



discussioni

History in Latin America (1968-2008)*

Jurandir Malerba

1. INTRODUCTION

THIS paper sums up a broader analysis I have made on the dominant trends of historical writing in Latin America since the epistemological breaking of mid 1960's, when post-structuralism blossomed in the Humanities and Social Sciences of the hegemonic centers of Western culture. Its gradual reception with relative chronological delay in Latin American intellectual environments partially explains why economic and social history still remained for almost two decades as the most important historiographical fields amongst the historians of the region until the mid 1980's. By this time, the vertiginous flow of new thematic and theoretical trends influenced by the so-called "cultural turn" had begun to change Latin American historiographical scenarios as well.¹

Some basic elements for the understanding of the dynamics of Latin American historiography in the period are, on the one hand, the context of the paradigmatic transition itself and, on the other hand, the relationships that the different poles of intellectual production (and, in particular, of historiographical production) of our region have with the culturally hegemonic centers. Special emphasis is given to the North American intellectual and institutional influence upon the countries of the south of the continent.

Methodologically speaking, due to the size of the subject of analysis, cuts had to be made. Mapping a general frame of contemporary Latin American historiog-

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¹ This research has started in 2004, due to an invitation made by the publishers of the last volume of *História Geral da América Latina*, que trata de *Teoria y metodología en la Historia de América Latina*. (Paris; Madrid: Unesco; TROTTA, 2006, vol. 9 da HGAL).

raphy could result in a typology or a static portrayal of no more than a descriptive classification of the continent's historiographical trends. It seemed more opportune to me to present such trends in a historical perspective; or rather, to review its trajectory in the last the four decades, departing from an interpretative frame that could make it possible to perceive the process of change of this historiography along this same period. Here, two points are paramount. First, the broad historical context of societal and epistemological transformations in the 1960's, within a set of crises of Western culture's major values. The revolutionary uprisings of 1968 are the noisy expression of such radical changes. In this sense, the 1960's shall be taken as a true point of inflection, by the way, as they are for all contemporary history, in a long-run perspective.¹ In this direction, my argument is that the history of Latin American historiography in the period under discussion is marked by a radical paradigmatic transition, that led to the abandonment of holistic and synthetic oriented historical narratives based upon great scientific and explanatory theories (such as the so-called dependency theories), in favor of new analytical modalities of historical writing, centered in subjects constructed in reduced scale. The years of 1968 and 1989 are two major symbolic moments of this movement.

A second cardinal point for the understanding of Latin American historiography's development is the tight and ambiguous relations that it has had with other cultural and historiographical poles over the decades and specifically in the key historical quadrant. First, however, it was necessary to review, though too rapidly, the state of art of Latin American historiography before the rupture of the 1960's.

Still from a methodological point of view two comments are necessary. My objective here of drawing trends leads me inevitably to proposing generalizations that are a resource of the reasoning and an argumentative strategy. Naturally, many of such generalizations are more properly valid to one country than to another, to one tradition than to another. It is also true because of the differentiated rhythms and trajectories of each one of these national historiographies.

On the other hand, the magnitude of the Latin American historiographical output in last the forty years makes impossible to include in the analysis all the innumerable and magnificent fields of research in the area, what imposes other inevitable cuts. The criterion of inclusion rests on the ample representativeness of determined fields in the period in focus, for the characterization of that which I understand to be the major trends of Latin American historiography. Thus, after presenting a general picture of paradigmatic transition – and its consequences for the Latin American historiography –, the vast and diversified fields of social history and the economic history are analyzed as the most representative of what characterizes our production in 1970's and 1980's; and the “new” cultural and political history for 1980's and 1990's.

¹ No matter how hard the leaders of that movement themselves want to deny it today. Cf. Lichfield. Ex-anarchist visits 'enemy' Sarkozy, «The Independent», Londres, 17 de Abril de 2008, on the just-launched book where German Daniel Cohn-Bendit, “the red”, one of the most prominent leaders of 1968 in France, denies any importance to the movement and “practically asks for excuses” for his performance in it.

I have plain recognition of the high degree of arbitrariness involved in these classifications and chronologies that I have adopted here only for heuristic and explanatory purposes. The criterion of inclusion will be doubtless much more easy to justify than that of exclusion, so I have to recognize the impossibility of contemplating in this essay fundamental trends with solid tradition within the historiographical production of the region such as the history of ideas and the intellectual history; administrative, diplomatic history and the history of international relations; the history of church and of religions; military history; demographic, urban and agrarian history; and others, more recent, but no less vigorous, such as the history of sport and environmental history. The fields that I analyze will be enough, however, to offer a sketch of the general trends of change in the conceptions of the historiographical labor in Latin America. Thus, after presenting a general picture of the paradigmatic transition, the vast and diversified fields of **social history** and economic history are analyzed as the most representative fields for Latin American historiography in the 1970's and 1980's; and the "new" **political and cultural history** for the 1980's and 1980's.

1. 1. *Before the 1960's*

For a better understanding of what has happened to Latin American historiography from the 1960's on, it may be appropriate to glimpse the scenario as it was before that starting point. Before the 1960's – and even after this, as demonstrated by a few historical studies –, a type of history that could be called "traditional", or either, non professional, produced for self-taught intellectuals was the rule. Such amateur historians came from the most diverse formations, but also linked to the institutions of education or traditional clubs such as historical societies and institutes (Matute 1974).

Therefore, a prevalence of state-centered history, official history (when not an officious one), apologetic for the governing elites, when not parochial and biographical, was the rule until late 1960's.¹ Although incipient, the renewal took place outside of the "academe". Self-taught intellectuals, sociologists, jurists and so forth, people like Caio Prado Jr, Sergio Buarque de Holanda and Raymundo Faoro in Brazil, Mario Gongora in Chile, Renato Rosaldo and Daniel Cosío Villegas in Mexico, amongst innumerable peers in all Latin American countries, had produced a very creative and rigorous history comparable to the best historiography from "central" countries like France or United States of America. But the rule was the numerical predominance of authors and works one can label "traditional".²

¹ In one of the most ambitious recent efforts for surveying Brazilian historiography, Carlos Fico and Ronald Polito, when evaluating the production of their country in the 80's, have observed the strong presence of political history, which did not present, however, important thematic or methodological renewals by that time. Fico & Polito 1992.

² Cf. FALCON 2004a; FALCON 2004b. Some pioneering historiographical surveys made in the 60's and 70's, many of which promoted by the Hispanic American Historical Review, have confirmed this traditional profile of early Latin American historical production. Cf. SKIDMORE 1976, STEIN 1960, GRIFFITH 1960, PEREZ CABRERA 1962, TEPASKE, 1975, LEMMO 1977, but also CARDOZO 1987, COLMENARES 1987, POSADA-CARBÓ 1996. By the way, this most useful kind of project of mapping of the "state of the art" on determined region or subject has become scarce due to the same expansion of the field. If in the 60's this kind of annual reports were possible, today similar works will depend on collective and coordinate efforts to reach satisfactory results.

1. 2. *Intellectual and historical context of the “paradigmatic transition”*

The 1960's were marked by a drastic acceleration of historical time that influenced in all forms of historical being, making and thinking. This “turn” is a symptom of a wider cultural change experienced in the Western world, dramatically disclosed in the proper conception of the goals and the limits of Social Sciences and the Humanities. It also demanded a critical reevaluation of the current scientific rationality.¹ In an extremely turbulent political context characterized by visceral objections to European colonialism, to the different expressions of economic and cultural imperialism, by the vertiginous propagation of mass-media and by an increasing process of shortening of distances and spaces, the old beliefs of Western reason raised since the Enlightenment were radically contradicted.² Macro-historical and macro-social models based upon the State, the market or the antagonism of social classes could no longer explain the yearnings and challenges of the present. This pessimistic vision of the course and of the quality of modern Western civilization played a central role within the “new cultural history”.

It is not necessary here to search for a precise definition of post-modern, the current mode of historical thinking heir of post-structuralism in the 60's. One once defined it as melting pot of different theories, thesis and claims that had its origin in the modern Germanic philosophy, namely from Nietzsche extending to Heidegger – and in the adaptation of this philosophy by some French intellectuals, particularly the mentors of post-structuralist theories of language since the 1960's such as Michel Foucault and Roland Barthes.

In a broad sense, post-modernism argues that, in the last decades, Western society has passed through a change from a modern age towards a “post-modern” age. This would be characterized by the final denial of Enlightenment heritage, particularly its belief in Reason and Progress, and by an insistent incredulity in the great meta-narratives, since these would impose a sense and a direction on History, particularly the notion that human history is a process of universal emancipation. In the place of these meta-narratives one finds now a multiplicity of discourses and language games, the questioning of the nature of knowledge and the dissolution of the idea of truth.³

The impact of the post-modern proposals in the theory of history, and more specifically, in the theory of historiography, was huge.⁴ A paradigmatic shift in the writ-

¹ WALLERSTEIN 1997, SANTOS 1995, IGGERS 1997.

² CARDOSO 1999; also DOSSE 1991, FERRY & RENAUT 1985.

³ Theoretical postulates for Post-modern impuginations had been launched, firstly, in LYOTARD 1989 (originally 1979) and systemized for the field of history in ANKERSMIT 1994. For a serious evaluation of meta-narratives and the “end of the history” that it excites, see CALLINICOS 1995

⁴ As I have said elsewhere about the contribution of post-modernism: “In the field of theory of history more than in historiography, post-modernism contributed effectively to knock down old dogmas, some ironed postulates that had survived to the destruction of a certain conception of history heir of Enlightenment and the scientific thinking still effective in many important intellectual environments during the 70's. (...) However, in spite this iconoclastic attitude, post-modernism have little contributed for the theory of history and historiography. It has brought advance by denying and knocking down, but very little it has placed back”. MALERBA, *Introdução: teoria e história da historiografia*, in MALERBA 2006

ing of history took place with post-structuralism and continued with post-modernism and supported itself on two axiomatic postulates: its conception of language and the negation of realism. The first one directly contributes to the development of the *linguistic turn* and post-structuralist negations that led to the appropriations that the first structuralists, like Levi-Strauss, had made of Swiss linguist Fernand Saussure's work. One is dealing now with a new idealistic linguistic philosophy that affirms that language constitutes and defines reality for human minds, v. g., that no extra-linguistic reality exists independently of our representations of this reality in language or discourse. Such linguistic idealism considers language as a system of signs related one to another only internally, within an endless process of meaning building that can never reach a final sense.¹ The great dissemination of this conception of language in recent years is a clear trace of what is called the *linguistic turn*² in history and other social sciences. Thus, post-modernism denies both the capacity of language or discourse to refer to an independent world of facts and things, as much the final determination – or the “resolvability” – of the textual sense. From there on, it also denies the possibility of objective knowledge and truth as utopian goals for any inquiry.³

The abandonment of totality as utopian horizons is one of the supports upon which the eclectic wave of thought baptized as post-modernism stands. In a word, according to Brazilian historian Ciro Cardoso (1999), “history” no longer exist, but histories “of” and “towards” specific groups defined by given positions, by the “places from where one speaks”. This dispersion of the emitters of discourse culminated in the proposal of a history for the women, a history for the blacks, a history for the homosexuals, a history constructed around ecological interests, a history for the young e the old, a history defined in relation to the diverse ethnic or national groups and so forth. Such attitudes are particularly present in the historical studies in the 1990's in the United States, in Europe, and also in Latin America.

1. 3. *Latin America's relationships with hegemonic Western cultural poles*

Besides the paradigmatic transition that blossomed in Europe in the 1960's and landed in Latin America in the mid 1970's, a second cardinal point for the understanding of contemporary Latin American history of historiography is grounded in the decisive relations that this region kept and keeps with other cultural poles. It is assumed that Latin American historiography didn't appear nor develop itself alone, but that it is intimately connected to the major matrices of Western historical thought (Sato 2006). A fundamental element of Latin American history, this connection reveals the dilemma of its chronic subordination present in this relationship. The burden of colonial heritage that Latin America's peoples bear lays down deep roots in the history and the culture of the region that political independence of the 19th century

¹ CARDOSO 1998 (reproduced in CARDOSO 2005). ALSO IGGERS 1997, p. 118 ss.

² PULINO, *Richard Rorty e a questão das representações em filosofia*, in CARDOSO & MALERBA 2000.

³ Literature on the “post-modern” phenomenon is immense. One shall include in it RÜSEN 1993; ANKERSMIT 1994; TOPOLSKY 1994; BAILYN 1982; STONE & SPIEGEL 1992; Pieters 2000. A critical appraisal to anti-realism in MALERBA 2007.

only partly overcome. This is a starting point for the understanding of Latin American culture and historiography.

Particularly for the case of the relations of the United States of America towards Latin Americans, it is common among investigators, even North American ones, to perceive a certain “pragmatism” dictating research interests on Latin America themes. Distinguished North-American historian Thomas Skidmore reviewed the trajectory of the “issue” Latin America in the American academe. He points out the relative non-interest that the region engendered among American intellectuals in general, and historians in particular, during the 20th century. This picture only started to change with the advent of Cuban revolution, when millions of dollars suddenly became available for research. Only after Fidel Castro, who can be taken as the true patron of Latin-American studies in the United States, that societies such as Latin America Studies Association (LASA) and the National Directory of Latin Americanists (NDLA) were then created there.¹ One shall remember that the major issue of research sponsored by North American foundations during the 1960’s was militarism in Latin America, as race and gender issues became priority during the 1990’s on.

Another important aspect to keep in mind concerning the relations of Latin American academic community with the hegemonic centers of Western culture, particularly with the United States, is the fact that many Latin American historians have been educated in North American institutions, both as undergraduates and as graduate students.

1. 4. *New subjects of research*

The current proliferation of subjects of historical inquiry amongst Latin American historians, on the one hand mirrors the general fragmentation peculiar to the phase of paradigmatic transition initiated in the late 1960’s, but on the other hand shows the cultural dependence of the Latin American intellectual community on the canons produced elsewhere – namely in the countries of central economy of Western world capitalist system.² In 1985, American historian John Johnson argued that the really significant development in the writing of modern Latin American history in

¹ An exception worth of note is The Conference on Latin American History (CLAH) created in 1926. Thanks Hendrik Kraay for this observation. Cf SKIDMORE 1998. Also ROSEMBERG 1984; GROVER 1988:350.

² Europe has since always had Latin America as a great area of influence, even intellectually speaking. However, this influence was clearly supplanted by North American ancestry in the region since Second World War. This ancestry not necessarily was directly imposed to the region. One shall remember that Europe was destroyed during the war and its reconstruction was benefited not only by American dollars there canalized to by the Marshall Plan, but also for the massive arrival of historians and American social scientists to the new centers of research then arisen everywhere, under the auspices of UNESCO. François Dosse (1992: 105 ss) states that if France did not have more than twenty centers of research in social sciences in 1955, ten years later one would count out more than three hundred. The study on the “interchange” of ideas between the European and the North American intelligentsia would be such a challenging subject of inquiry. It is enough to remember, for example, that if post-modernism was re-elaborated and found room in North America to grow up, with authors as Haydn White, its theoretical bases were eminently French ones: Barthes, Derrida, Deleuse, Lacan, Foucault.

the United States since the 1960's had as its distinctive mark the engagement of the investigators with an ampler set of new questions intimately related with daily life of men and women. Among these new questions one would find urban history, the increasing interest in the history of the "dispossessed", the "black experience" (and race issues) and slavery (in new approaches such as microanalysis), the social history of labor and, particularly, the dramatic growth of women's history ("practically a non-existent theme as a topic of research before the 70's"). Other subjects would gain academic prestige after Johnson's analysis, such as the sexuality-oriented studies (gays and lesbians) and environmental issues.¹

Ten years ago, the current Secretary of the Brazilian Studies Association and expert on Latin America history Marshall Eakin could already confirm previous predictions. According to Eakin, it can be said that during the 1980's social history dominated, as well as the "new" cultural history in the 1990's, when the study of non-elite groups such as the enslaved, women, Indians, workers and peasants saw a renewal. Post-modernism's influence, the so-called "linguistic turn", and post-colonial studies with focus on subordinate groups had appeared as preponderant approaches then (Eakin 1998). Besides, the new subjects in Latin America studies derived from contemporaries' attitudes and social interests of the so-called "politically correct" reflect the yearnings and demands of the researcher's culture (a foreign) and not necessarily the demands of the people under investigation. The unquestioned reception of canons and problems exported by the powerful North American academic community suggests the gradual and surreptitious imposition of values peculiar of liberal social-democracy that the United States exports to the world. The high costs of this imposing model can be found in Latin America politics in the 1960's as much as today in the American invasion against Iraq people.

For example, the subtle and vertiginous growth of studies on slavery in Latin America by North American researchers ("a virgin field until the mid 1960's" according to Eakin) was practically an echo of the movement for civil rights – and, later, of the so called "affirmative action" – in the United States, where the legacy of *Jim Crow*² remains an open wound. However, if we can agree that such goals are noble and that a degree of engagement of the students with their subjects is even desirable, such type of motivation, although highly relevant for the Americans, easily will become ethnocentric, anachronistic and thus irrelevant to the country and region taken as a "subject of study".

It is not the goal here to judge the merit of the intrinsic value of those themes (as race, gender, sexuality and so forth); each one of them absolutely pertinent

¹ JOHNSON 1985:757ss. Also SKIDMORE 1998:113 ss; EAKIN 1998:550-561.

² Jim Crow had constituted, from 1876 on, the legal base for discrimination against blacks in the States of South, when even an attitude as a student to pass a school book to another one of a different "race" was then forbidden. In Alabama, no hospital could hire a white nurse if a black man was interned there. Bus stations had to have separate waiting rooms and ticket-offices for each race. Buses had also to have separate seats. And restaurants would have to provide at least seven feet high separations for blacks and whites. These Laws of Jim Crow were distinct of the Black Codes (1800-1866), that had restricted Afro-American freedoms and civil rights. School segregation sponsored by the State was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 1954 in the case *Brown v. Board of Education*. All the other laws of Jim Crow had been revoked by the *Civil Rights Act* de 1964. Cf. AYERS 1992 e BARNES 1983.

and relevant in itself. I just want to underline the fact that those issues have arrived to Latin America “from outside”, as urgent subjects typical of developed liberal societies. Developed societies that no longer have the same structural challenges to overcome, as those that characterize all Latin American nations as the result of historical circumstances that the so called “dependence theories” had started to denounce and to study since the 1960’s, *vis-à-vis* the a-symmetrical economic relations with the central economies and, resulting from those, the unjust forms of insertion of these same Latin American nations in the world market, as raw material exporters and industrialized products and technology importers. Structural problems ensue from those conditions. One could point out questions such as the historical concentration of landed property; the constitution of economic and political hegemonic elites that perpetuate themselves in power; the chronic unequal distribution of income, resulting in low standards of education, health, habitation; difficulties for accessing formal labor and knowledge etc. In other words, the different forms of social exclusion for the immense majority of the Latin American population. These structural questions no rarely are neglected in favor of other topics that enjoy higher academic status, have greater penetration of media, and offer greater possibilities of institutional development, such as access to scholarships and academic places.

In short, the cultural (and academic) relations between the hegemonic powers and the countries of Latin America are marked by what Brazilian sociologist Florestan Fernandes once (1967) characterized as the imposition of an *agenda*, which as a rule scarcely included the real interests and necessities of the people under investigation.¹

2. THE 1970’S AND 1980’S: ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL HISTORY

Economic history and social history are consolidated historiographical fields, with their own problems, objects, and theoretical and methodological tools. However, as much in Latin America as in Europe three or four decades before, these fields of history had appeared closely tied, as the banner of critical historians in the effort to surpass the methodic history, or the wrongly called “positivist” history, then hegemonic. And although both have developed following their own steps, the intersection points in their course are innumerable. Labor history is perhaps the most emblematic of these crossing points.

In Latin America, as well as all over the world, Marxist and the French Annalist traditions nourished economic and social history. Economic history and social history — or what some insist on calling socio-economic history — inquired into slavery to perceive it under the prism of the economic structures and its dynamic, but also the familial, sexual, cultural relations and the resistance of enslaved people. The working classes were investigated as a gear to put into motion the capitalist machine during the process of industrialization, but here also the formation of identities derived from the co-living spaces, the communities, the factory, the political resistance are valuable subjects of inquiry for Latin American historiography. Today, as we look the last three decades of historical production in the region, we can say

¹ Cf. DIEGUES JR 1967:3-5; FERNANDES 1967: 19.

that economic and social history was the one and sole field where Latin American historiography advanced most. During the interval between the two world wars, due to motives we cannot explore here, that period is marked by a clear retreat of French and German cultural influences before the geopolitical and cultural North American advance; in South America, in contrast, the cultural influence of Europe remained continuous and important, even before and after the outbreak of the First World War (1914-1918).

In this historiographical context, it is widely known that Lucien Febvre always manifested his fascination with this “privileged field of studies” that was South America, as he stated in 1929. When the *Annales* school still had only a marginal presence in the French historiographical scene, important ties between the *Annales* and some distinguished exponents of Latin American historiography and Social Sciences had begun to develop. A well-known example of this approach was the presence between 1935 and 1937 of Fernand Braudel as one of the first History of the Civilizations chair of the newly established College of Philosophy, Sciences and Letters of the University of São Paulo. Braudel’s presence there laid down deep roots into the Brazilian historiography. The graduate program of São Paulo University was pioneering in Brazil, a true matrix that formed practically the totality of Brazilian historians from the 1960’s to the 1990’s.¹ It is not a mere coincidence that economic history and social history comprises the two major fields of research of USP’s History Graduate Studies Program, since its beginnings.²

An important parenthesis that one must add when referring to economic history in Latin America concerns to the so-called “dependence theories”. In the turbulent 1960’s, whereas industrial Western societies were swept by the winds of cultural revolution, in Latin America diverse versions of the most innovative way of conceiving the history and the present situation of this quadrant of the globe were then elaborated. The “theories of the dependence” had begun to be formulated in the 1950’s by intellectuals linked to ECLA (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean – or CEPAL, Comissão Econômica para América Latina) of the United Nations. Its thesis, not that much innovative at all, was that the terms of international trade during 20th century were disadvantageous to exporting nations of primary products, from the “periphery” to the “center” of world economic system; consequently, solution for the problem of underdevelopment of the region would lay on the active persistence of governments in the sense of what Cepal (ECLA) intellectuals called “import-substitution industrialization”.³

The thesis of the so called “developmentism”, that placed all the nations at different moments of an unavoidable evolutive line as underdeveloped, in development

¹ PRADO & CAPELATO 1989; CAPELATO 1995.

² Today they comprise two independent programs of graduation studies in History. To illustrate French ancestry in the formation of USP’s historians, one should remember, for example, the foundation of the most important history journal of the 50’s and 60’s: the «Revista de História». Directed by Eurípedes Simões de Paula, that was Fernand Braudel’s pupil, disciple and later assisting professor, Simões de Paula affirmed the direct filiations of the «Revista de História» with the *Annales* school in his article “Nosso Programa” (1950). On this magazine’s role for Brazilian history and culture see Mota 1980.

³ BERGQUIST 1970; LOVE 1990. Also CUEVA, VILLAMIL e FORTIN 1976, TÚLIO HALPERIN-DONGHI 1982 e RONALD CHILCOTE 1981 e 1990.

or developed, was the basis for liberal economists in the immediate post-Second World War period. It supported itself in three presuppositions that would become central for the new paradigm: first, that the world was divided between central developed nations and underdeveloped peripheral nations; second, that both categories of nations were unavoidably tied within a world economic system in such a way that development and underdevelopment were non-dissociable phenomena; finally, that the trade relations in the world system operated in detriment of underdeveloped nations.¹

However, the explanatory potential of dependency theories was practically emptied by the bombastic cultural revolution of the 1960's, thus aborting the possibilities of advance within of this line of intellectual evolution and killing in the cradle the "new paradigm" before it could develop all its critical and creative potentialities in historical studies – and in the social sciences as a whole. Such phenomena may be explained because dependency theories had blossomed in the 1960's, when the current paradigms in social sciences imploded with the advent of post-structuralism, which resulted in the post-modernism of the 1980's and 1990's. The new paradigms, in turn, decreed the collapse of macro-theories and macro-narratives. Thus, in the context of deep and lengthy fragmentation proper to the context of paradigmatic transition in which we perhaps still find ourselves, the utility, validity and legitimacy of a "macro" social and historical theory – as the theories of the dependence frankly are- lost its interest and its sense for the academic establishment.

The dependency theories had come out in the 1960's under the spur of the Cuban revolution. Throughout Latin America territory these theories played a role of resistance to North American imperialism, not necessarily present in its first formulations. Although not all of them were based exclusively on Marxists grounds, Marxism offered important analysis tools for its spread. At a moment when innumerable military dictatorships come to power over all Latin American territory, Marxism also offered ideological support to sustain resistance. When dependency theories lost force, by the mid 1970's, economic and social history built themselves by mixing Marxism and the lessons of French *Annales* school. This hybrid and typically Latin American new economic History played a central role as a flowing of renewal, thus replacing the old dependency theories.

The presence of French culture in Latin America was particularly important for the development of economic and social history in the 1970's also due to the fact

¹ Cf. SUNKEL 1970, FURTADO 1970, CARDOSO & FALLETO 1969, GUNDER FRANK 1967. In the recent celebration of Cepal's 50 years, Ricardo Bielschowsky had organized an anthology where some of the most representative texts issue by Cepal were rejoined. Among then one should underline Fernando Enrique Cardoso, Stolen Celso, Maria da Conceição Tavares and Raul Prebisch's works. Bielschowsky structured the anthology edition based on four analytical frameworks: the historical-structuralist approach, raised upon "center and periphery" relationships; the international insertion analysis; the internal structural determinants analysis; and the possibilities of state action. It had also been identified five phases in Cepal's thought that demonstrate the historical evolution of the region: the 50's had been marked by industrialization; the following decade, by the reforms destined to eliminate obstacles to industrialization; the 70's, by the reorientation of development possibilities; the 80's, by the overcoming of external indebtedness by means of the adjustment towards growth; finally, the 90's would have been marked by the agenda of "productive transformation with fairness". Cf BIELSCHOWSKY 2000. On Cepal's economic thought, see LORA 1999; LOVE 1996; RODRIGUEZ 1981.

that dozens of important Latin American historians had been exiled to France by the military dictatorships, often financed by North American dollars and trained by North American secret services, as recent scholarship demonstrated (Fico, 2008, 2004, 1997). In Europe, those historians had contact with the best teachings of the *Annales*, on the one hand, and of Marxism, on the other. This world vision nourished not only the historical studies but the proper anti-imperialist resistance in the region. Among innumerable young historians of the 1968 Mexican generation doubly marked by the *Annales* influence and the spread of Marxism we can underline names such as Antonio García de León and Enrique Florescano (Aguirre Rojas 2000). In this same time, innumerable historians and brilliant Brazilian students such as Maria Yedda Linhares, Maria Luiza Marcílio, Kátia de Queiroz Mattoso and Ciro Flamarion Cardoso migrated to France and were trained in the best tradition of social, demographic and economic history in motion in France by that time (Moraes & Rego 2002). This marriage of the Marxism with the *Annales* deeply marked Brazilian historians educated in the late 1960's and the 1970's.

3. THE 1980'S AND THE 90'S: NEW POLITICAL HISTORY AND NEW CULTURAL HISTORY

The fields that better characterize Latin American historiography in this period are the “new political history” and the “new cultural history”. However, before any consideration, it is important to emphasize, in first place, that the studies of economic and social history had not been interrupted overnight; secondly, political history was present in Latin American historiography as an important field of inquiry since at least the 19th century. Political historiography of the 1990's recognizes itself as “new” in opposition to the old state-centered and great men/heroes works for denying this type of apologetic narrative of ruling elites' deeds; and for adopting a new problematic guideline and the theoretical and methodological instruments of what was baptized as the *cultural turn* in Social Sciences and Humanities. The same is valid for the cultural history that has always existed, although with other names and objectives. Ever again, “new” cultural history identifies itself as “new” due to some formulae dictated by the paradigmatic post-structuralist breaking.

“New” political history

In early 1990's, the renewal of this field first started in Europe (particularly in France) in the previous decade reached Latin America. One now talked about a “new political history”, reinvigorated because of the intense contact with cultural history, in which the concept of “representation” became paramount.¹ In spite of the plurality of approaches, theoretical and methodological references and the variety of objects, we can identify the existence of a new topography in the field of political history, characterized by the predominance of representation systems and their relation with social life, the nature of power, and the exercise of political powers. This new topography could be explained by the direct influence of trends of thinking

¹ A book-manifesto of this trend very much popular among Brazilian historians is the anthology edited by Remond 1989. See also NOIRIEL 1989 e BALMAN 1989.

such as structuralism and post-structuralism, and of the opening of Latin American historiography to contemporary branches of political philosophy, sociology, and anthropology. All this is true for Brazil. I do not have similar analyses for the other Latin American countries, but an impressionistic perception makes me believe that an analogous historiographical movement also happened in the region.

Since the late 1970's social movements and minority groups attracted great interest in Brazil, which can be attributed to the moment of re-democratization and the sprouting of political parties with original characteristics. In international scale, the theme of Revolution which was central in the political debates since the Russian Revolution started to be gradually substituted by the theme of democracy. In Brazil and in Latin American countries that had lived a similar experience this phenomenon is connected to the process of exhaustion of the military regimes and the political opening that followed it.¹

An important parenthesis here concerns to the permanent intellectual submission of the Latin American historiography to foreign agendas. If open-mindedness and equal dialogue between peers with foreign historiographies are a true imperative for the qualitative growth of Latin American history, the role of "model importers" leads to the hindrance of its creative capacity. Brazilian historians M. H. Capelato and E. Dutra have made a deep research on the arrival of "representations" and the "new political history" in Brazil in the 1990's and they have observed the clear hegemony of a foreign literature as theoretical substratum for local production. Those authors checked out over 200 PhD theses to find out a set of authors massively present in Brazilian researches. Historians as Jacques le Goff, Roger Chartier, Peter Burke, Bronislaw Baczko; Michel Vovelle; Michel de Certeau; Pierre Bourdieu; Raoul Girardet; Natalie Davis, Robert Darnton, Peter Burke, Eric Hobsbawm, E. P. Thompson; Richard Graham, Stanley Stein, Thomas Skidmore, Stuart Schwarz; Jean Starobinski, Maurice Agulhon are listed amongst the most quoted authors. Michel Foucault Pierre Bourdieu, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt; Pierre Francastel; Clifford Geertz; Roland Barthes; Cornelius Castoriadis; Georges Balandier; Claude Lefort; Pierre Ansart; Maurice Halbwach; Norbert Elias, Mikhail Bakhtin and Ernest Cassirer are the most quoted theoretical supports imported from others areas.

This research field on the History of the political representations articulates projects related to the collective representations and expressed by means of ideas, ideologies, imaginary, symbols, myths, utopias, spectacles of the power (civic festivals and commemorations, rituals, liturgies, parades). One strong presence of works directed toward the studies of political culture that contemplates issues concerned to public and private spheres, citizenship, rights, identities, nation, is also noticed. One can also observe the strong incidence of works that articulate culture and politics, by incorporating objects of other areas and by approaching history to other fields, such as literature, music, arts, architecture, cinema, and theater.²

¹ Ana Maria Burmester has verified this phenomenon of the emptying of the interest in the subject of the revolution in her research on the historiography produced at the University of São Paulo in the 70's and 80's. Cf. BURMESTER 1997.

² Some notorious examples of this renewed political historiography in Brazil, see SOUZA 1999; SCHWARCZ 1998; RIBEIRO 1995; NEVES 2003, FICO 1997.

3. 2. Cultural History

The arrival of new themes and characters to investigators' agenda from the 70's can be understood as one of clearest effects of 1968 on Western historiography. A distinctive mark of this cultural revolution, that deeply affected the modes of historical thinking and writing in the following decades, is the so called "irruption of present in history"; by means of this irruption, present time will disclose itself in historiography with greater force, by breaking through the ruling rigid division between past and present and inscribing present time, contemporaneity, actuality as objects of historical research. It can be seen in the sprouting of many important subjects in the last three decades, under the sign of the so called Historical Anthropology; this, also known as Anthropological History (or "mentalities", in France), such as privacy, intimacy, sexuality, the history of the women, children, family, madness, delinquents, popular culture, race, gender, environmental issues and so forth as prominent subjects.

Another face of this same cultural movement is visible in the new expressions of social movements, now also pulverized. Such a plurality is also noticed in the new social movements' demands, no longer economic or political, but now diversified into feminists, pacifists, ecologists, urban, anti-racists, ethnic, communitarian demands that arose in the context of post-1968 social struggles.¹ International historiography in general and Latin American in particular were not indifferent to that movement. "New cultural history" first investigations were then ensued.

When analyzing the phenomenon of the arrival of "new cultural history" to Mexico, the University of the California (San Diego) Professor Eric Van Young stands out its "strongly ecumenical" character, if I am allowed to use a euphemism. Ironically, Van Young recommends that cultural history would have to actively colonize the economic relations, as it did with political systems, by following the imperialist presupposition that all history is cultural history. Such is a defining aspect of this modality of historical narrative: once everything in the end is reduced to discourse, all aspects of human life – from economy to politics, from institutions to private life – are equally reducible to the cultural approach.

However, it is very difficult to answer questions such as what it is culture? what it is cultural history? Or, what he is "new" in this cultural history? According to Van Young, the obsessive interest of cultural history in the inquiry of texts and language, obviously originated with the literary post-structuralist studies, as much as the ethnographic method and, to some extent, its remarkable interest in "sub-altern" groups and community and identity networks derives from Anthropology. It is unnecessary to evoke here all the vast literature that deals with the incestuous relations between anthropology and history since the late 1960's, when the third generation of the *Annales* school developed. The linguistic turn and the deleterious influence of the post-modernism that followed it demanded an intelligent criticism of more "traditional" historians, from the right as much as from the left (politically and epistemologically speaking).

¹ A critical approach to the conservatism present in this historiography, see CARDOSO 1999, 2005.

Van Young raises another important question concerning to the degree of “newness” of this “new” cultural history. Classic books had been written by Latin American authors or not on Latin American cultural history. Young refers to Charles Gibson’s work (*The Aztecs to under Spanish Rule*, 1964) and Gonzalo Aguirre Beltrán’s (*Medicina y magia, Medicine and Magic*, 1963), to which one could join, amongst others, Sergio Buarque de Holanda (*Visões do Paraíso, Visions of the Paradise*, 1958), as meaningful examples of cultural history. However today, in Mexico (as much as in Brazil or any other place of Latin America), the practitioners of “new” cultural history identify each other due to the reference to a body of canonic works, of theoretical references, methodological and sources predilections and a “specialized jargon”, in which subjects as sexual and racial representations, textuality, relations of power, subalternity and sex and racial identities, intimacy and privacy, popular culture, memory, among others, are imperative.

Notwithstanding, if the agenda is given, the form of its execution within Latin America does not accurately follows the prescription. Thanks to their opening to a large variety poles of theoretical reflection and historiographical production, Latin American historians “mestizised” in their own way that approach to cultural historical studies. They started to practice it with certain creative freedom, some times by developing it within inquiries on other topics. Therefore, North American historian Sueann Caulfield could perceive vestiges of gender history in Latin American historians works’ on social history, demographic history and the mentalities. Whatever its presumable genealogy and the authorities it typically invokes to support itself, new cultural history as it is practiced in Latin America is not indeed a radically post-modern project, once their practitioners seem to believe in the ability to know (partial or total) past realities. And because they believe that there is a difference between a novelist’s creative imagination and the historian’s factual imagination. (Young 1999:217).

4. FINAL REMARKS

After all, what can one point out as “new perspectives and problems” in Latin American historiography? Generally speaking, up to date with the international historiographical movement since the 1960’s, in Latin America one can also verify a kind of radical turn in historical thinking and writing, in the sense of a gradual shift of theoretically-oriented holistic and totalizing approaches, which were in search of a historical understanding of Latin America amidst the concert of nations. Such epistemological removal was accompanied by the perception of a general social fragmentation in scaling-reduced political niches, in which new historical individuals stand out. These isolated individuals insist on not constituting a whole nor considering themselves integral part of any sort of social configuration (as a State) or imagined community (as a nation): women, blacks, aboriginals or Jews (and all the possible ethnic groups), children, old men, greens, gays and lesbians and so forth... Following this movement, theory shortened its scope of range and also split: one has now a theory for the women; another one for the diverse ethnic groups; for social classes; another one for the old people and children; another one for practitioners of each religious faith; another one for ecologists; another one for sexual

minorities; and so forth. The generating vector of these local identities is culture, however each one defines it! Such a turn in Latin American historiography reiterates its historical role as importer of thinking and fashions.

Rigorously speaking, one can say that newness in Latin American historiography stands in the past, while the present is full of pastiche and copy. Theories of dependence are what Latin American intelligentsia has produced as “new”, as genuinely Latin American. But these theories were aborted with the advent of post-structuralism that has denied function to theory. In my opinion, no doubt remains that, in this very same period of four decades, the world has become more complex, not only in geopolitical quarrels but also in the field of culture, due to many factors, including the shortening of distances and the revolution in its systems of reproduction, such as family, school, virtual networks and mass media. But it seems to me that the assumed option, although the easier one, is not the most effective and important.

Post-structuralism has played a major role by throwing down old obdurate truths especially those proceeding from Marxist theory that authoritarian regimes had appropriated as a creed in the 20th century. However, if post-structuralism and in its aftermath post-modernism had been important in its iconoclasm, these intellectual movements have placed very little in the niches of the destroyed idols (Malerba 2006c). The best solution will not be simply to abandon theory or to reduce it to the idiosyncrasies of discourse building and de-construction. On the contrary, one has to rescue it, to improve it in such a way that all the important historical subjects that have gained voice since post-structuralist paradigmatic revolution can be integrated again into a global perception of Latin American society, its history and its relations with the world as whole.

In my opinion, therefore, pan-semiotic reductionism initiated by post-structuralism, that reduces all the aspects of reality to an effect of discourse, that converts the world a text, definitively is not a solution for theory (Malerba 2007). Nor is the segregation of such subjects into their respective closed worlds. It is no longer possible, for example, to understand Latin American colonial history by telling only the history of whites, nor only of Amerindians, nor only of blacks, without taking into account their interrelationship. The same is valid for the history of women, gays, environment, and so forth. They must be considered under a totalizing approach, not in a broken up, fragmented, segmented, sectarian one. As long as society will not solve such terrific problems as discrimination and social, ethnic, and sexual exclusion only by means of affirmative action for the homeless, blacks, Indians or gays, humanity conceived as unit of survival will not avoid environmental catastrophe if each individual plants a tree or saves the panda bear or Brazilian golden lion-tamarin (*Leontopithecus rosalia*). In this case, ecological equilibrium and life on earth will be permanently threatened while the major pollution emitters of the planet refuse to subscribe to the Kyoto protocol. We are talking about of a bigger problem, one that is simultaneously economic, political, cultural, scientific, that is, in a world, structural. The same is valid for the other referred historical issues.

Finally, respecting to the future of Latin American historiography, one must take into account the urgent necessity of democratization in the field of knowledge

production and circulation. The greater part of Latin American universities do not have funds enough to pay for access to the excellent and expensive databases for Humanities and history that foreign companies have constituted, not rarely, by joining the best of Latin American production and that, ironically, is barred to researchers of the South. Only when one makes effectively available the access to information, when academic production spreads freely, a true possibility of definition of a new agenda for historical studies in America Latin will be open; an agenda concerned with Latin American people's interests.

Fortunately, however, not only rocks can be found in the course of consolidation of Latin American historiography. In spite of all problems, its expansion in the last decades is remarkable. Many centers of research, graduate programs, scientific journals and other important vehicles of scientific diffusion had appeared and have been consolidated in countries such as Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Peru, Mexico and other places of Central America, and Brazil. Despite all the budgetary and technological limitations, reciprocal exchange, cooperation, and debate facilitated by the new cybernetic networks have improved in the region. Important congresses and meetings are the rule in the academic agenda in many countries. Representative associations have significantly contributed to all of this. Local authors start to occupy prominent places in international debates. These improvements became possible because Latin American historians have learned how to construct their institutional spaces in adverse conditions, with scarcity of resources, with inefficient administrations, and under ominous political regimes. Perhaps from there appeared flexibility to get around adverse scenarios, the open-mindedness, the theoretical plasticity and the rigor characteristic of a growing segment of Latin American historians. Much is still to be done, but the way is mapped and many already started to tread it.

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