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The thickness of time: the writing of history and appropriation of the past in Brazil, 1830–1930

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1 Since the late 1980s, the recent[1] Brazilian history of historiography has perceived the nineteenth century as a period crammed with several peculiarities. By beginning with a brief presentation on the Brazilian history of historiography, it is possible to affirm that the construction of the nation was one of its main lines of investigation.[2]

2 The origin of Brazil was inevitably connected to the Portuguese expansion; however, its genealogy, strictly linked to Portugal, was an issue for the literates writing the country's history after liberation from Portugal, in 1822.

3 After independence, the recently formed nation demanded an organised present, which, in turn, imposed a creation of a past. Placing territory and people in historical time was the greatest challenge in the nineteenth century; therefore, the quest for identity was the main purpose of Brazilian historical writing. In order to develop this project, which followed the parameters of romanticism, time itself became part of this project as a research object and force of history. In the 1830s, the creation of institutional spaces, such as the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute[3] (IHGB) and the National Museum,[4] shows how the experience of time, at that moment, increased the asymmetry between past and future and how this asymmetric experience of time composed an agenda for historiographical writing.

4 Despite the centrality of the IHGB, it was not the first or the only institution to formulate the identity of the nation. The Society of National Industry, the Medicine Academy and the National Museum were also focused on nation-constructing projects, in which the singular experience of Brazil began to be outlined. These institutions must be highlighted as promoters of narratives in which the modern experience of time challenged former models of experience of time, models that understood it as a cycle and saw imitation as a model for writing history.

5 The 1830s witnessed a complex and intense dispute concerning nation projects, which was somewhat mitigated by a unification project during the Second Empire. Thus, the IHGB became one of the most important institutions responsible for building national identity from 1830 to 1860. The IHGB did not advance only one programme of narratives about the past, but rather produced a set of programmes that contributed to the diversification and thickening of the experience of time, indicating elements that composed the history of the recently formed Brazilian state. Thus, the IHGB's role was to indicate, through its discussions and actions, the historical subjects, historical events as well as the authors entrusted to write narratives about the past. The romantic project provided an outline of Brazil through the description of its landscapes, its singular population and territorial occupation. In the late 1840s, the establishment of specific sections in the IHGB, such as the Archaeological Section, which was responsible for research on the deep past of the Brazilian lands, verticalised time and promoted ways to separate Brazil from a strict genealogy with Portugal.

6 From 1840 to 1860, public space became more diversified and the so-called 1870s Generation – which challenged the propositions of Francisco de Adolfo de Varnhagen in his *História Geral do Brasil* (General History of Brazil, 1857) – focused on writing critiques on the parameters of romanticism in the writing of history, of which Varnhagen and Pereira da Silva were fond.[5] The 1860s were marked by the events concerning the Paraguayan War. For authors such as Sílvio Romero, the representation of history did not shed light on other social dynamics related to the nation's past. The disputes regarding the construction of the past of the Brazilian territory gained a new perspective and the 1870s Generation sought to elaborate psychological and ethnological analyses to deal with the specificities of the nation. Besides Romero, Capistrano de Abreu[6] – and others – believed that history should be based on ethnic matters. These critiques became popular, and Abreu challenged his contemporary, Romero, rejecting his thesis on the formation of the Brazilian people, maintaining that Romero had silenced the importance of the environment as well as of the indigenous peoples, whom he seldom mentioned.

7 The republic, inaugurated in 1889 – a year after the abolition of slavery – represented a new time, nevertheless equally incapable of dealing positively with this enormous expectation. The late nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth century can be understood as a period of temporal disorder. According to Alceu Amoroso Lima, who used the pseudonym Tristão de Athayde, this kind of experience of time was characterised by the coexistence of several "stages of civilisation".[7] The sentiment of a crisis of time was an important factor for this generation, which recognised the emptiness of the organicist model, commonly utilised by the previous generation represented by Romero and Abreu.

8 Therefore, this article aims to offer an overview of the different modulations of temporal experience that appear in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Brazilian historiography, presenting some of the *topoi* that organised and shaped it.

Natural time

9 Among the experiences of time, we can qualify, specifically during the nineteenth century, some regarding deep time, which is based on geology and established the anteriority of the Earth in relation to man. Such a movement towards a past that precedes the human past presents a different experience of time when compared to the one concerning the biblical chronology, which posits the simultaneity of man and nature, unifying all beings of nature and man in a single creation in time.

10 In the nineteenth century, the term naturalist described not only those who examined nature, but it also encompassed those who sought to understand the changes in natural phenomena over time. Naturalists who departed for Portuguese America differed from the first explorers of early modernity. Their scientific missions attempted to perceive the specificities of colonised lands and approach them using European models. The Bavarian botanist Carl Friedrich Philipp von Martius, who wrote a monograph entitled "Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil (How Brazilian history should be written)", which received an award from the IHGB, highlighted the importance of man's actions in the past, having as a purpose some orientation in history. His travels through inner Brazil, between 1817 and 1821, offered him enough material to interweave the relations between man, time and territory. Von Martius' approach was similar to that of Alexander von Humboldt, for this manner of articulating events was part of the historian-philosopher's craft. The role that time occupies in this kind of explanation does not apply exclusively to society, but to a broader collective, which scientific practice began to consider at the beginning of modernity. Von Humboldt also shared this method when writing the treatise *Kosmos* (1845–1862). The expeditions of von Martius and Johann Baptist von Spix were characterised by a scientific culture branded by the contours of natural history. At the same time, scientific culture could be understood as a mosaic, comprised of pieces from romanticism that relied on emotions to understand life. These expeditions viewed nature as a "source of emotions acting over sensibility"; it is also a valid way to compose historiographical narratives.[8]

11 In the seventeenth century, but specifically during the eighteenth century, the discovery of fossils heralded a new way of dealing with the past in Europe. The Earth's age appeared to be millions of years older than proposed by the biblical chronology. In a similar way, the nineteenth-century discovery of fossils in the American continent gave the past its own dynamic. In Brazil, Peter Lund's excavations were part of this new experience.[9] While fossils were considered vestiges of a deep past, they also opened the possibility to understand the nonvisible dimension of time, as the first issue of *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (*RIHGB*), the institute's journal, maintained.[10]

12 Nineteenth-century archaeology confirmed the existence of a past beyond the past, increasing the temporal distance, as archaeologists discovered the multiple layers of the Earth. The number of related research projects increased at an accelerated pace. The discovery of the Asian and African prehistorical period excited the scientific world, imposing the necessity to understand this new reality: an antiquity, previously centred in Europe, began to expand to other places in the world. Many diplomats from England, France and Prussia departed for the south of the American continent, Argentina and Uruguay, in an effort to find fossils to add to the museum collections of their respective countries – many fossils of great mammals were discovered in Patagonia.[11] After Lund's works, and despite the fact that the IHGB's Archaeological Section was founded in 1847, it was only in the 1860s that Brazil boosted its own archaeological research. Von Martius – who believed that lost monuments, hidden by forests, existed under Brazilian soil – was one of the many enthusiasts of these researches and scientific voyages.[12] In his monograph on how Brazilian history should be written, he pointed out that scientists should interpret the indigenous as *ruins of the people*, understanding them as elements that contained traces or vestiges of Brazilian history. Thus, the Brazilian past was written on those populations.

13 The first issue of the *RIHGB* introduced the theme of deep time, which would present nineteenth-century history with important challenges. Fiction became an important way to understand this extremely distant past. The western imaginary was composed of Edenic and lost cities, strange beings from a deep past, of which people had no memories. Palaeontology began to bring this past to the surface. The same issue launched the challenge of finding a lost city hidden in the hinterlands of Bahia province.[13] A narrative,[14] dated 1753, referred to a city described as a lost paradise, commonly mentioned by early modern voyageurs. This narrative served as guide for explorer Canon Benigno. The quest for old monuments encouraged the IHGB's desire for a recognised antiquity. The description of the lost city in the 1753 narrative introduced elements from European antiquity, fostered new approaches and opened a range of desires and possibilities for the immemorial past of the Brazilian lands. Benigno, guided by the dubious geographical references mentioned in the 1753 narrative, headed to that remote place. Not in the slightest frustrated by the negative outcome of his mission, he was, on the contrary, even more convinced of its existence.

14 The topic of the "lost city of Bahia" and other elements from the imagined and desired past exited the historiographical narrative, finding shelter in romantic literature. The Edenic cities lost their place in the fields of archaeology and ethnography and the indigenous assumed their place as characters apart from civilisation. Varnhagen, who wrote the first synthesis of the history of Brazil, jettisoned the indigenous peoples to nature, including them, as historical subjects, only in his last work. This effort stemmed from the need to approximate indigenous peoples to a prehistoric age and, also, to the history of European antiquity; or, according to Varnhagen, to some other cultures related to the vast and glorious past of the west.[15]

15 Therefore, in defining the experience of time and this new perception regarding the past during the nineteenth century, the use of adjectives such as "imagined" or even "mythical" sounded weak and insufficient. The scientific voyages sought to classify all that was found between the new and the already known; they also selected what should or should not belong to their classification and narrative. Thus, we do not take into consideration here a form of historical writing that does not individualise the past: the historical distance[16] was produced from several different points of experience. The "effects of distance"[17] between present and past, produced by the literates and scientists, mingled in their own institutional dictates, also included, without severe reservations, lost cities, fossils, the Pleistocene epoch, the geography of the nation, indigenous peoples, megafauna, collections, Portugal, independence, monarchy, the writing of history and its mystification by nineteenth-century historiography. This mosaic indicates the type of profile assumed by the *RIHGB*, highlighting several layers of texts, objects and meanings that translated the process of the passage of time in the initial moment of Brazil.

16 The acceleration of time resulted in several discontinuities from 1808 to 1850; however, Portugal's project, which sought to inhibit any attempt to distance Portuguese America from Portugal, endeavoured to control or even annul this acceleration in Brazil. The multiplicity of discordant projects sought to shape forms of experience of time that organised the European tradition along with a new perspective, which began to understand the new situation of Brazil and its specificities.

17 The *RIHGB* opened space for a great range of narratives regarding the Brazilian lands and their location in time. The nation and its specificities were inscribed in a deeper deep time and could be seen in the collections of the National Museum. Before Brazil's independence, the National Museum was already responsible for the institutionalisation of sciences; however, it still maintained bonds with traditions of natural history: classification and ordination. From the 1830s and 1840s, the museum was also charged with the consolidation of a scientific community in Brazil. It shared with the IHGB many literates and men of science who attempted to insert – through the romantic sciences – the Brazilian nation into a deeper time.

The sociologisation of natural time from the organicist perspective

18 From the 1860s and 1870s, considering the crisis of the Second Empire, the process of complexification and diversification in the Brazilian literary scene was quite noticeable. A contingent of young writers, mostly composed of medical students, began to promote alternative performative spaces and also to elaborate new conceptual instruments. Hence, as the disputes about the past became fiercer, the IHGB lost its leading role as the organising centre of historical discourse on the constitution of the nation. This new generation, as diverse as it was, ended up turning the nation's temporality into a problem again, criticising and delegitimising the narrative schemes established in the historical writing from the 1840s to 1870s. Evidence for this process can be identified in the following passage by Romero, one of greatest critics of the established scheme:

> a glance cast on our history, not on the history written by author A or B, by Varnhagen or Pereira da Silva – old rhetorical declaimers – but on the unwritten history, the fluctuating and indecisive tradition of our origins and ulterior development. With a glance at it, one will discover, with some difficulty, the first guidelines of our legends and folk songs.[18]

19 As Romero posits, the facts narrated by the romantic historiography of authors such as Varnhagen and Pereira da Silva were not capable of supporting the national history. It is clear, however, the gap that these new authors emphasised between the writing of romantic history and the national past only worked as these authors transferred an outside referent to that kind of historical representation; that is, this gap presents different elements for the national history. On account of the fact that they were not talking about the same past (and, consequently, not talking about the same idea of nation), authors such as Romero, José Veríssimo,[19] Euclides da Cunha[20] and Abreu ended up moving the romantic literature to the rhetorical field, emphasising, from that point, the emptiness of their antecessors' language: "They used to produce more rhetoric than psychology, more aesthetic ramblings than ethnological analyses. We are fed up with poetical apologies and romantic broodings; more serious thoughts and less language zigzags."[21] Therefore, in the same way that IHGB literates went about challenging foreign writings on national history in order to impose a "truly national" writing of history, a new generation had to distance themselves from the historiographical method established by the IHGB from the 1840s to 1870s in order to legitimise a new conformation (endowed with value, epistemology, narrative and politics) of historiographical work.

20 In short, the movement to (re)define a new model for the writing of history was grounded on the central opposition between superficiality and depth, and, at the same time, on the opposition between artificiality and authenticity.[22] The past that this new history needed to produce, and which became a commonplace in the historiographical texts at the end of the nineteenth century, can be qualified as the "deep past" of the nation. As posited by Abreu, in his famous obituary for Varnhagen, "the purely documented history should gain the depth of "broader and more radical facts".[23] This new depth of history was characterised by the need to delimit the contours of the national population. Hence, the republican agenda they pursued redefined the political role of history as an instrument capable of diagnosing the historical formation of the Brazilian people, therefore orienting the models of sovereignty and political representation that suited the country. Seen in these terms, Veríssimo's statement is quite emphatic in determining the nature of this new political equation and its historiographical effects: "History is made of one element, the people; thus, it is the people, not the government, who can radically change the conditions of a nation, whose vices and flaws – we must insist – firstly belong to its people, before belonging to those who administer and direct it."[24] Elías Palti has properly summarised this process: "A notion of social representation is, definitely, inseparable from knowledge, from social science; it presupposes a certain sociology."[25]

21 The investment in rewriting history adopted the most diverse scientific theories, and the process was mobilised due to the elaboration of a new depth of time, which was capable of modelling new contents of experience, such as technical acceleration, the diffusion of mass media, the abolition of slave labour and the constitution of a salaried labour market, democratisation and demands for political representation, urban mass sociability and the modernisation of production methods. A particular concept seemed to be capable of combining those different contents and shape the contours of deep time: the concept of evolution. Used in distinct ways, this concept, which has different semantic nuances, took its strength from biological and geological metaphors. An anonymous time – deep, naturalised and long in duration – came to shape feasible interpretations about the national past as well as to outline its future possibilities. Conceiving society as an evolutionary process determined by immanent laws, in analogy with biological phenomena, implied the need to legitimise certain social agents, historians, sociologists and anthropologists so they could act as social physicians.[26] The analogy between society and nature had, as its consequence, a certain *naturalisation of politics*,[27] and it was up to these reformers of society to maintain its organic balance.

22 The physician Nina Rodrigues,[28] in his anthropological and criminal studies, highlighted the evolutionary condition to which the juridical conceptions should be submitted, pointing out, implicitly, the origin of the imbalance, characterising the historicity of Brazilian people:

> Thus, not only the mental evolution presupposes at several stages in the development of a race a unique cultural capacity, albeit of growing perfectibility, but it still affirms the impossibility of suppressing the intervention of time in its adaptations; therefore, the impossibility of imposing on a people a civilisation, which is incompatible with the level of intellectual development of this people.[29]

23 The diagnosis regarding this coexistence of peoples, at several stages in evolutionary history, came to confirm the univocal dimension of that same evolution. At the same time, it treated the national scenario as a problem, due to its heterogeneous population, constituted by indigenous peoples, Europeans, Africans and Mestizos. For instance, Cunha's writings on Canudos and the Amazon forest are permeated by a *denial of contemporaneity* experience.[30] In the same manner, Antônio Conselheiro, a spiritual and political leader of the Canudos Movement, was considered an atavistic manifestation while the jagunços' dwellings[31] "resembled the dwellings of Caesar's Gauls". Cunha also observed that the migrant who came from the south of Brazil to Amazonia was suddenly thrown into the "darkened attic of history".[32] Thus, travelling to inner Brazil was the same as travelling through different temporal strata. From the copyist[33] civilisation on the coastline, to the backland (*sertão*) fetishist society, or even to the Amazon forest – where the first lines of history were written – the different stages of human history are presented in their living forms. The Euclidian perspective, as well as that of his contemporaries, gained a privileged dimension specifically among the Brazilian coastal civilisation, and it can be defined as if "a historical coordinate separated us from them – time".[34]

24 Romero used Auguste Comte's classification method to emphasise the evolutionary specificity of the Brazilian population: "While, on one hand, they are not a cultured people, on the other, they have not remained in the polytheist and mythological period of beliefs. Applying the Law of Three Stages, created by Comte, the Brazilian population belongs, outwardly, to the theological period, in the monotheist stage; but there still exist pronounced sediments from the stage of fetishism and polytheism."[35] It can be said with a certain freedom that the Brazilian man – either peasant or primitive (and much less ancient) – was a schizophrenic subject, occupying an *in-between* lieu: no longer primitive, but not yet modern, an element in transition. However, the transition is not a uniform and unidirectional movement; it surged from the encounter and blend of distinct temporal strata, simultaneously provoking advances and partial setbacks. The coexistence of different temporal strata engenders certain anomalies and inversions, in the same way that the Canudos Campaign[36] represented a "reflux to the past". The elaboration of a barbarian civilisation also fits as an example, as posited by Cunha regarding Amazonia. As if that temporal distance (and distinction) was not enough, each social group's rhythm tended to progressively increase this difference. While it took the "primitives" centuries to conquer the smallest benefits, the modern coastal civilisation accumulated conquests and changes in much shorter time intervals. Modern society was in constant acceleration, significantly increasing its distance from other groups.[37]

25 Some of the pessimism of the literates, which would intensify with the outcome of the establishment of a republican regime in 1889, stemmed from the – almost apocalyptical – belief that technical progress was self-sufficient, following an immanent logic, in which men can only accept it or accelerate its achievements.[38] In any case, in this kind of secularised temporal logic, whether the belief in technique had eschatological features, the final redemption in the Brazilian case was far from certain. As Cunha said: "We are condemned to civilisation. Either we progress, or disappear."[39]

26 The vast process of rewriting national history, which received a boost from the crisis of the Second Empire and the inauguration of the republican regime and the social changes it brought about, assumed many particular configurations depending on the place where it was formulated. In several institutions, such as the *Revista Brasileira* (Brazilian Journal) – in its third phase under the editorship of Veríssimo – the IHGB and National Museum and its scientific discourse, there was a tense negotiation regarding the incorporation of a new agenda demanded by the republican regime. Rewriting the national past from these nonsynchronic temporal strata was an unavoidable challenge to reflect on the future of those institutions in their different levels of necessity and contingence.

Modernism and temporality

27 If the establishment of a republic in Brazil was, at some level, accompanied by the expectation of a new era, it was also nourished by the acute perception that the political regime represented a moment of temporal disorder, as it was unable to deal with the expectations projected on it. In 1924, the literary critic Tristão de Athayde delivered an astute diagnosis about the situation that, according to him, characterised the Latin-American countries:

> we are hurried nationalities, where all the civilisation stages coexist, from the savage one, at its last stage of decay, to the subtle and Mediterranean intelligentsia that isolate or wither themselves in these excessive and yet primitive tropics. A sense of ephemerality and a continuous presentiment of death emanate from all of this.[40]

28 Many of his contemporaries shared this perspective of a "crisis of time". Ten years before, with the First World War looming, Alberto Torres suggested, in what resembles a generational lament, that "contemporary intelligentsia faces the most anarchic crisis that the human spirit has ever had to face. In no other stage of history has it been more evident that the march of man has occurred in cycles, with recurrent turns to many points, firmed by habit."[41] In 1928, the modernist Paulo Prado[42] alerted the readers of his *Retrato do Brasil* (Portrait of Brazil) to the unstable nature of time that their generation faced: "We shall fix our glance, for a while, on the visible, touchable and alive reality of this today that emerges, transforms itself and disappears at a glimpse, like the landscape that vanishes when a car passes by."[43]

29 Faced with such a situation, Athayde proposed a pertinent question: "Where do this disconformity of times of development (*tempos de crescimento*), spiritual hopelessness, moral ambiguity, which has not yet allowed our soul to find its being, come from?" He offered an immediate answer: "I think they come from the constant divergence between the fatality of time, that slowly and – discontinuously (sometimes) – shapes our national *reality*, and the requirements of our *identity*, so ready, so alive and, at the same time, so empty of pertinence and breath; between what nature forces us to be and what intelligence demands us to become."[44] In other words, the literary critic pointed to a certain disparity between the intellectual yearnings and conditions of society; between what was offered as "the concrete field of what is possible" and the ever higher images that the community formulated about itself. This was "our greatest disease", as Romero put it in 1908.[45]

30 Perhaps it is possible to suggest, based on the discussion above, that the displacement proposed by the generation that succeeded the 1870s Generation is connected to a perception about the emptiness of the organicist matrix centred on the evolution idea. Those scientific assumptions seemed no longer sufficient to explain the national historical process and, hence, to modulate time according to the problems that the literates faced in the early twentieth century. According to Athayde's diagnosis, there was a gap between society and history, between the slow and discontinuous social development and the accelerated process of time: "we really are faced with, perhaps, as in no other epoch of our history, a *multiplicity of times of development* [*tempos de crescimento*], which makes our time appear anarchic … A very modern world overlaps, or, even better, is inserted here, into a very past world."[46] In 1926, when Alcântara Machado was writing about Brazilian modernism and its impact on national literature, the movement seemed to be clear to him: "The first stride was in integrating Brazilian literature in the moment. In the universal moment, of course. Here is the fright. Suddenly we jumped 50 years forward, at least. So we could match with the rest of the decent world."[47] Thus, literature accomplished the task of realigning social time with historical time, inserting Brazil in the broad movement of the civilisational process.

31 The confirmation of the profound differences and the considerable time lapses that had separated Brazilian culture from (western) civilisation, as well as the attempts to "place itself in its own time" (*colocar-se no tempo de seu tempo*), according to Octavio Ianni,[48] created the conditions for the existence of a *discourse on absence.* The elaboration of the nation's image according to gaps and absences, if we analyse it from a temporal perspective, from the *topos* of the historical delay of the nation, was repeatedly used by the first republican generation. This situation was also noticed by the modernist generation. As posited by Eduardo Jardim de Moraes, modernism's "second half", initiated in 1924, after the immediate yearnings, which had characterised the previous years, defined the time of the nation as a fundamental subject. For the author, "the formulation of a theory about the temporality of national life makes it possible to re-evaluate the 'delay situation' of the national context. It also provided the definition bases of a modernisation time appropriate to the nationality."[49] The alteration of focus and conceptual changes that occurred in the early twentieth century, and consolidated 50 years later – with the systematic use of the modernisation idea – kept the same diagnosis, even though the word "delay" gave way to the more elaborated idea of "underdevelopment". All the efforts to interpret the nation that characterised that literate generation dealt with the notion of a "disoriented time", and with the complex task of understanding the visible causes and the deep reasons for such a situation. Although tardy, Athayde's perspective is one of the most evident examples of these efforts.

32 Therefore, it is valid to say that the problems the literates faced from the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth century were, in a certain way, singular, for they searched for ways of adaptation between the modern historical consciousness, based on the ideals of civilisation and progress, and the perceptions and discourses of the social reality, such as the *topos* of the "Brazilian cultural delay". The search for the meaning of national history, for the nation's temporal depth, seemed to be under suspicion: the philosophical evolutionism, in its ramifications through social studies, which, apparently, offered a coherent narrative about the nation, seemed no longer to be a suitable conception for Brazilian history during the 1920s. The term "evolution", although still present, gave way to the emergent idea of "modernisation", which was much less implicated by the dogmatisms of the natural sciences. In short, the possibilities of a benign future and the settling of scores with the past did not work due to genetic improvement or the coherence of social laws that predicted the natural evolution of society. The twin problems treated by the late 19th-century generation, such as "cultural delay" and "racial inferiority", were no longer sufficient as historical explanations. Thus, solving this impasse also meant formulating new problems.

33 Manoel Bomfim,[50] in his 1905 work *A América Latina: Males de origem* (Latin America: evils of origin), drew attention to another important cause, that of "social parasitism", in which history was traced from the New World colonisers to the political elites of the independent Latin American societies. Although the author maintained the evolutionist perspective in his discourses, articulating in a very singular way biological knowledge with the sociological field, he avoided the interpretations that emphasised exclusively the mesological influences and racial issues (or the relation between both) to explain the Brazilian inability to join the cortege of civilised societies, as Romero did so, a few years earlier. Bomfim relied on a medical vocabulary for his sociological explanation. According to him,

> such is the case of a physician called to see a young and sick person, having all reasons to be strong, having around himself all that the human organism could need for its perfect development – who, nevertheless, has been frail and disturbed since birth, badly constituted, evolutionarily retarded, whimsical and incoherent. Immediately the physician will look for the patient's medical history and will seek there the cause of the current malaise, and also the effective means of defeating it.[51]

34 For that reason, "the sociologist cannot escape from turning back to the past, trying to find the causes of the malaises of the present".[52] In Bomfim's quest for the Brazilian temporal depth, where all the answers for its social malaises would lay, historical time was understood according to an organicist matrix, yet very close to natural time.

35 On the other hand, rejecting geographical conditions and racial inferiority as explanations, while maintaining many assumptions commonly diffused by nineteenth-century science, Bomfim presented a different bias related to a sociohistorical approach: a mainly cultural causality, in which the effects of geography and race overlapped. The causes for the delay belonged to the social process itself, and not only to the innate characteristics of their actors (either man or environment). In the same way, Oliveira Vianna, 15 years later, offered his contribution to the debate. His study on "national formation" was conducted through the "social characterisation of the Brazilian people". He clearly laid out his methods in the beginning of his first book: "In these studies, I glimpse over the cosmic and anthropological factors quite rapidly, including the ones concerning the three forming races; nevertheless, I dwell, with a certain rigour of details, on the research about the political and social factors of our collective formation."[53]

36 Therefore, it is important to emphasise that, in this case, the participation of those literates in the racial debates in Brazil is somehow less important than the fact that their works resulted from considerable efforts to reinterpret the national historical process, conferring on this process another intelligibility criteria, hence, different ways of reinterpreting the past. Authors such as Cunha, Caio Prado Jr,[54] Gilberto Freyre,[55] Sérgio Buarque de Holanda,[56] to dwell on the canonical figures, were important at the time when temporality emerged as an intellectual problem. Thus, this generation seemed to practice, at least partially, the designs elaborated years before by Abreu about the craft of Brazilian historians, whose studies should be "guided by the law of *consensus*, [to present] the *rationale* of our civilisation, [to define] the organic interdependence of phenomena, and [to elucidate] one by another. [To extract] from the bowels of the past the anguish secret of the present, and [to free ourselves] from the crass empiricism that we condemn."[57] A historian could, after collecting and criticising the pertinent documents about the national experience, properly interpret the nation, finding the depth of his history in the temporal thickness of society.

Conclusion

37 The century dealt with above, from 1830 to 1930, is extremely important for the understanding of the specificities of the temporal experience in Brazil. The events that emphasise conflicts concerning the multiple projects of nation between Portuguese America and the Portuguese Crown – and where independence is a fundamental factor – exposed a new reality that needs to formulate a new repertoire about itself.

38 In the nineteenth century, the IHGB, National Museum and historiography, which was being set as a discipline, formulated innumerous national projects. It is possible to affirm that the matter of nation appears as the main line of investigation for Brazilian history. Notions of time and space underwent a deep transformation as regards their comprehension and description; new concepts and metaphors were also required for that new reality, crammed with intense disputes over projects for the future of Brazil.

39 The history of historiography, the investigation field evidenced by this article, has as its research object the study of historiographical productions, where they were written, their period of time and their subjects. In this article, the topic of nation is important in the analysis and understanding of the experience of time at that moment, having as a primary source the authors and their productions, institutions and interpretative theories that mobilised the formation of Brazilian historical writing.

NOTES

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[1] We have assumed that history is knowledge produced in a specific place and time, and thus the history of historiography recognises the historicity of this production. We also start from Reinhart Koselleck's proposal on the understanding of historicity: human actions are between the space of experience and the horizon of expectations. See Reinhart Koselleck, *Futuro passado: Contribuição à semantica dos tempos históricos* [Futures past: On the semantics of historical times] (Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto/Editora PUC Rio, 2006). The history of contemporary historiography mentioned here refers to the period beginning in the late 1980s. This period is marked by a new look at historiographic making, distinct from the perspectives of the history of ideas or of intellectual history. With the historicity of Brazilian historiography as an object of research, institutions such as the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB), plus the syntheses of Brazilian history and the essays on the formation of Brazil, reveal a new perspective for historians, and in the last 30 years, starting from the work of Manoel Salgado Guimarães on the IHGB (1989) and Lucia Paschoal Guimarães (1995), the history of Brazilian historiography has become a field with a consolidated research agenda.

[2] In the history of Brazilian thought, the perenniality and strength of the national question is seen when this subject is treated from the most varied approaches: literature, from its first moments, with the historical novel of José de Alencar and the criticism and history in the literature of Romero; the contemporary critique of Antonio Candido, the sociology of Gilberto Freyre, in the early 1930s; the problem of subcitizenship currently approached in this field; and, finally, the historiography since the first edition of the *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, the IHGB's journal, in 1839.

[3] The IHGB was founded in 1838, in Rio de Janeiro, capital city of the empire. The institute followed the mould of the Enlightenment academies, formed by erudite scholars in a moment in which history was in a process of disciplinarisation. This was a troubled political moment for Brazil, involving intense discussions about the national projects to follow, and the institute was also a stage for these discussions. Formed mainly by members of the government, it demonstrated from the outset a very close connection to the Brazilian state. The IHGB was born with the purpose of preserving the memory of Brazil and writing its history, assigning roles to the various personages of the Brazilian nation at the time. In its main romantic project, the genealogy of Brazil in relation to Portugal was strongly marked, extolling the Portuguese element as a civilising force and the project of a white European-like society, in a portrait that was far from reality. At the same time that authors like Varnhagen reinforced the European role, the antagonist was also formed: the Indian. Miscegenation does not appear, at any moment, in Varnhagen's writing on the history of Brazil.

[4] The National Museum was created in 1818 in Rio de Janeiro. Initially the Royal Museum, it dealt with the colonial context, even at the moment of dissent between Portuguese America and its metropolis. Its foundation was due to the Portuguese royal family's relocation to the colony, after fleeing the Napoleonic invasions. After independence, the institution was renamed the Imperial Museum and later, after the declaration of the republic, the National Museum. Dedicated to natural history, the museum was one of the most important spaces for the institutionalisation of science in Brazil during the 19th century, and was responsible for the emergence of a nascent scientific community in Brazil.

[5] Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen (1816–1878) was the son of German military engineer Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Varnhagen and accompanied his parents in their changing circumstances. Varnhagen personalised the romantic ideals, in the sense of the deep connection between author and nation established in that moment, by providing the historiographic narrative with the perspective of the nation's construction, creating links in time to the events of the people and the territory. The first edition of Varnhagen's work, *História Geral do Brasil* [General History of Brazil], considered to be the first synthesis of the history of Brazil, was published in 1854. It was criticised by the indigenist scholars of the IHGB. The second edition (1857) no longer mentioned the strong idea of fighting against the indigenous peoples. The writing of João Manuel Pereira da Silva (1817–1898), like that of Varnhagen, has deep roots in Romanticism and the author dedicates himself to the narrative of examples of "iconic men" that would mark the national trajectory in time. Even if they were exceptions, these lives would inform the characteristics of a people. His most emblematic works of this type of nineteenth-century historical writing are *Plutarco brasileiro* [Brazilian Plutarch] (1847) and *Varões ilustres do Brasil nos tempos coloniais* [Illustrious men of Brazil in the colonial period] (1858).

[6] João Capistrano de Abreu was born in 1853 and died in 1927. His works *A língua dos Bacaeris* [The language of the Bacaeris] (1897), *Capítulos de história colonial* [Chapters of colonial history] (1907) and *Caminhos antigos e povoamento do Brasil* [Ancient roads and settlement of Brazil] (1930) became classics of Brazilian historiography. His historiography is considered by many authors as an expressive departure from the Portuguese past and intended the construction of an entirely national historiography.

[7] Tristão de Athayde, "Política e Letras" [Politics and letters], in *À margem da história da república (ideias, crenças e afirmações): Inquérito por escritores da geração nascida com a república* [On the sidelines of the republic (ideals, beliefs and affirmations): Inquiry by writers from the generation born with the republic], ed. Vicente Licínio Cardoso (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert, 1924), 239.

[8] Karen Macknow Lisboa, *A nova Atlântida de Spix e Martius: Natureza e civilização na "Viagem pelo Brasil" (1817–1820)* [The new Atlantis of Spix and Martius: nature and civilisation in "Journey through Brazil" (1817–1820)] (São Paulo: Hucitec, 1997), 23.

[9] Peter Wilhelm Lund (1801–1880) was born in Denmark. He travelled to Brazil in the first half of the nineteenth century and settled in Minas Gerais, where he conducted his research on the fossils of the Cenozoic period. In the caves of the region of Lagoa Santa, the naturalist found fossils of extinct fauna. Lund's research on this period led to the questioning of Georges Cuvier's catastrophist theory, because the fauna found there, according to their dating, could not have lived with the current fauna. A contributor to the IHGB, Lund died in Brazil.

[10] *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro*, 1/1–3 ([1839] 1908), accessed 24 October 2017, https://ihgb.org.br/publicacoes/revista-ihgb/item/107695-revista-ihgb-tomo-i.html.

[11] Irina Podgorny, "La febbre del fossili. Pedro de Angelis y el carácter transnacional de la ciencia" [The fossils fever: Pedro de Angelis and the transnational character of science], *Zama* 5/5 (2013): 11–26.

[12] Lúcio Menezes Ferreira, "Vestígios de civilização: A arqueologia no Brasil Imperial (1838–1870)" [Vestiges of civilization: Archaeology in Imperial Brazil (1838–1870)] (Master's thesis, Unicamp, 2002), 181.

[13] *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* 1/3 (1839): 151–56.

[14] The narrative was held at the Biblioteca da Corte (Court Library).

[15] Temístocles Cezar, "Varnhagen entre os antigos, os modernos e os 'selvagens': Estudo introdutório de 'A origem turaniana dos tupis e dos antigos egípcios'" [Varnhagen among the ancients, the moderns and the "savages": Introductory study of "The Turanian origin of the Tupi and the ancient Egyptians"], in *Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen*, ed. Raquel Glezer and Lúcia Guimarães (Rio de Janeiro: Fundação Miguel de Cervantes, 2013), 317–45.

[16] Mark Salber Phillips, "Rethinking historical distance: From doctrine to heuristic," *History and Theory* 50/4 (2011): 11–23.

[17] Jaap den Hollander, Herman Paul and Rik Peters, "Introduction: the metaphor of historical distance," *History and Theory* 50/4 (2011): 1–10.

[18] Sílvio Romero, *Estudos de poesia popular do Brasil* [Studies in popular poetry of Brazil] (Rio de Janeiro: Vozes, 1977), 38.

[19] José Veríssimo (1857–1916) was a literary critic and historian of literature. His contribution to the ethnographic studies of the Amazon jungle is undeniable, as his work shows the importance of the geographical environment in understanding the cultural formation of a people. His main works on the Amazon are *Primeiras páginas* [First pages] (1878), *Cenas da Amazônia* [Scenes of Amazonian life] (1886). However, his main work is *História da literatura Brasileira* [History of Brazilian literature] (1916), regarding the formation of the Brazilian people, which was published posthumously.

[20] Euclides Rodrigues Pimenta da Cunha (1866–1909) graduated as a military engineer, but his republican ideas distanced him from his military career. He accompanied, for the newspaper *O Estado de São Paulo*, the war of Canudos, which took place between 1896 and 1897 in Bahia. The experience in Canudos provided Cunha with the material for his work *Os sertões* (1902). The work is a classic for humanities studies and in the early twentieth century posed crucial questions about national identity.

[21] Romero, *Estudos*, 38.

[22] Nísia Trindade Lima, *Um sertão chamado Brasil: Intelectuais e representação geográfica da identidade nacional* [A backland called Brazil: Intellectuals and geographic representation of national identity] (Rio de Janeiro: Revan/IUPERJ/UCAM, 1999), 222.

[23] Capistrano de Abreu, "Necrológio de Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, Visconde de Porto Seguro" [Obituary for Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, Viscount of Porto Seguro], in *Ensaios e estudos: 1a Série* [Essays and studies: First series] (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira/INL, 1975), 90.

[24] José Veríssimo, *A educação nacional* [The national education] (Porto Alegre: Mercado Aberto, 1985), 43.

[25] Elías Palti, *El tiempo de la política, el siglo XIX reconsiderado* [The time of politics, the nineteenth century reconsidered] (Buenos Aires: Siglo Veintiuno, 2007), 223.

[26] Claude Blanckaert, *La Nature de la société: Organicisme et sciences sociales au XIXe siècle* [The nature of society: organicism and social sciences in the nineteenth century] (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2005), 61.

[27] Michel Foucault, *Naissance de la biopolitique* [The birth of biopolitics] (Paris: Seuil, 2004), 355.

[28] Raimundo Nina Rodrigues (1862–1906) graduated from the faculty of medicine of Bahia in 1888. He dedicated himself to teaching legal medicine and was influenced by the criminal anthropology of Cesare Lombroso.

[29] Nina Rodrigues, *As raças humanas e a responsabilidade penal no Brasil* [Human races and criminal responsibility in Brazil] (Salvador: Progresso Editora, 1957), 29.

[30] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the other: how anthropology makes its object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 219.

[31] Henchmen's dwellings.

[32] Euclides da Cunha, *Um paraíso perdido: Reunião de ensaios amazônicos.* [A lost paradise: collection of Amazonian essays] (Brasília: Senado Federal, 2000), 146.

[33] The term "copyist" can be noticed in many articles on medieval history, for example, Karina van Dalen-Oskam and Joris van Zundert, "Delta for Middle Dutch: author and copyist distinction in Walewein," *Literary and Linguistic Computing* 22/3 (2007): 345–62, accessed 24 Oct. 2017, https://doi.org/10.1093/llc/fqm012.

[34] Cunha, *Um paraíso perdido*, 86.

[35] Romero, *Estudos*, 33.

[36] "Let us insist upon this truth: the Canudos war was a reflux in our history. We unexpectedly had an old, dead society resurrected and in weapons right in front of us, galvanised by a crazy person." Euclides da Cunha, *Os sertões* [Backlands] (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1985), 248.

[37] Reinhart Koselleck, "Acortamiento del tiempo y aceleración. Un studio sobre la secularización" [Shortening of time and acceleration: a study on secularisation], in *Aceleración, prognosis y secularización* [Acceleration, prognosis and secularisation] (Valencia: Pre-Textos, 2003), 96.

[38] Giacomo Marramao, *Céu e Terra* [Sky and earth] (São Paulo: Editora da Unesp, 1994), 136.

[39] Cunha, *Os sertões*, 145.

[40] Athayde, "Política e Letras," 239.

[41] Alberto Torres, *O problema nacional brasileiro. Introducção a um programma de organização nacional* [The Brazilian national problem: introduction to a national organisation programme] (São Paulo: Companhia Editora Nacional, 1933), 24.

[42] Paulo Prado (1869–1943) was related to the economic elite of the time (large plantation owners and coffee exporters) and played an important role during the 1922 Modern Art Week, a crucial event for modernism in Brazil. His book *Retrato do Brasil: Ensaio sobre a tristeza brasileira* (Portrait of Brazil: an essay on the trajectory of Brazil in time), published in 1928, is an essay on the trajectory of Brazil in time and takes the colonial past as an impasse for the modernisation of the country.

[43] Prado, *Retrato do Brasil*, 204.

[44] Athayde, "Política e Letras," 239.

[45] Sílvio Romero, "Nosso maior mal" [Our greatest disease], in *Provocações e debates (contribuições para o estudo do Brazil social)* [Provocations and debates: Contributions to the study of social Brazil] (Porto: Livraria Chardron, 1910), 102.

[46] Athayde, "Política e Letras," 268.

[47] Antonio de Alcântara Machado, "Geração revoltada" [Revolted generation], in *Presença da literatura brasileira. Modernismo: história e antologia* [Presence of Brazilian literature: modernism; history and anthology], ed. Antonio Candido and José Aderaldo Castello (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1997), 156.

[48] Octavio Ianni, "Estilos de pensamento" [Thought styles], in *O pensamento de Oliveira Vianna* [The thought of Oliveira Vianna], ed. Elide Rugai Bastos and João Quartim de Moraes (Campinas: Editora da Unicamp, 1993), 438.

[49] Eduardo Jardim de Moraes, "Modernismo revisitado" [Modernism revisited], *Estudos Históricos* [Historical Studies] 1/2 (1988): 220–38.

[50] The main books by Manuel Bomfim (1868–1932) are *A América Latina: males de origem* (1905), *Através do Brasil* (written in co-authorship with Olavo Bilac, 1910). Concerned with the national question, he indicated as a problem of Brazil its formation, moving away from the common explanation at the time that miscegenation would be an obstacle.

[51] Manoel Bomfim, *A America Latina: Males de origem* [Latin America: evils of origin] (Rio de Janeiro: Livreiro-Editor; Paris: H. Garnier, 1905), 22–23.

[52] Ibid.

[53] Francisco José Oliveira Vianna, *Populações ruraes do centro-sul (Paulistas – fluminenses – mineiros)* [Rural populations of Centre-South Brazil (Paulistas–Fluminenses–Mineiros)], vol. 1 of *Populações meridionaes do Brazil (Historia – organização – psycologia)* [Meridional populations of Brazil (History–organisation–psychology)] (São Paulo: Monteiro Lobato, 1920), iii–iv.

[54] Caio da Silva Prado Jr (1907–1990) graduated in 1928 from one of the most traditional law schools in Brazil. Attached to the ideas of the left, he joined the Communist Party of Brazil in 1930. His classic *Formação econômica do Brasil* (1942) is a landmark in Brazilian historiography, and brings the thesis that the history of Brazil is not related only to Portugal, but to a broader context of the history of capitalism.

[55] The works of Gilberto Freye (1900–1987) include *Casa-grande & senzala* (1933) and *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo* (1942), landmarks in the studies on the formation of Brazilian national identity. His work is generally considered pivotal in Brazilian social thought. Freire's thinking is considered a new moment to sociology in Brazil.

[56] Sergio Buarque de Holanda (1902–1982) authored *Monções* (1945), *Caminhos e Fronteiras* (1957), *Visão do paraíso: os motivos edênicos no descobrimento do Brasil* (1959). However, *Raízes do Brasil* (1936) was his first and most expressive work on Brazilian history. In it, his studies turned to the history of the nation and the obstacles that prevented its development. *Raízes do Brasil* has had more than 30 editions, and its critical editions are adding content and revealing the transformations of Sérgio Buarque's thinking.

[57] Capistrano de Abreu, "Necrologio de Francisco Adolpho de Varnhagen" [Obituary for Francisco Adolpho de Varnhagen], in *Ensaios e estudos (critica e historia): 1a Série* [Essays and studies (Criticism and history): First series], ed. Sociedade Capistrano de Abreu (Rio de Janeiro: Livraria Briguiet, 1931), 141.