

# Making history, writing history: The figurations of the historian in nineteenth century Brazil

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## ABSTRACT

In nineteenth century Brazil, the creation of a historiographical regime with scientific purposes raised the unavoidable question of the conditions for writing Brazilian history. Another crucial question also arose – what should the historian of Brazil be like? The article analyses the figurations which defined qualities and

specific competences for the historical studies, especially the biographies of men of letters published in the *Revista* of the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute during the nineteenth century.

Keywords: historiography; historian; Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute.

To Manoel Luiz Salgado Guimarães

*In memoriam*

In a session on 10 October 1879, the first vice-president and orator of the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute, Joaquim Manoel de Macedo, proposed the suspension of the institute's activities due to the death of General Manoel Luiz Osório. "This great citizen", he noted, "did not belong to this Institute, but when alive he was an immense monument to the history of Brazil."<sup>1</sup> At the following meeting Luiz Francisco da Veiga read a historic elegy, proposing the posthumous nomination of the Marquis of Herval as a member of the institution in recognition of the services he had given to his country. This was promptly refused by the commission responsible, who alleged that its acceptance would represent an infraction of the statutory rules then in force.<sup>2</sup>

The case would not be worthy of closer attention were it not for the arguments developed by Veiga to justify the incorporation of the legendary soldier as a member of the Institute. Far from being based solely on the evocation of a duty

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of memory, recurrent in funeral elegies proffered in the institution, Veiga appealed to the semantic scope of the modern concept of history to justify his proposal. According to him, 'real history' could also be defined as a field of the heroic action of great men. Before being prepared in the form of narration, there was 'real history', in other words that "written by the individual, by the commune, by the province, by the *department*, by the county, by civil and political corporations of any hierarchy and finally by the state...". However, General Osório could not be qualified as a 'registrar of strange facts and deeds', nor could he be considered a scholar of historical, geographical or ethnographic questions. The reason for the connection of his name with the institution was the undeniable fact that this illustrious Brazilian had *made* history in Brazil in his condition of a heroic *agent* of events. According to the argumentation of Veiga there existed

*Historians* simply of the *pen* and historians who write immortal pages in the annals of the idolized patria, sacrificing on the altars of the patria the sovereign faculties of their souls, the meritorious aptitudes of their physical vigor and even their own lives.

The meritorious and dignified Brazilian who has just died in this court ... was certainly not a *historian of the pen*, the registrar of *strange deeds and facts*; but was a true and illustrious historian, because he *wrote*, with his sword and spear, invincible and admirable pages in the history of this country, pages that will be documents of pride and nobility for all the generations to come in this portentous American Empire.

Not being, nor having been, a *historian of the pen*, nor even a writer in the subjects that concern this Historical, Geographic and Ethnographic Institute, the glorious Marquis was not a member of this Institute.

...

And this Institute is especially *historic*, and the venerated General Osório, Marquis of Herval, *was one of our most illustrious historians*, writing, I insist on this word, glittering pages of glorious heroism in our history of fifty-seven years as an independent nation!!<sup>3</sup>

Notwithstanding the eloquent tone, the proposal would be rejected based on the protocol that regulated the acceptance of candidates to membership of the IHGB. With there being no possibility of the dead general being accepted by the institutional rules on the basis of his prominence, Tristão de Alencar Araripe and Manoel Jesuíno Ferreira, members of the commission who decided

the case, suggested the expedient of the posthumous consecration with which the institution always paid homage to all illustrious Brazilians: the writing and later publication in the Institute's *Revista* of a biography.

In Veiga's discourse the ambiguous reference to those who wrote and those who made history not only served to amplify the heroism of an illustrious man, but also left important clues about how the figure of historian was seen in the second half of the nineteenth century in Brazil. At this moment it is fundamental to note that the conceptualization of history as an omnipresent instance and space of action of men was accompanied by the idea of its feasibility. In other words, the awareness of the availability of history allowed it to be perceived as feasible from two points of view – that of agents who talked about the history they had made, and that of historians, who talked about it when they wrote it.<sup>4</sup>

Given the awareness that history could be 'made', what duties were highlighted in the ample spectrum of intellectual tasks that composed the historiographic profession in the nineteenth century? At a moment when a historiographic regime with scientific intensions would leave unavoidable the question of the conditions of the possibility of the writing of national history, a question of no less importance could be also be raised – what should the historian of Brazil be like? The objective of this article is to analyze the figurations which defined the qualities and duties for the study and writing of history, in the way that these attributes were being circumscribed in the biographies of some 'men of letters' published in the *Revista* of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute during the nineteenth century.

#### MEN OF LETTERS AND SCIENCE: HEROES FOR POSTERITY

Unlike the strict condition of 'man of arms' which prevented the Marquis of Herval from joining an association based on criteria of 'literary sufficiency,' a large part of the illustrious Brazilians whose biographies appeared in the IHGB periodical had worked concomitantly in the public business of the Empire and had provided services to Brazilian literature.<sup>5</sup> During the first decades of the twentieth century, in the context of the First Republic, as illustrated by Ângela de Castro Gomes, the intersection between the political and intellectual spheres would remain an unavoidable trait of Brazilian lettered production, shown in the positions occupied by various authors, both in their formal activities in public functions and in the defense of politico-cultural ideas or projects.<sup>6</sup>

It was not by chance that the most paradigmatic examples of this dual notoriety were found among the founders of the institution, most of whom had close ties with the state bureaucracy. Thus, in one of the biographic elegies dedicated to the first president, the Viscount of São Leopoldo, the experience he had accumulated in political administration was considered decisive in accrediting him with the genuine vocation of historian and ‘man of science’. Born in the town of Santos and with a degree in theology from the University of Coimbra, he was appointed a customs magistrate in the provinces of Rio Grande and Santa Catarina and made auditor general of the troops of the Imperial army in the pacification campaign of the River Platte region in 1811. A deputy in the Lisbon *cortes* and in the 1823 constituent assembly, he climbed to the position of president of the province of Rio Grande and later to that of senator and councilor of state. In the words of the author of the brief retrospect of his life, “in the theater of action, [Fernandes Pinheiro] witnessed the facts and scenes that later would make him into a historian.” Nevertheless, his becoming a man of letters would only be achieved after stepping away from the political scene, especially the factional fights in the years following independence. The *topoi* of the priesthood of truth and impartiality defined the requirements for the noble mission of the *literati* inspired by the sentiment of patriotism:

While society revolves in the agitated fight of political passions, the calculation of ambition; while the world debates in the tumultuous disorder of transitory interests: the *literati*, the son of intelligence, withdraws to solitude, concentrates all his faculties and dedicates himself to the noble priesthood of truth ... in the retreat of office ruled by the regions of thought, and irradiates the reflections of his glory on an entire nationality.<sup>7</sup>

As soon as he reached the highest position in the career of a servant of the state, the Viscount of São Leopoldo swapped ‘the uniform of the minister for the table of the *literati*,’ leaving the agitation of politics to dedicate his life as a ‘man of science.’ Away from public business and the ‘tumultuous passions’ which characterized the political scenario of the First Empire, he was able to apply himself entirely to the ‘cult of letters.’ Finally, as a legacy to future generations, his work on the history of Brazil was distinguished by the “profound investigation of facts, by the clarified criteria and illustrated impartiality of his appreciation”, as well as the ‘sobriety of style’ in recounting events.

In the bibliographic elegy of the Viscount of São Leopoldo some of the traits which defined in men of letters the *vocation* to study history can also be found. Judging by the biographies of those, such as the president of IHGB, deemed worthy of recognition for their works in this specific field, the composition of historiographic works did not appear to be connected to the manifestation of a genius or original artistic talent, similar to poets, but was related much more to a *choice* marked by sacrifice and a certain amount of abnegation.<sup>8</sup> It is through this formula that the French writer Augustin Thierry is evoked as an exemplary model of the historian devoted to the arduous craft of research and to the national cause:

Thierry resuscitates the past with his profound questions, carries the flaming torch of truth to the shadows that are wrapped around the primitive times of France. The victim of heavy work, the light of his eyes dimmed in the deciphering of old manuscripts; his body worn out by his vigil; mutilated by suffering, he is inclined towards the tomb. But the smile of contentment rests of his lips, because in his writings the glory of his patria will endure.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, the emphasis on the heroic and pragmatic condition of the investigation of the past did not imply scorning the literary dimensions of historiographic work. At the same time, José Feliciano Fernandes Pinheiro could be defined as “one of the most notable writers in Brazilian literature”, who also did not lack all the attributes of a ‘perfect historian.’ The writing of history was seen above all as a noble task based on patriotic inspirations, in addition to the *utilitarian* and *educational* knowledge that it offered society.

Based on a similar argument, Manoel de Araújo Porto Alegre called upon lettered Brazilians when the Institute celebrated the new installations in the Paço Imperial on 15 December 1849:

The literati does not belong to this secondary existence in the social order, this twilight life which only after death aggrandizes: the intellectual services of the ministry of ideas were leveled with the other civilizing elements and their glory equaled to that of the general, the magistrate and the statesman; the links of the civilizing chain are found fraternally interlinked and heading in the same direction.<sup>10</sup>

While the historiographic work remained defined as an *acquisition forever*, in other words, a good for posterity, the figure of the historian acquired strong

traits of heroism due to the difficulties attributed to the investigation and writing of history.<sup>11</sup> In the biography of Sebastião da Rocha Pita written by João Manuel Pereira da Silva, thps formula is used to highlight his qualities and at the same time attenuate the serious objections made to his *História da América Portuguesa*. The life of the Bahian literati was “regular, mild and placid”, while around him there occurred important historical events for the destiny of the nation “which did not deserve attention”.<sup>12</sup> Between the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth, the outcome of the struggle against the Dutch and the French invasion of Rio de Janeiro did not tear the historian away from his ‘happy leisure’ and the ‘serene and restful’ daily existence of landholder. Thus, he spent more than half of his existence with agricultural business and during his moments of rest, ‘in the ease of the spirit,’ he studied literary and scientific works and the writing of sonnets and eclogues with which he conquered his reputation as an ‘average poet.’ Only in maturity, after abandoning poetry, did the idea of writing the history of Brazil come to him. Starting that important mission Rocha Pita ‘calculated all the difficulties of his enterprise’ and to overcome them spent many years examining documents in archives in Bahia, Rio de Janeiro and Lisbon.

It was necessary to resort to manuscripts and documents, search public libraries, state departments, royal and private archives, examine itineraries, voyages, religious chronicles, military descriptions; the task was immense and very difficult to execute, the work long and heavy; the life of one man seemed at first sight to be too short undertake and complete it!<sup>13</sup>

The idea that written history represented the arrival point of a difficult pilgrimage in search of the marks of the past and the concomitant effort to submit all traces to a narrative ordering, came to circumscribe the qualifications of the ‘true’ historian. This is how Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen would be described by Joaquim Manoel de Macedo as a ‘man-monument’ in the elegy dedicated to the former by the Institute shortly after his death. Before evoking his contributions, however, the Institute’s orator did not hesitate to nominate Rocha Pita as the initiator of the heroic venture of founding national historiography:

Until the end of the eighteenth century, although Brazil had history, it did not have historians yet. The two Peros, Caminha and Gandavo, created its cradle, but they could only write two acts, that of birth or discovery and that of the

baptism of Terra de Santa Cruz. Afterwards, and for two hundred years, *the history of Brazil was and still is an ordeal requiring great patience*, and the torment of the critic in seeking it in the letters and diaries of explorers ... in the chronicles of religious orders, in travel narratives ... Many elements; all, however, dispersed, confused, and compromised by absurd inventions, by imaginary creations and by the shadows of historic periods almost without a star in the prolonged night.

In the eighteenth century there emerged like the dawn the already old Rocha Pita, Brazilian by birth and by love, a pilgrim with white hair who studied languages and visited European capitals in search of clarifications and of documentary evidence of life and things in Brazil, and was also a pilgrim in his patria going to the captaincies of the then Portuguese colony one by one and after very laborious investigations and conscientious study, was shown to be the first historian in Brazil...<sup>14</sup>

Unlike his predecessor, the Viscount of Porto Seguro found in the diplomatic career favorable conditions to dedicate himself to historical investigations. Nevertheless, like the Bahian author, he would also “be engulfed by libraries, cover himself with the dust of archives, compulsively buy hundreds of books, find treasures and sources of light in rare works, discover ancient manuscripts and important documents”, and to finally crown his literary and scientific labor with the publication of his *Historia Geral*.<sup>15</sup>

Although they constitute a recurrent justification of the option of men of letters to study history, the sentiments of patriotic inspiration make the fulfilling of the imperatives of the scientific approach by the discipline increasingly more problematic, since these motivations raised suspicions about the supposed partiality of their writings. Among those who dealt with this question, Canon José Feliciano Fernandes Pinheiro showed that he was aware of the different forms of historiography according to the point of view of those who wrote them. Introducing his work on the battles that marked the end of Dutch dominions in colonial Brazil, he said the following:

Historians have to understand that it is licit to adorn national pomp with the arabesques of fiction, extol the victories won over enemies, and to hide, or attenuate, their defeats; to this school belonged Herodotus, Titus Livius among the ancients and João de Barros and Rocha Pita amongst us. No matter how respectable these authors are, no matter how patriotic their proposals seem, we move away from their method, thinking that if history *no longer spoke the truth*

*to men* it would lose the most noble of its prerogatives. Recognizing the competence of the similar tribunal, winners and losers appeal to it, and convinced of its justice no one refuses its subpoenas. For many years the final sentence has to be waited for: though when proffered IT carries the seal of the most grandiose impartiality.<sup>16</sup>

These considerations echo warnings expressed against the intromissions of literary rhetoric, patriotism and ‘fables’ stripped of any basis of historical truth, into the writing of the historian. The conditions for a more impartial and true historiographical understanding of the facts is given by a distancing which only temporal succession (the ‘dilated years’) and the actual flux of history can establish. In this case the advance of time is considered less for its corrosive potential than for adding of meaning and comprehension of past events. As the premise for the preparation of historical knowledge, temporal distancing circumscribes the privileged epistemological position of the historian regarding the chronicler, which accentuates the demand for documents with which the former can investigate critically and indirectly the past.

Clarifying facts, presenting in detail events, illuminating them with reflections, investigating news, making lengthy and profound question, driving away doubts, breaking through the clouds, the shadows wrapped around facts, disfiguring them and altering them, making prejudice fade, weighing traditions using whatever is rational and consensual in them, eliminating in popular beliefs whatever is false and wrong: this is the *mission of the historian* which, illuminated by the light of truth, should in an impartial and open-minded manner examine historical monuments, visit temples, monasteries, buildings, tombs, live in archives and notary offices, travel, be a paleographer, antiquarian, traveler, bibliographer, everything, as Alexandre Herculano, the scholarly Portuguese historian stated.<sup>17</sup>

In light of the words of Manuel Duarte Moreira de Azevedo, it can be argued that the multiple figurations of history scholars result to a great extent from the incipient status of disciplinary frontiers in the nineteenth century. However, the apparent accumulation of tasks by the historian marked diversified conceptions about modes of investigation and writing of knowledge of the past, as well as the undeniable connections between modern historical criticism and the practices of antiquarians and scholars.<sup>18</sup> For this reason the differences between men of letters and men of science remained tenuous at that moment



thanks to the confluence of their 'intellectual services' rendered in the name of the same civilizing policy project.

It can thus be understood that the biographic elegies highlighted not only the literary and scientific prowess of these subjects, but also made an apology for certain moral virtues that made their lives exemplary. The recurrent use of this formula can be noted in the large number of biographies printed in the IHGB's *Revista*. This is the case of the extensive pages dedicated to the naturalists, Friar José Mariano da Conceição Veloso, Friar Leandro do Sacramento and Francisco Freire Alemão.<sup>19</sup> By defining them as 'vivifying examples' for future generations, José Saldanha da Gama celebrated the notable services provided to the state and the personal qualities of those figures of Brazilian science, such as 'love for the truth', the 'sublime sacrifice', 'perseverance' and 'abnegation.' In the appreciation of the scientific writings of the Frar Conceição Veloso, the result of knowledge accumulated in various branches of natural history and above all in the prolonged years devoted to botanical research in the countryside of Rio de Janeiro, the scope of his contribution would be discussed as follows:

Looking through that virtuous Franciscan's *Flora Fluminense* page by page, a conciseness of the characters of each plant can be found, which the impression that it produced in our spirit dissipates totally, because we look to the time in which he lived and recognize through this retrospective turning back of our eyes that the elements indispensable to the development of a science are gradually accumulated through partial efforts which converge for the same purpose, and the intelligence that enters as one of the foundations in the construction of such a glorious monument is notable. (Gama, 1868, p.165)

An identical and exemplary combination of the devotion to science and the virtues of a 'good and wise' man can be found in Freire Alemão, whom Saldanha da Gama declared himself to be a disciple of. In a more accentuated way than in the other two biographies, the portrait of the naturalist and member of IHGB is permeated by a poetic vision of scientific research and the relations of the man of science with nature:

There he was in the middle of the forests, piercing the multiple secrets of the flora of Brazil, spending hours and hours in front of the vegetation with which nature formed the environs of Rio de Janeiro. The lands of Gávea, Copacabana, Corcovado, Tijuca, Jacarepaguá, Mendanha in Campo Grande, and finally the

abundant province of Ceará, all of which he knew very well; perhaps no plant was seen with flowers that did not appear later classified and drawn (if unknown), and dried amongst the flower of his herbarium. (Gama, 1875, p.73)

In other passages it can be noted how the evocation of Freire Alemão as a collector-researcher of vegetal species was in tune with the romantic conception of science, so dear to nineteenth century traveler naturalists, and particularly diffused by the formulations of Alexander von Humboldt, for whom the 'feeling of nature' (*Naturgefühl*) was as legitimate a manner of scientific comprehension of the physical world as its empirical observation.<sup>20</sup> In effect Saldanha da Gama did not hesitate to recognize in Brazilian botany, in addition to notable intellectual gifts, "the love that wrapped around the heart when feeling the multiple impressions received from the great world which organized bodies inhabited...". Despite the difficulties in sifting through diversified Brazilian flora, at the moment when the naturalist came across a new vegetal species or one that was still unknown in the scientific annals, "the soul dilated with contentment, the happiness of the wise man at the peak of the exercise of intelligence spread on its semblance" (Gama, 1875, p.73).

#### ATTRIBUTES OF THE HISTORIAN

It was not fortuitous that in nineteenth century Brazil, men of letters and science shared the institutional spaces dedicated to the task of inquiring about the national past. In this context, in the words of Temístocles Cezar, "being a poet or romantic was not always incompatible with being a historian; and moving from one genre to another was an option, not an intellectual impossibility."<sup>21</sup> Nevertheless, it became evident that an *ethos* was emerging which would define in a more specific form those who dedicated themselves to the writing of history. In this case, as Rodrigo Turin has demonstrated, a triad of attributes of the figure of the historian –sincerity, scientificness and utility – delineated historiographic practice in relation to its most direct links with the national project that it was being attempted to create.<sup>22</sup>

Notwithstanding some variations, the formula which appeared to define the motives for the celebrity in the career of letters in the strict sense was based on qualifications as blunt as those which distinguished the important figures of Brazilian science. Some of these common places can be found in the speech made in memory of Joaquim Manoel de Macedo and Domingos José Gonçalves

de Magalhães, both of whom died in 1882. According to Franklin Távora, the remembrance of the lives of these eminent members was confused with the praise of the literature of Brazil. Elected successor to the position of orator of the Institute held by Macedo, Távora did not spare words to elevate the former to the 'founder' of the Brazilian novel, recognizing in the author of *A moreninha* 'a vastness of talent', the decisive influence of 'romantic renewal' in his choice of the 'path of letters.' Both could be nominated the founders of Brazilian literary nationality, at the moment when the lettered genres were still subject to supposedly universal aesthetic precepts. Like all the servants of the state after independence, performance in the literary arena could not be exempt from the influx of politics, as the experience of Macedo in front the Liberal Party's newspaper, *A Nação*, shows. In this field the nature of the literati, more affected to the 'domain of the imagination' was not compatible with faction disputes. In relation to the political trajectory of the dead orator, Távora concluded:

He was a member of the legislative assembly of his province and a deputy ... however, what these facts indicate is that in our land not only agitation on the streets, but also the serene work in the office, is the force that goes to the parliament and to the councils of the crown.<sup>23</sup>

Then how can one situate both literati's relation in the study of history conducted by the members of IHGB? Admitted as a member in 1845, Macedo abandoned medicine to dedicate himself to literary activities and to be nominated afterwards professor of history and chorography of the Imperial College D. Pedro II. Works such as *Compendio de História do Brasil* and *Anno Biographico Brasileiro* were written, according to Távora, at a time in which the 'imagination of the writer' began to make space for 'his intelligence and the examination of the past.' In the case of Gonçalves de Magalhães other circumstances placed the poet on the path of history, specially his nomination as secretary of the government of Maranhão, as a member of the group designated to pacify the province during the Balaiada Revolt. This was when, taking advantage of the 'documents, information and news' that the position gave him, he wrote the *Memória Histórica* about those events, a work awarded a prize by the Institute in 1847.

During the elegy of the celebrated members of the Institute, Franklin Távora did not forget to manifest his discontent with what he described as a posture of disdain of the new generations in relation to their predecessors in the field of letters. What was needed was to recognize in those 'revolutionaries of

yesteryear' the debt for 'a brilliant evolution' without which, the new orator of the Institute argued "we would not have the [revolution] that has not started because, as you know, due to the law of historical fatalism, the epochs are tied one to the other as a flower is tied to its delicate stem.'

What Távora identified as a 'scientific spirit' highlighted in the 'province of letters' became an underlying theme to the reflections in the final decades of the nineteenth century on how the history of Brazil should be written. In a speech given in 1883, he alluded to the possible forms available to historian to narrate and explain events:

When considering history, there are various ways to deal with it, various methods to write it. One person accepts the facts in their real expression, whether they are complete or mutilated; another explains them after decomposing or recomposing them; others complete them with conjecture of logic. Tacitus belongs to the first school, Thierry to the second, Guizot and Macaulay to the third.

When dealing with the history of Brazil, as in this Institute, it is licit to ask the historian: which theory do you follow – that of Martius, of Buckle, of the adherents of Spencer, the disciples of Comte? How to express such diverse opinions without sacrificing any of them?

I infer from here a law: the literary tribune, when it represents the result of collective suffrage, always needs to have more the character of an individuality than that of complexity.<sup>24</sup>

The problem related to the best form of presenting the knowledge of the past was related to the historian's choices of the diversity of method and theories for writing history. The various models that could be used for the historiographic enterprise were, nonetheless, not incompatible with the ambition of scientific status for historical studies. The possibility of historical investigation reaching the level of modern scientific disciplines was inescapably based on the reaffirmation of impartiality as the emblematic attribute of the historian. It was in this way that in 1897 the Institute's vice-president, Manoel Francisco Correia, classified history as a 'science,' since

it [history] does not dispense with observation, the grouping of facts that follow each other; but its principal merit is also in penetrating, with an invisible operation of thought, the logical nexus that holds them, or in other words, in

discovering the evolutionary march of civilization in the confusion of events that revolutionize, cause tumults and trample over things.

Impartiality is its distinctive mark. With equal and inflexible justice it exalts and brings down empires and republics, aristocracies, theocracies, oligarchies: its worship is of good and virtue.

The scrupulous historian, the one who inspires himself, has an immense power to bring down on those whose lips are muted forever the admiration or stigma of posterity.<sup>25</sup>

The observation of the fact for the understanding of its development was the procedure that approximated history to the other natural sciences, but the absolute criteria of its scientificness did not reside there. As the guardian of the memory of the deeds of great men, the historian fulfilled an important function for history, which due to its continual march would also be a sphere of justice for humanity.

While the members of the Institute were making great efforts to ensure its survival under the recently proclaimed Republic, Manoel Francisco Correia concluded his speech evoking the motto that had been in force since it had been founded, that in the institution there was no space for explicit political dissent, only for the communion of nobles and disinterested efforts, aimed at intellectual exercise.

The reiteration of this principle perhaps created within the Institute, an environment of friendly coexistence that went beyond the field of sometimes irreconcilable political factionalism, shown in the different notions of the investigation and writing of history, proclaimed in the speeches and work of its members. Notwithstanding the heterogeneity of opinions that circulated there, the concept that was unanimously shared was what appeared, in a laconic form, in the words of its vice-president cited above. The preparation of historical knowledge was based on the tasks of historians alone, who were expected to unveil the logical nexus of events and the evolutionary march of civilization.

In the biographies and posthumous elegies analyzed here we can find delineated the intellectual qualities and skills necessary for the historical profession. Nevertheless, in the initial decades of the twentieth century the profile of the historian remained open, “being the object of debates and disputes in respect to both the type of cultural product that characterized its *métier* (in terms of its diversity and hierarchy) and the type of professional and social activity that were appropriate to developed to be recognized as such” (Gomes, 2009, p.26). Despite

being aimed at the fabrication of a specific type of knowledge, historiographic activities covered a diversity of duties and challenges to be fulfilled with the consciousness of the performance of a *mission*. At the same time the authority of those who assumed the responsibilities of historian was no longer just a literary question, rather it came to be based on a series of operations that came to confer 'scientific' credibility on knowledge of the past. In summary, due to their dual condition of being men of letters and of science, writers of history were responsible for exercising what the president of IHGB, Olegário Herculano de Aquino e Castro, designated as the 'so elevated and so useful genre of literature', aiming at enriching the future with the experiences of the past through the registration with 'conscious impartiality' of the most notable facts in the life of the nation and the deeds of the most influential men.<sup>26</sup>

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 42, 1879, p.257.

<sup>2</sup> The Statutes of IHGB allowed for four types of members: effective, corresponding, honorary and presidential. A few years later, in 1890, an amendment authored by Joaquim Norberto de Sousa Silva created the class of meritorious members, with prove of 'literary sufficiency' being dispenses with. This was a type of survival strategy after the creation of the republican regime. Cf. Guimarães. *Da Escola Palatina ao Silogeu*: Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (1889-1938). Rio de Janeiro: Museu da República, 2007, pp.24-26.

<sup>3</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 42, 1879, pp.263-264.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Koselleck, *Futuro passado: contribuição à semântica dos tempos históricos*. Rio de Janeiro: Contraponto; Ed. PUC-Rio, 2006, pp.233-246.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Oliveira, Maria da Glória. Traçando vidas de brasileiros distintos com escrupulosa exatidão: biography, erudição e escrita da história na *Revista do Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro* (1839-1850). *História*, São Paulo: Ed. Unesp, vol. 26, no. 1, pp.154-178, 2007. Available at: [www.scielo.br/](http://www.scielo.br/).

<sup>6</sup> Gomes, Ângela de Castro. *A República, a História e o IHGB*. Belo Horizonte: Argvmentvm, 2009, p.26.

<sup>7</sup> O Visconde de São Leopoldo. Esboço biographico pelo Sr. Francisco Ignácio Marcondes Homem de Mello. *RIHGB*, Tomo 23, p.132, 1860.

<sup>8</sup> In an instigating work on historians' autobiographies, Jeremy Popkin analyzes how the theme of vocation is dealt with, especially in the writings of Edward Gibbon and Henry James, to justify dedication to the task of writing history. Cf. Popkin, Jeremy D. Choosing History: the issue of vocation in historians' autobiographies. In: *History, historians & autobiography*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005, pp.120-150.

<sup>9</sup> O Visconde de São Leopoldo, cit., 1860, p.133.

<sup>10</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 42, 1849, p.555.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Turin, Rodrigo. Uma nobre, difícil e útil empresa: o ethos do historian oitocentista. *História da Historiografia*, no. 2, pp.12-28, 2009. Available at [www.ichs.ufop.br/rhh/index.php/revista/index](http://www.ichs.ufop.br/rhh/index.php/revista/index).

<sup>12</sup> Biographia dos Brasileiros Distinctos por letras, armas, virtudes, etc. Sebastião da Rocha Pitta. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 12, 1849, p.259.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p.261.

<sup>14</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 41, Parte II, 1878, pp.480-481, emphasis added.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p.486.

<sup>16</sup> Pinheiro, Joaquim Caetano Fernandes. As batalhas dos Guararapes. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 29, 1866, pp.309-310, emphasis added.

<sup>17</sup> Azevedo, Manoel Duarte Moreira de. O dia 9 de janeiro de 1822. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 31, 1868, p.33, emphasis added.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Guimarães, Manoel Luiz Salgado. Reinventando a tradição: sobre antiquariato e escrita da história. *Humanas*, Porto Alegre: IFCH-UFRGS, vol. 23, no. 1/2, pp.111-143, 2000.'

<sup>19</sup> Gama, José de Saldanha da. Biographia do botânico brasileiro José Marianno da Conceição Veloso. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 31, II, pp.137-305, 1868; Biographia do botânico brasileiro Frei Leandro do Sacramento. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 32, pp.181-230, 1869; Biographia e Apreciação dos trabalhos do botânico brasileiro Francisco Freire Alemão. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 38, pp.51-126, 1875.

<sup>20</sup> In relation to *Naturphilosophie* and the romantic concept of science, cf. Gusdorf, G. *Le romantisme II. L'homme et la nature*. Paris: Payot, 1984-1993, pp.359-369.

<sup>21</sup> Cezar, Temístocles. Livros de Plutarco: biography e escrita da história no Brasil do século XIX. *Métis: história & cultura*, vol. 2, no. 3, Jan.-Jun. 2003, p.74.

<sup>22</sup> Turin, Rodrigo. Uma nobre, difícil e útil empresa: o ethos do historian oitocentista. *História da Historiografia*, no. 2, pp.12-28, Mar. 2009.

<sup>23</sup> Discurso na sessão magna de encerramento pelo orador interino Franklin Távora. *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 45, 1882, p.516.

<sup>24</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 43, 1883, p.658.

<sup>25</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 60, 1897, p.419.

<sup>26</sup> *Revista do IHGB*, Tomo 55, 1892, p.427.