

LIFE (AND DEATH?) OF GLOBAL HISTORY

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The debate about the themes and limits of the so-called 'global turn' in the Humanities is currently so intense and disperse that considerations have appeared even speculating about its end. In fact, when this issue of *Estudos Históricos* was in its final weeks of editing, in what was still believed a moment of profusion of global and transnational approaches, the historian Jeremy Adelman published the essays "What is Global History now?" and "The clash of Global Narratives." According to Adelman, not only we are rapidly entering an era of violent anti-globalization, but the new social and political realities imposed by figures such as Donald Trump and Marine Le Pen, for example, show how national approaches are as important as ever and that perhaps some historians had rushed into the 'bender' of Global History, which he provocatively calls a 'short ride.' Adelman appears to criticize those who saw in Global History an "elixir, a way to return to public relevance", in a precipitation which mistakenly disregarded along the way the importance and the complexity of space and the game of scales.

Have we really reached the end of what can thus be called one of the most ambitious, and short lived, schools of History?

Actually, despite interesting insights and the important criticism of a type of prevailing vogue, Adelman's own texts remain strongly centered on the political, academic, and historiographical

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reality of the North Atlantic axis (the local effect of the election of Trump appears to have been disproportionately transported to the rest of the world by the historian). This shows that the debates about Global History can still move forward, especially if a common platform is sought for new research networks and for the continuous provincialization of Europe (and of the North Atlantic axis...).

Continuing to consider these perspectives becomes one of the most incisive means of understanding that the globalization (or the new phase of globalization) which began in the 1970s has to be taken in a very relative form as the motor or fuse of the movement of Global History. Above all, that is because that approach is strongly based on its impact on Europeans at the end of the decolonization process and on the effects of the Vietnam War on US society. In other words, it is centered on the historic experience and the perspective of the North Atlantic axis and, therefore, with very limited conditions as a historic phenomenon projected in time and space. While some historiographic traditions only begin to look for new approaches, and even if various convergences are perceptible, discussions about transference, circulation of ideas, and reciprocal influences remain rare. There is a clear fragmentation, a result of the positivist foundation of the new Sciences around a century and a half ago, combined with the strong influence of the nation state building agenda. On the other hand, there is also an immense wealth of theoretical, conceptual, and methodological frameworks, some with various decades of existence. In fact, the novelty seems to lie in an unprecedented dialogue within academia.

According to the historian Robert Frank, who gave an interesting interview to this issue, remembering Marc Bloch's 1928 classic text, "we have known for a long time that we had to leave the national framework" (Frank, 2012/1: 7). Much longer before the 1970s, centuries before, if we attentively read the rich text Sanjay Subrahmanyam publishes here. However, the current cacophony behind the debate on Global History, which has provoked a moment of "uncertainty and transition" in the discipline of History, as Maxine Berg (2013/4: 89) states, is easily identified in the set of synthesizing works, or in those released as part of a theoretical and conceptual – and even epistemological – discussion within the Humanities. This is probably explained by the different forms and paces with which historians have left the national frameworks since the beginning of the twentieth century.

Zhang Xupeng (2013/4, 89), for example, in an interesting review of contemporary Chinese historiography, reveals that the influence of a political project of nation state building in China meant that, in the second half of the twentieth century, Chinese historians only began to adopt the model which had already been questioned by Bloch two decades before. Yet in Brazil, after the age of 'mitographies' of the nineteenth century, according to Maria Helena

P. T. Machado (2000: 63), the country experimented the nationalist projects of Vargas and Capanema and the foundation of History courses in the 1930s, with profound effects in the area that are still felt, to the point of even creating a strong regionalist historiography which dialogued little among itself (within Brazil!), as the historian Jeffrey Lesser noted during a talk at the launch of his book *A invenção da brasilidade*, at the CPDOC in March 2016. The chaos is even more complex when one, as in Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch's *mea culpa* words (2013/4: 111), considers that in Africa not only does there exist an enormous production neglected by research networks outside the region, but that it is extremely multifaceted, with little organicity, and with asymmetries provoked by material reasons and by the different languages in which the narratives are produced.

Nowadays, when the facilities of communication put the community of historians in contact in a quicker and more accessible manner, even though the vectors of diffusion remain concentrated in the North Atlantic axis (as the footnotes in this Presentation testify), the historiographic chaos and differences behind the label of global are more evident than ever. If Global History manages to be a common platform for all these realities to meet and dialogue, as well as to discuss the units of analysis to be used in the future, then it deserves to be more alive than ever.

Taking into account this context, this volume, rather than just presenting interesting examples of how to do History reconsidering time and space, intends to offer a state of the art and to provide a platform for debate.

Estudos Históricos, to a certain extent, has been a witness of these almost 100-year-old discussions. It has been even a place for them since it started being published in the 1980s, as shown in its second issue, entitled *National Identity* (vol. 1, n. 2, 1988), which opens with an article by Elisa Reis on "The National State as Ideology: the Brazilian case." While Reis critically analyzed the constructed reality of the nation state in Brazil, exposing its entrails and altering readers about the different meanings of borders, other issues since then have explored distinct aspects of this same reality, such as the volume about *National Heroes* (vol. 14, n. 25, 2000), or their contestation, through the ignoring or challenging of the same constructed borders, as in the volumes dedicated to *Globalization* (vol. 6, n. 12, 1993), *Latin America* (which deserved two issues, one in 1997 – vol. 10, n. 20, and another in 2009 – vol. 22, n. 44) and *National States and Globalization* (vol. 23, n. 46, 2010).¹ The conjugation of these debates clearly demonstrates that it is not enough for a person to cross a border and establish a relation with another human being for the phenomenon of the nation to be left aside, even if this person is not at the service of State. The whole of this debate becomes important to understand that, while today there exist the deconstruction, decentralization, and decompartmentalization

of social processes, their opposite also existed and exists, and that all of them deserve the attention of the historian.

In this *Global and Transnational Perspectives* issue, the journal offers a new round of discussions about how to *do* History. After the initiatives of *História, Ciências, Saúde-Manguinhos*, with the dossier "Brazil in the Global Context (1870-1945)" (v. 21, n. 1, jan./mar. 2014), e da *Revista Brasileira de História*, with the dossier "O Brasil na História Global" (v. 34, n. 68, jul./dez. 2014), and taking advantage of the organization of the *Global History Conference* by the FGV/ School of Social Sciences in October 2016,² *Estudos Históricos* launched a 'global' Call for Papers and is publishing an issue containing contributions from different traditions and cultural and spatial horizons, all proposing to collaborate with the construction of the Global History platform.

A large part of the texts was discussed during the Conference in question and reflect the wealth of the discussions and the dimension of the challenges. The contribution of the historian José Antonio Sanchez-Roman, for instance, is a direct fruit of the final report he presented at the closing of the meeting, containing a rich overview of the ideas and debates alive there. The use of different possible definitions of 'Latin America' (as space or culture, for instance) served as a starting point for the texts presented here. The sophistication of the analyses presented by the authors, however, perfectly allows them to dialogue with any other initiative (or approach) discussing how history should be written in the future.

The Articles section starts presenting the contribution of two historians concerned with a topic distant chronologically, from a time long before the fever of the nation states building. Ryan Crewe, first, and Thiago Mota, later, construct narratives which conceive oceanic spaces not as empty zones, but as experiencing intense and different dynamics. Both reconsider areas such as Asia and Africa from the axis of the Americas and their channels of communication in the Pacific and the Atlantic.

Following, the article by José Augusto Ribas Miranda presents an innovative way of understanding the circulation and constitution of connections in ample spaces in the nineteenth century. Looking beyond the international financial and sovereign debt markets, he reveals transnational dynamics such as the history of capital itself, but also of reputation, ambition, and even crime.

Cristián Castro's text, advancing through the first decades of the twentieth century, presents itself as an example of how, within the debate on Global History, the theoretical and conceptual richness existing for decades can be taken advantage of to propose new narratives, without it being necessary to demand ruptures in History. Analyzing the black press in São Paulo and Chicago, Castro uses the work of Benedict Anderson to construct an 'imagined transnational community,' focusing on the construction of an anti-hegemonic discourse about race in these spaces.

The efforts to relativize the strong methodological nationalism still present in various academic communities in Latin America found an echo in the article of Juan Suriano. As well as Brazilian historians have recently taken the global context of armed conflicts into their discussions on Labor History, Suriano analyzes the consequences for the Argentine workers' movement of the impacts caused by the Great War, proposing an interesting path to Global History in the region.

Later, reinforcing the wealth of possibilities for debates within the arena of Global History, Marcos Chor Maio and Thiago Costa offer another manner of questioning the various ideas of borders that can exist in the Humanities. In addition to exam and challenge political and cultural borders, Maio and Costa's text invites us to think about the global turn as a moment of questioning the borders between the Human Sciences through the analysis of the sociologist Donald Pierson's work on racial relations.

Closing the group of texts having a strong thematic cut is the article by Stella Krepp on the complexity of the Malvinas War. Krepp's contribution is to reverse the prevailing perspectives about the conflict, generally marked by a North Atlantic focus. Her argument corrects asymmetries and questions the already mentioned Eurocentrism through the analysis of Third World solidarity in relation to the conflict.

The final two texts in the Articles Section, the second to last by the researchers Pedro Afonso Cristovão dos Santos, Thiago Lima Nicodemo, and Mateus Henrique de Faria Pereira, and the last one by Aldo Marchesi, offer an interesting bridge to the articles closing this issue, consolidating it as a platform of debate about the potentials and limits of a global writing of Latin American history. While Santos, Nicodemo and Pereira analyze the possibility of a 'self-critical global history,' inspired by Subaltern and Post-Colonial Studies, Marchesi contributes to initiatives which have sought to link global and local traditions of writing the history of the Cold War, one of the most dense fronts of the current debate on Global History.

After the Articles Section, there is a rich contribution from Albert Manke, Katerina Brezinova and Laurin Blecha in the Bibliographic Essay Section. The piece, taking into account the importance of integrating the 'global south' in Cold War studies, offers a review of the literature produced in recent years in Europe and the Americas, indicating the advances already achieved and the potential still to be explored.

Moving on to the Special Contributions Section, we have the text of Sanjay Subrahmanyam who very kindly not only ceded to *Estudos Históricos* the publication rights in Portuguese of his 2013 *Collège de France* Inaugural Lecture, but offered to revise the text and make the necessary adjustments for the version published here. As mentioned above, his reflections help us to understand the depth of the debate behind the 'global' label. Along with Subrahmanyam, there

appear the text by José Antonio Sanchez-Román, a rich overview of the *Global History Conference* (held in Rio de Janeiro in October 2016), but also a rich debate about space and time and the writing of history, and the text of Diego Olstein, a very skilled academic who has made efforts in recent years to offer a little bit of order to the chaotic debate about Global History.

To use the expression present in the title of Sanchez-Román's article, the reading of all these important articles published here will provoke 'reflections,' but equally it will result in various 'doubts.' Perhaps it is still early for some sort of 'commitment,' since as long as Global History can be defined as a meeting we are still at its beginning. None the less, the interview with Robert Frank, closing this issue, offers numerous clues in that sense. He demystifies various appeals of Global History and confronts the difficult task of understanding the whole and what is at stake in this debate, including politically.

Excellent reading to everyone!

NOTES

1 All *Estudos Históricos* articles can be freely accessed on the journal's website: <http://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/ojs/index.php/reh/index>.

2 The Conference brought together in Rio de Janeiro the *2^a Coloquio Internacional: Latinoamérica y la Historia Global* and the *2nd Latin America in Global Context Workshop*, in an event organized by the FGV School of Social Science, UFRRJ, USP/Labmundi, the University of Pittsburgh, Universität Bern, and by Red Latinoamericana de Historia Global. The conference program can be accessed at: http://ri.fgv.br/sites/default/files/noticias/arquivos-relacionados/ghc_programa.pdf.

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