constitutional states have in this task? What was the legitimate position of the writer-historian? What was the role of the press as public opinion and as a vehicle for historical accounts?

Everything seemed to point to a great conflict concerning contemporary historical representations, something like the image conjured by Vergueiro of a truth that emerges from the political struggle. The function of the press as a critical space was mentioned by both sides of the debate, but that did not answer the social need to have access to history in a more or less cohesive way. While pointing to press freedom as a condition of truth in his work, Cairu evoked ancient examples of sponsorship and patronage of kings and nobles. Without sponsorship, history, especially modern history, would not be possible. But how could one prevent sponsorship from compromising the impartiality and value of the author? Even accepting Cairu's argument that press freedom and partisan struggle would serve as critical instances, the question remained: why should the state fund one history and not the many others that could be written? Vergueiro's position was consistent with his image of a history born of conflict. But would this model then be able to produce the kind of complete, documented, philosophical history that was desired? The world evoked by Vergueiro was closer to the British situation, where the writing of history was a question of the relationship between the author and his audience, while Cairu's position depended on the author's image as an almost priestly figure, who could even remain independent from the government and state in pursuit of the common good.

At the same time, the author's social significance continued to change. Anthologies such as the *Parnaso Brasileiro* [Brazilian Parnassus] by Canon Januário da Cunha Barbosa, published between 1829 and 1832, through the collection of works and biographical news, helped to produce the modern cult of the author as a great genius,<sup>32</sup> associating him even with the degree of civilisation attained by society, as would become famous in the essay by Gonçalves de Magalhães in 1836. The demands for greater autonomy and authorial freedom are widely documented in the period by the continuous lamentations of scholars about the lack of support for and appreciation of belles-lettres.<sup>33</sup>

In his master's thesis, Varella analyses one of the controversies involving Justiniano José da Rocha and Cunha Barbosa, then editors of the periodicals *Chronista* and *Correio Oficial*, respectively. The dispute began with a note by Rocha dated April 1837. For him, the English merchant and historian John Armitage may not have been impartial in his attempt to write contemporary history, especially on Brazilian independence. Armitage's history of Brazil was marked by the interests of groups and factions.<sup>34</sup> His friendship with Evaristo da Veiga, great articulator of the Revolution of 7 April 1831, would have compromised the impartiality of the Englishman.

In response, Cunha Barbosa insisted on the contrary, highlighting the fact that Armitage had travelled to Brazil and studied the facts in authentic documents. For Cunha Barbosa, independence was already an accomplished fact, it had entered into history, and so was fit to be historicised with impartiality.<sup>35</sup> We can find a similar assessment – although based on other arguments, such as the synthetic and expressive quality of Armitage’s history – in the review by Magalhães, published in May of the same year in the *Jornal dos Debates*.<sup>36</sup> In defending their political positions, often in pragmatic and contradictory ways, these men of letters also revealed their conceptions of intellectual life, authorship and the relationship with the type of state under construction.

Rocha’s battle with the *Correio Oficial* and its editor would take even sharper turns in the second half of 1837. On July 30, he would write in the *Chronista* that a government periodical “should be serious, and decent, not funny and insulting like the old *Mutuca*” [horsefly]. The mention of the *Mutuca* again brought Cunha Barbosa to the centre of criticism, for it was he who, in 1834, edited the *Mutuca Picante* [Stinging Horsefly], plainly a journal of political struggle. Rocha complained much about the slowness of the *Correio* in reporting on government initiatives and about the limited relevance of the topics published, the material lacking observations, commentary and explanations. Beside the partisan struggle, there was also the debate about the role of the press in political life. On September 18, after the resignation of Padre Feijó, Pedro de Araujo Lima would temporarily take charge of the regency government. The unexpected action of Feijó culminated in a tense attrition process in which journalists of different political hues incessantly attacked the government. The controversy surrounding Armitage’s work was just another chapter in this dispute, which was of particular significance because it assumed the character of a kind of historical justification of the “moderate liberal” group and of the project that had begun with the 1831 revolution.

With the political upheaval, Rocha was named the new editor of the *Correio Oficial*. This situation, where positions of power changed in accordance with the succession of majority political groups, was something new and difficult to comprehend in a society that was building the contours of a modern political life. Aware of his delicate position, Rocha published a short editorial explaining the reasons that led him to assume control of the government-supporting paper. He claimed the need for governments to constitute a public voice was universally recognised in the countries with freedom of the press. It was natural to have a periodical to publicise the actions of the government and defend them from the opposition papers. However, to fulfil its role, the *Correio*, although official, should be “written conscientiously”. Thus, “it is imperative that its editor agree on views with the administration, whose acts it will publish, explain and justify”.<sup>37</sup> So, the change at the helm of the newspaper was natural, since a new political group was leading the government, a group to which the old editor was opposed. This entire apparatus appeared to be necessary to find the discursive place of the scholar in this new situation between state, government, civil society and the market. We do not have the space here to examine whether or not the readers were kind to Rocha, but we know that his short text formed the basis for and was a target of satire and reflection.

On 14 December 1837, the *Jornal do Comércio* offered for separate purchase the caricature “A Campanha e o cujo” (The bell and John Doe), an impression designed by a young Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre.<sup>38</sup> Considered one of the first “caricatures” in the Brazilian periodical press, it had a lot to say about the emergence of new models of



intellectual and authorial autonomy in newly independent Brazil. The piece pointedly mocks the behaviour of the new editor of the *Correio Oficial*.

The centre of the image is dominated by a scene that condenses the criticism. Kneeling, the figure of Rocha appears to be carrying objects that characterise him as a scholar, journalist and practitioner of the writing craft. On his head, feathers and an inkwell serve as a hat, in his left hand a rolled volume, which can be a manuscript or an edition of a newspaper. The official figure (perhaps the regent himself) delivers a bundle of newsprint containing coins, and rings a bell, preceding with a proclamation in which he offers the job of editor of the *Correio*.

Towards the right of the image, in the background, on the wall of a building, can be seen, at the top, the caricature of Rocha's face and, at the bottom, the words "Chronicle of Imbecilities", a reference to Rocha's old job at the *Chronista*. This cartoon was the first of a pair, the second, entitled "Rocha Tarpeia" (Tarpeian rock), followed the same path of mocking Rocha's publishing and his arguments. The journalist is lampooned in several images, frontal and profile, forming the "Rocha Tarpeia". The reference to the classic story relates to the ideas of betrayal, greed and punishment. In an extremely hierarchical slave society, the figure of a good man, a scholar, abdicating his autonomy and virtue to be sold to the highest bidder, seemed outrageous. This aspect is reinforced by a clear racial element: Rocha's mulatto features are highlighted and, in the second cartoon, he is associated with a mule or workhorse. The transcendental value of independence that romanticism sought to associate with the "man of letters" was negated by Rocha's alleged vile behaviour.<sup>39</sup>

Instead of simply accepting Porto-Alegre's accusation, as he did much of the criticism, we have to seriously consider Rocha's position in reflecting on the place of a pro-government press in a free society, the negotiated conditions of autonomy this official journalist claimed. The confrontation between Porto-Alegre and Rocha is more than just an episode in the fierce political struggle of the regency period; it documents an important turning point in the history of the formation of the historian as a modern author.<sup>40</sup> In denouncing the supposedly mercenary character of Rocha's action, Porto-Alegre evoked a romantic conception of authorship that valued originality and inspiration, but also confirmed the complaints of Canon Januário about the lack of a scholarly institutional space. It was certainly no accident that two of the biggest names in Niterói were involved in these disputes, alongside Cunha Barbosa.

In the background of this debate, issues such as the definition of copyright and the form of financing intellectual life were in question. This more direct relationship with the "market", Rocha wrote, would be opposed to the idea of an autonomous intellectual life subsidised by the government. As Bignotto observed, in those early decades of the nineteenth century, there were two contrasting conceptions of the production of printed matter: one viewed it as intellectual work closer to manual labour, a service to be provided; the other focused on concepts such as inspiration, originality and subjectivity.<sup>41</sup> The young romantic generation would certainly not want to be confused with that ambiguous world where the scholar was seen as a kind of mechanic. But, again, the debate proposed by Rocha was not that. It sought to reflect on the new places and opportunities offered by the free press.

### *Scene III. 1838-1839: the creation of the IHGB and the clash of autonomies*

A few months after the events described above, in 1838, Cunha Barbosa and other scholars would unite to create the IHGB in the imperial capital, Rio de Janeiro. Although it had been founded “under the immediate protection of His Imperial Majesty”<sup>42</sup> Pedro II, its founders, emphasising the imminently scholarly character of the new space, sought to isolate the IHGB from the tumultuous world of the periodical press. The institute’s quarterly, *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, which resembled more a book in its format, was a more controlled space for historical production. A fundamental event in the production of a disciplinary field, or the historian’s *ethos*,<sup>43</sup> the IHGB’s founding, however, did not mean the end of the controversies or the disappearance of competitive models of writing history.

In this sense, even the first issue of the *Revista*, published in 1839, contained a set of theoretical and methodological provisions aimed at the search for a historiographical consensus about what was history, who should write it and how it should be written. A considerable part of the heuristic principles emerging from these seminal proposals were developed and applied, in one form or another, more faithfully or more autonomously, by those – historians or not – who dedicated themselves to historical practice in the nineteenth century. Thus, in addition to contributing to the standardisation of a new paradigm for research, they also ratified aporias and difficulties in the writing of history, particularly those inherent, apparently, in the unstable narrative of the time, which was marked, on the one hand, by an oscillation between the orientation of today, or the modern, and, on the other, the past, or ancient, assumptions of western historiography.

The first *Discurso* (“Address”) delivered at the IHGB by Cunha Barbosa, then its permanent secretary, offered a model that was designed to stabilise the historiographical narrative. The opening citation contained the following call to scholars: “Seek also to revive the memories of the homeland from the unworthy obscurity in which they have hitherto lain.”<sup>44</sup> The link between history and homeland, understood here as a variant of the nation, acquires its own face because reviving the past, as will be noted below in the “Address”, does not imply recognising the past, criticising it and burying it as past history, as Jules Michelet would have it, but bringing it into the present like a beacon, since it was not possible to “leave forgotten any longer the remarkable facts of its history that happened in various points of the empire”.<sup>45</sup> To correct the distortions of collective memory would arrogate the almost divine act of resurrection. This process implied an idea of unifying the nation, since these events occurred not only in a particular place and time, but, on the contrary, in all the provinces. So, the IHGB’s task was to make visible, through a “general and philosophical history of Brazil”,<sup>46</sup> the pre-existing historicity of the Brazilian past. For this, it was necessary to nationalise the cognitive chain that chronicled the events of Brazil since the colonial period, that is, since 1500.

This history objectified the utility of the past finds in the famous definition by Cicero: *historia magistra vitae*. “With this judicious doctrine,” Cunha Barbosa maintained, “our association should be charged with perpetuating through history the memorable facts of the homeland, saving them from the ravages of time, and extricating them from the heavy clouds that quite often engulf them in partiality, a partisan spirit and

even ignorance.”<sup>47</sup> The Ciceronian formula, found in various parts of Cunha Barbosa’s speech, is not only a scholarly adage but an organising principle that justifies, and, at the same time, guides the IHGB’s research. The idea what facts should be saved and perpetuated derives from that principle. Yet, the two instances of the same operation, to “perpetuate” and “save”, are not confused: what is perpetuated is that which is likely to become memorable, and whose definition depends on a series of theoretical and political provisions; what is saved is what was perpetuated, which supposes a certain number of methodological procedures covering a field that begins with the discovery of sources and extends to text production.

Accordingly, Cunha Barbosa takes up the question of the political independence of Brazil, which for him was being reported in a disfigured way, even while its facts are still “within reach of our view, as only 16 years have passed since this momentous time in our modern history, and already much is fading from the memory of those who are most interested, simply because they have been written without the impartiality and necessary criticism that should always form the character of a true historian”.<sup>48</sup> It is obvious that a notion of history of the present appeared from the beginning of the IHGB.<sup>49</sup> Apparently, the institute did not reject anyone for working on this kind of history (recall Cunha Barbosa’s position towards Armitage), but did so for working in an incompetent manner, that is, without impartiality or criticism. These two negative characteristics hinder the work of memory, which, in this case, is informed as much by writing as by sight. The history of the present time is, from this perspective, a type of history that can be seen, and the memory a faculty that also operates with optical metaphors.

However, the recording of times past, be they more recent or more distant, depends on other material beyond that which can be derived from hindsight. For the IHGB, it was necessary that historians, in carrying out their work, correct the mistakes made. This exegesis defines a field of research whose purpose is to “save” the facts that convey meaning to Brazilian history: from rescuing facts from “unworthy obscurity” to specifying the objects that should be better marked, described and measured.<sup>50</sup>

Finally, the IHGB deemed history could only be done through teamwork. That is, it envisaged a group of researchers not restricted to the court and imbued with the spirit of philosophical history. Nevertheless, as the nineteenth century progressed, the references to a philosophical history or to a philosopher historian, as proposed by the Bavarian naturalist Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, an important interlocutor for Brazilian scholars, and by the romantic poet Magalhães tend to disappear, while the concepts of history and historian acquire a more disciplinary profile.<sup>51</sup>

Cunha Barbosa’s “Address” also covers other themes that cannot be explored here: the question of the origin and chronology of Brazil, the treatment of sources, the controlled use of the faculty of the imagination, and, referencing Plutarch, the need to create a pantheon to house the heroes and great men who made Brazilian history. More than a passage, such themes reflect an overlap between the compilatory and disciplinary regimes of historical discourses. As much as Cunha Barbosa reveals a modern vocabulary, the “Address” upholds normative premises very close to his political activity as well as to his individual and generational memory. Besides, Cunha Barbosa’s “Address” seems unwilling to confront theoretical weaknesses that would impede the IHGB or clarify the boundaries between different regimes of historical discourse.

## Scene IV. 1854–1857–1877: The general history of Brazil. From compilation to discipline?

With the IHGB and the accelerated transformations of literary romanticism, a new model of intellectual autonomy would gain strength, thereby imposing a disciplinary standard based on specialisation, depoliticisation (understood as non-partisanship) and greater internal control, by those considered peers, of the historian's activities. The fact is that the scientific production that would ensure the desired paradigmatic stability did not conform to the theoretical premises. For example, Brazil, despite the essays mentioned above, still did not have its *general philosophical and pragmatic history*.

Mindful of this historiographical gap and the forms that history should take, in 1840 Cunha Barbosa proposed to the members of the IHGB to offer a prize for the best written project on the “ancient and modern history of Brazil”.<sup>52</sup> An essay by von Martius, titled “How the history of Brazil should be written”, won the contest.<sup>53</sup> The contemporary situation and the compliance with modern standards of research were the factors that justified the selection of Martius' proposal. However, the competition jury considered the project so advanced that “a written history according such a design may be infeasible at present”.<sup>54</sup> Paradoxically, what legitimised Martius' plan – suitability to a new experience of time – made its immediate implementation impossible.

The task of writing the general history of the Brazilian nation fell to historian and Brazilian diplomat Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, the future viscount of Porto Seguro and author of an immense body of work that, although after a certain point favours history, extends over various fields, from literature to literary criticism, on through biography, ethnology, politics and diplomacy, economics and even philology.<sup>55</sup> In this work, the regimes of autonomy, whether in its compilatory form, or its disciplinary form, encounter, simultaneously, aporetic limits and consolidation opportunities. Accordingly, before publishing what would be his best-known work, the *História Geral do Brasil* (General history of Brazil), Varnhagen, who lived only a short time in his own country, assumed the position of IHGB secretary in 1851, during which he proposed and executed the reform of the statutes – notably the procedures for membership, which would have to be less subject to political intervention – and the material reorganisation of the institution. This was a first and clear attempt to professionalise the institution as well as to secure its intellectual autonomy.<sup>56</sup>

The *História Geral* is a monumental work. A research study, it concentrated and summarised all the elements of a rhetoric of nationality, an intellectual effort that characterises the entirety of his studies and, in a way, his very life.<sup>57</sup> The first edition was published in two volumes, in Madrid: the first in 1854 and the second three years later.<sup>58</sup> The second edition, corrected and enlarged, also in two volumes, was published in Vienna in 1877, a year before his death.<sup>59</sup>

The first edition became, in effect, a structural source for subsequent Brazilian historiography, and was converted into a widely circulated school textbook.<sup>60</sup> Regarding the second edition, the text was subjected to an operation of discursive cleansing of what we could define as signs of subjectivity.<sup>61</sup>

The preface to the first edition, which appears only in the second volume (1857) and was written in an undisguised autobiographical tone, aims to elucidate a series of theoretical and methodological assumptions. The principal objective, it stated, was to write “a conscientious general history of the civilisation of our country”. The precision attributed to the adjective *general* is important. On the one hand, in dealing with the “first general review, or rather, the first available collection of the facts that, more or less developed, should fit in the General History,” the historian justifies – regarding the methodology – the inevitable absences in the text. On the other hand, the *História Geral* was a way to develop a correspondence between civilisation, represented by the empire, and history itself, a vehicle that dialectically accelerates time: “The integrity of Brazil, while represented majestically in the state and in the universe by the monarchy, will now be represented among the histories of nations by a national history, seriously and impartially written.”<sup>62</sup> The contract between the historian and the emperor is presented as a covenant sealed by abstract entities: the nation’s history (the *História Geral*) and monarchical power (Dom Pedro II).

Thus, just as the monarchy organises society, history provides a solid foundation for institutions. History is not just a repertoire of rhetorical ornaments, but a necessary practice. The generality and conciseness of the *História Geral* are not thus aimed at any effect other than usefulness.<sup>63</sup> It was not the one history, neither in political nor, probably, in theoretical terms, but it was the only possible history given the limitation of available sources. Consequently, Varnhagen envisioned that the work of other historians could and should be integrated into his history. The *História Geral* is, therefore, not an absolute genre. Neither is it a total history. It is, paradoxically, a specific type of history: it is a major work of art that only time, the historical process, will conclude.

Varnhagen, even in the preface, does not hide his religious, political and social beliefs. He defines himself as a Catholic and monarchist, who is just and humane with the native peoples and the slaves.<sup>64</sup> This statement, never disavowed or rectified by the author, disappears in the second edition of the work. In 1877, would taking such a position be so compromising, to the point of being removed without explanation? Or would it detract from impartiality, a foundation in the process of consolidation in the emerging historical discipline, that is, would it work against disciplinary autonomy? The answers to these questions appear in Varnhagen’s biography. He never distinguished himself by maintaining very cordial relations with Brazilian scholars and politicians. In addition, in this phase of his life he was living in Vienna, where he held the post of minister plenipotentiary of Brazil to the Austro-Hungarian empire. On the other hand, in his work, there is no philosophy of history under development, that is, that underwent significant changes over the years. His concerns concerning philosophy and/or the political order went apparently unchanged. However, deletions such as those occurring in the preface, between the first and second editions, are not uncommon in the body of work that makes up the *História Geral*. For the second edition, Varnhagen undertook a conscious editing task, targeting the points that could compromise the objectivity of his writing. Such deletions can be considered as attempts, or silent measures, not only to correct the text, but, at the same time, to lend it a more impartial epistemological status, closer to the vernacular of science that insinuated itself throughout the nineteenth century.

Varnhagen had an awareness that the full possession of this scientific spirit was something that went beyond the world of men. The truth is that the scientific precept is

not explicitly asserted in the *História Geral*. On the contrary, Varnhagen, practically, does not use the word *science* to define historical knowledge. He only postulates the truth of his account through a very simple formula: “in reverse, by mistake”. The historian can write history as he wishes, provided he does not err. This perspective, the author explained, authorises the use of an “exaggerated style” in order to maximise the colours to “paint – for example, the beauty of the city of Rio de Janeiro – with more truth.” It is the same principle that validates his description of facts as “animated with the heat of conviction or patriotism or any other noble passion”.<sup>65</sup>

In recognising that such assertions could be perceived as manifestations originating from the domain of the poetic, Varnhagen reaffirms the classic difference between the historian and the poet: the latter, to be one, must have more imagination than cold criticism; whereas the former first studies the fact, investigates it through the tests that require his criteria; and only then judges with gravity, conveying to the public the sentence and its reasons; and which is clear just as he sensed them, if the pen knows to obey him, which does not always happen.

The historian does not have the same freedom of imagination of the poet. However, Varnhagen’s notion is full of alternatives that reduce the distance between the two domains. First, the historian analyses the facts according to criteria of his own and not necessarily according to the criteria of a community of historians (like the IHGB). Second, the effort surrounding the writing of history does not always disregard the feelings of the writer. Consequently, the historian, just like the poet, sometimes loses control of the pen.

In the prologue to the second edition, Varnhagen returns to the subject. In 1877, he stated that he belonged to a “historical school foreign to the overly sentimental one that, intending to be quite moving, ends up moving away from the truth itself”.<sup>66</sup> He didn’t give this school a name, nor did he mention who its adherents were. However, he pointed out who was not a member: for example, Sebastião da Rocha Pitta, the “chronicler”.<sup>67</sup> The mere assertion of belonging to a school, on the other hand, even if the notion that unifies it – the *truth* – is nuanced, creates an effect of epistemological complicity. Varnhagen was not alone. Thus, he is part of a historical tradition that methodologically is contrary to error and which is theoretically one of the aspects of the truth. It is not surprising, therefore, that Varnhagen, towards the end of the *História Geral*, recalled the arguments of that prologue and places himself alongside Thucydides. Just like the Greek historian, he also prefers “to displease by publishing the truth, than be applauded for missing it”.<sup>68</sup>

The work received a frosty reception at the IHGB, where it generated much controversy among its members, almost all of whom, however, recognised its merits. Varnhagen spent his life between Europe and the Americas, in archives and libraries, amid controversies of all sorts that were always mediated by historiographical arguments. From the historiographical approach that compiles to the one that follows a particular discipline, his work is characterised, above all, by the unceasing pursuit of intellectual autonomy.

The forms of history are not limited to the scenes covered here. Its many variations, its underground and/or discontinuous paths continue into the century, constituting a mass of documents that a considerable number of historians is now in the process of analysing.

We have tried to understand how the forms of history became complex intellectual configurations: clear and inflexible, but also opaque and unpredictable, socially and politically; normative and propositional, but also allegorical and unstable, culturally and linguistically. Overcoming this “unfamiliarity” and moving towards an understanding of it, is, ultimately, our challenge.<sup>69</sup>

## NOTES

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- 2 Hayden White, *The content of the form: narrative discourse and historical representation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987).
- 3 Allan Munslow, *The future of history* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 168–81.
- 4 Michel de Certeau, “L’opération historiographique,” in *L’écriture de l’histoire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975)
- 5 For an analysis of this criticism, especially by authors such as Manoel Salgado and Afonso Santos, see Valdei Lopes de Araujo, “O século XIX no contexto da redemocratização brasileira: a escrita da história oitocentista, balanço e desafios,” in *Disputas pelo passado: História e historiadores no Império do Brasil*, ed. Valdei Lopes De Araujo and Maria da Glória de Oliveira Araujo (Ouro Preto: EDUFOP, 2012), 8–41. For a global analysis of the theories of national modernisation, see Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, “As três interpretações da dependência,” *Perspectivas* 38 (2010): 17–48.
- 6 For the Brazilian case, see Valdei Lopes de Araujo, “A experiência do tempo na formação do império do Brasil: Autoconsciência moderna e historicização.” *Revista de História* 159 (2008): 107–34. For a more complete overview, see Elías José Palti, “The nation as a problem: historians and the ‘national question’,” *History and Theory* 40/3 (2001): 324–46.
- 7 Reinhart Koselleck, *Le futur passé: Contribution à la sémantique des temps historiques* (Paris: Éditions de l’EHESS, 1990).
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- 9 Reinhart Koselleck, “¿Para qué todavía investigación histórica?” In *Sentido y repetición en la historia* (Buenos Aires: Hydra, 2013), 52.
- 10 See José Honório Rodrigues, *A pesquisa histórica no Brasil* (São Paulo: CEN, 1969), 37. This does not mean that the historiographical experience of the eighteenth century was not relevant; rather, it was even assumed to be “proper inheritance” for the first generation of the IHGB. See Iris Kantor, *Esquecidos e renascidos: historiografia acadêmica luso-americana (1724–1759)* (São Paulo: Hucitec, 2004), 249.
- 11 This topic is amply developed in Valdei Lopes de Araujo and André da Silva Ramos, “The emergence of a cosmopolitan point of view: the experiencing of the Universal History’s History of Portugal,” *Almanack agosto* 10 (2015): 465–91.
- 12 The *Universal History* has been studied by a variety of researchers: Guido Abbattista, “The business of Paternoster Row: towards a publishing history of the ‘Universal History’ (1736–65),” *Publishing History* 17 (1985): 5–50; Johan van der Zande, “August Ludwig Schlöser and the English Universal History,” in *Historikerdialoge: Geschichte, Mythos und Gedächtnis im deutsch-britischen kulturellen Austausch, 1750–2000*, ed. Peter Lambert, Stefan Berger and Peter Schumann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2003), 135–56; Anne-Marie Link, “Engraved images, the visualization of the past, and eighteenth-century universal history,” *Selected Proceedings from the Canadian Society for Eighteenth-Century Studies* 25 (2006): 175–95; Monica Baár, “From general history to national history: the transformations of William Guthrie’s and John Gray’s A General History of the World (1736–1765),” in *Cultural transfer through translation*, ed. Stefanie Stockhorst (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2010), 63–82.
- 13 Araujo and Ramos, “The emergence of a cosmopolitan point of view.”
- 14 Hipólito José da Costa, “Prefácio a Esta Edição,” in *História de Portugal, composta em inglez por uma sociedade de literatos* (London: F. Wingrave et al., 1809), emphasis added.
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  - 17 Araujo, “A experiência do tempo na formação.”
  - 18 André da Silva Ramos, “Robert Southey e a experiência da história de Portugal: conceitos, linguagens e narrativas cosmopolitas (1795-1829)” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, 2013).
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  - 21 Bruno Franco Medeiros, *Plagiário, à maneira de todos os historiadores* (Jundiaí: Paco Editorial, 2012), 17, 75ff.
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  - 24 On the episode and Cairu’s historiography, see Hélio Vianna, “A primeira versão da Introdução à História dos principais sucessos políticos do Império do Brasil, do Visconde de Cairu,” *Revista de História* 26/53 (1963): 35–51; Araujo, “Cairu e a emergência da consciência historiográfica”; Bruno Diniz, “Da Restauração À Regeneração: Linguagens Políticas em José Da Silva Lisboa (1808–1830)” (PhD diss., Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, 2010); Kirschner, *José Da Silva Lisboa*; Kirschner, “Um pouco de historiografia: a representação do passado colonial brasileiro a partir da independência” (paper presented at the 26th Symposium on National History, São Paulo, 17–22 July 2011, accessed 5 Sept. 2017, [http://www.snh2011.anpuh.org/resources/anais/14/1307019610\\_ARQUIVO\\_Umpoucodehistoriografia.versaorevisada.pdf](http://www.snh2011.anpuh.org/resources/anais/14/1307019610_ARQUIVO_Umpoucodehistoriografia.versaorevisada.pdf)).
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  - 26 Kirschner, *José Da Silva Lisboa*, 268.
  - 27 *Anais do Senado Federal* [Proceedings of the Senate], 10 September 1830, vol. 3, p. 9.
  - 28 *Ibid.*, 11.
  - 29 *Ibid.*
  - 30 *Ibid.*
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- 45 Turin, “Uma nobre.”
- 46 Ibid., 11.
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- 63 Ibid., viii. The idea of brevity in writing also appears in the prologue to the second edition. See Varnhagen, *História Geral do Brasil, antes de sua separação de Portugal*, xiii.
- 64 Varnhagen, *História Geral do Brasil* (1854–57), vol. 2, x.
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- 67 Ibid., xiii. The same comment is found in the preface of his *Historia das luctas com os Holandezes no Brazil, desde 1624 a 1654* (Vienna: Finsterback, 1871), xxxvi.
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- 69 De Certeau, “L’opération historiographique,” 162.