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Word Imagery and Painted Rhetoric:
Historians, Artists and the Invention of the History of Brazil.

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in
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ABSTRACT

Contrary to romantic-teleological narratives disseminated from the nineteenth-century onwards, the emergence of modern nation-states in this period, not only in the Americas but also in Europe, was by no means a natural, predestined or linear process. Unlike the idea that nation-states originated spontaneously from pre-existing traditional cultural and historical bonds, contemporary historical studies emphasise that the emergence of nation-states is a relatively recent phenomenon. This is nowhere more true than in Brazil, a collection of regionally disparate and autonomous Indigenous peoples colonised by a small European minority residing in a few cities on the coast, which introduced a large African slave population and built its wealth on this colonial system. When independence was declared in 1822, this European and European-descendant minority represented a mere 24.4% of the population (SKIDMORE, 1995).

However, in just a few decades, the former Portuguese colony achieved one of the greatest transformations in modern history: the widely disseminated self-image of the sovereign nation-state of Brazil as a cohesive and civilised people who made the transition from colony to nation-state almost entirely peacefully. How did this new nation-state manage to establish a national project in such a relatively short period, while inheriting the basic structures of colonial society?

To investigate these and related questions, this thesis focuses on the central place of nineteenth-century painters and historians in the invention of the history of Brazil. Specifically, it shows how painters of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) and historians at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB), with shared epistemological and political agendas, played an important complementary role in inaugurating visual and written interpretations of Brazilian history that actively contributed to the nation-building process during the post-independence era. It details the place of these two institutions inside the Brazilian national-romantic movement of the time, as well as their complex relationship with (and financial dependency on) the Brazilian Imperial state’s national project, especially during Dom Pedro II’s reign. The thesis also investigates how the works of pioneering historians and painters contributed to the consolidation of an influential narrative model of the history of Brazil that has informed the production of books and paintings since the nineteenth-century until today. This model is based on a subtle – yet effective – formula that hierarchises the representation of European, Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations in Brazil.
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Introduction

Contrary to romantic-teleological narratives disseminated from the nineteenth-century onwards, the emergence of modern nation-states in this period, not only in the Americas but also in Europe, was by no means a natural, predestined or linear process. Unlike the idea that nation-states originated spontaneously from pre-existing traditional cultural and historical bonds, contemporary historical studies emphasise that the emergence of nation-states is a relatively recent phenomenon. Far from peaceful and predicted, the creation of national identities was largely marked by symbolic and physical struggles to join together populations with different feelings of belonging, and heterogeneous political and cultural loyalties, under the rule of these new social formations. Elite nationalisms – along with their long-term expansion, negotiation and appropriation by wider populations - are currently regarded as being key factors for the emergence of nations, not the contrary (HOBSBAWM, 1990; ACHUGAR, 2009).

This is nowhere more true than in Brazil, a collection of regionally disparate and autonomous Indigenous peoples colonised by a small European minority residing in a few cities on the coast, which introduced a large African slave population and built its wealth on this colonial system. When independence was declared in 1822, this European and European-descendant minority represented a mere 24.4% of the population (SKIDMORE, 1995). However, in just a few decades, the former Portuguese colony achieved one of the greatest transformations in modern history: the widely disseminated self-image of the sovereign nation-state of Brazil as a mainly “white” and/or whitening1, civilised people who made the transition from colony to nation-state almost entirely peacefully. This serene interpretation stands in stark contrast to most other neighbouring nation-states, whose transition was usually depicted as characterised by violence, continuous border wars, decimation of large parts of all sectors of society and the destruction of much of the infrastructure, creating a lasting legacy of a divided and partisan political sphere. Furthermore, Brazil has persistently been seen as unique due to the accomplishment of its emancipation, its establishment as a sovereign nation, during the continued presence of monarchical administrators. How did this new nation-state manage to establish a national project in such a relatively short period, while inheriting the basic structures of colonial society?

1 The assimilationist theory commonly known as **embranquecimento** (whitening) adopted at the end of the nineteenth-century in Brazil, based on the then “scientific” notion of the intrinsic superiority of the white race and on its “benign” and “redemptive” role in eugenic miscegenation, will be meticulously discussed in the third and fourth chapters. These chapters will also approach the central role of self-declared “white” Brazilians in creating a national history.
To investigate these and related questions, this thesis focuses on the central place of nineteenth-century painters and historians in the invention of the history of Brazil. Specifically, it illustrates how painters of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) and historians at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB), with shared epistemological and political agendas, played an important complementary role in inaugurating visual and written interpretations of Brazilian history that actively contributed to the nation-building process during the post-independence era.

The recognition of nineteenth-century IHGB members as founding fathers of Brazilian history is not new; neither is acknowledgement of the pioneering efforts of AIBA artists in creating the first visual chapters of Brazil’s history. However, critical and detailed studies of the relationship between historians and painters, as well as the influence of historiography on art production and vice versa, are still rare. Due to the common academic separation between the disciplines of history and art history, professionals still tend to ignore theories, methods and other scholarly developments from each other’s areas of expertise. As a result, art historians often regard historians’ treatment of visual sources as incomplete or reductionist, notably for turning them into mere illustration of texts. In turn, historians often criticise art historians’ emphasis on formal/aesthetic properties of images as proof of their lack of understanding of broader socio-political contexts that produce these images in the first place. Although historians and art historians have increasingly shared resources and viewpoints, there is still a tendency to “retreat back” to their own “respective favoured intellectual turf”, a fact that ultimately limits “historical understanding” (BROWN, 2003, p. 5).

To be fair, historians arguably bear greater responsibility for this lack of interdisciplinary dialogue. Much of the historians’ scepticism, uneasiness and lack of preparation in dealing with images derives from historiographical training’s enduring emphasis on interpreting words (especially, written words). Despite recent calls for greater awareness in approaching visual sources and for more open interdisciplinary dialogue vis-à-vis varying methodological approaches, there is still a feeling that historians “do not take the evidence of images seriously enough” (BURKE, 2001, p. 9). Accordingly, it is hard to disagree with Ivan Gaskell’s conclusion that despite valuable contributions from individual scholars, most historians continue to be “ill-equipped to deal with visual material”; a fact that results in a usage of images that appears “naïve, trite or ignorant to people professionally concerned with visual problems” (GASKELL, 1991, p. 168).
Through a close comparative analysis of foundational works produced by nineteenth-century historians and history painters, I attempt to bridge a still enduring divide between the fields of Brazilian history and art history. Most of the following pages are devoted to critically assessing and linking recent findings by experts both in nineteenth-century Brazilian visual and written sources. I give particular emphasis to the works focused on the emergence of the Brazilian national state. As a result, I aim to fill a substantial gap in recent literature on Brazilian nation-building by presenting detailed and clear evidence of how, parallel and supplementary to the efforts of historians, the works of painters also played a crucial role in disseminating a national discourse among an essentially oral-based culture such as nineteenth-century Brazil.

The opening chapter, *Drafting and Sketching a Nation: the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) and the Brazilian Historiographical and Geographical Institute (IHGB)*, focuses on the importance of the AIBA and IHGB in the creation of visual and written national narratives during the Brazilian post-independence era. It details the place of these two institutions inside the Brazilian national-romantic movement of the time, as well as their complex relationship with (and financial dependency on) the Brazilian Imperial state’s national project, especially during Dom Pedro II’s reign.

The second chapter, *Religious Past and Secular Prophecies: Re-interpreting Victor Meirelles’ The First Mass in Brazil*, advances the discussion of the relation between texts and images in nineteenth-century Brazil by tracing how history painters relied on publications and methods developed by professional historians for the composition of their artistic works. Specifically, by means of a close reading of the painting *The First Mass in Brazil*, it demonstrates how painter Victor Meirelles strategically uses the sixteenth-century document *The Letter of Caminha* as a primary source to attest to the historical accuracy of his painting. Furthermore, the chapter argues that Meirelles’ work - far from an accurate historical representation - is part of a long, selective and romantic-inspired corpus of works that interpret the formation of the Brazilian nation-state as a relatively peaceful and straightforward process.

The third chapter, *White Pages, Whitening Country: Historians and Racial Theories in Nineteenth-Century Brazil*, discusses how the works of IHGB historians engaged with and contributed to nineteenth-century theorisations of race and nationality. A thorough analysis of Karl von Martius’ award-winning dissertation *How to Write the History of Brazil* (1847), demonstrates how historians found an effective formula to answer a dilemma shared by most Brazilian intellectuals of the period: how to belong to a nation that wanted to be part of the
“civilised” world, while carrying what was then seen as the burden of an enormous Indigenous, African and mestizo population.

The fourth chapter, *Francisco Varnhagen and the Invention of a “General” History of Brazil*, illustrates how the works of eminent historian F A. de Varnhagen - building on Martius’ initial insights – contributed to the consolidation of an influential narrative model of the history of Brazil that has informed the production of books and paintings since the nineteenth-century. This chapter provides evidence to suggest that although Varnhagen’s model was not specifically race based, its enduring influence is due to its creation of a subtle – yet effective – formula to hierarchise the representation of European, Indigenous and African-descent populations in Brazil.

The penultimate chapter, *At the Margins of Napoleonic Art and Brazilian Politics: Reinterpreting Pedro Américo*, provides a close reading of Pedro Américo’s famous painting *Independência ou Morte! (Independence or Death!)*. As will be demonstrated, Américo’s work has contributed significantly to a broadly accepted interpretation of Brazilian independence as a relatively peaceful and non-traumatic process, especially when compared to neighbouring nation-states emerging from the collapse of Spanish America. Furthermore, the chapter demonstrates how three key concepts coined from the interpretation of Martius and Varnhagen’s works provide fresh angles for reinterpreting the painting’s subject matter. Specifically, it argues that a critical understanding of these two historians’ works encourages a reframing of what nationalistic visual histories such as Américo’s often ignore: that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, the consolidation of Brazilian independence was achieved through the expansion, occupation, negotiation and incorporation of autonomous territories of Indigenous and maroon societies.

A deliberately speculative appendix entitled *Pixeling Paintings: Reframing Brazilian History with Digital Tools* complements and concludes the thesis. It presents a concept I am currently developing, *historiomediography*, which focuses on the current debate over how to rise above (art) historians’ relatively restricted training in word editors - such as Microsoft Word -, at a time when contemporary (art) historiography requires a broader preparation in audio, visual, animation and Web software techniques. Specifically, I outline the practical experience of constructing a Web-based project designed to re-interpret chapters of Brazilian history, focusing on nineteenth-century paintings as the medium. I chose Pedro Américo’s *Independência ou Morte! (Independence or Death!)* as the primary visual-historical source for the site. Through a detailed analysis and graphic manipulations of the original painting, I present practical examples of art historical Web narratives with the aim of adding fresh, original interpretations both to the painting itself and to the theme of Brazilian Independence.
My goal in this appendix, along with its interdependent and complementary digital Web page, is to advance convincing written and multimedia arguments for Web design as an effective, productive platform - yet relatively unexplored - not only for meticulous art historical analysis but also for expanding interpretive/writing exercises within the discipline. Beyond merely addressing specific topics of the (visual) history of Brazil, I have conceived and constructed this Web site to meet art historical methodological standards and, at the same time, to question the scope and limitations of writing in this field.

Before outlining the AIBA and IHGB histories and active roles in constructing a Brazilian history in the nineteenth-century and to effectively address challenges to the interpretation of the period’s paintings with the use of new media, I must briefly situate this thesis within a wider debate on theories of nationalism, from which it derives most of its questions and methods.

Studies on the formation of the Brazilian nation-state have traditionally focused on the second term: the state. Indeed, the state's bureaucratic structure - heavily documented in its continuous (re)production of decrees, minutes, laws and correspondence – appeared, at one time, to be particularly appropriate for the historian's familiar methodology of interpreting the past through print-based sources. The subjective dimension of the nation, on the other hand, posed a major challenge to the standard historical method (JANCSÓ and PIMENTA, 2000, p. 135). The formation of nations imposed difficulties for the empirical analysis of history because the emergence of national identities is not defined by a precise moment at which a political act appears in print - such as the writing of a constitution – but instead becomes known and accepted through a gradual transformation of collective feelings of belonging to a community.

In part, this explains why until the 1980s relatively few studies were dedicated to such a central, over-arching theme as the nation, and why it was commonly taken for granted in ways similar to those of the romantic tradition: as a natural, non-problematic and inevitable cause of the state's own existence. Methodological limitations and disciplinary boundaries, not just in Brazil but also across Latin America, also resulted in a “de facto division of labour between those who have studied nationalism as a manifestation of political power, focusing on the state, and those who have worked on national identity as a cultural community, focusing on society” (MILLER, 2006, p. 212).
Demands for a more comprehensive and multifaceted understanding of national histories contributed to the popular 1990s reception of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities* in most of Latin America (CHASTEEN, 2003). Particularly popular was one of its concise but judicious hypotheses: that widespread reading of print media – above all, novels and newspapers - advanced the cultural changes essential to the possibility of imagining the first nation-states at the turn of the eighteenth-century. According to Anderson, expanding print-capitalism helped both to transform the perception of time and space, and to standardise and stabilise languages, essential to the consolidation of the feelings of belonging to a nation, first among American creoles and then for Europeans. Therefore, it was a key vehicle in disseminating new chronological and linguistic codes that would, for the first time, allow local populations - geographically dispersed and effectively anonymous with respect to each other - to gradually think of themselves as part of a unique and unified “sociological organism” (ANDERSON, 1991, p. 26); to imagine themselves as if living the synchronicity of a same calendar, within the perimeters of a united land, as if enjoying a common cultural framework.

Benedict Anderson’s book, in many ways, helped to bridge interpretations focused on states’ well-documented objective trajectories with those concerned with deciphering nations’

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2 Nicola Miller (2006, p. 202) adds that the rise of national identity studies around the 1990s is also directly linked to major political transformations in Latin America around this period, which include the transition from dictatorships to democratic regimes, the role of liberal, neo-liberal policies and social movements in debating citizenship and rights during re-democratisation processes and the need to evaluate the recent authoritarian past.

3 The relation between the growth of print-capitalism and the cultural changes that contributed to the emergence of modern national states is just one of *Imagined Communities* innovative theses. Anderson’s broad scope actually begins by detailing how national consciousness replaced two hegemonic cultural systems - religious communities and dynastic realms – that preceded modern nation-states. Anderson convincingly argues how these two political systems - largely based on the cultural conception of sacred languages, political high centres and “messianic” time - are useful for understanding how nationality and nationalism are also themselves cultural artefacts that enabled a “new way of linking fraternity, power and time meaningfully together” (ANDERSON, 1991, p. 36). By comparing modern nationalism with previous cultural beliefs, Anderson famously defined nations as: [1] imagined, since national citizens will never be able to know and/or meet each other, but only to assume their collective co-existence; [2] imagined as limited, since every nation, despite its size and frequent territorial expansion, will always be marked by limited boundaries; [3] imagined as sovereign, since modern nations’ existence derive normally from revolutionarily-enlightened ideals that challenged deistic-based hierarchies of dynastic realms; [4] imagined as a community, despite the internal exploitation and lack of equality that normally prevail in every nation-state (Anderson, 1991, p. 7).

Another central hypothesis raised in Anderson’s book is the role of colonial administration in the creation of proto-national feelings of belonging in the Americas (notably creole pioneering pilgrimages that would create territorial identities forming the base of future nation-states and creole resentment against Peninsular bureaucrats privileges). In this thesis, though, I deliberately focus on the contribution of print media to the creation of cultural conditions that allowed for national imagination since, as will be clear in the following chapters, these provide an interesting case to expand Anderson’s theses by analysing the role of painted media within nation-building processes.

4 Claudio Lomnitz (2001, p. 4) notes how Anderson’s proposition that nationalism was first developed in the colonial Americas and then exported back to Europe caught many Latin American scholars by surprise, since until then no one had dared to make such a bold claim. Anderson himself explains in the preface to his 2nd Edition that he decided to retile his Chapter 4 as “Creole Pioneers” precisely because of the fact that the “Eurocentric provincialism” which marks studies of nationalism had prevented many readers of the 1st Edition to see that one of the original ideas of *Imagined Communities* was “to stress the New World origins of nationalism” (ANDERSON, 1991, p. xiii).
rather enigmatic subjective sentiments of belonging. By insisting on the simultaneous study of political and cultural realms, the *imagined community* gradually became an unavoidable concept and the preferred focus for study of the history of nation-states.

Despite a relatively late reception, Latin American scholars embraced Anderson's approach toward nationalism as a cultural artefact rather than a mere political ideology. Although pointing to the extremely low literacy rates across the region – even among elite sectors – scholars have usually acknowledged print media as one important factor in helping to create national consciousness and consensus among creole-elite. As a result, although criticising the incompatibility between Anderson’s basic hypotheses and the region’s historical heterogeneity and specificities, most Latin Americanists, “have also adopted, adapted and extended his ideas” (MILLER, 2006, p. 205).

Despite its focus on Spanish American examples, Anderson’s work has also been influential in Brazilian scholarship (OLIVEIRA, 2011). Nevertheless, his book is increasingly viewed more as an audacious essay, whose merit consists of its overall theories and innovative conjectures, rather than for any direct applicability to the Brazilian case. Consistent with this approach, scholars of Brazil tend to join other Latin Americanists who, rather than simply condemning Anderson’s propositions for failing to stand up to empirical scrutiny, have opted to emphasise both the importance and the limits of his interpretative model, and to benefit from a critical and selective use of his ideas (CHASTEEN, 2003). For example, some argue for the need to correct Anderson’s chronology: if print-capitalism promoted feelings of national belonging in Latin America, this was more significant during and after independence movements than before them (GUERRA, 2003).

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5 As Fernando Unzueta notes, around the same period, Uruguayan literary critic Angel Rama wrote an equally influential book regarding the centrality of elite intellectuals, bureaucrats and written-based information to the formation of Latin American imaginaries. Rama’s *La Ciudad Letrada* (1984) also helped to redefine an interpretative model to study national formation in Latin America, one that also emphasised the role of “ print media and cultures vis-à-vis national state formation” (UNZUETA, 2003, p. 117-8).

6 It is noteworthy that while Anderson makes bold arguments about Latin America as a whole, especially in his “Creole Pioneers” chapter, the Brazilian case is left relatively untouched. In the Preface to the Second Edition (p. xiii), Anderson states that he did not address the idiosyncrasy of late Brazilian nationalism in his original book and attempted to address this. Yet, it is fair to say that Brazilian nationalism continues a fairly minor theme if compared to the Spanish American examples. The second revised edition briefly points to some specificities of the Brazilian case, especially by means of a long footnote that recommends a further reading of a famous – yet relatively old - article by José Murilo de Carvalho (1991, p. 51).

7 Beyond questions of timing, John Chasteen, François-Xavier Guerra and other scholars have raised objections to Imagined Communities’ overall deficiencies. Claudio Lomnitz, for example, has famously summarised three major critiques of Anderson’s work when applied to the Latin American case, namely, [1] the differences between Anderson’s conception of nation and the complex and shifting historical use of the term nación throughout Spanish America; [2]; the difficulty in applying Anderson’s notion of “deep horizontal comradeship” as a trait of modern nationalism to the highly clientelist, paternalist hierarchical societies emerging from colonial Latin America; [3]
This thesis will add to the critical and often ambiguous reception of Anderson’s ideas when applied to Brazilian and Latin American experiences. In it, I evaluate the roles of nineteenth-century elite intellectuals in creating and disseminating national discourses that, ultimately, were imposed upon and subsequently reappropriated by the larger society, contributing to the unity and viability of the emerging imagined Brazilian nation. Therefore, the first chapters are dedicated to a type of a history from above (SHARPE, 1991), restricted to the understanding of the intellectual production of a rather small group of Brazilian historians and artists. As will become clear, this initial analysis of how an official Brazilian history was constructed from the top down will be an indispensable step in demonstrating subsequently how its limited assumptions have not only been constantly challenged and modified by wider groups of society but, specifically, what contemporary historiography can offer to this debate.

I make no attempt to corroborate, refute or compare each of Anderson’s claims about Spanish America to the Brazilian case. Rather, I give particular attention to one of the most

Anderson’s suggestion that personal sacrifice is an exemplary manifestation of modern nationalism and not, as is common in Latin American history, often the “result of the subject’s position in a web of relationships, some of which are characterised by coercion, while others have a moral appeal that is not directly related to nationalism” (LOMNITZ, 2001, p. 11). Nicola Miller (2006, p 205) also notes the ironic fact that most historians of Latin American independence precisely reject Anderson’s main claim that local nationalist wars of independence across the continent “resulted in models for the development of nationalism in European and elsewhere”. For other critical reviews of Anderson’s impact on Latin America, see Sara Castro-Klarén and John Charles Chasteen (2003) and José Itzigsohn and Matthias vom Hau (2006).

8 Drawing on Emilia Viotti’s ideas, I also assume that, despite their heterogeneity and frequent internal frictions, Brazilian elites can be defined as groups that benefited from/shared/occupied positions of economic-political power inside Brazilian nineteenth-century society. Whether they were plantation owners, merchants, statesmen, army officers and/or intellectuals, Brazilian elites also tended to share ideological “common notions about the world” and to “consolidate their power by controlling the state apparatus and by exerting other forms of social control to subordinate social groups” (COSTA, 2001, p. xx).

9 Brazilian “official” history is defined here as a knowledge of the past directly supported by the state both in its context of creation (funding research, inaugurating historical institutes, awarding scholarships to historians and artists, fomenting historiographical contests, building museums, national archives, public libraries, etc.) and of its dissemination (designing history programmes and implementing its teaching in schools and universities, celebrating/ritualising historical dates, subsiding the publication of books and textbooks, financing museum exhibitions, commissioning historical monuments, paintings, theatre plays, etc.). Naturally, no “official” body of knowledge about the past has ever been as stable and as coherent as most nationalists often suppose; national histories everywhere tend to change with the agonistic flow of new governments, with the shift of regional/class/ gender/ethnic powers inside a country and, not least, in face of the continuous new findings and paradigm variations in national and world historiographies. Despite its changes and disputes, the context of the creation of what is being called here a Brazilian “official” history in the nineteenth-century is relatively stable one, associated with one basic form of government (a constitutional monarchy), one main city (Rio de Janeiro) and few privileged state institutions (such as the IHGB, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, the National Archives, Museu Nacional and the Colégio D. Pedro II). It is important to note that if contemporary historians have many reasons to call the knowledge produced at an institution such as the IHGB as “official”, because nineteenth-century historians’ economic and political ties to the imperial government are evident from a today’s viewpoint, many IHGB members at the time tended to see themselves as above political interests. As historian Manuel Luís Salgado Guimarães (1988, p. 9) noted, some of its most prominent members were “worried about defining the institution not as official, but as fundamentally as a scientific-cultural institution and, therefore, as neutral in relation to disputes of political-partisan nature”. For competent studies on the creation of an official history at the IHGB, see Lucia Guimarães (1995), Lilia Schwarcz (1999), Arno Wehling (1999) and Kaori Kodama (2005).
polemical aspects of Anderson’s book when applied to Latin America in general, namely, the disproportionate place given to the role of novels and newspapers in the creation of cultural conditions for the spread of national discourses. Anderson’s central ideas and concepts remain useful in the analysis of nationalism (CENTENO, 2008), especially for researchers wishing to approach nation states not only as a political but also as a cultural phenomenon. However, I join a critical chorus that argues that they must be expanded for a better understanding of the complex dynamics of identity discourses and feelings of belonging that resulted in Brazilian and Latin American independence, and/or secured national unity in post-independence contexts.

Indeed, any attempt to link print-based culture to the shaping of socio-political identities has to confront the fact that most of nineteenth-century Latin American populations remained fluent in essentially oral and visual-based forms of knowledge. This is in contrast to the expanding literacy context and even the concern with the rising levels of peasant and worker’s reading seen in some European countries (LYONS, 1997, p. 165). Books, newspapers and other print publications were frequently accessible to those unable to directly read them, as contents were shared through widespread public and collective readings. Nevertheless, discourses of identity inside Latin American societies necessarily “extended beyond writing, even beyond language, to involve images and ceremonies as key elements” (GUERRA, 2003, p. 9). Indeed, beyond print-based national discourses consumed basically among the elite, Brazil’s independence was followed by immediate efforts to produce “a new visuality that would convince the predominantly illiterate population of the new reality” (SCHWARCZ, 2006, p. 26).

The limited influence of print-capitalism in Latin America is linked to the highly exclusionary nature of nineteenth-century capitalism across the region. Most countries were marked by pervasively undemocratic economic-political environments and by severely segregated societies based on elitist, patriarchal, Eurocentric and largely rural economies. In the specific case of Brazil, a slave-based and racist economy, the “nation” consisted of a small number of urban centres defined by limited print-centred cultural infrastructures, such as libraries, bookstores, salons, cafes, publishing houses. Furthermore, as Brazil introduced institutions, it legally

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10 In the specific case of Brazil, this print infrastructure was even more limited considering the Portuguese crown’s extremely centralised control over information and teaching throughout the colonial period, based on the strict prohibition of the production of newspapers, books and establishment of any printing industries. This resulted in a quite distinct approach to literacy and education between the Spanish and Portuguese colonial powers: “While Spain established the first universities in the Western hemisphere, Portugal expected its subjects to return to the mother country in pursuit of higher education. Primary and secondary education were also relatively neglected” (KIRKENDALL, 2003, p. 86). Even though the import of books and creation of illegal printing presses would guarantee the flow of documents, newspapers and pamphlets throughout colonial time, the first official publishing
excluded one-half of its population, its women, from formal political life, education 11 and confined elite 12 women to domestic spheres. Thus, the reach of print media’s contents, even if part of it was read publicly aloud, was narrowly circumscribed.

Furthermore, any attempt to link print media to the advancement of Brazilian national discourses within broader society must recognise that the shift to a written-based culture occurred more than a century after the independence movement:

The spread of literacy in Brazil only started to take place during twentieth century following on the tardy establishment of the public education system. Toward the end of the nineteenth century, educational opportunities were greatly restricted, accessible only to the landowning elites and to freemen in small towns and cities, a minority of the population. The first national Brazilian census was conducted during the period of the Empire, in 1872, and revealed that 82.3% of the population over the age of five was illiterate. The same proportion of illiterates was found by the census conducted in 1890, after the proclamation of the Republic. (DI PIERRO et al., 2009, p. 15-6)

Similar illiteracy rates were common across most nineteenth-century Latin American states 13. The point is that, no matter how seductively succinct Benedict Anderson’s theory, studies on nation-building must recognise the heterogeneous social groups and multiple temporalities that must be accommodated in the gradual nationalisation of societies (BALIBAR, 1991, p. 92), giving a better view of all “components that were part of nation building” in the continent (ACREE and houses (along with universities and libraries) on Brazil’s soil were inaugurated only with the arrival of the Portuguese royal family to Rio de Janeiro in 1808.

11 Women were formally granted access to higher education in Brazil only in 1879. Despite efforts to include women’s right to vote in the first republican constitution of 1891, this would only be legally recognised in 1932 (HAHNER, 1990). It is important to note that, even though formal political and educational restrictions for women were a rule in the majority of Latin American countries during most of the nineteenth century, it can be argued that traditional (phallocentric) historiography has also played an enormous role in the silencing of nineteenth-century women’s voices. In a different direction, although less public and “largely excluded from national literary canons” (CHAMBERS, 2003), and in spite of the fact that countless primary sources in the form of newspapers, manuscripts, letters and diaries written by women were never considered important enough to be protected in state archives, new historiographical research has been accumulating evidence of the active participation and influence of Latin American women in cultural and political spheres, throughout colonial, independent movements and republican times. An excellent summary of specific changes in Brazilian historiography of nineteenth century women is found in Emilia Viotti’s chapter Patriarchalism and the myth of the Helpless Woman in the Nineteenth Century (COSTA, 2001).

12 It is important to highlight that not all women of the time were confined to the domestic sphere. As explained in Chapter 2, the myth of the ideal “woman” (elite Euro-descendant) was the “angel of the hearth”, and in that sense, elite white women were indeed confined to the domestic sphere. However, none of these elite women attempted to restrict slaves or Indigenous women to the domestic sphere at all because their labour in the public sphere was necessary to keep the economy going.

13 A noticeable exception was Uruguay and Argentina. Because of the creation of solid public school system at the end of the nineteenth-century – one that converted “print culture into a public concern” - these two South-American countries constitute a unique educational experience in Latin America, which allowed written-based information to disseminate unlike any other region in Latin America (ACREE JR, 2006, p. 136).
Thus beyond “correcting” Anderson’s chronology of the impact of print-based culture in Latin America and/or reevaluating the role of creole pilgrimage, it is also essential to expand debates on the visual and oral largely untouched in his book and, in fairness to Anderson, in most histories of nationalism. That is, it is important to better understand how “images and rituals were politically as important as writing well into the independence period” and that, as a result, “no study of the creation of national identities can be complete without consideration of them” (GUERRA, 2003, p.7)\(^\text{14}\).

To contribute to the debate on how the feeling of “Brazilianess” was assimilated among widely distinct socio-ethnic groups and through different modes of communication, I will expand Anderson’s focus from printed to painted media produced in the nineteenth-century. Specifically, joining the quest of other scholars to go beyond imagined communities (CASTRO-KLARÉN and CHASTEEN, 2003), I will demonstrate how the Brazilian Imperial state strategically fomented the development of fine arts with the specific purpose of narrating with images the most important chapters of its national history. Thus, I supplement recent studies in attempting to rethink the meanings of writing/reading to include the visual in nineteenth-century Latin American nation-building processes (ANDERMANN and GONZÁLEZ-STEPHAN, 2006; GONZÁLEZ-STEPHAN 2009; PURCELL, 2010). Furthermore, by presenting a meticulous comparison between the works of historians and painters, between words and images, I provide fresh evidence for the debates calling for the need to understand how, together with Latin American lettered cities (RAMA, 1984), visual cities (ACHUGAR, 2009) have been equally central to the formation of national imaginaries across the continent.

Without discounting the wonderfully rich, diverse and extensive collection of visual sources produced in nineteenth-century Brazil, I will restrict my analysis to history paintings produced at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA). As will be clear in the next chapters, although AIBA’s students and teachers were prolific producers of sculptures, and lithographies, drawings, as well as diverse landscape, portraiture and still life painting genres, history paintings played an strategic educational-moral role inside the national project.

From among this select group of Brazilian history painters, I chose to restrict my focus basically to two works by Victor Meirelles and Pedro Américo, respectively: *A Primeira Missa no*

\(^{14}\)In the second edition of *Imagined Communities*, Anderson includes a chapter in which he directly touches on the visual by investigating how maps (as well as museums and censuses) strongly informed and transformed “the way the colonial state imagined its dominion” (Anderson, 1991, pp. 163–4). However, Anderson’s chapter is basically restricted to Southeast Asia examples, failing to provide significant contribution to how visual discourses also affected Latin America.
Brasil (The First Mass in Brazil), 1860, which portrays the episode when Portuguese sailors and Indigenous Tupinikins celebrate a catholic ritual blessing, the so-called “discovery” of Brazil in 1500; and Independência ou Morte! (Independence or Death!), 1888, depicting the famous episode when Dom Pedro I, travelling near the margins of the Ipiranga River in 1822, declared Brazilian independence from Portugal with the shout: “Independence or Death!”;

*A Primeira Missa no Brasil (The First Mass in Brazil)*, Victor Meirelles, 1860. Oil, 268 x 356 cm. Rio de Janeiro, Museu Nacional de Belas Artes (MNBA)

Since these are the best-known works from the most celebrated nineteenth-century Brazilian painters, a significant number of studies have been dedicated to examining their stylistic and thematic features. Much has been written, as well, about the political context during which Pedro Américo and Victor Meirelles produced them. However, due to the enduring separation between history and art history in Brazil previously mentioned, these paintings are often studied in an artistic vacuum – notably through analyses essentially confined to contextualising these artworks inside a broad and self-referential history of European artistic traditions and conventions - or as simple reflections and/or inevitable products of their socio-economic environments. This is precisely the reason why a qualitative approach is particularly useful to the development of my thesis. My comprehensive analyses of Meirelles and Américo’s works with reference to the influence of IBGH historians will result in a much-needed study that, while carefully approaching the aesthetic and formal qualities of the paintings, will also be able to offer a better understanding of the complexities and dynamism of the nation-building process that marked most of the nineteenth-century.

A major contribution of this study is the linkage of often dispersed and mutually ignored collections of primary and secondary sources organised and/produced by both Brazilian historians and art historians. Through this dialogue between insights and developments from each field, I endeavour to enhance both the interpretation of paintings themselves and the broader historical periods in which these were made and consumed. This relationship will be both causal and circular: while socio-historical inputs will improve the interpretation of the paintings’ subject matter and iconography, the deciphering of the paintings’ symbolism will also, as a corollary, provide valuable information to reinterpret the historical period as a whole.

I will give particular emphasis to relating Meirelles and Américo’s paintings to the pioneering history writings of Karl von Martius and Francisco A. Varnhagen. My assessment of these four founding fathers of Brazilian written and visual historiography will advance understanding of the context of the invention of a history of Brazil in the nineteenth-century. In addition, I will also present clear evidence of how parts of their works continue to inform the way Brazilian history has been interpreted since then. Specifically, my detailed comparative analysis of these historians and painters will provide key concepts to challenge, in the concluding chapters of the thesis, an enduring and subtle narrative model that has effectively silenced and erased Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants from Brazilian written and visual histories15.

15 At this point, it is important to acknowledge the scope and limitations of my project. That this PhD research was conducted mostly from New Zealand imposed considerable restrictions to the access of primary and secondary
sources in Brazilian archives. It resulted also in practical challenges to maintaining an updated dialogue with the dynamic academic production of Brazilian historians and art historians, may it be in the form of newly published books and dissertations - especially those available exclusively in Brazil or destined to the relatively small, basically USA-UK-based network of Portuguese-speaking historians -, or fresh research data delivered at the many congresses and seminars held in Brazil annually covering themes germane to my thesis.

My two relatively brief travels to Brazil in 2011 and 2012, in this sense, were fundamental not only for providing me with the invaluable experience of direct contact with the two works by Victor Meirelles and Pedro Américos analysed in the thesis (currently exhibited at the Museu Paulista/USP and Museu Nacional de Belas Artes), but also for enabling me to carry out preliminary research that helped me to decide on (that is, select and discard) the list of essential primary and secondary sources I would or could use. In addition to bringing back to New Zealand an overloaded luggage carrying some of the (then) newest publications on the history and art history of Brazil, these travels also enabled me to share my early PhD plans and receive feedback from a community of Brazilians and Brazilianists with whom I shared close epistemological and disciplinary affinities.

Despite these travels, though, geographical and financial constraints made it evident from the start that my PhD project would have to rely heavily on online resources and, therefore, accept its content and methodological limitations. Fortunately, my thesis benefitted from the recent, ongoing, collective efforts by Brazilian public universities, libraries, archives and privately-funded institutions to create specialized visual and printed digital databases. Free of charge, and usually technologically sophisticated and reliable, these online platforms have made available an increasingly large, high resolution collection of primary and secondary sources, extending from the beginning of the Portuguese colonisation to the present day. Among these, my research benefited immensely from the indispensable Brasiliana USP collection (http://www.brasiliana.usp.br/), from which I was able to access digitised versions of manuscripts from the sixteenth-century to the nineteenth century, including colonial texts from Gabriel Soares de Souza (1557), Pero de Magalhães Gandavo (1576) and Frei Vicente do Salvador (1627). Equally important, the thesis would not be feasible without the remarkable effort of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) to make available online its entire collection of journals (RIHGB) published, uninterruptedly, since 1839 until today.

For specific studies on art history, I am indebted to the researchers and editorial members of the academic journal and art project Dezenove Vinte Arte no Brasil do Século XIX e Início do XX (http://www.dezenovevinte.net/), whose Web site constitutes an unsurpassed resource for disseminating Brazilian art histories online and a practical tool for art historians; functioning at the same time as a prolific database not only for academic articles and artist biographies and artworks, but also providing a wide variety of primary sources related to the AIBA – including letters exchanged by faculty and students, exhibition catalogues, institutional reform texts – quoted throughout the thesis. Particularly in Chapter 4 - focused on the acknowledge of Indigenous and Quilombola plurinationalities that constituted autonomous social formations that, simultaneously, occupied, disputed and regarded as theirs the territory unilaterally declared as independent “Brazil” – with the invaluable efforts of The Curt Nimuendaju Digital Library to create a digital collection of rare manuscripts, books and articles on Indigenous nations, languages and cultures of South America (http://biblio.etnolinguitistica.org/).

In order to try to keep updated and informed of recent articles and PhD theses on Brazil, I also paid constant attention to the comprehensive network of online portals of Brazilian public universities and government research agencies such as CAPES and CNPq, giving particular focus to the government-funded SciELO (The Scientific Electronic Library Online), which is a free of charge, digital library covering a vast collection of Brazilian scientific journals; the http://www.dominiopublico.gov.br/, destined to promote the access to Brazilian literary, artistic and scientific productions (in the form of text, sounds, images and videos) that are found in public domain; the CAPES portal of publications (http://www.periodicos.capes.gov.br/) the University of São Paulo (USP), Universidade de Campinas (Unicamp), Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) and Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF) database of theses (respectively, www.teses.usp.br/ www.bibliotecadigital.unicamp.br/ http://www.história.uff.br/stricto/teses.php and http://fenix2.ufrj.br:8991/F?func=find-b&request=texto&find_code=wte&local_base=teses)

Furthermore, I am extremely grateful to Dr Daryle Williams, one of the external examiners of the thesis, whose constructive and provocative challenges to the thesis made me rethink and expand my initial use of primary sources. Williams’ comment that the thesis submitted for examination made a light use of original sources in archival form, as well as the print and illustrated press of the Brazilian empire, was accompanied by a supportive suggestion to take into account other online resources that contained significant numbers of manuscript materials and serial publications directly germane to the dissertation, including the Brazilian National Library’s recently launched digitised collection of nineteenth and twentieth century newspapers (http://hemerotecadigital.bn.br/), the complete digitization of the documentary and iconographic collections of the Museu D. Joao VI of the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ) (http://docvirt.com/MuseuDJoaoVI) and The Annual Reports of the Ministry of the Empire, part of the center
This is not an isolated work; my critical analysis of nineteenth-century historians and painters is situated within an extensive genealogy of scholars who reassess the role of foundational historical works in the consolidation of independent Latin American nation-states. Like most of its neighbours, Brazil is beginning to recognise that its history is far from its mythical, linear, homogeneous and coherent character. Topics previously ignored in Brazilian history include, but are not limited to: the invention of national traditions; the cultural and ethnic diversity of the population; the Euro-androcentric grand-narrative informing national writers; the discontinuous and belligerent integration of the territory; the genocide of populations defiantly opposed to the national project; and enduring racism.

Distinct from any perennialist or teleological interpretations of nation-building, some recent studies have pointed to the diverse and often antagonistic regional identities that composed Latin America prior to and after independence; those identities conferred completely distinct meanings on keywords such as homeland, nation and patria. This is not to say that there were no preexisting colonial/regional identities that were maturing at the eve of independence, but rather to underscore how complex and heterogeneous these were. Far from a romantic tradition of pre-independence shared linguistic and cultural national identities, the Latin American map was composed, in reality, of a “number of overlapping territorial identities”, many of which were “mutually incompatible” and “not yet national in character” (GUERRA, 2003, p. 6). While several movements across the continent rebelled against Spanish and Portuguese rule, not all “anticolonial moments were national, if by that we are to understand that each country was aware of its own particular identity” (DOYLE and PAMPLONA, 2006, p. 4).

It is noteworthy that this multiplicity of overlapping territorial identities is still a main feature of the Abya-Yalan/Latin American map. Bolivia was the first country in the region to finally recognise this, formally declaring itself a plurinational state.
The heterogeneity that characterised most of nineteenth-century Latin America is matched by the equally diverse, overlapping and conflictive identities that peopled the territory unilaterally declared in 1822 as independent Brazil. Similar to the conflicts in the Spanish colonies, the collapse of the colonial system during the years that preceded and succeeded the 1822 independence gave more visibility to what historians István Jancsó and João Paulo Pimenta call the regional "multiple political identities" that coexisted inside the Portuguese empire, and which often carried in themselves distinct "potential national forms".

To be a paulista, pernambucano ou baiense\(^\text{17}\) meant to be Portuguese. What is important to note here is the simultaneous emergence of three differences. The first is the one that distinguished an American Portuguese (as for example a baiense) from all of those who were not Portuguese (the French, the Dutch, the Spaniards). The second, simultaneous with the previous one, allowed for a baiense to be distinguished from other fellow Portuguese (for example, from an Iberian[reinol], or paulista). Finally, a third difference was the one that distinguished, among all the Portuguese, those who were American and those who were not (JANCSÓ and PIMENTA, 2000, p. 136-7) (Italics Added).

Furthermore, contrary to traditional nationalist views, many studies have suggested that political leaders in Brazil attempted as late as 1821 to keep the only nation that they were sure to belong to, the Portuguese, united on both sides of the Atlantic. As counterintuitive as it may seem to a contemporary (nationalist) viewpoint, most elite members at that time adopted a transterritorial concept of nation. In other words, the definition of the Portuguese nation was not necessarily “attached” to the physical geography of the Iberian Peninsula: “wherever they were, vassals of the Portuguese monarch were part of the Portuguese nation” (SLEMIAN and PIMENTA, 2003, p. 12) (Italics in the original). As a result, in terms of cultural geography, there were Portuguese of Portugal, just as there were Portuguese of Brazil, of Goa, of Angola and so forth. The gradual collapse of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves in 1822 can be seen as the result of an unsuccessful attempt of Luso-Brazilians and Luso-Portuguese to maintain, until the last moments of negotiation, a transatlantic Portuguese nation united on a balanced distribution of powers between Lisbon and Rio de Janeiro\(^\text{18}\). Unlike the romantic image

\(^{17}\) These three terms refer, respectively, to the residents of the Brazilian states of São Paulo, Pernambuco and Bahia, all of which were, until 1822, part of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil e Algarves.

\(^{18}\) Historian Emilia Viotti da Costa summarises these identity ambivalences in her analysis of José Bonifácio, a man who prior to independence was considered a loyal Portuguese soldier and brilliant academic and, after 1822, would be immortalised as the “patriarch” of Brazilian independence. He was an active politician, one of D. Pedro I’s closest friends and his councillor, at the time of the 1821 Lisbon Constituent Côrtes created in the aftermath of the Porto Revolution. This constitutional-liberal movement, which erupted after the Napoleonic forces had left the Iberian
of brave Brazilian nationalists fighting against cruel Portuguese intruders, the independence movement is better understood, according to historian Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias’ famous expression, as a result of the *interiorisation of metropolitan* interests in the colony, especially after the arrival of Dom. João VI and his delayed decision to return to Portugal. The Brazilian independence process, therefore, seems better characterised as a type of civil war among the Portuguese, resulting from the Porto Revolution of 1820 (DIAS, 1972)\(^{19}\).

Inside this Portuguese-centred identity framework, marked by the attachment to multiple regional *patrias*, it is no surprise that there were hardly any sentiments of “Brazilianess” until the declaration of independence, or that the term “Brazilian” was rarely used in the civil-national meaning adopted today. Brasileiros, as the suffix suggests, still usually referred to Portuguese who owned a business or had commercial bonds with the part of the Kingdom known as Brazil; it classified an economic activity rather than a national identity, just as sapateiros defined those who sold shoes, ferreiros or blacksmith as the ones who forged iron (PIMENTA, 2006, p. 78).

Beyond the regional frictions between Portuguese nationals, what was declared as the “Brazilian” state in 1822 was and continued to be a fractured and disputed zone for years. A significant portion of the Indigenous peoples, African and mestizo populations confined within the perimeters of what regional elites declared as the Empire of Brazil, continued to ignore concepts such as the Brazilian state or nation; and remained unfamiliar with any sentiment of belonging to national community as long as they could do so. While newly independent from the Portuguese monarchy, state administrators faced the enormous challenge of legitimising a common history among populations not only largely immersed in oral culture but also, in many cases, completely indifferent both to the concept of a previous Portuguese nation and to the newly-declared Brazilian one.

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\(^{19}\) The fact that the European Portuguese rebelled against the Portuguese king living in Brazil, demanding his immediate return under the risk of losing his territories in Portugal, lead to Kenneth Maxwell’s insightful suggestion that it was actually Portugal that first declared its independence from Brazil: “The important point about Brazil, therefore, is that it became economically and politically emancipated between 1808 and 1820 while acting as the centre of the Luso-Brazilian Empire. This unusual circumstance explains why in 1820 it was Portugal that declared ‘independence’ from Brazil, and only afterwards, in 1822, that Brazil declared its ‘independence’ from Portugal” (MAXWELL, 2003, p. 155)
Like most Latin American national histories, Brazil’s cannot be explained by former straightforward formulas based on ephemeral and heroic events – but only through *processes* that would take decades to be concluded. While most gained political independence between 1810 and 1825, Latin American countries “remained states in the search of nationhood” for many years to come (CHASTEEN, 2003, p. xviii), many until today. In Brazil, a small group of elites (initially of those residing in Rio de Janeiro) unilaterally declared as “Brazilian” the continental and ethnically heterogeneous territory of the former Portuguese empire; this revolutionary 1822 action led to countless revolts and formal combats between regional elites following the independence process, including border wars with other nation-states. Indeed, the struggle to maintain territorial integrity is evident in the fact that “between 1831 and 1848 alone, more than twenty minor revolts and seven major ones broke out in different parts of the country. In three of the latter, the leaders proclaimed independent republican governments” (CARVALHO, 1982, p. 390). The tension resulting from these mostly elite-lead regional revolts was in addition to the state’s continuous warfare against the many Indigenous groups that never acknowledged either pre-independence or post-independence colonial powers, and the incessant slave uprisings and formations of autonomous maroon societies.

Nonetheless, despite the enduring reality of this turbulent geo-socio-political context, I document in the following chapters how the newly emancipated Brazilian state needed only a few decades to frame and to disseminate an image of relatively stable politics, ethnic harmony and social tranquillity. Beginning in 1822, local political leaders praised the supposed peaceful and natural Brazilian “revolution” (PIMENTA, 2009); this emphasis on the orderly developmental nature of the Brazilian nation has been extolled repeatedly and still has wide acceptance both in Brazil and among foreign observers. The point to be emphasised is that Brazilian national

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20 At present, for example, at least two countries in the region, Bolivia and Equator, have been trying to solve the physical and symbolic tensions associated to the idea of a “homogeneous” national discourse by declaring themselves as “plurinational” states.

21 The most notorious border conflicts involved the Brazilian empire and Provincias Unidas del Río de La Plata. Both claimed authority over the region known as Banda Oriental, today Uruguay. The Portuguese King exiled in Rio invaded the region the region in 1817. The “Provincia Cisplatina” became one of the provinces of the newly independent Brazilian state in 1822. Montevideo signed and declared its loyalty to the Imperial Brazilian Constitution of 1824. Only after a series of battles, lasting from 1825 until 1828, and because of British interest in the region, the former Brazilian Cisplatina Province would be declared an independent national state, the Oriental Republic of Uruguay.

22 In fact, during the course of writing thesis, the interpretation of Brazil as a unique – relatively peaceful- country in Latin America made headlines in two important Brazilian and International publications. Former Brazilian president Luís Inácio “Lula” da Silva (2003-10) appeared on the cover of the 29/03/2009 edition of Newsweek. The interview praises Lula as the “most popular president in the world”, and clearly suggests that Brazil, as a “symbol of democracy
history discourse was literally (and literarily and visually) created only after the break with the Portuguese metropolis; its wide diffusion and basic features were shaped in a relatively brief period of time. In this sense, Brazil fits well into one of the paradoxes of nation-state development cited by Benedict Anderson: it is also regarded as “objectively” modern in the eyes of a historian but “subjectively” ancient in the hearts most of its citizens (1991, p. 5). In its nation-building exercise, the newly independent country attempted “to confer antiquity upon a recent process, universality upon localised experience and an almost religious aspect upon an evidently political instrumentality” (SCHWARCZ, 2006, p. 26).

As with any collective identity construction, the Brazilian imagined community was also expressed through comparative/relational terms, especially in opposition to the “Other” bordering populations. This thesis pays particular attention to the substantial efforts of Brazilian intellectuals and state administrators to contrast the stable, harmonious civilised Brazilian image with its often chaotic and violent republican neighbours and disseminate this image widely. Despite increasing attempts (especially after the declaration of the Brazilian Republic) at drawing parallels between the history of Brazil and that of its neighbours, there prevails a strong intellectual tradition of highlighting Brazilian exceptionalism inside the region (BETHELL, 2010).

A few examples of this exceptionalism that were inspired by this interpretative tradition - both in Brazil and abroad - include the following tendencies: [1] to view Brazil's transition from colony to independence as a comparatively "calmer" process - ignoring the many regional bloody movements for emancipation in Brazil, as well as the countless genocidal wars against "in the Americas", should “stand for certain values” and help to safeguard democracy in the region supposedly threatened by Hugo Chavez. Nearly one month later, the same magazine published an article entitled “The Crafty Superpower”, in which Brazil is again praised for being a “unique regional power”, because it has no “state enemies” in the region or “any ambition to be a military power”. While praising Brazil’s peacefulness and democratic commitments, Newsweek once again comments on the country’s silence “as Venezuelan strongman Hugo Chavez threatens foreign companies, intimidates the opposition and bullies its courts and Congress”, implying that the country had also failed in condemning Colombia’s “attacking a guerrilla encampment in the Ecuadorian jungle last year, and routinely abstains on U.N. resolutions condemning human-rights violations in Cuba”. The second headline made the pages of the influential Brazilian newspaper Folha de São Paulo on 17/02/2009. Reinforcing a persistent interpretation that Brazil’s dictatorship was “relatively” more orderly and cordial than that of neighbouring countries, such as Argentina, Chile and Uruguay, the newspaper created a pun with the word Portuguese word dictatorship (Ditadura). Substituting the last letters of the word (dura, which means “hard” in Portuguese, for branda, which means “soft”), the newspaper created the neologism “ditabranda” to suggest that Brazil, once again, was example of a soft, peaceful and unique model that contrasted to the rest of the region. Folha’s article ignited a huge public debate in Brazil, including articles that suggested that the newspaper’s lenient view of the authoritative regime was linked to the very subserviency/cooperative role Folha had during the military years (1964-85). Links to the Newsweek and the Folha de São Paulo’s original articles:

http://www.thedailybeast.com/newsweek/2009/03/21/lula-wants-to-fight.html
http://www1.folha.uol.com.br/fsp/opiniao/fz1702200901.htm
autonomous Indigenous groups and *quilombos*; [2] to emphasise the establishment of a monarchical regime as a main factor in the supposedly stable Brazilian nation-building process - ignoring that both the colony and the new country were shaken by constant republican-inspired movements, including the Inconfidência Mineira in 1789, the Taylors Revolt in 1798, the Pernambuco Revolution in 1817, the Equator Confederation in 1824, the Juliana and Rio-Grandense Republics in 1835-45, the Sabinada Movement in 1837; and [3] to argue that Brazil is unique because it has a different national language from the rest of Latin America. This ignores the existence of multiple Indigenous languages that have always existed inside what is conveniently called "Portuguese" America, which from Indigenous perspectives - and similar to "Spanish" America - completely blur and challenge the idea of geographical and cultural homogeneity in these "national" territories.

For the reasons cited above, this thesis is confessedly aligned with a historiography dedicated to disputing the tradition of viewing Brazil as an extraordinary case in Latin America (PREUSS, 2011). I will constantly challenge this “dominant” interpretative tradition that emphasises Brazilian supposed racial and political “cordiality” and “conciliation” (SOMMER, 1991, p. 153) in contrast to Spanish America. Without discounting the obvious and expected Brazilian particularities, I have opted to emphasise the parallels between Brazil’s history and other nineteenth-century Latin American countries. Contemporary research reveals a starkly different picture from that image of a civilised, peaceful, stable, exceptional monarchy promulgated and disseminated by nineteenth-century Brazilian state administrators and intellectuals crafted and embellished in print and painting, one that strongly contrasted the country with its “barbaric” neighbouring republics (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 7). Thus, I am less concerned with why some Brazilians have historically considered themselves as quite different from other Latin Americans and more with how recent historiography has accumulated evidence that allows us to interpret Brazil as sharing similar processes with other Latin American regions. Brazilian specificities will be necessarily discussed in each chapter, but without ever dismissing the benefits of a historiographically comparative approach.

While educated nineteenth-century Brazilians and Latin Americans may have perceived elements of distinctive political and cultural contexts, I examine two obvious similarities. The first is a common ambivalent tendency of Latin American elites to claim political sovereignty from Iberian metropolises and, at the same, to claim cultural affinity with European civilization

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23 Quilombos (often called as Mocambos) is the kimbundu-origin term used to describe Maroon societies in Brazil.
(especially with French culture). The second is the enduring influence of European institutions in the way that Brazilian and Latin American intellectuals defined their local cultural institutions and their scientific and artistic practices. I pay particular attention to the then emerging field of historiography and the production of academic history paintings.

Through critical comparisons between local and wider contexts, I endeavour to avoid the analytical mistake that - by pointing only to analogies – interprets the history of Brazil as a mere mechanical reproduction of wider processes occurring throughout Latin America and/or Europe. Additionally, I seek to avoid another that - by pointing exclusively to Brazilian uniqueness - ignores the broader picture that only a comparative analysis can provide. In the works of nineteenth-century artists and historians, I will trace this complex mixture of unique and irreducible aspects of Brazilian history, some of which are unmistakably intermingled with European cultural and institutional influences and many of which are only understood inside a wider Latin American context.

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24 A now long established tradition initiated by Franz Fanon identifies the ambivalent position of the creole elites in moving from colonialism to independence. Post-colonialist theory focuses mainly on this philosophical dilemma as a problem of identity. Homi Bhabha is arguably the best known of recent postcolonial theorists greatly influenced by the poststructural critique of binary oppositions. In *The Location of Culture* (1995), Bhabha challenges dichotomies such as center/periphery and enlightened/ignorant in order to demonstrate that cultures perceived as “central” and “peripheral” mix and impact each other in more complex ways than hierarchical binary oppositions permit. Bhabha affirms that these intricate cultural mingling result in cultural hybridity. His work on cultural hybridity and the theorisation of the 'third space' parallels many discussions on creolisation. As will be discussed in Chapter 1, while Babbha and other English-speaking authors are hegemonic in the academic world, Latin Americans authors such as Fernando Ortiz, Nestor Canclini, Antônio Cândido and Silviano Santiago have been writing about these topics as well for a long time, which will offer particularly useful viewpoints for this thesis.
Chapter 1 – Drafting and Sketching a Nation: Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) and the Brazilian Historiographical and Geographical Institute (IHGB)
The dramatic 1808 transmigration of the Portuguese Royal Family to the colony of Brazil, fleeing from Napoleonic forces, brought rapid changes to the capital at Rio de Janeiro. Beyond the immediate task of finding proper accommodation for the Royal Family and its entourage of an estimated 20,000 nobles and courtiers, the tropical colonial city needed to replicate the metropolitan atmosphere of early nineteenth-century Lisbon. Massive cultural, urban and landscape projects included the construction of libraries, gardens, avenues, universities, museums and other scientific, cultural and artistic institutions. Usually informed by French models, these institutions were intended to create “the appropriate cultural infrastructure for a new nation state”, in order to “cultivate the leadership and enlightenment necessary for national civilization and progress along the lines of the accepted models of the contemporary European world” (NEEDELL, 1999, p. 3).

Much beyond the changes to the specific city of Rio de Janeiro, the transferral of the centre of the Portuguese empire to the colony would also catalyse a gradual redefinition of powers between the American and European parts of the Portuguese nation, especially after King D. João VI formally raised the colony of Brazil to the category of the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves in 1815. This rebalancing of political powers, added to the longer than expected length of stay of the Portuguese king in Rio, produced profound grievances between the American and Peninsular Portuguese. The constitutional and liberal revolution in the city of Porto, in 1820, followed by Brazilian independence in 1822, were the ultimate results of this process.

This chapter will discuss Brazil’s unique process of nation building during the nineteenth-century, in which a wide range of state-supported educational, scientific and artistic initiatives, added to other more autonomous ones - such as the formation of an influential romantic literary movement - promoted what has been called a “politics of national memory” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 33). Specifically, I will document the simultaneous concentration of the responsibilities for validating, producing and teaching art during the post-independence period within the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA). This gave the institution a strategic and privileged place to create for the emerging Brazilian society some of its first public, visual national symbols. In this pursuit, the AIBA would be situated among a few other select imperial institutions such as the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro - IHGB), the National Archives (Arquivo Nacional) and the Colégio Pedro II, all dedicated to the task of transforming intellectual and artistic labour into a proud national discourse. If the latter three were considered, respectively, as focal spaces for writing national History, for safeguarding it, and for
teaching it to the new generation, the AIBA was commissioned the equally imperative task of imagining and creating a national iconography.

1.1 Napoleon’s last laugh: the invasion of Brazil by French Artists

Officially founded in 1826, the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) built on the works of a predecessor, the Royal School of Sciences, Arts and Crafts (Escola Real de Ciências, Artes e Ofícios) created by the exiled Portuguese King Dom João VI, in 1816. From the previous institution, the AIBA also inherited the responsibility both of refining artistic tastes and providing art education in the newly independent country. Its directors and teachers were given the task of assuring that artistic training would both develop local talent and, at the same time, keep up with the development and trends of leading European schools.

Understanding the role and history of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) is a pathway into the history of the Brazilian imperial state itself: the institution was created in the first years after the declaration of independence from Portugal and subsequently extinguished with the Empire's own decline, due to the Brazilian republican movement at the end of the nineteenth century (CASTRO, 2005). While its inauguration dated back to the first turbulent years of the D Pedro I government, the AIBA only gained full prestige and stability more than a decade later. At that time, Emperor Pedro II began his long reign and became the AIBA’s honorary president and personal sponsor (SCHWARCZ, 2006).
The close relationship with the Brazilian monarchy brought to the AIBA a near-monopoly on Brazilian artistic production and education during most of the nineteenth century. In such an environment, the AIBA’s artistic criteria and values were crucial in legitimising what should be considered as art and who should be regarded as an artist during this period.

Ultimately, the quality of a work of art or the progression of an artists’ career was measured not only according to personal talent or dedication, but also to the ability to translate these into what was then considered as “universal” European standards, in particular those derived from Italian and French traditions. Since its predecessor, the former Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts, was originally founded by members of what is known as the French Artistic Mission brought by D. João VI, the administrative and educational model of the École des Beaux-Arts

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25 This chapter will display several different examples of nineteenth-century Brazilian paintings linked to the French Artistic Mission and to the AIBA. The reproduction of these images should not be taken as a direct illustration to written arguments of this chapter. That is, they do not necessarily try to visually explain and/or corroborate specific paragraphs and/or ideas of the pages they are displayed on. Rather, taken as a whole, the collection of paintings exhibited here aims to give readers an overall feeling of the AIBA’s prolific production, as well as to give a general idea of how academic principles, Neo-Classic and Romantic movements informed the production of paintings in Brazil.

26 The expression French Artistic Mission refers to a group of artists and artisans invited by King D. João VI to officially inaugurate and develop the teaching of Arts and Crafts in the colony, during the period the Portuguese court was in exile in Rio de Janeiro. Even though the mission’s formal existence was relatively short, being impacted both by the return of the Royal family in 1820 and the independence of Brazil in 1822, its works had a great influence over nineteenth-century Brazilian art. Joachim Le Breton, the mission’s first chief, was responsible for writing a document structuring the academic rules, neoclassic tendencies and systematized teaching methods which would be
continued to inform the AIBA. Concerning the teaching of painting however, the AIBA still regarded Italian conventions - especially from Renaissance masters - as the supreme artistic reference (LEITE, 2009). It was not by chance that, in 1845, when the AIBA started to award travel grants to its preeminent students, most of these aspiring painters gravitated to either (or sequentially) Rome and/or Paris, the former city being regarded as the historical symbol of the achievements of European Art, and the latter being associated with the most recent artistic tendencies.

The self-proclaimed AIBA aspiration to develop a national art by keeping up-to-date with European schools perhaps lead to an unforeseen consequence: intense polemical debates centred on issues of originality and plagiarism within the works of AIBA teachers and students (COLI, 2005). They became a particular target for the Modernist movement starting from the 1920s onwards because of Brazilian intellectuals’ and artists’ tendency to mimic, and their subservience to foreign creative conventions. The often negative response of Modernist artists and critics to

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adopted by the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts and, later, during the first years of the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) (FERNANDES, 2007a).
what some considered backwardness and lack of originality in “academic art” became very influential during much of the twentieth century (CARDOSO, 2007).

For these very acts, it was not uncommon for Modernists to accuse nineteenth-century painters of having delayed the emergence of an authentic Brazilian school of art (VENÂNCIO, 2008). As a result, a large and heterogeneous generation of nineteenth-century artists was collectively held responsible not only for copying exogenous models but for discontinuing the use of native themes, materials and techniques of earlier colonial artists - especially of what was often considered as the first expression of a proto-national art: the Baroque works of the province of Minas Gerais. The controversy between academics and modernists, of supposed imitators and creators and around the issue of imported and genuine art, also contributed to the relatively marginal and largely discredited status of research on nineteenth-century art in most Brazilian universities until recent times (PEREIRA, 2008).

Following a different path, however, contemporary scholars seek to reassess Brazilian nineteenth-century production, emphasising its uniqueness and even some of its surprising similarities with some twentieth-century modernist works (PEREIRA, 2008). In particular, some studies have suggested that the AIBA’s pursuit of recognition and validation, commonly based on European paradigms, was not because of shortages of local ambition or self-esteem; rather, it was because it was actively focused on the mission of elevating Brazilian art (read civilisation) to a comparable position with European nations (CASTRO, 2005). Recent attempts to interpret the AIBA’s production, thus, have tried to go beyond the influential (and typically negative) interpretation that modernists had of academic artists; such scholars challenge the ways previous critics viewed the AIBA as a homogenous institution at the exclusive service of the Empire, and not as a place of artistic-political negotiation, in which even republican sentiments could arise (CARDOSO, 2007).

Recent studies of the AIBA in its historical context have also revealed that the institution’s mission was never restricted to merely replicating French or Italian models. Rather, in a post-independence period marked by the simultaneous efforts to consolidate internal stability and international recognition, the appropriation of foreign techniques was seen as a reputable way of affirming specific national themes but also as the most effective way to situate Brazilian culture

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27 Venâncio (2008) adds that this "barroquization" of Brazilian national art by modern artists was also, undoubtedly, an important strategy for their self-glorification. To the Modernists’ perspective, the historical timeline of Brazilian art was structured in the way that the first period of a genuine national art was identified with “Baroque of Minas Gerais”; the second phase (Academic art) would be marked by an imported aesthetics and a false characterisation of Brazilian art; and finally, the third stage, defined by Modernism itself, would be the period in which, once again, Brazilian art was being produced.
alongside that of Europe. Such an approach may seem strange from a modern standpoint accustomed to understanding paintings either (or both) as a search for originality or as an expression of a particular national identity they allegedly represent. Yet, with Brazilian industrial and scientific developments in their infancy, artistic triumphs were one of the few pacific forms in which to express national pride (CARDOSO, 2007). In this, the AIBA played a similar role as other American academies, such as San Carlos in Mexico, in which the “production and protection of the fine arts” symbolised one of the few ways for a country to demonstrate its “entry into the modern world” (WIDDIFIELD, 1996, p. 29).

This ambiguous relationship between national and European art reflected a much wider political-cultural dilemma. Most Brazilian leaders, like other Latin American elites at the time, thought of themselves not only as newly freed from colonialism but also as direct descendants of European settlers. Across the continent, independence movements were lead “precisely [by] the white soldiers, overseers and administrators”, who after expelling any resisting representatives of the Spanish or Portuguese crowns, continued “the overlordship of large non-white, or Indigenous populations, or African slaves” (MAXWELL, 2003, p. 147). Thus, more than simply attempting to emulate European patterns, these independent local elites regarded themselves as direct heirs of the colonial enterprise.

In Brazil, the challenge of consolidating territorial and political autonomy from Portugal and, at the same time, affirming an inherited kindred and intellectual parity with Europe constituted a structural aspect of the life of most nineteenth-century upper-classes. In this respect, Thomas Skidmore ironically recalls how members of the Brazilian elite existed in a tension between “two worlds”: while their European-informed education was “shaped by Jesuitical and humanistic cultural traditions of Portugal increasingly modified during the nineteenth century by French culture”, this elite “actually lived in Brazil, not Paris or London. Eça de Queirós or Anatole France might visit Brazil, but they were certainly not of Brazil” (SKIDMORE, 1974, p. xxiii).

There is a temptation to interpret these “two worlds” as simply the relation between a model and a copy; as if Europe continued to export its cultural values to a former colony that contradictorily continued to import misplaced ideas (SCHWARZ, 1992). The argument that the continuous adoption of European forms is at the root of Brazilian intellectual and cultural dependency has been a constant theme throughout the country’s history. It has ranged from the critique of academic painters by modernist avant-garde cited earlier to virtually every other debate since the nineteenth century that sought some kind of pure national expression beneath the
arguable layers of forged foreign influence. This has been a polemical topic not only for critics, but also for various artists and art historians.

This thesis is not concerned with the discontinuous history of what some consider true, authentic Brazilian art or the often-emotional debate over the alleged contributions (or disservices) of artists and artistic movements to the country’s development. On the other hand, since the academic paintings studied here have been frequently targeted as examples of (neo)colonised art and mere copies of European conventions, it is important to note that recent studies insist on the difficulty of interpreting Brazilian art simply by means of dualistic dichotomies, such as original or replica, true or false, authentic or illegitimate.

Indeed, as a result of the intense and often brutal process of social-cultural mixing that marked the Brazilian colonial and post-colonial processes for at least 500 years, it has been virtually impossible to define convincing boundaries between “unadulterated” national characteristics as opposed to “absolute” foreign ones. Instead of the search for local uncorrupted essences that clearly contrast to derivative copies, scholars seem to have profited more from exploring the processes of transculturation (ORTIZ, 1995) and hybridity (CANCLINI, 1995) that can be perceived not just in Brazilian but in most Latin American productions.

Furthermore, not only in cultural but also in political and economic realms, historians have sought to understand how Brazilians have been strategically selecting and creatively adapting European conventions to local contexts, rather than reproducing them in literal and indiscriminate ways. Recent studies suggest that even where local elites have openly sought to perpetuate European legacies, consciously or not, they frequently filtered and diverged from those same legacies. From macroscopic levels of state administration to daily issues of domestic cooking, historians have accumulated evidence of how Portuguese settlers and Creole descendants were at the same time replicants and deviants of European paradigms (JANCSÓ, 2008). As such, Brazil followed an analogous path to most Latin American societies, in which cultural and political negotiations tended to incorporate “references that were at once distinct from those of the former colonial powers as well as still linked to Europe and acceptable to European standards” (COSTA, 2006, p. 208).

For two remarkable essays on these two respective themes, please refer to Lilia Moritz Schwarcz’s (2004) analysis of how King Dom Pedro II aesthetically mixed European and tropical ornaments to ritualise and affirm his power as both the first Brazilian monarch and, at the same time, a genuine member of Habsburg and Bragança houses and to Evaldo Cabral de Mello’s (2002) description of how Portuguese settlers, in the attempt to create a New Lusitânia, had to adapt and recreate traditional diet and recipes based on wheat, cheese and wine by relying on local products such as mandioca and cachaca.
What Brazilian critic Silviano Santiago denominated the *space-in-between* of Brazilian culture (SANTIAGO, 2001) - the recurrent deviation from the norm that avoids inert assimilation of foreign models while also demolishing any claim of discursive purity and homogeneity - might also be applied to nineteenth-century artistic production. As will be clear in the course of this chapter, one of these patent rule transgressions relates to the very specificities of the Brazilian romantic movement that informed history paintings and historiography at the time. The movement provided Brazilian intellectuals with a path “in-between” to rely on universal models and also, above all, to affirm national specificities (SCHWARCZ, 2006, p. 31). Furthermore, it promoted an unexpected merging of academic aesthetics with quests for scientific rigour - on the rise in most of Europe and Latin America - with local Indigenous-inspired motifs, tropical elements and a relatively early debate on ethnic-cultural miscegenation.

![Fig 1.3 Victor Meirelles. *Felipe Camarão. Study for the Battle of Guararapes*. 1874/1878. Oil on Canvas. 73,0 x 59,4 cm. Museu Victor Meirelles, Florianópolis, Brazil.](image)

The decision to avoid dichotomous categories here, however, should not be mistaken for disregard of the economic and epistemic powers that have characterised Europe’s centrality and Latin America’s peripherality globally for centuries. On the contrary, this thesis also focuses on geopolitical and economic issues, especially by disputing the simplistic, linear and progress-oriented paradigm of modernity in the direction of world-system analysis (MIGNOLO, 2002). By avoiding easy dichotomies such as model and copy, developed and developing countries and by
interpreting modernity and coloniality as synchronic and interdependent phenomena, the thesis hopes to emphasise not only the coloniality of power (QUIJANO, 2000), but also the existence of transmodernities (DUSSEL, 2002) that challenge Eurocentric and macro-narratives of the history of Western civilization. Furthermore, in the specific case of Brazil, the use of the notion of an “interiorisation of the metropolis” (DIAS, 1972) will help challenge static and xenophobic interpretations of nation-building. It will highlight the construction of metropolitan-colonial type relations inside the country, which not only hierarchised regions and citizens but also repeatedly defined Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations as internal “Others” as opposed to Euro-descendants.

Of course, Brazilian transculturation processes varied enormously according to region and historical period. In the case of nineteenth-century intellectual and artistic production in Rio de Janeiro, the patterns of selection and appropriation of European models were closely linked with post-independence efforts to establish internal authority and international approbation. Instead of judging academic artists according to anachronistic categories and contemporary national viewpoints, it is more productive to understand the type of national project that was being conceived at the time (at least within the elite circles to which they belonged) and the degree to which the project was seen as compatible with European notions of politics, science and art. Attempts to adopt or refuse specific aspects of European culture, thus, cannot be seen as detached from dynamic strategies for national and international advancement, either from the pursuit of personal recognition, intellectual hierarchy, social mobility or financial benefits.

The use of particular European works as a type of template for national production seemed a coherent strategy not only for the Fine Arts but also for most other intellectual/artistic production in the nineteenth-century. Moreover, this quest for national validation in relation to European achievements was not unique to Brazil. Several other Latin American countries also sought to avoid exile to the cultural periphery by demanding a space within a civilised circuit not only inside art academies but also in scientific and literary institutions:

Such attempts to balance universalism and nationalism were characteristic of a range of Latin American institutions, e.g. the Sociedade Mexicana e Geographia y Estadistica (founded in 1933), the Instituto Historico e Geografico Brasileiro

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29 As shown in the last chapters of the thesis, more than “Others”, Indigenous and African populations were frequently defined as non-human beings, since they were expandible, especially in the interest of the progress and modernisation of the nation state. More than “silenced” and “erased” from history, thus, these populations were often viewed as an impediment for national progress; as such, they were taken as “necessary victims” (DUSSEL, 2002) of modernity and are “turned into “minorities” so that this status validates ethno-genocides.
(founded in 1838), the Instituto Historico y Geografico (founded in 1855), the Argentine Junta de Historia y Numismatica (founded in 1901), the Mexican Academia de Letras (founded in 1836) and the Academia Brasileira de Letras (founded in 1898). All of these institutions adopted the values of Western civilization, the practice of Western science, literature and the arts, and the establishment of Western educational policies that were designed to progress the inclusion of their respective nations into the global “concert of nations” (DUTRA, 2007, p. 88).

In the case of post-independence Brazil, the quest for both nationalist and universalist expressions is more easily understood by considering how, despite the often resentful rhetoric against former Iberian rule, most political and intellectual elites still felt a profound identification with Luso-European civilisation. Although the country’s political and territorial autonomy underlined a break from former metropolitan-colonial hierarchies, intellectual emancipation was still measured in relation to positioning Brazilian cities (and citizens) closer to their European counterparts. Brazil’s continued official status as a Bragança-Hapsburg monarchy in the Americas only reinforced, notably among local elites, the idea of belonging to a wider and transcontinental Europeanised civilization. Throughout Dom Pedro I’s, and especially after the rise of his son D. Pedro II to power, Brazilian history discourses emphasised the benign heritage of Portuguese colonisation, resulting in the “construction of a Brazilian identity that was firmly attached to the colonial past (DUTRA, 2007, p. 86).

Fig 1.4 Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre. D. Pedro I. 1826. Oil on Canvas, 123 × 94 cm. Museu Histórico Nacional. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
As in most parts of Latin America, this context was defined not only by the ambivalent cry for political sovereignty and for continued cultural consanguinity with Europe, but also by the need to make space for the European while maintaining control over territories largely populated by Indigenous peoples, mestizos, and African groups. Similar to countries such as Mexico with its undeniable miscegenated population, Brazil also experienced “the tension of creating a national art and identity” that, simultaneously, affirmed the country’s “difference from Europe and similarity to it” (WIDDIFIELD, 1996, p. 5).

Unsurprisingly, the authoritarian Brazilian political context led to an equally restricted concept of national culture. The Monarchic regime restricted full citizenship only to prosperous men (CARVALHO, 2007) which not only favoured a plutocracy that excluded civil rights for the great majority of the population - namely, rural workers, women, Indigenous and Afro-descendant populations - it also established a national culture based on productive (male and Euro-descendant) intellectuals. Not surprisingly, this restricted and elite-based concept of culture “stood in grand contrast to the regional folk cultures, vital, hybrid, and in constant formation, in which all Brazilians participated, and in which the various contributions of native peoples, African peoples, and the Portuguese met and mingled” (NEEDELL, 1999, p. 3).

In that environment, political independence was followed by the continuation of most artistic, urban and scientific projects initiated earlier with the Portuguese court transmigration. Although Portugal avoided the raid of Napoleonic forces, Brazil did not escape the invasion of French-inspired intellectual and artistic trends brought from Lisbon. This was especially true in the imperial capital, Rio de Janeiro, which was showcased as the foremost evidence of local sophistication. Thus ironically, the former colony continued most of the colonial enterprise after independence. Indeed, in these early attempts to affirm a European-like society inside an overseas, tropical and multi-ethnic territory, already visible were the complex identity conflicts and paradoxes that not only Brazil but most Latin American countries would exhibit for years to come: “to no longer be colonial meant embracing a colonial project: to ‘civilise’” (SCHULTZ, 2001, p. 102).

The Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA), as a result, cannot be understood outside of this largely state-promoted “civilising” process that was launched with Portuguese King D João VI, which increased during the independent reigns of both Pedros and, arguably, which continues in modified form until the present republican day.
1.2 Romanticism rendered in feather pens and brushes

As expected, these attempts to nationalise populations either by persuasion or by force\(^{30}\), along with the active resistance and creative agency that workers, women, Indigenous peoples and Afro-Brazilians had in shaping this process, has given space to a broad debate and diverse discourse. Nonetheless, beyond successful efforts to draw attention to local and specific nation-buildings processes, most scholars agree that, globally, the production of historical discourses was “a crucial element with which to construct nations and national identity. Creating national historical

\(^{30}\) The references to how state administrators used both force and persuasion in their attempts to nationalise wider sectors of society should not be understood as clear/antagonistic strategies. Rather both terms are employed here to refer to a wide spectrum of (often-blurred and simultaneous) strategies that ranged from the most unambiguous use of physical violence (such as military actions, punishment of deviant behaviours and heterodox cultures, incarceration, death penalties, expropriation/relocation from “state” territories, etc) to the subtest forms of control, such as the creation of universal education system, mass propaganda, regional alliances and other power negotiations. It is important to note that, beyond any national policies imposed vertically by state agents and institutions, nation-building studies are never complete without understanding power relations that occur horizontally, that is, of forms of control/authority that extrapolate the direct realm of the state and formal politics. Arguably, Michel Foucault has been the most influential author in suggesting how power relations should be understood not only as repressive actions associated with the state’s apparatus, but also as productive/positive actions produced by every day citizens. His works have opened a challenging task of understanding power-knowledge relations inside societies not only through visible and macroscopic forms of coercion but also through the \textit{microphysics} of power; not only through the way governments have imposed themselves over societies, but also how societies have accepted and reproduced governability itself. (FOUCAULT, 1991) Throughout this thesis, I will approach this theme in accordance to Etienne Balibar’s insightful suggestion that the fundamental problem is not how the state’s vertical “top down” forces operate to create national communities, or what he provocatively denominates “producing the people”, but how “the people produce itself continually as national community” (BALIBAR, 1991, p. 93).
consciousness was widely seen as the most important precondition for engendering true national feeling in the wider population” (BERGER, 2007, p. 1).

Indeed, the creation or invention of national histories, and the institutional attempts of state administrators and elite groups to disseminate them on the nation-state, along with the critical reaction to these discourses from subaltern and marginalised populations, seems to be a topic that unites most emerging nineteenth-century Latin American and European nation-states. The nineteenth-century introduced a period in which national histories gradually gained as much prominence as previous traditional forms of knowledge - religion or family genealogies - in daily practices. At first limited to elite groups, an increasing assimilation of all populations within a state boundary as a national population, as “homo-nationalis from cradle to grave” (BALIBAR, 1991, p 93), evolved during this period.

The advancement of feelings of (historical) belonging over broad segments of society was a gradual and often conflictive process. Print media was only one of the forms for the dissemination of Brazilian national-historical discourses. Gradually a rising tide of books and newspapers, art and museum exhibitions, public monuments, songs and anthems, theatrical productions and other media forms emanated from the initial centre, Rio de Janeiro, to hegemonically immerse the territory’s population in the consensual view of the history of Brazil. Across Brazil, this gradual construction of the “historical culture” that began to mobilise nineteenth-century society broadly can be evoked as historical knowledge began to circulate not only through the ink on pages but also through recited melodies, not just pressed into cellulose but also brushed onto canvas, not merely through library stacks but through shining bronze and marble public monuments, i.e., the history of Brazil evolved as a common subject both to lettered cities (RAMA, 1984) and to oral-visual suburbs.

This rise of history (BANN, 1995) as a pervasive and popular form of knowledge, and its powerful and unprecedented use for the development of nineteenth-century identity discourses, attracts scholars of varied interests. Among the possible paths of inquiry, this thesis concentrates on two interrelated phenomena that evolved with the creation and popularisation of a (written and

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31 I borrow Arno Wehling’s definition of “historical culture”, for whom it identifies a historical moment in which intellectuals and popular groups began to recognise their cultural affinities and social interaction having historical knowledge as a bond: “the concept of historical culture has been historically used to designate the spreading of nineteenth century historicism beyond the limits of the intellectual world, generating new attitudes in broader sectors of society. A new Weltanschauung, if we use the term traditional German philosophy, based on the perception of historicity by an audience much broader than scholarship communities of the time. Patriotism, nationalism, political romanticism are other variables of the Euro-American mind-set of the nineteenth century which are interlaced with the concept of historical culture” (WEHLING, 1999, pp. 29-30).
visual) history of Brazil: the advent of the romanticism movement and the professionalisation of history as a discipline.

While the word romanticism (or the expression Romantic Era) is still controversial, it can be conveniently used to refer to a body of literary, artistic and intellectual production that, although originating in the second half of eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Europe, had tremendous impact on Latin American art and historiography throughout the nineteenth-century. Although it covers diverse geographic areas and multiple fields of scientific and artistic production, romantic movements were usually centred on the search for a unique national past and culture that distinguished a nation; or what came to be known, inspired by the works of Johann Herder, as volkgeist or “spirit of a people”.

Like their neighbouring and European peers, nineteenth-century Brazilian romantic-nationalists, were also busy writing “heroic histories and [honouring] national heroes” as well as seeking “evidence of a distinctive national culture in their literature, music, and cuisine” (DOYLE and PAMPLONA, 2006, p. 6). Far from a local manifestation, thus, the search for historical national roots that informed Brazilian romanticist expressions are better seen inside a transnational movement that contributed to what art historian Stephen Bann identifies as the rise of a collective historical-mindedness. In this context, history “became over half a century or so the pragmatic form of knowledge to which all others aspired”; managing also to thrust “its way into the traditional modes of painting at the time” (BANN, 1995, p. 3).

Historical consciousness also seeped into the works of the AIBA’s teachers and students. Since romantic nationalism also common at the same period. That is, romantic expressions based on the subjectivity of the modern nineteenth-century individuals, whose production (notably artistic ones) were guided by valuing a person’s intimate feelings and individuality (see NUNES, 1978). For reasons of space and focus, this thesis will not directly address the extremely influential national-romantic movement found in Brazilian literature. Analogous to the historians and painters studied here, romantic writers were actively engaged throughout the nineteenth-century in similar projects of demonstrating cultural equivalency to Europe while contributing to position the country intellectually and politically along with the rest of the sovereign and “civilised” group of nations. It is also undeniable that their prolific production in prose and verse contributed to shape and popularise a History of Brazil in the minds and hearts of distinct Brazilian social groups. However, this thesis is assumedly restricted to the creation of what has been called an “official history” of Brazil. As it has been mentioned, this form of historical knowledge was directly connected to the state’s financial and logistical support. It is true that the monarchic state constantly commissioned works from romantic writers, especially poems. Yet, as historian Arno Wehling (1999) argues, while literary romanticism should be considered as one fundamental agent for the “politics of national memory” in the nineteenth century, it was a rather “spontaneous” movement that (different from institutions such as the IHGB or the AIBA) did not depend on direct subsidies from the Brazilian monarchy to survive. An example of this relative autonomy of romantic literature of the state can be attested in the publicly bitter relationship between Emperor Dom Pedro II and José de Alencar, who is often regarded as the most notorious and influential of the romantic novelists. However, even if it deliberately tries to evade the direct theme of literary romanticism, this thesis will frequently have to acknowledge the contribution of novelists/poets to the production of

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32 In addition to this “historical” romanticism, scholars usually distinguish also a type of “psychological” romanticism also common at the same period. That is, romantic expressions based on the subjectivity of the modern nineteenth-century individuals, whose production (notably artistic ones) were guided by valuing a person’s intimate feelings and individuality (see NUNES, 1978).

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geographical bonds, it was no coincidence that historical knowledge eventually became an unavoidable reference to most narrative forms during the nineteenth century, paintings included. Across Latin America, more than the specialised knowledge of historians or teachers, history narratives became “the hegemonic discourse as all other disciplines appealed to it to explain their subject matter and acquire legitimacy” (UNZUETA, 2003, p. 130).

As a result, to fully understand the way romanticism influenced the complexion of the institution’s canvases, especially the nationally-inspired history paintings, the AIBA’s close relationship with the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) must be examined. After all, it was in this key imperial institution that an official history of Brazil was initially produced, professionalised and validated.

Directly modelled on the Institut Historique in Paris (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 13), the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) was founded in 1838 in the context of this rising transcontinental national-romanticist movement, and rapidly became indistinguishable from most cultural and political transformations in post-independence Brazil. The imperial government entrusted the institution - headquartered in the then capital city of Rio the Janeiro and flanked by several sister provincial institutions - with the ambitious task of coordinating and writing the history of the then newly independent state. The institution’s progress reports were to be shared with the rest of nation through its periodical publication, the Revista do Instituto Historico e Geographico do Brazil (RIHGB).
At the IHGB’s opening speech, Januário da Cunha Barbosa summarised the IHGB's rather straightforward yet monumental task of writing a "general history and philosophy of Brazil":

Today, we are gathered to commence the works of the proposed Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute, and by this act, to show the cultured nations that we also care for the glory our country's history, and proposing to assemble, in this lettered association, the diverse geographical explanations and events of our history, so they can be shared with the rest of the world, purified from the errors and inaccuracies that stain them in the many national and foreign publications. (RIHGB, 1839, p. 9)

The IHGB’s significance not merely as an academic centre but also as a key institution for assuring educational and cultural development for the Brazilian population seemed self-evident to its founding members, as can be attested in the opening paragraphs of its inaugural journal:

Being undeniable that Arts and Letters, beyond contributing to the adornment of society, also powerfully influence the strength of its foundations, either by enlightening its members, or by sweetening public customs, it is evident that in a constitutional monarchy (…) Arts and Letters are an absolutely indispensable necessity, specially those which, by addressing the Country's History and Geography, can offer great assistance to the public administration and to the enlightenment of all Brazilians. (RIHGB, 1839, p. 5)

As a result, beyond merely recording the country’s past, IHGB’s duties were clearly linked to securing Brazil’s future alongside other European nations. Similarly to the AIBA’s production, the IHGB ambit was twofold: “to explain the genesis of the Brazilian nation” while, at the same time, “to integrate [the nation] inside the tradition of progress and civilisation”, defining it as a “white and European civilisation” re-created in the tropics (GUIMARÃES, 1988, pp. 7, 8).

In a solemn session attended by Emperor D. Pedro II, the IHGB president Cândido José de Araújo Vianna reiterated the institution’s imperial loyalties and dedication to national development:

Many are the benefits that the Institute has received from the liberal hand of Your Imperial Majesty. I hope that the members of the IHGB, continuing their arduous works, will improve their zeal to meet with the paternal expectations of Your Imperial Majesty, and the solicitude with which Your Imperial Majesty incessantly promotes regarding everything related to the nation’s prosperity and splendour. (RIHGB, 1849, p. 551)
The IHGB’s explicit role of writing a national history that could provide virtuous examples that contributed to Brazil’s future glory had been summarised in Barbosa’s opening speech:

Our history exceeds with models of virtue; yet, a great number of glorious feats die or sleep in obscurity, without benefiting subsequent generations. Brazil can however present through history a great list of distinct men of knowledge and of other brilliant qualities, which will be studied and emulated by [our present] sons. We have lacked those who could present this in an orderly fashion; organising it according to times and places, so it can be better understood by those who wish to follow their steps in the paths of honour and national glory (RIHGB, 1839, p. 15-6).

Lilia M. Schwarcz’s (2004) biography of D. Pedro II documents how the young monarch’s support was fundamental to the IHGB’s romantic mission of discovering the country’s unique traditions to promoting Brazil’s place among civilised nations. The Brazilian Emperor not only became a direct sponsor contributing most of the IHGB’s funds, but actually offered a palatial room for the historian’s regular meetings. In addition to attending most of the institution’s selective gatherings until his dethronement in 1889, he was also known for making known his views on the need to investigate, systematise and disseminate national traditions. Directly, D. Pedro II gave his view on the links between historical research and the prospects of a glorious national future, when he commented on the importance of the IHGB’s periodical journal:

It is undeniable, gentlemen, that your trimestral publication has provided valuable services, showing to the old world the esteem that the use of intelligence also deserves in the new world; however, in order for this objective to be perfectly met, it is necessary that you not only gather works from previous generations, but that

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34 It is important to emphasise that this proximity between historiography and politics, between the IHGB historians and the state’s moral-educational projects, went much beyond the mere production of pro-monarchic books and speeches. Many of the IHGB original members, after all, formed part of what historian Arno Wehling (1999, p. 35-6) appropriately called a Brazilian “moderate political elite”, that is, a group initially engaged in re-establishing a Brazilian constitutional monarchy centred in the city of Rio de Janeiro. One should not forget that, at the year of the institute’s foundation, Brazil experienced some of the most turbulent moments of the interim regency government established after the departure of emperor D. Pedro I to Portugal in 1831, leaving his 5-year old son Pedro II in Brazil. Four major regional revolts, the Cabanagem, the Sabinada, the Balaiada and the Farroupilha, were happening simultaneously in all corners of the vast new country. In this context, beyond any exclusive archival and office activities, most of the IHGB members were also active players in public-governmental spheres, notably in fighting for the country’s unity; even contributing to the legal lowering of the “age of majority” of the then 14-year old D. Pedro II (a move often called as the Majority Coup – Golpe da Maioridade)-, which formally declared him as the ruler of Brazil and ended 3 years earlier with the regency period (1831-1840) (GUIMARÃES, 1995). It is not possible, thus, to understand IHGB historians’ academic accomplishments without acknowledging their political practices as part of a moderate elite who fought not only against federalist-regional movements that threatened Rio’s administrative hegemony, but also against the plausible risks of a return to the excesses of a non-constitutional monarchy. That is, as men who were “opposed, ideologically, both to a Jacobin political model and its democratic solution and to neo-absolutist model of restoration” (WEHLING, 1999, p 35) that haunted Brazilian regency period between 1831-1840.
you also make the generation to which I belong to be worthy of praise from posterity: do not divide your strength, the love for science is exclusive, and, working together towards such a noble, useful and difficult enterprise, lets raise a standard of glory for the civilisation of our homeland (RIHGB, 1849, p. 552).

This nexus between historiography and politics, notably in the way IHBG historians and Pedro II joined in a pragmatic attempt to use representation of the past to reaffirm the strength of the post-1822 constitutional-monarchic regime, was ironically labelled as a “courtly society” of history writers (SCHWARCZ, 1999, p. 115) by a succeeding generation of historians.

The works of the so-called founding father of Brazilian historiography and zealous monarchist, Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen, provide a clear example of this assumed applicability of history production to the benefit of the state. Intertwined in his genuinely erudite and archival works resulting from vast original historical research, Varnhagen’s monarchic loyalty “aimed at the improvement of Brazilian society: the goal was to be useful, the means to achieve it was through a work that combined, in the author’s purpose, both scientific authority and social pedagogy” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 58).

Alongside the IHGB, an analogous courtly visual society was being developed at the AIBA at the same time with similar monarchic support. As earlier noted, it was also during Pedro II’s reign that the AIBA came to enjoy a more stable situation, due to an increase of state support and funding. Similarly to the IHGB, the Emperor launched the distribution of awards, medals, European scholarships and insignia to the most celebrated artists, as well as actively participating

Fig 1.6 D. Pedro II. Victor Meirelles. 1864. Oil, 252 X 165 cm. São Paulo Art Museum (MASP) – São Paulo
in the annual AIBA General Exhibitions (SCHWARCZ, 2006). Due to such monarchical proximity, obscured borders between art and politics marked most AIBA works and public speeches during the second reign. On the occasion of his visit to Italy, celebrated AIBA painter and teacher Pedro Américo stated a similar connection between the promotion of art and the intellectual development of a particular civilisation:

Art is, everywhere, the material expression of thought, the visible and undeniable proof that a society has or has not ideas, aspirations and sensitivity of its own. A country where there is no art is not a real homeland for the men who live by intelligence; it is simply a country, with no ambition to nestle a predestined society (MELO, 1844).

Most other AIBA members proudly recognised a direct association between the Fine Arts and the moral-intellectual development of the Brazilian society. Although AIBA members had underscored links between art and national progress since the institution’s inception, this task became even more evident after the institution came under the direction of Manoel Araújo Porto-Alegre. Working as a writer, painter, architect, diplomat and professor since the 1820s, Porto-Alegre played a central role in shaping the “nationalistic, intensively nativist” characteristics of the Brazilian romanticism movement as a whole, and in the realms of fine arts in particular (CARDOSO, 2000, p. 58). With direct support from D. Pedro II, who entrusted him with a new a reform35 of the AIBA, Porto-Alegre re-directed the institution by encouraging teachers and students to focus on the quest for a genuine Brazilian art36. As a consequence, he reaffirmed “the

35 Transformations in the AIBA’s artistic teaching and administrative organization are usually linked to its two major reforms. The first in 1831, known as the “Lino Coutinho Reform”, occurred under the administration of Félix Émile Taunay. It basically updated the founding document approved by the chief of the French Mission, Joachim Le Breton, during the establishment of the Royal Academy of Arts and Crafts (Escola Real de Ciências Artes e Ofícios) in 1816, which served as model for the provisional AIBA act until 1831. The “Lino Coutinho” reform is celebrated for having consolidated the AIBA’s public General Exhibitions, for awarding scholarships for students to travel to Europe, for improving the Institution’s library and translating foreign books in order to assist in its method of European-inspired artistic training. The second major pedagogical and administrative transformation in the AIBA, known as the “Pedreira Reform”, was conducted by Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre, with the objective to modernise the Academy according to new trends in teaching and producing art. Deeply influenced by his stay and training in Europe (1831-37), Porto-Alegre established new disciplines for the specific training of geometric design, industrial design, theory of shadows and perspective, applied mathematics, theory of art, archaeology and aesthetics. He is also regarded as having started the romantic-nationalist phase of the institution, stimulating the AIBA’s students and teachers to the search for a specific Brazilian art.

36 The search for an authentic Brazilian history had to several practical effects for fine arts training in Brazil. In particular, AIBA artists informed by romantic-nationalistic ideals gradually began to challenge the “Neo-classical heritage to which the Academy still officially subscribed” (CARDOSO, 2000, p. 58). As a result, Greco-Roman and biblical-inspired subject matters gave space to paintings that relied on history accounts for distinctly Brazilian motifs and inspirational narratives. As will be detailed in the next chapter, in line with Brazilian historians and writers’ decision to use Indigenous-inspired traditions and motifs to praise the distinctiveness of Brazilian culture, several AIBA artists also began to depict Tupi-Guaranis as main symbols of their representations of the national past.
political role of the arts in the service of moral and intellectual formation of new generations” and defended an even “closer relationship between artists and the state” (SCHLICHTA, 2006, p. 256). The institution’s new 1855 statutes clearly state its national-political goals of “promoting the progress of Arts in Brazil” and to fight against “the errors introduced [in the country] regarding taste”, but to do this in a way as to “assist the Government in such an important objective (AIBA, 1855, p. 3).

In this, the AIBA’s role was not different from its sister institutions across Europe and the Americas, such as the Chilean Academia de Pintura and the Mexican San Carlos Academy - the latter one considered “as part of the state’s bureaucracy and effective in educating its citizens” (WIDDIFIELD, 1996, p. 17); or from the American Academy of Fine Arts in the United States, responsible for instilling “virtue, morality, and gentility in all Americans” (REBORA, 1995, p. 229). In alignment with their international peers, AIBA artists operated within an artistic ethos in which “art and politics established constant dialogues regarding the construction of national identities” (PRADO, 2007, p. 187).

In his speech as newly appointed director, for example, Manoel Araújo Porto-Alegre suggested that the mastering of a refined drawing technique would not only benefit the specific training of Fine Arts itself, but should also be considered as a:

Civilisatory element, a social thermometer, and the base for a guaranteed development (...) The vulgar spirits consider it an artistic luxury, a pleasurable hobby, however, the educated men, those of superior intelligence, see it as a necessity for civilisation; because it is a revelation of thought itself, and the universal writing of the language of forms (PORTO-ALEGRE, 1855)37.

Speaking at the opening 1870 ceremony of the AIBA’s course of Aesthetics, Art History and Archaeology, in the presence of the Emperor, Pedro Américo would publicly praise Porto-Alegre’s pioneering efforts in creating a national art:

it is my responsibility, as his pupil and as professor of aesthetics, to pay [him] tribute; since he was the first among us who spoke the language of beauty; aiming always to share with his eloquent and authoritative word the immutable truths upon which should stand the convictions of the artist and the poet; receive, thus, my humble gratitude tribute to he who, wishing to serve his country, was able to create a truly national academy (MELO, 1888, pp. 8-9).

Nearly fifteen years later, Pedro Américo reaffirmed his nationalistic approaches by stating that every artist should “aspire to directly collaborate with the statesman and the soldier in the strengthening and beautifying of the common fatherland” (MELO, 1888, p. 132).

Fig 1.7 Pedro Américo. *Retrato de (Portrait of) Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre*. Oil on Canvas 81 × 65 cm, 1869, Museu Dom João XVI, Rio de Janeiro.

It is not the case here to quote the countless examples of AIBA or IHGB member’s speeches proudly linking the development of Brazilian history and art to the progress of the state itself. The point to emphasise is that, far from the alleged creativity and autonomy of research goals cherished by most contemporary artists and historians, their nineteenth-century Brazilian peers created history images and texts aligned with state goals. In order to stimulate the broad nation-building process underway, as well as to build his personal reputation as a Maecenas and an enlightened King in the model of Luis XIV, Dom Pedro II clearly understood the importance of having both “historians to formulate a national tradition and painters to glorify it” (SCHWARCZ, 2004, p. 92). In this respect, art historian Maraliz Christo accurately summarised the hierarchical and “a priori roles” of the state and its institutions in the establishment of a national memory: “the emperor would order, the Institute would write, the Academy would illustrate” (CHRISTO, 2009, p. 1153).  

38 It is necessary to note that, although such “a priori” roles existed, this is not mean that artists strictly followed and/or had their creativity limited by them. Although the production of visual histories respected the implied hierarchies between the Imperial State, IHGB and AIBA’s respective places in the production of knowledge, it would be naive to reduce paintings in this period to simply subordinate productions or literal translations of “official” state
Consistent with romantic-nationalist movements elsewhere, both historians and artists regarded historical knowledge as a matter residing well beyond mere erudite occupation or artistic inspiration. Rather, history was a central agent for stabilising the existence of the very Brazilian Empire that they were helping to build and by which, in most cases, they were directly employed.39

Using Victor Meirelles’ famous painting *A Primeira Missa no Brazil*, the following chapter presents a detailed comparison of the complementary works of AIBA artists and IHGB historians in inventing written and visual histories of Brazil. Specifically, it demonstrates how one of the most famous history painters of the time managed to critically and creatively negotiate his duties to simultaneously follow the state’s national agenda, the IHGB’s historiographical models and to meet the contemporary aesthetic demands of the time.

The analysis of Meirelles’ painting will shed light on the reasons why AIBA artists, like their peers elsewhere, defined history paintings as a prime genre only taught to select students, as well as the only one considered capable of the “grand mission of eternalising national history episodes” (FERNANDES, 2007b). In understanding how fine arts in general - history paintings in particular - played pivotal educational-moral roles inside the state national project, the next chapter provides fresh evidence of how the Brazilian “imagined community” relied not only on

orders and/or and historians’ authoritative written texts. Indeed, several studies have been emphasising how although the IHGB indeed “began to dictate the parameters that would guide the writing of the history of the country” and that “this orientation certainly marked the production of historical painting thereafter”, it would be a mistake to understand “the artistic work as a mere transposition of a historical narrative to a screen, as the artists responded to this demand in different ways”. (PEREIRA, 2008, pp. 34-5). Indeed, as will be detailed in the following chapters, Brazilian painters creatively operated and negotiated in between state demands and their own personal ambitions. That is to say, while they acutely followed nineteenth-century imperial procedures, their paintings often reveal transgressions and personal inputs that transcend state and/or historians publications.

39 More than twenty of the 27 founding-members of the IHGB occupied high-ranking positions inside the state bureaucracy (SCHWARCZ, 1999, p 114). The significant presence of imperial politicians and bureaucrats as core members of the IHGB throughout the nineteenth-century attest how the borders between a pro-monarchic agenda and academic ambitious were inevitably blurred during the first decades of the institution: “individuals who worked for the public sector prevailed at the IHGB, especially those who were part of the State apparatus. Ultimately, this entailed a double subjection to D. Pedro II – maecenas of the IHGB and the highest authority in the country. In short, two words characterise the group, dependency and loyalty. To the Crown and to the Emperor” (GUIMARÃES, 1995, pp. 497-498). A similar situation also defined the AIBA. Most of this institution’s members not only directly worked for the Imperial bureaucracy, but also were also members of the IHGB, including Félix-Émile Taunay and Araújo Porto Alegre. This suggests how “both institutions evidently worked very closely” (CHRISTO, 2009, pp. 1153-4). Analogously to the IHBG’s scholars, AIBA artists followed a nationalist-romantic agenda, “committed to the official program, directed to the cult of the fatherland, through the narrative of the nation’s past; to the consecration of moral and virtues, through its symbols and allegories” (FERNANDES, 2007b).
spontaneous print capitalism but also on systematic government art “subsidism” to advance national feelings of belonging.

Pedro Álvares Cabral (...) named the land he discovered Holy Cross, and by this name it was known for many years. However, it was [the devil’s] work that the first name was forgotten, leaving it with the name of Brazil due to the red and burnt wood of the same name used to dye cloth, and not the divine wood that gave colour and virtue to all the sacraments of the Church (...) Because of this, [Brazil] remained so unstable that, just as it began to be settled, many places are already depopulated and, although the land is so vast and fertile, it does not prosper, instead it declines.

(Friar Vicente de Salvador, Historia do Brazil, 1627, p. 15)

My homeland has palm-trees
where the thrush sings;
The birds that sing here
Do not sing as they do there.
Our skies have more stars,
Our valleys have more flowers.
Our forests have more life,
Our lives have more loves.

(Gonçalves Dias, The Song of Exile, 1843)

This chapter advances the discussion of the relation between texts and images in nineteenth-century Brazil. Unlike the first chapter, though, devoted to the broad theme of how works produced at the IHGB and the AIBA played a central and complementary role in inventing an “official” history of Brazil, the following pages focus on a close comparative analysis of a specific painting, A Primeira Missa no Brasil (The First Mass in Brazil), signed by Victor Meirelles in 1860, and a single historical text, A Carta de Caminha (The Letter of Caminha), written in 1500 by Pero Vaz de Caminha. This comparison will show how the works and methods developed by professional historians informed Brazilian history painters. A conjoint analysis of Meirelles’ painting and Caminha’s sixteenth-century source is also instrumental in understanding how both historical texts and images have tended to depict Brazil through antithetical, dichotomous lenses: either as an earthly Eden or as a terrestrial purgatory; covered by a benign-healing environment or by a torrid-pestilent landscape; blessed with either a promising future or feared as a condemned part of the globe; and whose population was either portrayed as noble and pure or as treacherous and evil. Furthermore, I will show how both Caminha and Meirelles, by producing two of the most famous “edenic” representations of Brazilian colonisation, played an important role in
disseminating an interpretation of the formation of the Brazilian nation-state as though it were based on a relatively peaceful and straightforward evolutionary process, especially in comparison with its South American neighbours.

2.1 Sacred science and historic mass

In a brief passage of his book *A Arte Brasileira* (1888), Luis Gonzaga Duque-Estrada affirms that Victor Meirelles’ *A Primeira Missa no Brasil* became “a true [artistic] triumph” largely because of the painter’s correct choice of subject matter, one that matched his personal “ideas and intimate convictions”. According to Duque-Estrada, Victor Meirelles’ introverted and modest personality prevented him from “seeing the tragic side” of battles, a condition that explained why most of his historical paintings based on war themes had never turned out to be exceptional art works. The theme of the peaceful encounter between Indigenous peoples and Europeans depicted in *The First Mass*, on the other hand, favoured the “poetic sentiment with which [Meirelles] interprets nature”, his “gentle and harmonious” techniques of colouring, his skilled “aerial perspectives”, his precise and methodical skill in drawing, and his “subtle and nuanced opposition of shadow and light”, all of which had helped to “spiritualise” the final composition (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888. p. 153).

In addition to concluding that the painter’s timid personality and gentle painting techniques suited the depiction of non-belligerent themes, Duque-Estrada also suggests that Meirelles’ work was particularly successful because of its historiographical accuracy. Specifically, he praises the painter for his visual summary of all that could be said about the colonial event in question, namely, the Catholic mass celebrated on May 1 of 1500, which blessed the lands Captain Pedro Álvares Cabral unilaterally declared as a new possession of the Portuguese Empire:

(Victor Meirelles’) first mass could not be but what is there. It had to be, necessarily, that arrangement, an altar, a priest officiating, another serving as acolyte, the Portuguese garrison watching the divine ceremony, the gentiles cautiously coming closer, admiring, imitating what they saw being done. This is *what history tells us and nothing more*. (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888. p. 145-6) (Italics added)

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40 Similar to Gonzaga Duque-Estrada, nineteenth-century writer Félix Ferreira also accused Victor Meirelles of having wasted his time painting “bloody wars”, agreeing that the painter’s talents were more suited to the representation of the native landscape and other national themes. (SALGUEIRO, 2002)
Duque-Estrada’s absolute confidence that Meirelles’ artwork was a faithful historical account (and nothing more) offers a useful point of departure for a deeper discussion of the relationship between historians and artists in nineteenth-century Brazil. Implicit in the critic’s assertion is the assumption that Victor Meirelles’ merits rested simultaneously on his talents both as painter and historian. The first chapter of this thesis addressed in general terms the way works of art produced at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) were closely informed by research and publications coming out of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHBG). It is important to add, however, that the way historians’ methods and publications became an unavoidable reference for history painting was not restricted to the nineteenth-century Brazilian artistic milieu; it was common practice in academies across the Americas and Europe at that time. Peter Burke went so far as to affirm categorically that nineteenth-century history painters should “be regarded as historians in their own right”, since they not only “learned from the work of professional historians” but also conducted original and meticulous research that contributed to the interpretation of the past (BURKE, 2001, p. 158). Similarly, Stephen Bann suggests that the source-based accuracy and first-hand accounts that informed the works of painters at the time were a direct result of a “historical fever” that characterised the romantic epoch as a whole (BANN, 1984). Further, Bann noted the increasing acceptance of empirical and archival methods developed by professional historians, among which the works of German historian Leopold von Ranke and his search for history “as it really happened” occupied a central place⁴¹. Bann’s study of Paul Delaroche, for example, reveals how one of France’s most accomplished nineteenth-century painters incorporated various historiographical methods in his paintings, including archival research and travel in order to expand his in-depth knowledge of his subject matter:

Delaroche made history his master: that is, he displaced the quest for the true style on to the search for the right source (…) There could be no guarantee that the public, or the critics would take the trouble to follow and check the process of verification that the artist had followed. But at least the artist had in his favour the general intellectual tendency of the age. In making himself, to a certain extent, an antiquarian, he participated with scholars, writers and other artists, who were likewise rejecting the history of ideas – as in the eighteenth century – and humbly submitting themselves to the tyranny of fact. (BANN, 1997, p. 155)

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¹¹ Peter Burke adds that, in addition to the field of Fine Arts, other nineteenth-century artistic genres such as the “historical novels in the manner Sir Walter Scott and Allezandor Manzonni” were equally engaged in the “accurate reconstruction of scenes in the past” (BURKE, 2001, p. 157)
Across the North Atlantic, careful research and historical accuracy “with regard to costumes, accessories, architectural setting, and when possible actual portraits” had also been a primary concern of many North American painters such as John Copley and Benjamin West at least since the end of the eighteenth century (AHRENS, 1980, p. 197). Evidence of how artists sought to add value to their paintings by relying on the professional status of the discipline of history is documented in increasing citations of primary sources used in the making of artworks. For example, an explanatory pamphlet accompanying John Chapman’s *The Baptism of Pocahontas* (1840) “quoted a number of Seventeenth Century sources relating to Pocahontas which had been his authority in the preparation of the painting” (AHRENS, 1980, p. 196). In referring to this deliberate incorporation of historiographical methods into painting, John Trumbull went so far as to declare himself as a “graphic historiographer” and “to take pride and conscious satisfaction” in informing his work according to historians’ procedures (BURNHAM, 1995, p. 40).

South of the Rio Grande and in tune with their North-American and European peers, Latin American history painters were equally concerned with associating their works with the methodological standards that were established during the ostensible “professionalisation of history” period, that is, at a time historians were actively engaged in “its transformation into a science” (IGGERS, 2006, p. 226). Some artists took this to extremes. For example, Uruguayan painter Juan Manuel Blanes (1830–1901), in his bid to join the Uruguayan Sociedad de Ciencias y Artes, argued for the possibility of reaching a “verisimilar representation of reality” and a “national-historical account through the use of a scientific method” (PRADO, 2007, p. 155). Further, to counteract any doubt about accuracies in his *El juramento de los Treinta y Tres Orientales* (The Oath of the Thirty-three Uruguayans), he went “so far as to bring sand to his studio from the place he was depicting in the historical scene” (ACHUGAR, 2009, p. 13). In the attempt to validate his 1873-74 historiographical research for another of his paintings, *Los últimos momentos del General José Miguel Carrera* (The Last Moments of General José Miguel Carrera), Blanes sought direct supervision from the then eminent Argentinian historian Ángel Justiniano Carranza (MEZA and VARAS, 2010).

Similarly, Chilean painter Pedro Subercaseaux also claimed historiographical erudition and accuracy in the making of the *Cabildo abierto del 22 de mayo de 1810* (Town Meeting of May 22, 1810). He affirmed that thirty of the sixty figures represented in his image had been based on his research of authentic documents (PRADO, 2010). Subercaseaux’s meticulous studies of military uniforms, arms and flags for several of his other history paintings brought him fame as a specialist on the theme, even allowing him to propose an original uniform for the Chilean military
forces that bore no resemblance to those of France and Germany (BARROS, 2000, p. 12). Because of his “veridical style”, formally committed to “truthfulness to facts and faithful documentation of elements”, Subercaseaux was long considered a “loyal chronicler of the feats” of Chile. Subercaseaux’s portrayal of history “without romanticist idealisations”, creating “almost photographic representation of characters” and in “fidelity to the reports left by chroniclers” is evident in a painting such as Primera Misa en Chile (First Mass in Chile, 1904, one of the most famous examples of the Chilean “realist school” (ROMERA, 1976, p. 130-1).

In Brazil, history painters similarly relied on primary and archival sources to authenticate their images. More than mere complementary proof of erudition, it was expected that Brazilian history painters should use the “methods of work of historians and follow their publications” as part of their AIBA training (CHRISTO, 2009, pp. 1153-4). The pressure on Brazilian artists to prove that their works relied on historians’ methods is wittily detailed by art historian Isis Pimentel de Castro in her analysis of the criticism Pedro Américo received for his monumental representation of the War of the Triple Alliance, A Batalha do Avahy (The Battle of Avahy). Drawing on François Hartog’s study of ancient Greek historians, Castro explains that a Herodotean tradition that held visual testimony (Opsis) as the most reliable guarantee of historical credibility still informed Brazilian nineteenth-century historiography. To make her point, Castro reconstructs a public debate between Pedro Américo and critics who had raised doubts about his painting’s veracity precisely because the painter had not travelled to Paraguay and, therefore, had not “seen” in person the actual historical place he narrated in images. To counter such accusations,
Castro shows how Pedro Américo cleverly relied on another Greek historical method to legitimate his paintings, by claiming to have plentiful evidence based on what he had heard (*Akoê*) from eyewitnesses to the event. In defending the authenticity of his painting, for example, Pedro Américo made public letters written by the commander of the battle, the Duke of Caxias, which confirmed the painter’s correct representation of the battle. Thus, despite never leaving Rio de Janeiro and basing his research exclusively on indirect sources, Américo was able to dismiss his critics by showing how Caxias had personally approved the overall visual reconstruction of the battle, as well as meticulous details; these included the way Américo had painted the commander’s unbuttoned military uniform and the sunbeams that suddenly filled the skies after the initial rainy hours of the battle (CASTRO, 2009, p. 44). To cement his claims of historical accuracy, Pedro Américo affirmed that he based *A Batalha do Avahy* on a manuscript Caxias wrote in 1869 detailing the battle. Furthermore, he relied on several other primary sources Caxias personally mailed to him from Brazil to Florence in a parcel containing “uniforms, arms, a map of the field, photographs (…) and some notes of the episode he suggested be painted” (ROSEMBERG, 2002, p. 30).

Américo employed similar indirect sources (*Akoê*) to attest to the veracity of other of his paintings, including *A Batalha de Campo Grande*, for which he asked Colonel Marques de Sá - an eyewitness to the event - to expressly confirm the accuracy of his visual narrative. In addition, the painter sent a letter to Colonel Rufino Galvão, to thank him for the loan of a sword, uniform, and other military artefacts he used in the making of the painting. In that letter, Américo requested that Galvão make a public statement attesting to the accuracy of his visual depiction of the battle (ROSEMBERG, 2002). It was certainly in order to avoid similar public debates and the need for eyewitness authentication, that Victor Meirelles opted to spend two months at the Paraguayan battlefront, studying *in loco* the soldiers, vegetation and topography he would depict in his own battle paintings; he personally witnessed the Brazilian and Argentinean forces conquest of the Fortress of Humaitá in 1868 (CARDOSO, 2007).

Beyond individual cases, the AIBA’s General Exhibitions catalogues document clear and plentiful evidence of how the institution systematically employed the authority of historians’ texts and/or historical sources to support its painters’ claims of historical accuracy. Texts in the printed catalogues provided viewers with detailed information about the artists and pieces on exhibit. In addition to a description of the painting, most catalogues also included a summary of the historical background of the subject matter portrayed. The deliberate use of historical detail in these texts aimed to provide a virtual experience of travel through space and time, in which the viewer/reader
felt as an eyewitness to the event represented. In the catalogue of the 1879 General Exhibition, for example, the historical summary accompanying Pedro Américo’s painting *A Batalha do Avahy* contained details such as the precise hour of the battle, a vivid description of how the weather had changed during the day and the identification of most officials represented. The previous General Exhibition catalogue of 1872 had already introduced Brazilian viewers to such detailed summaries; these included highly visual descriptions, including exact dates and times, individual names of historical characters and descriptions of the topography of other battles fought in Paraguay (CASTRO, 2009, p. 35).

As expected, the AIBA’s historical summaries were often grounded in the works of professional historians. The same 1879 catalogue, for example, reproduced nearly six pages of a historical summary of Victor Meirelles’ famous painting *A Batalha de Guararapes (The Battle of Guararapes)*, (1819), a monumental representation of one of the colonial battles against the Dutch occupation of northeastern Brazil. The link between this AIBA historical summary to the best-known work about the Dutch occupation published until then, *História das Lutas contra os Holandeses no Brasil desde 1624 a 1654*, written by IHGB historian Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen a few years before the exhibition was obvious. An erudite critic such as Duque-Estrada prided himself on identifying the precise moment chosen by the artist as “the unequal and fierce end of the Battle” described in Varnhagen’s book (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 151). In case there were any lingering doubts about the historical veracity of the text (and, by extension, of the image), the AIBA catalogue unambiguously cited Varnhagen’s in a footnote:

![Fig 2.2 Translation: (1)See. The official parts of Barreto de Menezes in the work *The Dutch in Brazil*, by Varnhagen, pag. 231” 1879 AIBA Catalogue, p. 21. source: http://www.dezenovevinte.net/catalogos/catalogos_1879.htm](image)

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42 In addition to Varnhagen’s book, the 1879 catalog also cites the work “Castrioto Lusitano”, by Rafael de Jesus, considered as one of the most important eighteenth-century documents on the presence of the Dutch in Brazil (CASTRO, 2009)
The 1879 catalogue presents several other examples of painters who rhetorically sought legitimation through historians’ works and historical sources for validation of their visual narratives. In the presentation of his painting *Elevação da Cruz* (*Elevation of the Cross*), for example, former AIBA student Pedro Peres quoted an entire paragraph from the book *History of Brazil*, written by English historian Robert Southey, published between 1810 and 1819. Painter Augusto Muller, in turn, quoted an ancient text by Titus Livius to confer authority on his historical portrait of the King of Numidia Jugurtha (modern-day Algeria). A few pages later in the same catalogue, a detailed description of another painting dedicated to the War of the Triple Alliance, *A Passagem de Humaitá* (*The Crossing of Humaitá*), by Victor Meirelles is documented. In addition to a detailed description of the historical event, the catalogue also emphasises the painter’s historical travels and research to enhance the authority of the artwork: “the artist, for the best development [of the painting], travelled to Paraguay funded by the Government to carry out his indispensable studies” (AIBA, 1979, p. 38). Similar to the pressure on professional historians to go beyond their cabinets to explore archives and authentic documents, history painters such as Meirelles could no longer be limited to studios, or judged solely on the merits of artistic talent and imagination. Rather, the careful reading of archival sources, the interviewing of eyewitnesses, the discovery of primary and secondary sources, the visiting of local archives, or even, travel to another country were expected.

Because of their stated commitment to historical truth, history painters were subject to criticism for even minor errors in their works. Despite his generally enthusiastic review of *A Batalha do Avahy*, for example, critic Duque-Estrada reserves harsh words for Pedro Américo’s inclusion of a Paraguayan family on the bottom right corner of the image. According to the nineteenth-century critic, the portrayal of this group of civilians trapped in the middle of the Avahy battle (a blind elderly man, a woman and three children traveling in an ox-drawn wagon) constituted a “dissonant note” in a well-executed composition overall. Duque-Estrada’s censure was not directed against the quality of the artistic representation, or to the original intention of contrasting “the delirium of the combatants with the helpless family” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 126). Although he criticised the “weak expression” of the mother, the strange way with which the boy “used his force” to pull the wagon and also the “disharmonious and heavy lines” that inhibited spectator’s interest in the group as a whole, Duque-Estrada praised their “well-drawn” bodies, “correct structures” and textures. He particularly liked the way the “old blind man is skilfully executed” both in drawing and colouring, as well as the “fortunate way with which his
face reveals the extremely cruel struggle his spirit is going through” at the moment of the battle (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 126).

However, if Duque-Estrada had mixed feelings regarding the quality of this part of the painting, he was unequivocal about the historical error the painter incurred by placing the Paraguayan family on the battlefield. To prove his point, Duque-Estrada cites a primary source⁴³ from which he concludes that Pedro Américo’s “group lacked truth” since there could not have been civilians roaming about that battlefield. Furthermore, based on his topographical knowledge of the Paraguayan landscape, Duque-Estrada contradicts Américo by affirming that residents of nearby regions such as “Villeta” and “Ypané” did not have to pass through the path of the Avahy battle in their travels. For this inaccuracy, Duque-Estrada affirms that the “detail [of the Paraguayan family] had damaged the whole” of the work (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 126-7).

Fig 2.3 Detail: “Paraguayan family”. A Batalha do Avahy (The Battle of Avahy), Pedro Américo, 1877. Oil, 600 x 1100 cm. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes (MNBA), Rio de Janeiro.

Although Duque-Estrada concluded that the Battle of Avahy was still the “finest work of art that Brazil had” produced until then, he was clearly disappointed at the way Pedro Américo had failed

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⁴³ Duque-Estrada cites a letter written by Duque de Caxias, in which the commander of the battle affirms that Paraguayan families had fled the region after the arrival of the Brazilian army: “It is the General himself who reports this on the Order of the Day number 272 of 14ᵗʰ of January, 1869: ‘during his travel [decrease]o J. M. Menna Barreto] saw an extraordinary number of Paraguayan families, who followed the wounded troops after the battle of the 6ᵗʰ and of the 11ᵗʰ who had fled, fearing the arrival of our troops” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 127)
to honour basic empirical-scientific procedures expected of (visual) historians at the time. For the critic, “in every work of art, what is most significant is the reality, the life, the truth” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p 127).

Duque-Estrada’s criticism is even sharper regarding the lack of historical truth in another of Pedro Américo’s work, Joana d’Arc ouvindo pela primeira vez a voz que lhe prediz o seu alto destino. (Joan of Arc listening for the first time to the voices that predict her higher destiny). The painting, included in the 1884 General Exhibition, depicts a young Joan of Arc at the moment her heroic vocation is revealed by God, represented by a luminescent, descending angel with extended wings on the upper-left canvas. At a time when professional historians were increasingly avoiding metaphysical and theological explanations of the historical process, replacing them with archivist and source-based deductions (WEHLING, 1999), Américo, according to Duque-Estrada, committed the inexcusable error of mixing a strictly historical theme with a fantastic biblical interpretation. For Duque-Estrada, the painting’s “idealised history” constituted an “extremely grave mistake” since it “perpetrated a crime against historical honesty”. Duque-Estrada expected an image based on what were then the most up-to-date scientific interpretations of the historical Joan of Arc, who was “not a biblical type, not a fiction of the Old Testament, but a truth in the domain of history” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, pp. 132-3). Duque-Estrada, citing historians Frederic Lock and Henri Martin, condemns Américo for ignoring the “psycho-physiological” scientific interpretations that challenged Joan of Arc’s divine calling: “the mysterious voice Joan of Arc heard was nothing more than a product of hallucination” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, p. 1888, p. 134-5). Pedro Américo’s research had ignored not only those two historians but also several other “scientific” scholars who had challenged theological interpretations of Joan of Arc; those oversights made his representation even feebler:

many other authors could corroborate this assertion. There is no denying: Joan of Arc was a poor hallucinating woman, victim of a brain development, [her nervous impressions were probably due] to strong hereditary influences (…) resulting in pathological disturbances that lead to her fanaticism. (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 135-136)

Thus, Duque-Estrada ended his essay on a pessimistic and ironic note, disturbed that “a history painter of the nineteenth-century” such as Américo could transform a rigorous historical theme such as the “maid of Domrémy” into a “a sacred history type”. Contrary to his critical yet undoubtedly enthusiastic review of A Batalha do Avahy written five years earlier, the critic concludes that Pedro Américo had stagnated during this period. He did not deny Américo’s
superior artistic qualities and potential; however, they were diminished by his “intact beliefs” and reliance on a “spiritual philosophy”, all of which had distanced the painter’s “mentality from the works of our times (…) from the necessities of our epoch” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 137).

![Fig 2.4 Joana d'Arc ouvindo pela primeira vez a voz que lhe prediz o seu alto destino. (Joan of Arc listening for the first time to the voices that predict her higher destiny). Pedro Américo, 1883. Oil, 229 × 156 cm. Museu Nacional de Belas Artes (MNBA), Rio de Janeiro.](image)

With this as background of how historians’ writings and scientific working methods informed nineteenth-century painters across Europe and the Americas, I return to Duque-Estradas’ positive appraisal of A Primeira Missa no Brasil that opened this chapter. Implicit in the critic’s positive review was the recognition that Meirelles’ work had been able to meet both artistic and historiographical standards of the time. Although Meirelles’ fundamentally religious subject matter could easily have lead to metaphysical and theological extrapolations, Duque-Estrada praised the painter’s restriction of his visual representation to a strictly historiographical interpretation. Implicit in the critics’ approval was also the recognition that Meirelles had made competent use of the most reliable primary source regarding the historical mass celebrated in 1500: the letter to King Dom Manuel I written by the Portuguese naval fleet’s notary Pero Vaz de Caminha, popularly known as A Carta de Caminha (The Letter of Caminha). Signed on May 1, 1500, Caminha’s letter is the best known of only two documents⁴⁴ that survived the Portuguese expedition that departed from Lisbon on the 12th of April, commanded by Captain Pedro Álvares.

⁴⁴The second one, popularly known as the Letter of the Master João, is a more technical account of the voyage written by the astronomer-physician who travelled in Cabral’s fleet, João Faras.
Cabral who sought the rich Calicut trade markets. According to traditional interpretation, Cabral’s vessels sailed westward as far as possible from the African continent in order to avoid the calm Gulf of Guinea. After many days sailing, the crew eventually disembarked on an unknown landmass which they immediately claimed for the Portuguese kingdom. Caminha’s letter is a detailed account of the so-called “discovery” of the land that the Portuguese initially named Terra de Vera Cruz (Land of the True Cross), but which subsequently was renamed Brazil due to the abundance of a tree called Pau-Brazil (Brazilwood). Because of its meticulous description of the landscape, fauna, flora and, particularly, of the first encounters between local Indigenous Tupis and the Portuguese, the Letter of Caminha is cherished both for its intrinsic historical value as the oldest record of the Portuguese colonisation in the Americas and, more importantly, for its symbolism as a foundational narrative of the Brazilian nation. As nineteenth-century historian Capistrano de Abreu famously explained, it is more than just an important document for the understanding of the beginnings of sixteenth-century colonisation: Caminha’s letter is often interpreted as “the birth certificate” of the Brazilian nation itself (ABREU, 1929).

Because of its descriptive value, historiographical authority and symbolism, Caminha’s words were the most reliable reference for the then young painter Victor Meirelles in the creation of his first grand-scale history painting at the conclusion of his nine-year study in European academies as an AIBA scholarship holder. Although living in Rome and Paris during this period, Meirelles continued to be diligently supervised by his Rio de Janeiro-based tutor, Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre. In their active correspondence Porto-Alegre recurrently instructs the young painter to use Caminhas’ letter in the creation of his painting. In an 1859 letter, for example, Porto-Alegre explicitly reinforces how he had “recommended [to Meirelles] the reading of the Letter of Pero Vaz de Caminha, who came with Cabral on the occasion of the Discovery. It will inspire you” (MELLO, 1982, p. 60). In addition to the unmediated account and detailed information that only a primary source could provide, Porto-Alegre knew that the use of the sixteenth-century document would – in accordance to an historian’s methodology - contribute historical credibility to his student’s final image. In simultaneously holding positions as an AIBA teacher and a member of the IHGB, Porto-Alegre was aware that the narration of history at the

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45 Since the nineteenth-century, Brazilian and Brazilianist historians have also considered the hypothesis of an “intentional” landing in the territory that today is known as Brazil (PEREIRA, 1979). According to this interpretation, rather than being lost because of avoiding the African coast, Cabral had been deliberately instructed by the Portuguese king to stop in the lands Europeans at the time considered as the “New World” they had “discovered”. Cabral’s landing, therefore, far from “accidental”, was part of a premeditated larger plan of the Portuguese to claim their own parts of the so-called “New World”, until then largely belonging to the Spanish Crown.
Historically, Brazilian art critics and historians agree that Victor Meirelles indeed followed Porto-Alegre’s guidance (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888; MELLO, 1982; COLI, 1998; CARDOSO, 2008). It can also be confirmed by an examination of Meirelles’ brushwork in dutifully rendering into images several excerpts of Caminha’s document. Meirelles’ composition attempts to visually translate one specific passage of *The Letter*: Caminha’s description of the moment when the Portuguese finally decided on the best place to celebrate the first mass on the shores of the “discovered” land. At the moment when they were joined by local Tupinikins, Caminha affirms that the Indigenous peoples acted spontaneously: “just as [the Tupinikins] saw us, some of them went under [the cross to help carry] it, to help us”, adding that:

After the cross was planted, with the arms and motto of Your Highness, which had before been fastened to it, they set up an altar under it. It was there that Friar Henrique said the Mass. (…) About fifty or sixty of them [Tupinikins] joined us, settled all on their knees like us. When it was time for the Gospel and we all stood up in uplifted hands, they stood up with us and lifted their hands, remaining like this until the end; and then they sat down again, like us. And when God’s body was elevated and we knelt, they stood just as we were, with their hands raised, and they were so calm, Your Highness, that I can attest that it gave us much devotion (…) (p.13).  

46 All the quotations of Caminha’s 1500 document are based on my translations of the full version of Caminha’s Letter available from the digital collection of the Brazilian National Library: http://objdigital.bn.br/Acervo_Digital/Livros_eletronicos/carta.pdf
In addition, Meirelles clearly relied on Caminha’s letter for details that enriched and offered more credibility to his visual narrative. For example, he depicted a “fifty or fifty-five year old” Indigenous male who “went amongst [the group of Tupinikin who remained after the mass was over] and spoke to them pointing to the altar and afterwards at heaven, as if he were telling them something of a good purpose; we took it so!” (p. 13). Clearly, Meirelles’ drew on Caminha’s recurrent descriptions of the “dark brown and naked” bodies of the local Indigenous peoples, who “had no coverings for their private parts”, and who used hats “of large feathers with a small crown of red and grey feathers, like a parrot’s”. Further, he relied on the highly visual account of the landscape the Portuguese were seeing for the first time, which included “a very high and rounded mountain, then other lower ranges of hills to the south of it, and a plain covered with large trees” (p. 1, 3).
Beyond the striking similarities between the 1500 document and the painting, further evidence that Victor Meirelles’ work relied on the Letter of Caminha to support its claims of historical accuracy is seen in the 1879 AIBA catalogue. The historical summary that introduces (validates) Meirelles’ work directly quotes Caminha’s words to describe the May 1st events the mass was celebrated; these included how the Portuguese “walked in procession” carrying the wooden cross and a “raised flag of Christ, chanting religious psalms”. In addition to affirming that the “savages [of the Tupinikin tribe] gave great attention to the sacred ceremony”, the summary also documents Caminha’s mention of an “old man who seemed to understand and explain to the others the holiness of the event” (AIBA 1879 catalogue, pp. 36-7).

In addition to basing his overall composition on a primary source, Victor Meirelles relied on another common method available for nineteenth-century painters who wished to enhance the validity of their historical narratives: quotation from previous works of art. Academic painters at the time maintained an intense self-referential dialogue with the history of European Art, and young painters like Victor Meirelles often “quoted the masters that preceded them” as a proof of artistic maturity (COLI, 1998, p. 376). Historians customarily legitimised their writings by
rhetorically quoting recognised texts; similarly, academic painters made strategic use of the “repertoire of models” and “iconographic references” available in the European painting tradition “to compose their own solutions or their own models” (ROSEMBERG, 2002, pp. 74, 78). Familiarity with works of art from antiquity and the Renaissance was a sign of erudition for both painters and audiences, since it suggested “an accomplishment comparable to the ability to recognise a quotation from Virgil and Horace” (ADES, 1989, p. 30). But young painters were also encouraged to study and follow the models of their contemporary nineteenth-century masters. In his years of Paris living, Meirelles found in the works of French master Horace Vernet a particularly appealing reference for the making of A Primeira Missa no Brasil. One of the most admired military painters of his time (THORNTON, 1996), Vernet had produced in 1854 a relatively well-known painting based on another Catholic mass that celebrated European colonisation, Première Messe en Kabylie. Vernet was an eyewitness (Opsis) to the mass celebrated as a result of the French conquest of Algeria and subsequently documented that experience. Victor Meirelles used this supplementary visual source to bolster his claim of historical accuracy:

The French painter had seen an equivalent scene, from a historical point of view, to what had happened in Brazil in 1500. The analogy was chosen [by Victor Meirelles] as an instrument of accuracy and truth: another painter, through his art, had become a witness to an event parallel to the one Meirelles should build for Brazilian art and history (COLI, 2005, pp. 32-3).

47 In Brazil, especially because of the Modernist movement’s emphasis on artistic originality and individuality after the 1920s, Academic training based on the methodical copy and quotation of previous works of art was often criticised as a proof of the AlBA’s lack of creativity. As a result, many academic painters were also accused of plagiarism (ROSEMBERG, 2002).
Although the almost identical staging of the altar and the priests gave rise to accusations that The First Mass of Brazil plagiarised Première messe en Kabylie, most art critics and historians consider Meirelles’ reference to Vernet’s work as legitimate and necessary. As the acknowledgment of paradigmatic prior models was an expected training exercise by aspiring academic painters, the young Brazilian painter might have been criticised if he had failed to cite such a work. Later, Victor Meirelles commented on the importance of European models when he was forced to defend his A Batalha dos Guararapes against critics attending the 1879 exhibition. On that occasion, he explained that he did not aim to portray the “cruel and savage” aspect of the battle but rather to pay a “debt of honour” to the patriotism of past “illustrious men”. Pointedly, Meirelles rhetorically discredited his critics by recalling his solid European training in “countries

48 Similar to most promising painters at the time, Victor Meirelles’ professional training began very early. When he was just 14, he met a councillor of the Brazilian empire traveling through the southern province of Santa Catarina, who, impressed with young boy’s talent, encouraged him to move to Rio. One year later, in 1847, Meirelles enrolled at the AIBA (XÉXEO, 2009). After winning the “Seventh travel award” of the AIBA, in 1852, for his work São João Batista no Cárcere (St. John the Baptist in Prison), Victor began his long period of study in Europe. He initially headed to Rome, where he was supervised by painter Nicola Consoni, who was himself a famous disciple of the master Tommaso Minardi of the Saint Lucas Academy. Art historian Jorge Coli argues that it was during his period in Rome that Meirelles had contact with the works of a dissident group of the Italian academies, the “Nazarenes”, who lead a movement inspired on neo-platonic ideals. Due to its emphasis on more simplified lines, a more spiritualised
where the cult of the muses had been more developed”, and where he had acquired the “fundamental principles of artistic composition”. Furthermore, the painter directly acknowledged the importance of drawing on the models in the European art tradition. This was especially true for painters working in a country such as Brazil, in which “art was still in its infancy” and whose “artistic production, as well as art criticism”, therefore, could not “but follow the principles of those nations where both of them have better blossomed” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 144).

Before returning to Brazil, Victor Meirelles exhibited a *Primeira Missa no Brasil* in the Paris Salón of 1861. He was the first-ever Brazilian painter to present in such a prestigious venue (FRANZ, 2007). More than a personal achievement, this was an institutional victory for the Brazilian Imperial Academy of Fine Arts, which for decades had been formally committed to the Brazilian “Empire’s great interest in initiating Brazilian youth in the study of Fine-Arts” (AIBA, 1831, p. 91). The acceptance of Meirelles’ work by the French academy validated the AIBA’s decades of financial and pedagogical investments. At last, the work of one its students obtained international recognition. Victor Meirelles had satisfied the basic requirements of a young history painter, effectively dealing with both the methods of history and models of art history. Because of the strategic reference to Horace Vernet’s mass and, particularly, the faithful use of Caminha’s primary source, a critic such as Gonzaga Duque-Estrada could conclude that the Meirelles’ “triumph” was largely related to the fact that his painting "had nothing to invent, except accessories". He argued that although Meirelles’ work was not “extraordinary (…) or animated by the strange light that is called genius”, his erudite and methodical work as a visual historian had at least the indisputable merits of reproducing only “what history narrates” and “nothing more” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, pp. 145-6).

### 2.2 History as it also really happened: “edenic” versus “satanic” images of Brazilian history

Today, it is evident that Meirelles’ representation of the first Catholic mass the Portuguese celebrated in 1500 does not simply illustrate what “history narrates”. We must put aside the use of colours, and less detailed anatomic drawings, this “purist” tradition would have an impact over the strict Neo-classical training Victor Meirelles had previously received at the AIBA. In this regard, Jorge Coli recalls how some of Meirelles’ studies concluded in Rome - which were periodically sent to Brazil as a way to measure his artistic progress during his stay in Europe - were criticised by his local mentor at the AIBA, Manoel de Araújo Porto-Alegre. Meirelles was censured for failing to draw muscles and other anatomic details of his characters correctly in accordance to academic standards. This suggested Meirelles’ intentional artistic decision to go beyond the “neo-classical eloquence”, by drawing lines that conveyed abstraction and simplified volumes like the Nazarenes, “abandoning anatomy and observation in the benefit of a specific spirituality” (COLI, 2005, p. 30). Meirelles shifts and mastering of “purist” use of colours, light and chromatic nuances is clearly noticed in *The First Mass in Brazil*. 

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Herodotean tradition’s blind trust in eyewitnesses that informed most nineteenth-century Brazilian historiography; and the then increasingly accepted Rankean-positivist models that defined source-based professional historiography as equivalent to scientific truth; and any other expression of epistemologically “naïve realism” based on the idea that historians could be “impartial and objective in their treatment of evidence” (MUNSLOW, 1997, p. 7). Clearly, Victor Meirelles’ could only have offered a politically and culturally-biased interpretation, among many possible, of the first encounter between sixteenth-century Tupis and Portuguese. Meirelles’ peaceful and laudatory interpretation of the meeting between Indigenous peoples and Europeans belongs to what many historians have called the “edenic motifs” (HOLANDA, 2000) (CARVALHO, 2000) that have been a recurrent part of interpretations of Brazilian history. At the risk of simplicity, “edenic” motifs form part of that broad and heterogeneous corpus of travel diaries, reports, letters, drawings, paintings and books produced since the sixteenth-century which, each in its own way, has contributed to the literal or metaphorical association of Brazilian landscape and populations with the Christian Garden of Eden. In this respect, *The Letter of Caminha* on which Meirelles based his painting is undeniably one of the country’s founding “edenic” descriptions (CARVALHO, 2000).

Explicit and implicit biblical allusions in Caminha’s text are natural in view of Iberian maritime expansion’s material and spiritual goals. In order to legitimate the lucrative routes to the Asian spice markets and mines, Portuguese and Spanish fleets also aimed at defending and expanding the Catholic faith. Beyond his well-documented obsession with finding gold, for example, Columbus’ first diary clearly states that the Spanish monarchs “as Catholic Christians and Princes, lovers and promoters of the Holy faith” had “thought of sending” him to the “regions of India” to see how “their conversion to our Holy Faith might be undertaken” (DUNN and KELLEY, 1991, pp. 18-9). Furthermore, Columbus is one of the first European chroniclers to claim to have found “if not the biblical Eden, or the fabled Fortunate Isles of classical myth” at least “some sort of paradise on earth” (STANNARD, 1992, p. 64). Most other European sailors at the time shared Columbus’ religious and material ambitions. In this regard, philosopher Marilena Chauí explains that ultramarine lands conveyed an ambivalent symbolism within the colonial imaginary. They alluded both to the prosperous civilisations described by Marco Polo and Mandeville and also to the lands not affected by the deluge described in Genesis. These lands

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49 Beyond the Luso-Brazilian case, there is a broader and transcontinental trend among colonial writers to represent the first meetings between Europeans and Indigenous groups as peaceful. Usually, though, Indigenous groups who are initially represented as noble and childlike turn treacherous. For a detailed discussion on the creation of noble versus savage dichotomies during the colonial period, see Peter Hume (1986).
continued to be blessed with an eternal spring climate, fertile lands, generous rivers and, naturally, abundance of gold and precious stones (CHAUI, 2000). The Portuguese with whom Caminha sailed in 1500 were also motivated by myths of paradise and utopia located in faraway territories across the western seas. They firmly believed in medieval prophecies that regarded an earthly paradise not as a fantasy or an intangible reality but rather as an achievable realm that could be recovered no matter how hidden it had remained since the beginnings of time (HOLANDA, 2000).

The Letter clearly replaces the Columbus diaries’ “messianic sense of historical mission” with a more “humanist” and “ethnographical” description of the Indigenous land and peoples (WILLIAMS, 1991, p. 60). Caminha attempted to write from an “unobtrusive distance” and to “establish a sense of impartiality” (ORTEGA, 2005. p.19). Nevertheless, the Portuguese scribe’s evident sympathy for and enchantment by the world he was seeing for the first time is recurrently expressed by means of “edenic” associations and insinuations. Analogously to the fertile and eternal spring of the garden Adam and Eve enjoyed before their sinful fall, for example, Caminha regularly informs King Dom Manuel of the landscape’s luxuriant trees and numerous rivers. He often alludes to the colourful parakeets among the “many and immense trees” of “infinite species”, and concludes that he does not “doubt that there are even more birds in the hinterlands beyond the coast” (p. 10). The tropical waters are frequently described as “sweet”, “abundant” and “very good”; Caminha cites the several rivers, ports and lagoons he sees along the seacoast, with water pouring “from all sides” (p. 8). Just as Adam and Eve did not have to work to obtain food, the scribe affirmed that Indigenous do not “plow or raise” crops or animals, since they fed on the plentiful yams, “seeds and fruits that the earth and the trees offer from themselves” (p. 10).

In addition to the fluvial and vegetal opulence, Caminha also alludes to the land’s potential mineral richness when he describes the two Indigenous men who were brought to meet with Captain Pedro Álvares Cabral. Caminha affirms that, when “one of the young men ([mancebo])” saw the “Captain’s [golden] necklace” he immediately pointed to the land and back to the necklace “as if he wanted to tell us that there was gold in the land”. Furthermore, the Tupinikin man also stared at a “silver candlestick and pointed back to the land (…) as if there was silver there as well!” (p. 3).

But beyond any material wealth found under and above the soil of the “discovered” lands, The Letter addressed to the Portuguese King also recurrently suggests the immeasurable spiritual benefits of the catechesis of Indigenous peoples. Indeed, although the land’s fertility and the climate’s benignity permitted it to “produce anything”, the scribe emphasised that “the best fruit
that could be taken from it was the salvation of its people” (p. 12). Caminha initially underlines the “reserved” and “coy” character of the Tupinikin people. Although he considered that their initial hesitant behaviour toward the Portuguese indicated that they were “bestial and of little knowledge”, the Portuguese scribe often justifies this in the compassionate suggestion that the Tupinikin lived in a state of nature. With respect to Indigenous peoples’ cleanliness and health, for example, Caminha interpreted this as a result of the fact that they did not live in “houses or anything like it”; rather, they lived like “the birds and animals of the [Portuguese] mountains” (p. 8). Over time, Caminha’s narrative shifts to show how the Tupinikins, although initially timid, became increasingly “calm” and “tamed” in the presence of the Portuguese newcomers. He affirms that, as time passed, more and more Indigenous men, women and children were coming to meet and trade with the Portuguese on the coast. Caminha emphasises how they became increasingly cooperative, receiving the Portuguese with lowered bows and arrows, observing and imitating some of the seamen’s tasks, and even playing with them; as a result, the Tupinikin eventually became “more secure in the presence of [the Portuguese] than the [Portuguese] were of being among them” (p. 11). On the 30th of April, Caminha affirms that the Tupinikin even “danced and sang with us, hearing the sound of our drum (tamboril), as if they were more our friends than we were theirs” (p. 12). Caminha suggests that the Indigenous peoples’ trust in the Portuguese became such that “when we waved to them” everyone “wanted to come to the carracks (naus)”, and if we “invited all of them, all would come” (p. 12).

However, more important than any sign of friendship and kindness was the Christian-like purity that Caminha ascribed to the Tupinikin. Analogous to the time before the “fall” from paradise, the Tupinikin “did not bother to cover or not to cover their intimate parts more than to cover their faces” (p. 2). Caminha describes a young woman who remained undressed throughout the mass despite the fact that the Portuguese had given her a cloth “to cover herself”. He concluded with a biblical comparison that “the innocence of this people is such that even Adam’s would not be greater” (p. 14). He viewed them as “good” people of “beautiful simplicity”, without any apparent “faith”, “idolatry or adoration” therefore, Caminha supplicated King Dom Manuel to “take care of their salvation” and to immediately send “clerics to baptise them” (pp. 12, 14) In his letter, he emphasised how they were peoples of such “innocence that if we understood their language and they ours, soon they would become Christians” (p. 12). The peaceful, cooperative and receptive role displayed by the Tupinikin during the mass, many of whom received Christian necklaces after “kissing [them] and raising their hands”, was but further proof that God “had not
brought [the Portuguese] here without a purpose”, but rather with the superior mission of “expand(ing) the Catholic faith”, which because of “God’s will would take little effort” (p. 12).

Beyond the brief, specific moment of the 1500 mass, Victor Meirelles’ painting is also an attempt to represent Tupi’s supposed inclination to Christian behaviours, their predisposition to conversion and their receptiveness to Europeans as described by Caminha. Above and beyond a single historical moment, Cardoso argues that the “logic of [Meirelles’] image” is that it also represents the “joyful interaction between Indigenous peoples and Europeans in their mutual subordination to the mystery of religion and the miracle of nature” (CARDOSO, 2008, p. 61).

Aside from the evident similarities between Meirelles and Vernet’s work, historian Jorge Coli accurately notes that The First Mass in Brazil’s attempts to render this harmonious cross-cultural encounter is the primary difference between the Brazilian and French compositions. Indeed, the first Mass in Kabylia has a dramatic theatrical effect – one reinforced by the vertical axis centred on the cross wrapped by clouds, the mountains that compress the space of the staged composition, the arid landscape suggesting the triumph of Europeans in a hostile environment and the clear separation between Christians and infidels. By contrast, Meirelles’ horizontal composition and open skyline help to create a dream-like and poetic effect (COLI, 2005, pp. 36-7). Furthermore, unlike the “repetitive and rigorous” line of soldiers that prevent the mixing of the distinct groups in Vernet’s work, Meirelles offers a harmonious fusion of characters. Art historian Ligia Prado adds that Meirelles’ depiction of Indigenous peoples as “integrated with the scene, as part of a harmonious whole” also makes it quite different from Chilean Subercaseaux’s The First Mass in Chile, in which Indigenous peoples appear in the background as remote spectators (PRADO, 2010, p. 196).

Although Meirelles’ composition displays several sub-groups of characters acting more or less autonomously, all of them are consistently integrated with the main narrative of the mass. Clearly, the central figure friar Henrique of Coimbra. Poised centrally, solemnly raising a golden chalice heavenward, the priest conducts the rite, commanding the attention of those situated both on and outside the canvas. The friar’s proximity to the imposing cross, as well as his elevated body on the higher step of the improvised altar, is a clear sign that he is the closest man to God. To add to his sanctified figure, the friar is also the brightest figure represented, lit by the celestial sunbeams that sparkle over his white and golden tunic. The composition is carefully arranged around two concentric ellipses that emanate from this central axis of the holy cross/friar towards the outer limits of the canvas. The smaller ellipse, adjacent to the friar/cross axis, is made up of the
higher-ranking men of the Portuguese fleet, *fidalgos* (noblemen), ecclesiastics and military officers. The wider outer ellipse consists of the several Indigenous sub-groups that, each in their own way, participate in the Portuguese mass. Although occupying peripheral positions and behaving in relative autonomy to the Portuguese rite, the bodies and gestures of most Tuniquins appear connected to the mass. The wider ellipse binds them to the central axis, as if they were in an open amphitheatre that gives each a distant yet unobtrusive and unobstructed view of the scene.

Only the two Tupinikins climbing the large tree on the right side of the canvas escape the concentric structure of the composition. Maria F. M. Couto affirms that the two Indigenous men accentuate the “exotic” character of the scene (2008, p. 162). Rafael Cardoso offers a more sophisticated interpretation by comparing the Indigenous male on the left, who is comfortably seated on the branch of the tree, with the priest celebrating the mass. Both the European and Indigenous men stand virtually at the same height, rising above every other human figure in the image. As such, they are closer than anyone else to the vast blue of the heavens covering most of the upper part of the canvas. Because of the Indigenous man’s elevation and association with the image of the priest (and the sacredness it conveys), Cardoso suggests that spectators might mistakenly interpret him as also having a holy role in the painting; he suggests that Meirelles’ wanted to metonymically associate him with the “state of purity” of Indigenous peoples as a whole, who “would have already reached divinity” before the arrival of the Portuguese and, accordingly, “did not require any catechism” (CARDOSO, 2008, p. 60). Yet, despite emphasising Meirelles’ “liberal” and “intellectual” character, Cardoso argues that the painter did not escape the “Catholic dogmas and the current opinions” of his time, views which disallowed any equivalence between a clergyman and a non-Christian. Consequently, although both the Portuguese priest and the Tupinikin man occupy the same “celestial zone” of the painting, only the Catholic friar occupies the illuminated centre stage, while the Tupinikin occupies a peripheral spot under the dense shadow of the distant tree. Although in a dim and secondary position, his body is clearly inclined toward the cross, as if attracted by the light. Cardoso affirms that a catechist message is implicit, since the *Primeira Missa* is an “optimistic vision of the benign influence of Christianity over Brazilian Culture”. To his right side, even more camouflaged by shadow and vegetation, a second Indigenous man appears climbing the same tree, to have a better view of the events. Another symbolic message is associated to his actions, indicating “that the [catechistic] path is open for all” (CARDOSO, 2008, p. 61).
Without discounting Cardoso’s interpretation, another interpretation of the biblical narrative is instructive in exploring the ambiguity of the representation of the two Indigenous men. In the biblical Garden of Eden, the infamous tree dweller is the serpent. Symbol of deceit and falsehood, the serpent tempted Adam and Eve to sin and they were subsequently punished for disobeying God’s path. In the allegorical “Eden of Tupinikins,” the two Indigenous men on the top of the tree are the only figures who escape the elliptical composition that joins all other characters around the central cross; their exclusion can be interpreted as a sign of their distance from the Catholic course. The spatial parallelism between the Indigenous men and the Portuguese priest, in this sense, can be seen as an inverted symmetry: it underlines the antagonism between them rather than proximity. In this sense, while Friar Henrique has already climbed the first two steps to get closer to the cross (Christ-heaven), the two Indigenous men are the only remaining figures who still must descend from the tree (animism-paganism). While all other Tupinikins stand at the same level and are concentrically predisposed to the Catholic ritual – with many directly illuminated by the same sunbeams that shine over the Catholic priest - the Indigenous men’s shady obscure spot reinforces their dissonant and sinful status. The opposition between the (crafted) cross versus the (wild) tree also alludes to the opposition between culture and nature, between Portuguese civilisation and Tupinikin savagery, beliefs dear to nineteenth-century intellectuals.

The second Tupinikin situated on the right occupies an even more ambiguous position. While most of his body is above the tree’s high branches, the bottom part appears to be falling to
the level where the mass is celebrated. Curiously, he is the only figure whose gaze is diametrically averted from the mass. He holds to the tree vigorously, his body entangled in it. If Meirelles was skilfully affirming Indigenous peoples’ predisposition to Christianity in depicting hands raised to the heavens, and also by two kneeling Tupinikins (the fifty-year old man and a woman beside him), he may have signalled a contrary intention in depicting the second Tupinikin on the right side of the tree. That figure is ambiguously “kneeling” before the tree, as if revering it, and refusing to leave it. He might be climbing up to get a better view of the scene, as Cardoso suggests, or he might be having trouble abandoning his animist-pagan religiosity. In time, he will be “falling” from the pagan garden to find his place among the other submissive Tupinikins of the outer ellipse and, more importantly, his salvation within the boundaries of European culture and Christian faith.

Another bible passage, the story of Zacheaus, might provide a clue to understand the deviant Tupinikins on the tree. Zachaeus was a greedy tax collector of short height. One day, as Zachaeus climbed on a fig tree to see as Jesus preaching in the square, he heard the Son of God calling him by his name, telling him that he was going to be a guest in his house that night. The crowd told Jesus that Zacheaus was not worth of such honour, since he was a avaricious man. But Zacheaus descended the tree promising that he would change, repaying all the money he had taken. A man’s “redemption” through humility, by giving up one’s privileged position (as he symbolically descends from the top of a tree), is the core moral lesson in the Zacheaus story. The Tupinikin coming down from the tree (analogous to the Jewish tax collector who was a traitor to the Jews by serving the Roman Empire) might have been a leader among the original inhabitants and therefore felt he had the right to reject the obvious superiority and gift of the Portuguese Christians who came in peace to civilise humanity. Because this idea of the elevated but misguided person being called down from the tree is so central to the redemption narrative, and because of the humanised depiction of all the Indigenous characters in this scene, this aspect of the humanity of the Indigenous is likely being symbolised here as a secondary semantic element perhaps as well as or even more than the “edenic” image mentioned.

The elliptical structure of Meirelles’ composition, in addition to joining the painting’s distinct sub-groups of characters (and contrasting them with the only two deviant Tupinikins left outside of it), has also the rhetorical function of inviting spectators to participate in the mass. Recently restored, Meirelles’ painting has been strategically placed on the end wall of one of main rooms of the Gallery of Nineteenth-century Brazilian Art at the National Museum of Fine Arts (MNBA), in Rio de Janeiro. Spectators who approach the enormous 2.68 x 3.56 meter canvas may
experience the feeling of stepping into the picture. As a consequence of both Meirelles’ clever arrangement of characters and the size of the canvas, viewers have the illusion of entering the historical episode, gazing at the scene from a height similar to the other Tupinikins who watch the mass from the lower part of the image. According to Rafael Cardoso, this intentional proximity between viewers and Indigenous characters in the lower part of the canvas is a way to block “[viewers’] feeling of superiority or moral distancing” toward the Tupinikin. As a consequence, similarly to sixteenth-century pagan Tupinikins, contemporary viewers are also inspired to think about their own “need of grace and salvation” (CARDOSO, 2008, p. 61).

But beyond a proselytising message, Victor Meirelles’ decision to “include” viewers in his history painting had also a historiographical motivation. Viewers who gaze at the mass “alongside” Tupinikins may become, in their own ways, anachronic eyewitnesses to the historical scene. As belated participants in the event, viewers may also endorse the historical accuracy that Meirelles pursued in his work. More than a visual translation of Caminha’s primary source, thus, Victor Meirelles ensured that his “modern spectators watched the First Mass in Brazil. That outcome was the result of, on one hand, [Caminha’s] document, and, on the other, the demiurgic power of art” (COLI, 2005, p. 39) (Original Italics). The enduring capacity to persuade viewers that they are before an accurate historical scene resembles that of successful history paintings in other national contexts, such as in the US, where viewers often also “leave the museums feeling that they have been in the presence of veritable ‘snapshots’ of historical events. (…) [responding] to history paintings as if they are eyewitness accounts” (AYRES, 1993, p. 22).

It is also noteworthy that, in choosing The Letter as a main source to validate his visual narrative, Victor Meirelles deliberately opted to ignore several colonial sources that sharply contrast with Caminha’s harmonious descriptions of the first encounters between Indigenous peoples and the Portuguese. His undeniably peaceful and fortunate representation of the “discovery” of Brazil places Meirelles’ visual interpretation within the genealogy of works that have produced/reinforced parallels between early Brazilian history and biblical times. As a result, he strategically avoided what historian José Murilo de Carvalho denominates the powerful “satanic” motifs that represent the opposite extreme in Brazilian discourse. In his essay, Carvalho refers to a broadly heterogeneous extensive list of ideas that have contributed to a pessimistic image of Brazil (and especially of Brazilians). His list ranges from the “lack of popular participation in the most important political transformations that the country went through” to past and contemporary “negligence and lack of industry of its inhabitants” (CARVALHO, 2000, p.
Yet, his expression is useful also in identifying several historical sources that, since the sixteenth-century, offered negative views of the lands and peoples during the Portuguese colonisation.

Friar Vicente do Salvador’s opening epigraph offers an instructive example of a “satanic” (if not apocalyptical) interpretation of Brazil’s history. According to the sixteenth-century friar, once the devil had succeeded in the substitution of the original sacred name (Land of Saint-Cross) for the vulgar name (Brazil), the land was doomed to unavoidable depopulation and decline, unless the course of the colonisation process could be corrected (SOUZA, 2001). In addition to this religious explanation, Vicente do Salvador’s book also associates Brazilian damnation directly with the unscrupulous, greedy and individualist character of the Portuguese colonisers, who did not want to stay in the colony but “take everything [back] to Portugal”:

And not only the ones that came from there, but also the ones who were born here, who use the land not as lords but as usufructuaries, only to use benefit from them and leave it destroyed. (…) no man from this land is republican, or protects and cares for the common goods, but rather each one of his particular things (…) It is for this reason that, while wealthy men’s houses are provided with everything, villages often do not have [products such as meat, fish and olive oil]. These are the reasons why many say that Brazil is not growing (SALVADOR, 1627, pp. 16-17)

Despite condemning the greedy and egoistic nature of the Portuguese, Vicente do Salvador reserves even more negative “satanic” words to describe Indigenous peoples. The friar hints that Tupi-Guarani ancestors might derive from the “barbarian people” who inhabited the Altamira Mountains in Spain. These barbarians “ate human flesh,” were in constant conflict with the Spaniards and were forced to migrate after their defeat in the Andalusian battle. Although the friar conceded that the Iberian roots of the two ancestral brothers named “Tupi” and “Guarani” who sailed away from Spain and eventually settled in Brazil and Paraguay “were not certain”, it nonetheless served to conclude that the only thing that distinguished Indigenous peoples was that “some were more barbarian than others”. While Salvador’s Historia do Brazil praised some Indigenous cultural aspects, such as their manual abilities or non-punitive approach in teaching their children (p. 59), several chapters clearly reinforce Tupis’ treacherous and aggressive manners. He was convinced that they “have no faith, or adore any god; or follow any laws or precepts; or have any king who gives them [laws] and to whom they obey” (SALVADOR, 1627, pp. 51-53). Even though historian Capistrano de Abreu could affirm in his 1917 prologue that the
friar described Indigenous peoples without “antipathy or disdain” (SALVADOR, 1627, prologue, p. XVIII), it is clear today that Salvador’s repeated associations of them to barbarism, belligerence, cannibalism and disloyalty is what implicitly justifies the several Portuguese retaliations and “just wars” described in his book.

Nearly a century earlier, settler and sugarcane mill owner Gabriel Soares de Souza penned some of the most renowned vitriolic "satanic" descriptions of the Brazilian colonial period in his 1587 *Tratado Descritivo do Brasil* (A Descriptive Treatise of Brazil). Not unexpectedly, as a direct stakeholder in the early Portuguese colonial expansion project, Gabriel Soares is careful to draw the attention of his European readers to “the greatness, fertility and other great parts” found in Bahia and in the rest of “the state of Brazil” (SOUZA, 1587, p. 1). He extolled Brazil’s “great merits” that could transform it into a “great empire.” Souza wooed the Portuguese king with “edenic” descriptions of the land’s wealth and potentials, some of which closely resemble Pero Vaz de Caminha’s 1500 letter:

> The land is generally very fertile, very healthy, cool and marked by good air, washed by refreshing and cool waters. Throughout the coast, there are many secure and large ports, which can easily make way and hold large naval fleets; to which it has more timber than any other part of the world (SOUZA, 1587, p. 2)

While Souza’s landowner’s eyes were inclined to idealise the landscape he was beginning to explore, they also framed the Indigenous peoples who owned it through negative lenses. Although Souza identified certain limited positive aspects in their health and manual abilities (exaggerated to suggest their fitness for manual labour), his text is far less positive about Indigenous peoples’ culture. In the case of the Tupinambas, for example, Souza categorically affirmed that they did not have “any knowledge of truth” and that they “were more barbarian than the many creatures God had created” (SOUZA, 1587, p. 280). Furthermore, Souza was one of the first Portuguese settlers to suggest that their ostensible cultural deficiencies were reflected in the deficiencies of their language. He endorsed the idea that language’s lack of “F, L R” sounds was an unquestionable sign that the Tupi culture was also deprived of “Faith” “Law” and “King” (*Rei*, in Portuguese). This argument was rhetorically repeated each century to justify the Portuguese colonial enterprise:

> Since they do not have F, it is because they do not have faith in anything they worship; not even those born among Christians and indoctrinated by the priests of the Company [of Jesus] have faith in God our Lord, nor have they honesty or loyalty to anyone that treats them kindly. Since they do not have L in their
pronunciation, it is because they do not follow any law, nor have any precepts upon which they govern themselves; and each one makes his own law, based on his desire; (…) And since they do not have this letter R in their pronunciation, it is because they do not have a King (Rei) who rules them, to whom they obey, and they do not obey anyone, neither the father his son, nor the son his father (SOUZA, 1587, p. 280-1).

Around the same period, another Portuguese writer, Pero Magalhães de Gândavo, offered an equally negative and sinful image of Indigenous peoples, describing them as:

greatly ungrateful, very dehumanised and cruel, inclined to fighting and to vengeance to the extreme. They (…) do not have any thoughts other than to eat, drink, kill others, and therefore they get very fat (…) They are very dishonest, they tend to sensuality, and likewise they give themselves to addictions (GANDAVO, 1576, p. 411).

Like many other of his sixteenth-century contemporaries, Gândavo’s “satanic” associations focused on Tupis anthropophagical practices:

One of the things that these Indigenous cause more disgust to the human nature, and what totally contrasts them with other men, is the great and excessive cruelty with which they execute any person they catch their hands on (…) Because not only do they give them a cruel death (…) after that they eat all of their flesh to satisfy themselves, using in this part such diabolical cruelties that they are able to exceed the most brutal animals (GÂNDAVO, 1576, p. 421).

As might be expected, many of these negative written accounts of Tupi-Guaranis were translated into images. Despite never traveling to the Americas, for example, the Belgian artist Theodorus de Bry’s several engravings of scenes of cannibalism are among the earliest and most enduring visual representations of the “satanic” nature of Indigenous peoples. As has been documented, many of de Bry’s images drew direct inspiration from Hans Staden’s accounts of his captivity among Tupinambás published in 1557:
“Satanic” chronicles and images of Indigenous peoples from the likes of Hans Staden and de Bry informed various writers and artists as is evident in an 1843 Brazilian painting signed by Manoel Joaquim Corte Real’s. In it, a colonial priest, Manoel Nóbrega, and other Jesuits escape an Indigenous cannibalistic feast (CHICANGANA-BAYONA; 2011):

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to catalogue all of the several colonial texts and
images that disseminated what is referred here as the “satanic” interpretation of Tupi-Guaranis. Further, I will not compare the Portuguese case with the equally extensive list of writings and paintings related to the Spanish conquest, which are also “replete with images of natives sinning, behaving crudely, and acting criminally, by Spanish standards” (SEED, 2001, p. 95). The primary reason for contrasting divergent Portuguese colonial sources was to underscore the unbalanced approach of Victor Meirelles, who in his quest for historical accuracy, strategically opted for an “edenic” tradition of colonial informants while, at the same time, ignoring a “satanic” one.

It is clear today that Meirelles’ choice of a positive Tupi image was directly related to the early phase of the Brazilian Romantic Movement, often labelled the “Indianist” generation. As seen in the first chapter, romanticism in Brazil was intricately bound to nation-building processes promoted by the Brazilian Empire. As in most European and Latin American nation-states, Brazilian intellectuals actively searched the past for facts and figures that permitted them to praise the country’s distinctive national culture; as a consequence, they enthusiastically embraced and added to the transcontinental collective historical-mindedness of the time (BANN, 1995).

Furthermore, I documented in the first chapter how nineteenth-century Brazilian intellectuals addressed both particularist and universalist quests. That is, while attempting to demonstrate the equivalence of Brazilian to European culture they, simultaneously, endeavoured to affirm the country’s unique nature and political sovereignty.

It was precisely by associating the national project with the autochthonous, pure and noble character of early Tupi-Guaranis that Brazilian romantics identified a cultural and historical justification for separation from the former Portuguese metropolis. This decision had both artistic and practical benefits. By claiming that core elements of the Brazilian nation could be traced back to Tupi-Guarani antiquity, the nation could also claim natural and sovereign rights over the territory that belonged to Indigenous peoples before the Portuguese “discovery”. As literary critic Antônio Cândido expressed it, the Brazilian “Indianist” romanticists were able to “provide a nation with a short history, [with] the deepness of a legendary time” (CÂNDIDO, 1993, p. 225). As in other nation-states, Indigenous-inspired invented traditions (HOBSBAWN and RANGER, 1992) were the basis of the Brazilian paradox: the nation was viewed as an objectively recent historical formation in the eyes of historians and yet as ancient in the subjective perception of its citizens (ANDERSON, 1991).

50 It is still common to divide Brazilian Romanticism into three successive generations with specific names and concerns, respectively: “Indianist or nationalist”, “Byronian or ultra-Romantic”, and “Social or Condorist”. (MAJOR NETO, 1999, p. 25).
Several studies have emphasised how the romantic association of Brazilian nationality with early Tupi-Guaranis served to justify the continuous warfare against still defiant and autonomous Indigenous populations who did not accept Brazilian claims over their traditional territories. Beyond poetic verses and passionate plots, the Brazilian empire’s enthusiastic incorporation of Indigenous motifs was interrelated with a clear political agenda. By associating the foundation of the nation with the peaceful and Christian-like Tupi-Guaranis, the Brazilian empire crafted a moral argument to defend the state’s perimeters from the threat of other nation-states (external others). Of equal importance, it justified attacks against any self-governing belligerent Indigenous groups (internal others), usually grouped as Tapuia (MONTEIRO, 2000). It is fundamental to note the selectivity practiced by “Indianist” writers and artists. Romantic-Indianism was identified with the early Tupi-Guarani populations who, despite their receptivity to and solidarity with the Portuguese settlers, were later considered decimated as a tragic consequence of colonisation. Indigenous peoples “selected to represent the emerging South American nation”, therefore, were not portrayed in any of the satanic colonial sources previously cited or in the several Tapuia groups who still fought for their sovereignty throughout the nineteenth-century. Conveniently, they were represented in “the noble, brave and, above all, extinct Tupi” (MONTEIRO, 2001, p. 28). In a public lecture delivered in 1870 at the AIBA, painter Pedro Américo poetically justified the extinction of Tupis by suggesting that their death and suffering was not in vain since, at least, it had contributed to the formation of Brazil:

The rain of tears pouring from the gentile’s eyes over the Brazilian soil would produce its fruits in the appropriate season (…) Indeed, the flourishing villages began appearing as if by incantation, from the riverbanks of the Oyapoc until the fountainhead of the Plata [river]; and in less than a century many of them had turned into cities, whose importance was still impossible to measure. Each cut tree provided a pillar to a house; each removed rock gave space to a temple, each dammed source gave seat to a public school (MELO, 1888, p. 30).

Returning to the biblical-edenic associations informing romantic narratives – and specifically, Meirelles’ painting – historical anthropologist Lilia Schwarcz is correct in affirming that Tupi-Guaranis assumed the role of a “great sacrificial lamb” in the birth of Brazilian nationality. She defined them both as “a hero and victim in a process that swept him aside”; having been “born free” in pre-national times and “killed in liberty” while helping to create the
By promoting an image of a peaceful, stable and racially-harmonious past, Brazilian intellectuals and political administrators could argue about the exceptionality and transitory nature of wars against Indigenous peoples and the territorial instability the country experienced. With respect to this contradiction between the idealisation of an Indigenous-national past and the brutal treatment of surviving Indigenous populations, the Brazilian empire’s “indianism” is similar to “historicist indigenism” manifest in the artistic production of other Latin American countries such as Mexico. In both, the search for Indigenous-inspired paintings had little to do “with the actual plight” of Indigenous populations of the time (ADES, 1989, p. 35).

While the “first generation of Romantic artists and literati” were instrumental in inventing a Brazilian past (NEEDELL, 1999, p. 3) and in transforming Indigenous peoples “into a model of nobility” in the “history and genesis of the Empire” (SCHWARCZ, 2006, p. 32), romantic historians were central to this process. In this regard, Brazilian historian Arno Wehling affirms that “much before the literary indianism” of writers such as Gonçalves Dias or José de Alencar, the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) was promoting an “erudite indianism” in the pages of its journal. Lacking a “medieval past” in which European romantic historians searched for their national roots, Brazilian historians relied on the “Indigenous theme” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 36). In the absence of archaeological ruins of ancient temples, castles and cities, Brazilian romanticism celebrated the monumentality of nature. In 1878, for example, Manoel Pinheiro Chagas would praise the tropical environment in Meirelles’ composition, arguing that it exceeded the beauty and sanctity of any human construction:

but the truly sacred temple is one that has the blue sky of the tropics as a dome, the curved arches of the giant trees as arcades, the scent of the flowers as incense, the sun as a chandelier, the immense sea as an organ, multi-coloured birds as chapel singers, a modest priest with a tanned faced from the gales of the ocean officiating the rite, a green hill as an altar, a simple cross just carved from cut wood as a crucifix (cited in CARDOSO, 2008, p. 59).

Not surprisingly, the rise of romanticism and the professionalisation of historiography resulted in a boom in archival research. The IHGB’s first publication unambiguously reminded

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51 In this respect, Doris Sommer (1991, p. 150) notes how writer José de Alencar insisted that Brazilian history was especial not simply because it had “good Indians allied to good whites” fighting common enemies, since this was a common Romantic plot in most other Latin American foundational narratives. Rather, what made Brazilian “origins” unique was the “romantic surrender”, that is, the fact that “whites and Indians fell in each other’s arms and made mestizo babies”, an idea seen in books such as Iracema (1865) and O Guaraní (1857).
members of the Institution’s central goal to “collect and systematise the historical and geographical documents important to the History of Brazil” (RIHGB, 1839, p. 6). Most of the colonial documents on which Brazilian historiography would base its romantic “indianist” past were re-discovered, organised, translated into modern Portuguese and made public as a result of pioneering and methodical efforts by nineteenth-century historians who worked in scattered Brazilian collections and in Portuguese libraries and archives, such as the Torre do Tombo.

All of the colonial texts previously cited, with the exception of Pero de Magalhães Gândavo’s work published in Lisbon in 1576, remained in virtual anonymity until their republication in the nineteenth-century (MONTEIRO, 2000). The Letter of Caminha was no exception. Although published nearly two decades before the foundation of the IHGB, in Manuel Aires Casal’s 1817 Corografia Brasílica (CUNHA, 2006), Caminha’s account would not have achieved such popularity without the favourable context Romanticism created for the consumption of historical “edenic” images of Indigenous peoples. In this regard, Jorge Coli affirms that The Letter was published at the best historical moment, since it conveniently confirmed what historians and romantic writers were depicting in their pages (COLI, 2005, p. 27).

As will become clearer in the following chapters, “indianist” historiography and literature also proved an effective means of avoiding the topic of the significant percentage of African-descendants in nineteenth-century Brazil. Most intellectuals and politicians considered this a hindrance to the nation’s development. The following chapters also document how nineteenth-century historians and artists devised ingenious ways to overcome the pessimism associated with the nation’s multi-ethnic composition. Out of that debate, a confident image of Brazil emerged despite the widespread popularity of determinist “scientific-racism” theories inside Brazilian intellectual circles, especially after the 1870s.

For now, it is sufficient to note that an interpretation of Victor Meirelles’ painting will never be complete if it remains restricted only to the historical subject matter portrayed. In addition to the romantic search for a national past, and the Brazilian empire’s use of historical and Indigenous-inspired motifs to promote its nation-building project, the following section demonstrates how Victor Meirelles’ personal ambitions, along with the AIBA’s institutional goals, offer essential input to re-interpret The First Mass in Brazil.

2.3 The art of redemption: the painter as a secular messiah
If the first pages of this chapter detailed history painters’ respect for the work of professional historians and commitments to historical truth, little has been said so far about artists’ commitments to their contemporary viewers and, particularly, their responsibilities in using paintings to instruct them. Yet aesthetics and didacticism went hand-in-hand in nineteenth-century art. As with other academies, the genre of history painting in Brazil was also the “most prestigious, labour-intensive and literate form of painting” (WIDDIFIELD, 1996, p. 26). It was also a privilege for those considered the most talented artists and the “pinnacle of [an artist’s] profession” (DOY, 2005, p. 11). Inside academies, the production of a history painting attested to a student’s maturity, since “the final end of a long apprenticeship could really only be sealed by the production of a large-scale history painting for either public commission or salon exhibition” (GREEN and SEDDON, 2000, p. 8). As mentioned, more than a eulogy of the Portuguese-Christian maritime expansion, *The First Mass in Brazil* was also intended to serve as verification of Victor Meirelles’ artistic development after years of study in Rome and Paris.

A trained history painter enjoyed the privilege of working on what was then defined as the most complex and highest-ranked of the Fine Arts genres, since it alone combined into one image the techniques and themes of all other genres: still-life, landscape, genre-scenes and portraiture (COLI, 1998, p. 376). In addition to plants, animals, objects, individuals and daily activities, history paintings also depicted collective narratives and noble events of the past; therefore, it was viewed as the only genre that could go beyond the purely visual “to comment in moral and philosophical form on the very conditions of human life itself” (BARLOW, 2005, p.1). Successful history painters, in this sense, were those regarded as capable of presenting viewers with an accurate narrative of the past while, at the same time, conveying moral and inspiring messages to contemporary viewers. The interpretation of a history painting, therefore, is never complete if it ignores the ambivalent dimension of their historical and contemporary meanings. As in most European, Latin and North American contexts, history painting in nineteenth-century Brazil was also to be defined as operating:

both backwards and forward in time. The backward-projecting documentary and commemorative functions are obvious, for earlier historical events are their narrative focus. Their forward-projecting function is more elusive, but arguably even more central. For in most cases artists intended history paintings to convey both straightforward and subtle moral and spiritual messages to those who would later gaze upon them (AYRES, 1993, p. 23).
In previous pages, I anticipated a few of the moral/spiritual messages in Victor Meirelles’ painting, including the association of Portuguese colonisation with biblical motifs; the depiction of Tupi-Guaranis (and, by extension, of Brazilian culture) as models of receptiveness and purity; and, particularly, the interpretation of Brazilian history as marked by a harmonious, blessed and peaceful beginning. As demonstrated, *The First Mass in Brazil*’s “edenic” messages offered viewers a re-assuring national image that avoided any references to the instability of provincial revolts or to Indigenous peoples’ resistance and slave uprisings of the time. Thus, Meirelles’ widespread acclaim among the nineteenth-century public may have had as much to do with his attempt to provide an accurate reproduction of history as with his ability to summarise major romantic-national ideals of the time. While the painting contained numerous messages, its main merit was to produce an allegory that reassured the nineteenth-century public of the ostensibly long-established and firm foundations of the Brazilian Empire, based on the “peaceful fraternity of the Lusitanian heritage in contrast to the despotism and disruption of Spanish America” (CARDOSO, 2007, p. 61).

Since *The First Mass in Brazil* has multi-layered meanings and several sub-narratives, it is impractical here to fully interpret every “message” Meirelles’ addressed to his viewers, such as those embodied in his representation of women. While this thesis is particularly focused on the erasure of Indigenous and African populations from Brazilian history, the gender imbalance in the erasure/exclusion cannot be ignored; traditional (androcentric) historiography has played a central role first in silencing the voices of Brazilian women of all ethnicities, but it also visually erases their real presence. In the case of nineteenth-century painting, both in Brazil and abroad, one of the most frequent forms of erasing women from history is by turning them into symbols, usually, into allegories of the emerging nation-states (SOMMER, 1991, CUSACK, 2000). Far from a natural and universal convention, this recurrent art subject is historical and above all political: the representation of the national spirit as feminine is another legacy of colonialism and, therefore, as productive and long-lasting for the national narrative as the reduction of non-Europeans to invisibility or submissive positions.

As with other period paintings, Victor Meirelles’ representation also reiterates a patriarchal strategy to delegitimise women by excluding them from history: women seem to be represented, although absent. However, instead of allegories embodying the entire Brazilian nation, the several Indigenous women in Meirelles’ composition reflect another common gendered nineteenth-century nation-building discourse: the use of women’s bodies to reinforce masculine views of
expected feminine virtues of the time. Proper behaviour, faithfulness and virtuous morals, were also directly connected to the emergence of modern nation states. Following the example of post-revolutionary France, where “female propriety, chastity, and fidelity, along with monogamy, all became tropes of civilised or virtuous nationhood” (LANDES, 2001, p. 5), many Brazilian paintings, lithographs, newspaper cartoons and other type of visual prints also disseminated examples of pure and chaste feminine virtues.

In the specific case of The First Mass in Brazil, Meirelles’ nineteenth-century quest for historical accuracy was clearly challenged when he had to paint the female body in accordance with sixteenth-century reality. Indeed, Meirelles rejected Caminha’s notoriously sexualised account of Tupinikin’s nudity - especially of the female’s genital parts that are recurrently praised as so “clean” and “trimmed and clean of hair” that any Portuguese women who could see them would feel ashamed for not being like them (p. 4, 5). He clearly abandoned that literal translation to represent women in accordance with nineteenth-century moral and religious expectations. Although Meirelles’ Indigenous peoples are mostly naked, the painter resorts to feathers, vegetation and averted bodies to obscure and/or cover any representation of male or female genitalia. In the specific case of women, the painter strategically plays with light and dark contrasts to obscure female bodily parts that might offend. This is especially true of the Tupinikin women’s breasts, which are always obscured and “dressed” by dark tree shade.

Furthermore, all of the Tupinikin women in The First Mass are visibly associated with common tropes of motherhood, domesticity, feminine docility and sanctity. These are didactically presented in the foreground of the image. The image of a young woman kneeling on the lower centre of the composition is instructive. She is portrayed beside a Tupinikin elder who restrains her by the shoulder. In a clear teaching role, he is talking and pointing his finger to the Portuguese mass. Delicately raising her hand to her mouth as if amused by what he says, the woman exhibits both “virtuous” child-like purity and submissive behaviour in relation to the “wise” mature male who instructs her. The woman’s size and placement on the outermost part of the image and her spectator role from a distant and unobstructed position make her figure immediately identifiable to women as they approach the canvas.

In addition to praising the puerile and passive qualities then assigned to women, Meirelles perhaps also aimed to specifically address each woman attending art exhibitions at the time. The parallels between the young sixteenth-century Tupinikin woman who was blessed by permission to witness the Catholic ritual and the nineteenth-century woman gallery visitor permitted to attend
artistic cultural ceremonies intrigues. Just as the Tupinikin woman had the honour to be alongside a wise elder who could show her how history was being made, Meirelles could also be suggesting how nineteenth-century women had the honour of seeing history being revived by a mature painter like himself.

![Fig 2.13 Detail: innocent and docile young Tupinikin being instructed by a mature male](image)

These possibilities apart, two virtuous examples of motherhood also stand out in the forefront of the composition. Situated on the right lower corner of the painting, the first mother tenderly hugs her small and visibly frightened son, whose arm and upper back are decorated with small black circles. A man standing by her side, likely her partner, plays the role of the wise patriarchal instructor. Resting a borduna (Indigenous weapon) over his right shoulder, he didactically uses his left hand to point to the Catholic mass, while paternally turning his head to explain to his wife details of the event taking place. As with the other female Tupinikin, the wife obediently listens to the male who guides her, also expressing bemusement at what she learns from him. Her raised right palm faces the cross, suggesting that, although still perplexed and struggling to make sense of the event, she is nonetheless spiritually moved and somehow connected to the Christian ritual. This is Meirelles’ Indigenous-inspired romantic rendition and tribute to the popular representation of the Christian holy family: the rational father associated with a wooden tool and a sensitive mother at the centre gently cradling a child.

In her own way, a second mother located in the lower forefront seated on the ground, to breastfeed a newborn, also exhibits virtues associated with the Virgin Mary. Like countless other madonnas painted since the European renaissance, such as Raphael’s *Alba Madonna* (1510), the Indigenous mother displays humility, as she nurtures her young child. After years of Italian study,

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52 Raphael’s painting is currently displayed at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Meirelles was certainly aware of several paintings of the “Madonna of Humility” that constituted one of the many representations of Mary in the European artistic tradition.

Fig. 2.14 Details: the Tupinikin “sacred family” and “Madonna of Humility”.

Meirelles depictions of virtuous, publicly humble and modest women who bond the family were not specific to Brazilian painting. In addition to borrowing from a European painting tradition, these also constitute specific features of Latin American marianismo (ASENCIO, 2010). Originally coined by Evelyn Stevens (1977), the term marianismo refers to the other face, the feminine, of the more common term machismo. It refers to an expected set of moral behaviours for women in male-dominated Latin American societies. The term derives from the Virgin Mary (Maria, in Spanish and Portuguese), and alludes to the sacrosanct and self-sacrificial place of women in Latin America, in contrast to the virile, fierce and commanding place of men.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to discuss the many faces of marianismo represented in the several other women depicted in The First Mass. It will be sufficient here to emphasise that far from simply reproducing history “and nothing more”, Meirelles’ painting reveals far more about male-centric nineteenth-century attempts to discipline female behaviour than an accurate

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53 It is important to emphasise here the difference between patriarchal society’s attempt to discipline female behaviours and the heterogeneous range of activities and work undertaken by women throughout nineteenth-century Brazil. Indeed, recent studies have been challenging the image of passive and domestic women in Brazilian history. Although the striking divide of social classes, urban and rural experiences and ethnicities make it hard to refer to “women” as a universal category in nineteenth-century Brazil, it is undeniable that most women continued formally ruled by masculine laws and religious codes. Yet, although many women may have indeed “aspired only to marriage or to motherhood”, this conventional image of feminine passivity and domesticity sharply contrasts to the descriptions of upper-class Brazilian women in the second half of the nineteenth-century going to “balls, theatres; ad tearooms; visiting friends; going shopping; even taking streetcars and going to the beach”; or to the many lower class women, freed or slaves, who worked as street vendors, nurses, in factories or rural activities from “sunup to sundown and sometimes even through the night”, many of which appeared in censuses as “heads of households” (COSTA, 2000, pp. 247, 249). Although much of the oppression women endured is attested to by nineteenth-century male-controlled laws inherited from colonial codes - which for example forbade women to higher education, to work outside home or to open bank accounts - the lives of women experienced changes throughout nineteenth-century in Brazil; including
portrayal of sixteenth-century Tupinikin women.

In addition to conveying moral messages that reinforced the secondary role of women at the time, Meirelles’ romanticist composition - filled with virginal bodies and untouched natural landscapes - is directly informed by a broader transcontinental expression of patriarchal desire related to colonialism. Indeed, beyond a historical-artistic theme and an expression of male sexual fantasies, the idea of an “immaculate” and “undiscovered” America was also directly connected to the imperial expansion that “recreated [America] as a landscape, as an object of various discourses and disciplines, and above all as a source of wealth and resources”. As a direct outcome of rapidly expanding industrial economic need for the continent’s “wide open and wild spaces (…) suddenly America’s historicity could vanish in order to appear “virgin” for Western eyes” (GONZALEZ-STEPHAN, 2009, p. 137). At the time, Brazil was also a self-declared increasingly industrialised Empire, whose romantic-nationalism was fundamentally based on Euro-descendants’ assumed inherited rights over all former territories of Portuguese America.

Accordingly, both artistic and historiographical romanticism reinforced bonds between virginal Indigenous women/lands and Luso-Brazilian settlers. For example, José de Alencar’s novel Iracema features as a main character a Tabajara “virgin with honey lips” wandering “freely through the plains and forests”\(^{54}\), who falls in love with a Portuguese settler and dies giving birth to their son; it is the quintessential romantic plot that linked the supposed peacefulness and inevitability of Brazil’s colonial process to Indigenous women’s attraction and sacrificial position in relation to European males (SOMMER, 1991). Historians at the time such as distinguished Francisco A. de Varnhagen used scientific authority to corroborate Indigenous women’s supposed “great disposition to unite with Europeans”, not only because of “physiological causes” but also to be “free from the most harsh captivity that their husbands imposed on them” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pp. 206-7).

Beyond the colonial and sexual meanings, Meirelles’ representation of women is yet another example of the edenic/satanic dichotomy previously mentioned. By opting to depict only the increasing access to public education and the rise of feminist agendas. While Brazilian paintings also helped to constitute women as gendered subjects marked by fragility and submissiveness, as well as to contrast a “discourse of female domesticity and male publicity” (LANDES, 2001, p. 6), studies have been reassessing how such attributed domestic and family roles never prevented women’s historical agency and centrality in Brazilian society. In short, as Emilia Viotti da Costa summarises, one should not underestimate the “discrepancies between actual behaviour and the prescriptions of the law, the Church, and the moralists” (COSTA, 200. p. 249), as well as the loss to society of not having women participate in political decision-making.

\(^{54}\) Extracted from a full version of Alencar’s romance Iracema, available at: http://www.archive.org/stream/iracmahoneylip00alenuoft/iracmahoneylip00alenuoft_djvu.txt
loyal mothers and innocent daughters, Meirelles clearly avoided “satanic” images that associated women in general, and Indigenous and African women in particular, with sinful activities such as witchery and cannibalism. A famous iconographic example of the “satanic” female nature is seen in Albert Eckhout’s *The Tapuia Woman*, in which an Indigenous woman is depicted carrying dismembered pieces of a human body. Eckhout’s painting emphasises the central, sinful and negative role of women within Indigenous cannibalistic practices, transforming her into a symbol of “pure savagery” that resembles the “animals and nature that surrounds her” (PESA VENTO, 2004, p. 26). Previous pages also displayed a detail of Manoel Joaquim Corte Real’s painting in which a group of Indigenous women raise their hands angrily and wildly at male Jesuits who manage to escape the cannibalistic feast they had prepared.

![Image of Albert Eckhout's Tapuia Woman](image)

**Fig 2.15** Albert Eckhout. *Tapuia Woman*. 1643
Oil, 266 X 159 cm. National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen.

Such images reveal connections between how female cannibalism in the Americas was informed by “iconography of witchery in the Old World”, especially in the case of elderly Indigenous women who, “similar to [European] witches”, are often depicted with “deteriorated bodies as a result of an entire life dedicated to vices and sins” (CHICANGANA-BAYONA; GONZALEZ SAWCZUK, 2009, p. 521).

While Meirelles undoubtedly had access to several primary and secondary sources that stressed such sins, his duties as history painter persuaded him to avoid these inconvenient parts of
history to the benefit of nobler messages that would instruct and inspire contemporary viewers. Meirelles’ selectivity, a personal choice, exemplifies the AIBA’s mission to act as guardian of higher culture and morality. Not without irony, critic Duque-Estrada commented on the contradiction between the institution’s aims to produce sophisticated and up-to-date artworks and its moral control over artistic production in Brazil. The critic was especially shocked by the fact that Rodolpho Amoedo’s painting *Estudo de Mulher (Study of a Woman)*, which for him was the best work presented at the 1884 General Exhibition, was condemned “by the academic congregation for being…immoral!”. Particularly interesting for this chapter is the fact that Duque-Estrada employs both an edenic and a feminine metaphor to emphasise the AIBA’s hypocrisy, by affirming that “the always pure, always immaculate, always virgin” artistic academic congregation hoped that “morality” could be respected by covering it “with the help of a vine’s leaf” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 163).

Strict moral and religious codes are key to understanding most paintings produced in an officially Catholic and male-dominated society such as nineteenth-century Brazil. This is particularly true for a painting directly dedicated to religious subject matter such as *The First Mass in Brazil*. As mentioned, historians such as Rafael Cardoso correctly noted that, among its many meanings, Meirelles’ work is a manifest homage to the benefits of Christianity’s moral and spiritual colonisation of Brazil. Yet, to conclude this chapter, I suggest that most analyses until now have ignored another religious dimension essential to understanding Meirelles composition. Indeed, most art historians have focused on the obvious religious symbolism of the painting’s subject matter and/or to moral messages addressed to viewers. Yet, there is little discussion of the connection between Meirelles’ work and the reigning, strong (near fanatical) belief among intellectuals that Brazil could only join other civilised nations when the country managed to organise, write and publish its own history.

As documented in the first chapter, the 1838 inauguration of the IHGB was enthusiastically welcomed as a clear sign that Brazil was on Europe’s road toward intellectual progress. In this context, the overlapping border between scientific and religious discourses is noteworthy. The IHGB journal’s first issues are filled with examples of historians who praise God for the Institutions’ good fortune, and who emphasise the redemptive role of historical knowledge in saving national citizens from ignorance and sinful misconduct. In a 1839 report read in the

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55 Although the 1824 constitution guaranteed religious freedom in domestic spheres, the Brazilian empire was an officially declared Catholic state. The division between religion and state was only established in the 1891 republican constitution.
presence of Emperor D. Pedro II, the IHGB’s secretary Januario da Cunha Barbosa warned that while “adulation” could corrupt the “hearts” even of men guided by reason, “history ministered secure advice that could enlighten [their] paths” (RIHGB, 1839, p. 586). As with religion, history was able to take:

> a man by his hands since the first days to ground his steps over the paths of life, advising him regarding deviances resulting from weakness and inexperience, collecting proofs throughout time that bring knowledge to his soul, preserving him from infinite errors. Our spirit accepts without embarrassment the authority that illuminates it (RIHGB, 1840, p. 585).

I will not list the countless examples of overlapping sacred and historiographical discourses among IHGB members. The point is that, similarly to historians, AIBA artists also awaited a redemptive day in which their artistic production (visual histories, in particular) would be fully recognised as a major contributor to the country’s spiritual and material development. Although Fine Arts training had been supported since the arrival of the 1816 French artistic mission, it was only after the Manuel de Araújo Porto-Alegre’s 1855 AIBA reform initiative that the institution formally centred its artistic efforts on Brazilian themes and the development of a dedicated long-awaited Brazilian School (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888). A Brazilian artist who, by using local motifs and traditions, could produce a history painting in the same fashion and sophistication as Europeans had yet to appear in Brazil. If a religious analogy is permitted, although the temple was already raised (the AIBA) and the gospel was widely known and preached (academic art), Brazilians still messianically awaited the arrival of a saviour-painter.

Meirelles 1860 debut cannot be understood without taking into account the pressures and anxieties of this nationalistic artistic context. The many letters56 his teacher Porto-Alegre sent to Europe reveal how the young student Meirelles, in many ways, was regarded as the painter the institution long expected. In addition to all of his practical teaching advice, Porto-Alegre’s words are marked by an evident prophetic tone. Porto-Alegre congratulated Meirelles for the work that he had sent from Europe, paintings that had filled the AIBA teachers “with great satisfaction” for demonstrating the student’s “salient progress” both in “technical and theoretical” aspects. Nevertheless, Porto-Alegre reassured Meirelles that while the academy was pleased with his efforts, he suggested that his creations “would, one day, give a new polish (lustre) to this Academy”

56 Digitised versions of the original letters are available at: http://www.dezenovevinte.net/documentos/mapa_vm.htm
(PORTO-ALEGRE, 1855) (Italics added). In the same letter, the tutor comments on his “respect” for his pupil’s “new pieces”. Despite criticising certain details with “paternal frankness”, Porto-Alegre emphasises how the young painter produced “hopeful works”, affirming that Meirelles’ studies revealed a fine “taste, intelligence and the finesse that denotes a soul predestined to the perception of beauty”. In another religiously prophetic expression, the Brazilian tutor confesses to Meirelles “with all love and frankness” how he wishes that [the Brazilian academy] “become, one day, a temple of the Arts”. For Porto-Alegre, the young Victor Meirelles would fulfil this mission, since “the time would come when [Meirelles] would take care of [the AIBA] and give it the necessary boost”. He concluded again by saying that Meirelles’ “mission was beautiful because the times are in your favour” (PORTO-ALEGRE, 1855).

In another of his letters, Porto-Alegre, who was also a writer, dedicated a poem to Meirelles marked by an oracular tone. Playing with the double meanings of Victor’s name and Caminha’s (which is a surname, but also a form of the Portuguese verb caminhar - to walk), Porto-Alegre wrote: “Read Caminha and march to glory, you artist. Since heaven called you Victor on earth, read Caminha, paint and then Caminha (go forth)” (cited in COLI, 2005, p. 31).

Only within this broader context is the significance of Victor Meirelles’ work manifest. Confirming Porto-Alegre’s “prophecies”, the young Meirelles returned in glory to Brazil as the first painter ever to produce a large-scale history painting dedicated to a national theme, as well as the first Brazilian artist to enter the Paris Salón. Art analysts who narrowly focus on the accurate portrayal of the 1500 Catholic mass and/or its symbolic significance as a foundational episode for Brazilian history, often overlook that Meirelles’ painting was the central piece of yet another, then contemporary, ritual. Beyond religion, it was art that played a redemptive role in this nineteenth-century nationalistic ritual. While Friar Henrique brought the gospel to bless the land centuries earlier, Meirelles was bringing again from Europe similar good news that attested to Brazil’s correct civilisatory path. Just as the sculpted cross presented Indigenous peoples with a palpable symbol of spiritual salvation, so Meirelles’ masterful painting techniques provided eager audiences with an artistic model that could save Brazilians from cultural backwardness. Meirelles’ choice of an historical episode that portrayed the beginning of Brazilian history could not be more appropriate to convey the most important message implied in his work: that it represented the beginning of Brazilian visual history.
Several topics that are key to this thesis were addressed in this lengthy chapter. Building on the discussion about the close relationship between works produced at the IHGB and AIBA, the first pages demonstrated how Brazilian history painters relied on publications and methods developed by professional historians in order to compose their artistic pieces. Specifically, by means of a close reading of *The First Mass of Brazil*, I showed how Victor Meirelles strategically used the *Carta de Caminha* as a primary source to attest to the historical truthfulness of his painting. Furthermore, by contrasting “edenic” and “satanic” representations, I argued that Meirelles’ work - far from an accurate representation of the past - is part of a long, selective and romantically-inspired genealogy of works that reinforce an interpretation of the formation of the Brazilian nation-state as based on a relatively peaceful and straightforward process. I concluded by suggesting that, more than simply portraying the arrival of the Portuguese and a religious ritual, Meirelles’ painting itself constituted a contemporary ritual that attested to the long-awaited arrival of higher art in Brazil.

The next chapters will continue the discussion of the creation of visual and written histories of Brazil in the nineteenth-century. Specifically, I will detail how historians at the IHGB, in a similar way but before the AIBA artists, were also eagerly discussing and waiting for the day in which Brazilian history would be finally compiled, organised and made public to readers. I will show how, not without irony, the task of answering the IHGB nationalist question of “how to write the history of Brazil” was first met by a scholar who was neither a Brazilian nor a professional historian. Now that the intertwined working agendas shared by nineteenth-century Brazilian artists and historians are clearer, I will demonstrate how the critical assessment of the works of some of Brazilian historiography’s founding-fathers provide, as a corollary, fresh concepts and ideas to re-interpret history paintings at the time.
Chapter 3 – White Pages, Whitening Country: Historians and Racial Theories in Nineteenth-century Brazil

Anyone who would endeavour to write the history of Brazil, a country so full of promise, should never lose sight of which elements vie for the development of its people. These people, however, are diverse in the extreme and are the result of a convergence of three races, namely: the copper-coloured or American, the white or Caucasian, and the black or Ethiopian. We will never be allowed to question the will of Providence that predestined Brazil to this mixture. The Portuguese blood, as a powerful river, should absorb the small tributaries of the Indian and Ethiopian races (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 443).

Studies of race and nation-building in nineteenth-century Brazil generally define the 1870s as a strategic point of departure for investigations. From this decade onwards, imported European racial and deterministic-evolutionist theories spread and acquired local shape within Brazilian intellectual circles. Without disregarding the important studies of the impacts of social Darwinism, social evolutionism, eugenics and neo-Lamarckianism (TELLES, 2004) on museums, universities and other institutions after the 1870s, this and the following chapter show how historiographical works from previous decades contributed to shaping academic and artistic attitudes towards race in nineteenth-century Brazil. Specifically, it focuses on how interpretations of the history of Brazil (and of Brazilians) produced as early as the 1840s at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) advanced the legitimisation of hierarchies among descendants of European, African, Indigenous and mestizo populations. As will be demonstrated, in decades prior to the dissemination of the 1870s racial theories, through the use of rather subtler ideas, the IHGB presented innovative - and eventually enduring - formulas to confront a common nineteenth-century intellectual dilemma, namely, the impasse between dreaming of a future white and unified nation, inside a territory essentially defined by what was then seen as the burden of an enormous Indigenous, African and mestizo population ⁵⁷.

Two IHGB-related documents, Como se Deve Escrever a Historia do Brasil (How to Write the History of Brazil), by Karl von Martius (1845), and Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen’s Historia

⁵⁷ As Eliana Dutra notes, this dilemma was also part of nation building-processes across Latin America, including Mexico and Argentina, in which “intellectual classes and politicians” had similar difficulties “in accepting the ethnic composition of their societies”. Like Brazilians, “they also they dreamed of ‘whitening’ the population. They felt like foreigners within their own countries, because they saw themselves as Europeans” (DUTRA, 2007, p. 97)
Geral do Brazil (General History of Brazil), published between 1854-57, will be used to illustrate the argument. Both present key instruments for approaching tensions between the ideas of race and nationality in nineteenth-century Brazil. This understanding is essential to appropriately develop the two key topics of the last chapters of this thesis: how Martius and Varnhagen’s foundational interpretations of the history of Brazil also informed the works of history painters at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA); and how a critical interpretation of these historians’ works offers strategic analytic categories for art historians to investigate the representation - and invisibilisation - of European, African and Indigenous-descendant Brazilians in the widely popular history paintings made at the time.

3.1 “Brazilian-style” racism

Modesto Brocos’ painting A Redenção de Cam (The Redemption of Ham) is an unparalleled visual allegory of the complex debates around race and nation-building in nineteenth-century Brazil. What seems, at first, only a serene portrait of family members in front of a humble wattle-and-daub home, has been repeatedly interpreted as a didactic pictorial summary of influential racial theories that marked not only the works of painters, but of most other artists and intellectuals at the time.

Despite having been the object of many previous interpretations, it is worth returning to the painting’s main theme: the portrayal of whitening of successive Brazilian generations. At the centre of the frame, a mestizo mother is seated on a rustic wooden bench. In the crook of her left arm, she tenderly holds a pale newborn. More than suggesting bodily comfort and protection, beyond indicating the exact midpoint that offers symmetry and balance to the other elements of the composition, the mother’s lap also serves an equally important narrative function: to turn the child’s body (and the viewer’s gaze) to the left of the image, where an elderly Afro-descendant woman stands. She is barefooted, thus, bearing the discreet but unmistaken sign of former Brazilian slaves. Praying to the sky and apparently unaware that she is being closely observed, the old woman is also the visual focus of her grandchild’s attention. The baby’s eyes are fixed firmly upon the grandmother, perhaps comparing her wrinkled skin to her rugged clothes, or contrasting the whitish headscarf over her black face. However, the infant’s ears seem to be tuned to a distinctly different direction, perpendicularly, apparently still listening to the echoes of the

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mother’s last words. Indeed, as if concluding a bedtime story or a nurturing class, the mother is
didactically pointing her right forefinger as in summarising the main theme of a lesson, or the
moral of the tale: the possibility of a genealogical bond between a white child and a black woman.
To the right of the frame, with eyes on his child and at arm’s-length of the ring on his spouse’s left
hand, a proud Iberian-descendant father approves the scene.

Fig 3.1 Modesto Brocos. *A Redenção de Cam (The Redemption of Ham).*

Although Brocos’ painting clearly avoided fresh artistic tendencies of the period, such as
Impressionism, Symbolism and Aestheticism (CARDOSO, 2008), and despite presenting no
genuine technical innovations, his painting would be publicly and critically acclaimed, awarded
the gold medal at the Exposição Geral (General Exhibition) of 1885. In explaining why this
certainly well-painted, but rather ordinary, work broadly appealed to both specialists and the
general public, most art historians have looked beyond any of its artistic or formal components.
Indeed, for its contemporary audiences, most of the painting’s merits lay in its rhetoric and
semantic appeals. In it, Brocos masterfully translated and condensed, into one single frame, what
was then one of the most current scientific paradigms - social evolutionism - with the foremost
national anxiety - racial miscegenation. In fact, due to its ability to to express what “was then the
most ‘scientific’ in Brazilian thought”, Brocos painting was taken by director of the Museu
Nacional in Rio de Janeiro, anthropologist João Batista de Lacerda, to the “First Universal Races
Congress in London (1911), to serve him as an illustration to a work on the supposed whitening of the Brazilian population” (CARDOSO, 2008, p. 103).

According to Lilia Schwarcz, the infamous essay presented by Lacerda “included in its introduction the reproduction” of Brocos’ painting with the following heading: “Le Nègre passant au blanc, à troisième génération, par l’effet du croisement des races [The black becoming white, in the third generation, because of the mixing of races]”. (SCHWARCZ, 1999, p. 13) The eminent Brazilian anthropologist was absolutely confident of this local application of eugenic theories - according to which the supposed higher “white fertility rates”, added to the “dominance of white genes” and to the elevated rates of Brazilian interracial marriage, would eventually whiten the population. Indeed, he predicted that “by 2012, the Brazilian population would be 80 percent white, 3 percent mixed, 17 percent Indian, and there would be no more blacks” (TELLES, 2004, p. 29).

But, for most Brazilians who attended art exhibits, there was little need for a scientific caption to explain Brocos’ allegory. The dilemma of a society that aspired to be part of the “civilised” world, while having an enormous “un-civilised” Indigenous, African and mestizo population, had been raised by political elite before and after the 1822 proclamation of independence. In this respect, Maria Odila Leite da Silva Dias has argued that important state actors tended to express deep pessimism and regular doubts about the integration of such diverse populations into one single political body. In 1813, the so-called “patriarch of Brazilian independence” José Bonifácio de Andrada, who beside a politician was also a competent mineralogist, metaphorically wrote of the difficulties “to amalgamate the fusion of such heterogeneous metals. Such as whites, mulattoes, free blacks and slaves, Indians, etc, etc., as solid political body” (cited in DIAS, 1972, p. 24).

The increasing acceptance of racial theories that directly linked European blood to social development and prosperity fuelled even more doubts of an economically and culturally flourishing tropical and multi-racial nation. From the middle of the nineteenth-century, the supposed scientifically-proven harmful effects of racial miscegenation became a popular idea among Europeans scholars, many of whom travelled to “corroborate” their studies in Brazil. It also began to inform local intellectuals who, following social Darwinist ideas, “believed that the same distances observed among species also existed among races, and that, therefore, crossbreeding was always a factor of imbalance and degeneration” (SCHWARCZ, 2003, p. 10).

But reception to racial theories in Brazil would not be a passive process, but a selective and creative one. Brazilian intellectual thought eventually “incorporated that which it wished to
serve and ignored that which it did not suit” (SCHWARCZ, 1999, p. 23). To counter the essentially deterministic predictions that mestizo populations tended necessarily to social degeneration and economic underdevelopment, intellectuals such as Silvio Romero, as early the 1870s, proposed another potential solution for racial mixing in Brazil: the progressive whitening (branqueamento) of the population by interracial marriage. Historian Thomas Skidmore documents how Romero, despite his intellectual contradictions and arbitrary habitual changes, publicly stated his opinions about the “whitening” tendency in Brazilian society:

‘My argument is that future victory in the life struggle among us will belong to the white. (...) the white type will continue to predominate by natural selection until it emerges pure and beautiful as in the old world. Two factors will greatly contribute to this process: on the one hand the abolition of the slave trade and the continuous disappearance of the Indians, and on the other hand European immigration!’ (cited in SKIDMORE, 1974. pp. 36-7)

Thus the whitening theory predicted by Romero and other intellectuals can be interpreted as Brocos’ primary subject through the family portrait allegory. To be sure that his allusion to the whitening of Brazilian society was the unambiguous central theme of the painting, Brocos carefully named it after the biblical curse of one of the sons of Noah (CARDOSO, 2008). The religious fable that Canaan and his children were destined to be “servants” of his uncles Shem and Japheth and their descendants - because his father Ham had seen “the nakedness” 59 of his grandfather Noah - was a familiar one to the overwhelmingly Catholic Brazilian population. In racist, slave-dependent and Christian societies such as nineteenth-century Brazil and the United States (JOHNSON, 2004), this biblical story was also commonly referred as divine justification for white supremacy, serving as “a basis to argue that blacks were destined forever to serve whites” since it stated that “only the latter were descendants of Shem and Japheth, while the former were direct descendents of Ham” (SLENES, 1996, p. 294).

Brocos’ painting, in this sense, skilfully summarised both specialised predictions that biological determinism could be subverted by multiracial matrimonies and popular general beliefs that only God’s benevolence could remedy humans’ sinful damnation. In The Redemption of Ham, through an ingenious use of a colour gradient, the painter manages to simultaneously connect and distance the three family generations: from the unequivocal black pigment used to depict the grandmother, to the ambiguity that marked social and phenotypic representations of brown-

mulattoes such as the young mother; to the clearly lighter-skinned patriarch; to the immaculate skin tone - and redeeming condition - of the white-skinned child.

Signs of this ambivalent kindred proximity and remoteness can be interpreted everywhere in the image. A carefully staged separation between left and right creates a subtle chronological metaphor that, at the same time, joins but distinguishes the “old” and the “new” Brazilians portrayed. The past, on the left, is also the past to be left behind. The old times are not only reinforced by the aged black woman, but also by the unpaved floor on which her worn bare feet stand. She is also, symptomatically, the only person who has no contact with any urban-modern symbols: the tiled floor, the footwear, the wooden bench or, more importantly, access to the house at the threshold of which sits the white male. A concrete wall of clay, a protective mother holding a baby and a vigilant father with legs crossed, hands closed and draped over the door’s entrance, obstruct entry into the house. A palm tree - symbol of the tropical, rural and untamed Brazil - serves as the grandmother’s main background. Attached to “nature,” as if belonging to it, she subtly re-enacts the representation of many previous Indigenous and Afro-descendant peoples to whom aesthetic subjectivity and agency were denied, becoming a mere element of the landscape in Brazilian nineteenth-century art (DIAS and SCHWARCZ, 2008).

The chromatic-chronological turn from past, present and future generations is suggested in skin tones but also in the clothing colours. The grandmother is predictably dressed in darker colours. A black jacket covering her torso becomes a second membrane over her dark skin. Her muted rust-coloured skirt is distinctly darker than that of her daughter. Intriguingly, a discreet part of her abdomen covered by a contrasting lighter cloth is revealed. It is hardly a coincidence that this white-exposed abdomen highlights the only part of her body with a potential for whitening. By contrast, the colours of the daughter’s clothing are again marked by the mestizo’s uncertain representational-social place: her blouse is white but features coloured dots, while her pink skirt is not only lighter than her mother’s but also adorned with white details. It (she) is coloured and white.

Cunningly, the tiny tip of the shoe appearing beneath the bottom of her skirt, positioned in the very border between the paved and unpaved country, suggests the daughter’s close yet different place from her mother’s family historical slave side. The proud patriarch wears typical Mediterranean-styled beige shirt with light-grey pants and casual clogs. An immaculate and unpolluted white fabric, in turn, covers the child, the redeemed new “Canaan”. Clearly hanging

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60 For a competent summary of the “uncertain classification” of mestizos in the History of Brazil, please refer to the chapter From White Supremacy to Racial Democracy in TELLES (2004)
inside the house are three recently-washed white items of clothing. To the extreme right, the pants unequivocally belong to the father also located on the right side. Just as the wife is sitting to the man’s right, the white fabric to the left of his pants (resembling a skirt) almost certainly belongs to her. The third piece of fabric, visibly smaller than the others, probably belongs to the newborn. Apparently, there is no space for any clothes belonging to the grandmother; just as there is no apparent room or reason for her to enter the house.

Gestures also play an interesting role in defining the shifts of generational (national) times. The grandmother alone stands on unpaved dirt. She lifts her arms mercifully thanking God, perhaps signalling that she has done her best for her family and is ready to exit. Her grandchild appears to perceive that, although physically proximate, the grandmother belongs to a distant, disappearing era. With right hand raised, the baby’s gesture is deeply ambiguous: it is a clear sign of recognition but it is also a wave of goodbye (BITTENCOURT, 2005). The child is (holding) the fruit of redemption and Christian purity, an orange (FERGUSON, 1961, p. 35); while the grandmother is rooted in the past, just as the palm tree behind her alludes to the diminishing once-covered-with-forest old Brazil.

To audiences deeply touched by religious prophecies and a national society tormented by science’s curse, Brocos’ painting was both aesthetically appealing and mentally appeasing. Adding even more to its symbolic appeal, Brocos’ image did not simply refer to the masculine family of Noah. It was also clearly intended to suggest an analogy between the birth of the Brazilian national community and the eternity of the Holy family picturing “a black (St. Anne), the Mother, a virgin mulatto (Our Lady), the Father, native and European at the same time (St. Joseph), and a white boy (Jesus the Saviour) [represents the new and future Brazil, which in the course of a century was predicted to become as white as the child portrayed (SCHLICHTA, 2006, p. 102).

However, visual or written discourses linking race and nation-building in Brazilian history have rarely been as clear-cut and didactic as in the Brocos’ painting. In spite of its multiple layers of meanings, The Redemption of Ham exhibits an uncommonly direct approach when compared to the way the majority of artists and intellectuals have expressed their opinions on Brazilian race and racism employing subtler, indirect and dissimulated techniques. Modesto Brocos’ take on race relations is only understood in the context of the relatively brief Brazilian eugenic movement; inside a period in which whitening theory came “to be accepted by most Brazilian elite” (SKIDMORE, 1974, p. 64), notably from the end of the 1880s until the first decades of the twentieth century.
This does not mean that the majority of the self-declared white artists and intellectuals, before and after this period, has been less prejudiced against Afro-descendants, Indigenous or mestizos in Brazil. Rather, it demonstrates that Brazilian attitudes towards race have been historically vaguer than those of openly-assumed racialist and racist\textsuperscript{61} societies such as South Africa or the US. Unlike the North-American “one-drop of black blood” measure of classification, Brazilian blackness, whiteness and \textit{mestizagem} have to be understood not only as historically “impure” racial categories but also as unstable ones, since one can be “white in one realm but ‘not quite’ in another” (PINHO, 2009, p. 44).

In Brazil, most official state positions regarding the country’s historical racism or plans to solve its enduring effects - by means of affirmative action, for example - have been hesitant or weak. This caution derives from the pressure of lobby groups that have actively denied the existence of racial prejudice in the country, or that have regarded it simply as a residual effect of economic inequalities.

Beyond political and/or academic debates, the general public’s positions about racism are, on the whole, equally intriguing. Lilia Moritz Schwarcz has shown in her paradoxical research results that Brazilians tend to see racism virtually everywhere in society, except in themselves. By confronting paradoxical data from a survey that shows that “97% of the respondents claimed that they were not prejudiced, while 98% of the same respondents declared that they knew other people who were”, Schwarcz ironically concluded that “every Brazilian feels like an island of racial democracy, surrounded on all sides by a sea of racists” (SCHWARCZ, 2003, p. 6). This tends to confirm sociologist Florestan Fernandes’ famous reference to another typically Brazilian form of manifesting racial prejudice. He termed it a “retroactive prejudice”, that is, a “prejudice against being prejudiced” (cited in SCHWARCZ, 2003, p. 7).

As a result of the colonisation process, clearly visible differences in appearance have defined the national society. That distinction along with the combination of hesitant state policies and the monolithic “prejudice of being prejudiced” shared by most Brazilians has often lead to the conclusion by locals and foreigners that Brazil was some sort of an earthly racial paradise or at least a \textit{racial democracy}\textsuperscript{62}, from which other societies could find inspiration to solve their own

\textsuperscript{61} I adopt here Tzvetan Todorov’s well-known distinction between the two words. For Todorov, \textit{racism} is a “behaviour”: a practical manifestation of prejudice/hatred toward others perceived as physically different. \textit{Racialism}, on the other hand, is a doctrine concerning human diversity based on the theoretical notion that different races exist. While racialism implies the hierarchy of distinct races, this tends but does not necessarily leads to hatred \textit{behaviour} toward others. (1993, p. 31)

\textsuperscript{62} The expression \textit{racial democracy} has been popularly used, both in Brazil and abroad, to refer to the country’s supposed comparatively peaceful historical, cultural and genetic amalgamation of African, European and Indigenous
problems. In fact, Brazilian historical *mestizagem* and tolerance was seen as a possible model for mitigating the racially-based tensions informing Nazi-Fascist movements that had destroyed Europe. Indeed this was the stimulus for a famous UNESCO study in Brazil “on the assumption that [the country’s] experience might offer the rest of the world a unique lesson in “harmonious” relations among races. (SKIDMORE, 1974, p. 215)

The research results however, suggested a much more pessimistic condition for most Afro-descendants and Indigenous Brazilians, pointing to direct links between variations of skin colours and the persistence of economic inequalities and social stratification. The 1960s critiques of this research by the so-called School of São Paulo led by sociologist Florestan Fernandes, resulted in the emergence of a very different vision of Brazilian society. Unlike formerly assumed paradisiacal views, Fernandes’ research group “concluded that racism was widely spread in Brazilian society, calling [racial democracy] a myth” and suggesting that “whites would seek to maintain their privileged positions for as long as possible” (TELLES, 2004, p. 42).

The repercussions of these investigations can still be seen in Brazil. Indeed, the revelations about racial inequalities more than 50 years ago can be regarded as a symbolic beginning of a public debate that has never ended. In this debate, it is evident that Brazilians tend to have polarised positions around this theme, especially among those who still defend the country’s racial democracy and those who attack it as ideological; between those who believe that social prejudices are simply a matter of residual economic/classist inequalities and those who believe there is an ethnic/racist base to the problem; between those who believe that the country should adopt affirmative action initiatives and those who predict that solving historical economic discrepancies would end any current phenotypic discrimination; between those who advocate for a deep national debate about the historical invention and social effects of the idea of “race” and those who fear that such measures would stimulate internal divisions through the importation of a populations, which produced an essentially mestizo society, virtually free from racism. The idea that Brazil had experienced a relatively benign slavery system, along with the development of a society in which social mobility seemed possible regardless of skin colour and, notably, as the result of a “harmonious” genetic, social and cultural miscegenation between Portuguese, African and Indigenous groups, were interpreted as patent evidence that Brazil was comparatively freer from the racism of other former settler and slave-based colonies, such as the United States and South Africa. The origin of the term is often falsely attributed to the works of Gilberto Freyre, even though the sociologist regularly opted for the terms *social* or *ethnic* democracy (CRUZ, 2003). Even though the term was not created by him, Gilberto Freyre indeed “fully developed, expressed, and popularised the idea of racial democracy, to the point that it dominated Brazilian thinking from the 1930s to the early 1990s” (TELLES, 2004, p. 33). Yet, although Gilberto Freyre’s highly influential works are usually regarded for popularising the term among Brazilian and international academic circles, it has been noted that the image of Brazil as a type of a racial paradise was already being promoted decades before Freyre’s works: “Historian Célia Marinho de Azevedo contends that the myth of Brazilian racial paradise was formulated by Brazilian abolitionists with the help of their US counterparts. Images of Brazil’s exceptionally pacific racial relations existed in US abolitionist circles as early as the mid-1800s, as part of their leaders’ efforts to emphasize the cruelty of US slavery” (PINHO, 2009, p. 45).
racial debate and reductionist classifications that are foreign to Brazilian people. In public opinion polls and academic debates, the polarisation of “economic” and “sociological” (HALL, 1996, p. 21) approaches to understanding racial relations and conflicts is manifest.

Beyond sociological research and relatively recent case studies, historians have searched for the roots of racism [or its absence] in the country’s history. They have given particular attention to the effects of the lengthy slave system initiated under Portuguese colonisation in the sixteenth-century and only abolished in 1888; to the rather ambiguous role of the colonial Catholic church in either condemning or morally justifying African and Indigenous slavery; to the enthusiastic adoption of so-called scientific racism in the nineteenth-century by elements of the Brazilian elite; to the suspiciously coincidental spread of (vertical) racial theories with the period of (horizontal) changes brought by the abolition of slavery in 1888 and proclamation of the republic in 1889 (SKIDMORE, 1974; DAMATA, 1987); and finally to the on-going debate about the historical resignifications of theories of mestiçagem (miscegenation), especially from the end of the nineteenth-century until the period of Gilberto Freyre’s first 1930s publications. Many Brazilians celebrate Freyre’s positive conceptualisation of a mestizo country for consolidating a creative national response against pessimist-deterministic European-inspired eugenics. Others, however, condemn it for popularising the false idea of national ethnic harmony, which is often held equally responsible for delaying compensatory policies to overcome racism in Brazil (CRUZ, 2003).

Paradoxically, even though questions regarding race and racism in Brazil frequently seek answers in the country’s past, recent Brazilian historiography has been relatively silent in dealing with these issues. Ronaldo Vainfas has suggested that this “historiographical debt”, which has persisted at least since the middle of the twentieth-century, probably has to do with:

the discomfort caused by the idea of a "racial democracy" suggested by Gilberto Freyre; to which might be added the stigmatising burden associated with the concept of race, which was so fashionable in the early decades of the twentieth-century, and whose historical use for segregationist state policies, and even for extermination, is well-known in various parts of the world. This [historiographical] debt or omission is caused by the [historians’] opposite conclusion to that of Freyre, namely, that colonial slavery "created" the racism that exists among us today, camouflaged or explicit, without it being studied in its origins; and without racial miscegenation being regarded as a legitimate topic of investigation. The major constraint, among historians, seems to lie in the problematisation of the concept of race. (VAINFAS, 1999, p. 11)
A significant part of this omission, thus, derives from the fact that the concept of “race” is not without criticism among historians. No quixotic attempts will be made in this chapter to summarise the “formidable, immense, and varied literature” (Hall, 1996, p. 16) that has made theorisations of race such a slippery theme. It seems necessary to note, however, that many of the common misuses and abuses of the notion of “race” also derive from the relative imprecision of its definition, added to its polysemic nature and contradictory historical appropriations.

Consequently, in the attempt to avoid similar misunderstandings, it is important to assert that this thesis follows the definition of race as adopted by most contemporary research in the humanities, that is, as a social and ideological construct rather than as a natural or biological-scientific category (Vainfas, 1999; Schwarcz, 1999; Todorov, 1993). Not only in Brazilian but in most international academic circles, the redefinition of race as a social rather than biological phenomenon has been the result of a long and collective effort not only of researchers in the humanities but, also, in biomedical fields that recurrently reaffirm that “there are no significant genetic distinctions between races, and that our system of racial classification is an invention of the West” (Berger, 2005, p. 4).

Furthermore, as any category of identity, race is not taken here as a fixed essence but as a contested and historically dynamic concept throughout Brazilian history. It is evident that the (biological and Eurocentric-based) concept of race adopted by the Brazilian nineteenth-century painters and historians studied herein is radically different from most contemporary researchers’ (ideological) understanding of the term. This is not to suggest that outdated racial thinking and discriminatory uses of racial categories have ended in Brazil after the establishment of new academic consensus. On the contrary, if most historians are quick to affirm that the concept of race is historically obsolete, many are equally puzzled to note its widespread social-political appropriations and uses in all levels of contemporary Brazilian society, including universities.

Indeed, even though scientifically disputed and morally challenged by national discourses that, at least since the 1930s, have celebrated hybridity “as the essence of Brazilianness” (Caio, 2008, p. 2), fixed notions of race and hierarchised racial differences continue to operate inside Brazil. Moreover, many discredited nineteenth-century white supremacist theories “remain deeply embedded in social thinking in Brazil”, or that relatively cordial “horizontal” relations between whites and non-whites still go together with hierarchised “vertical” relations between them (Telles, 2004, p. 13). To conclude this brief (and obviously inconclusive) list of Brazilian puzzles regarding racial issues, it should be noted that even the systematic denunciation of the so-called “myth of racial democracy”, initiated by the work of Florestan Fernandes and the School of
Sao Paulo, has not succeeded in ending current socioeconomic discrepancies and racist practices between privileged whites and the rest of the population. Although its theoretical and empirical refutation has been extensive and convincing, the presumption of a racially-democratic Brazil continues to survive with some effectiveness as political discourse (Guimarães, 2005). To paraphrase Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (2003), many Brazilians seem to see no conflict in living in mythic islands of racial democracy, even if surrounded on all sides by a sea of concrete (and cumulative) evidence pointing to the persistence of racism in the country. In the face of these and other enigma(s), many historians choose to avoid the issue of race relations in Brazil (Telles, 2004).

This relatively long preamble explaining the paradoxical background of racial discourse in Brazil is also necessary to explain the decision to confront this issue directly. From the initial introductory pages, this thesis has called for a challenge to the visual and written interpretations of what has been referred as the “official” history of Brazil, particularly, as AIBA painters and the IHGB historians documented it. Hierarchisation and/or erasure of Indigenous, African, and mestizo populations from books and paintings are defining features of this official history. It follows that research focused on the history of the history of Brazil, such as this, requires an in-depth discussion of the historically tense racial relations in Brazil that contributed to the legitimisation of discrepant hierarchical painted and written representations of its populations.

Indeed, as seen in the opening epigraph, the centrality of racial issues for Brazilian historiography was foretold by some of the first nineteenth-century writers such as Karl von Martius, who in the 1840s was already advising future historians to focus on the “copper-coloured”, “whites” and “blacks” which made up the country’s population. In many ways, with his multiracial interpretation of the nation, Martius anticipated by almost one century the fable of three races (Damatta, 1987) that even today has widespread acceptance among Brazilians.

By foregrounding racial relations, this thesis adds to a long historiographical tradition of interpreting Brazil’s past, present and future as necessarily linked to the cultural and physical encounters between local Indigenous peoples, Europeans settlers and forcibly transported Africans. The diverse generations of interpreters of Brazilian racial issues, evidently, have never shared consensual positions or delivered linear, coherent and accumulative results. For example, the dramatic discontinuity between the “whitening” ideals defended by eugenic-inspired social scientists and the post-Freyrians who constructed a positive concept of mestiçagem was noted in previous pages. Understandably, many Brazilian historical studies on race tend to concentrate their
analysis on the period from the 1870s to the 1930s⁶³, since they symbolically demarcate these two extreme moments of racial thinking in Brazil. These decades, after all, help to situate both the introduction of “scientific-racist” theories and the subsequent rise of “racial democracy” discourses.

Undeniably, the 1870s-1930s are key decades to an understanding of the way racial relations evolved in the country’s recent history. Nevertheless, the habitual academic focus on this period has also limited interpretations of this theme to two basic tendencies. At the risk of being simplistic, it is possible to define the focus of the first tendency as understanding the 1930s as a transformative and redeeming national phase. It is portrayed as a decade in which new anti-racist sociological and historical interpretations, along with the increasing promotion of the image of a mestizo national culture during the Getúlio Vargas government years, created solid foundations to integrate all Brazilians and to eliminate any residual prejudiced thought in the country. The relatively high rates of Brazilian miscegenation, as well as usually friendly relations between whites and non-whites, is taken by this group as clear proof of the non-existence of domestic racial problems. Although this interpretation is seldom promoted in most respected academic institutions, it still resonates in Brazilian society as a whole and continues to be effectively used as a political discourse.

In contrast, a second group of interpreters argues that, even if the 1930s witnessed the dethronement of the enormous national burden created by evolutionist-racialist-deterministic theories, the period saw the dissemination of an arguably even more sophisticated discourse that has blocked action to confront racial prejudice in Brazil: a state-supported eulogy of miscegenation. Indeed, in the search to explain the apparent paradox between Brazilian high rates of interracial marriage and conviviality, along with the persistence of racist practices and social inequalities, this second group of interpreters suggests that Brazil’s self-promoted image as an essentially mestizo country, although pioneering for the context of 1930s, is perhaps part of the reason for the relative lack of contemporary anti-racism policies. Contrary to the “primitive motor of segregation” adopted in other countries, Brazil’s distinctive racism has been resilient precisely because “the Brazilian system has been able to use miscegenation or fluid horizontal race relations to allow racial injustices and inequalities to persevere without state intervention, for a relatively long period of time” (TELLES, 2004, p. 2). Unlike the advocates of “racial democracy”, this

⁶³ As will be shown in Chapter 5, this was also the period of so-called pacification and genocidal campaigns against Indigenous peoples, so there was a material aspect to these theories that legitimated those campaigns as necessary for modernisation of the nation-state.
second group insists that public tributes to miscegenation have contributed to the neglect of Brazil’s more veiled racist manifestations, the so-called “Brazilian-style racism” (racismo à brasileira) (DAMATTA, 1997) or the “cordial racism” (TURRA and VENTURI, 1995), that is, informal, non-codified and covert expressions of prejudice.

In summary, these two interpretative tendencies share one common premise – that the 1870s signal the dissemination of the most substantial set of theories that explain Brazilian historical racism – and one major disagreement: did the 1930s mark the (beginning of) the end of racist thinking in Brazil, or did it simply yield space to fresh (and perhaps even more effective) practices of racial prejudice?

Renowned musician Antonio Carlos “Tom” Jobim is reported to have observed that “Brazil is not for beginners”. To be sure, the plasticity, ambiguity and shifting specificities of racial relations throughout the country’s history seem not to be an easy task even “for veterans”. In an attempt to place an additional piece in this seemingly endless, dynamic puzzle, the following 64

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64 Far from offering a comprehensive account of the heterogeneous map of investigations centred on Brazilian historical racism, the division above is nothing more than a didactic way to distinguish what are arguably the two most influential interpretations adopted by researchers directly studying this theme; that is, of those authors which take racial inequality as the main subject of their inquiries. It is possible that this polarisation in the understanding of race relations in Brazil derives from the influence of “two distinct generations of research that produced nearly contradictory findings”, as summarised by Edward Telles: “The first generation consisted mostly of North Americans who examined racism in the North and Northeast, although they were inspired by the master Scholar and shaper of Brazilian national identity, Gilberto Freyre. They (...) concluded that there was little racism and certainly no colour line in Brazilian society. By contrast, the second generation, beginning in the 1950’s, (...) concluded that racism was widespread and profound, rivalling systems of racial domination throughout the world. The second generation was exclusively Brazilian at first and focused on the South and Southeast.” (TELLES, 2004) Additionally, it is important to note that many individual researchers and research groups, although neither directly focused on the theme of racial relations nor restricted to the period of the 1870-1930’s, have also given inestimable contributions to the understanding of Brazilian historical racist thinking and practices. As one main example, it is necessary to note the prolific works from Brazilian and Brazilianists who have been studying the monumental theme of slavery, since the beginning of the African transatlantic diaspora to the reinvention of Pan-African social organisation in the form of quilombo/maroon societies (GOMES and REIS, 1996). Equally important are the many recent researches who have been pointing to the existence of racial classifications/discrimination much before the spread of nineteenth-century racial theories. Historian Ronaldo Vainfas, for example, has pointed to the open research field ahead of those who wish to better understand the invention/political uses of the concept of race much before its “association with slavery”, or its link to the “prejudices of colour” or the “biological racism” that sprung in the nineteenth-century. Rather, Vainfas proposes a study of a much earlier Iberian “colonial racism” (VAINFAS, 1999) that involved not only Blacks, but also other groups such as Jews and Indigenous peoples, and which developed not after but simultaneously to and as an organic part of the colonisation process, which was codified and became the foundation for International Law. With his call for the need to investigate much previous forms of racial discrimination, Vainfas seems to follow a similar path as other Latin American theorists such as Anibal Quijano, for whom: “The colonizers exercised diverse operations that brought about the configuration of a new universe of intersubjective relations of domination between Europe and the Europeans and the rest of the regions and peoples of the world, to whom new geocultural identities were being attributed in that process. (...) The success of Western Europe in becoming the centre of the modern world-system, according to Wallerstein’s suitable formulation, developed within the Europeans a trait common to all colonial dominators and imperialists, ethnocentrism. But in the case of Western Europe, that trait had a peculiar formulation and justification: the racial classification of the world population after the colonization of America. The association of colonial ethnocentrism and universal racial classification helps to explain why Europeans came to feel not only superior to all the other peoples of the world, but, in particular, naturally superior.” (QUIJANO, 2000, p. 541)
pages will outline an investigation of Brazilian racial history by relocating it to the period of 1840s and 1850s. Specifically, it will document how early visual and written interpretations of the history of Brazil produced at the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) and at the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA) contributed to the validation of some of the first representations of hierarchies between European, African and Indigenous Brazilian populations, some of which have wide acceptance today.

Without disregarding the important 1870-1930s debate, I show that categories crucial to understanding tensions between the race and nationality are found equally in the first attempts to narrate the so-called “History of Brazil”, specifically after the works of Karl von Martius (1845) and Francisco Adolfo Varnhagen (1854-7). Drawing inspiration from Martin Berger’s (2005) insightful suggestion that racialised perspectives can and have to be studied in texts that apparently have no links whatsoever to race, I will further argue that visual and written narratives on the history of Brazil can be interpreted as strongly linked to white(nes)s precisely because they appear to integrate Indigenous and Afro-descendants to a “general” narrative of Brazil’s history.

Martius’ Eurocentric ideas on racial mixing are well known, as are the supporting roles he attributed to Indigenous peoples and Africans in contrast to the Portuguese protagonist in the tri-racial national “fable”. A less discussed topic is the way in which his work helped to create an enduring narrative formula that, ultimately, taught future historians how to gradually *stop writing* about Indigenous and Afro-descendant Brazilian populations. As will be detailed in the following pages, Martius’ writing can also be productively used to interpret how the AIBA’s history painters managed to *simultaneously* evoke and disguise Indigenous and African histories in their visual narratives.

### 3.2 The Hydraulic metaphor of the Brazilian nation

In 1847, Karl Friedrich Philipp von Martius won an important contest promoted by the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) to judge the “best plan to write the ancient and modern history of Brazil” (RIHGB, 1847, p. 279). The winner, who was neither a Brazilian nor a professionally-trained historian\(^65\), entitled his dissertation as *Como se Deve Escrever a Historia do Brasil* (*How to Write the History of Brazil*).

\(^{65}\) A renowned Bavarian botanist and explorer, Karl von Martius would arrive in the recently declared United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarves in 1817, as part of a royal entourage that accompanied archduchess Maria Leopoldina of Austria, who was to marry King Dom Joao VI’s heir, prince D. Pedro I. Besides his awarded
There could not be more accurate words to describe the task ahead: indeed, other than a few early colonial writings, such as those from Gabriel Soares de Souza (1587) and Frei Vicente do Salvador (1627), or the attempts to write more comprehensive narratives found in Sebastião da Rocha Pitta’s *História da América Portuguesa* (1730) and Robert Southey’s *History of Brazil*, published in London between 1810-1819, no local writer had yet attempted to write a history from the recently independent nation’s perspective. As discussed in the first chapter, it would be only after the IHGB’s establishment in 1838, that the first attempts to write a history of Brazil as an autonomous national state were launched.

In a period when Cicero's *Historia est Magistra Vitae* continued to inform the works of many Brazilian intellectuals, writers actively engaged with the principles of a “pragmatic history” that aimed at diagnosing and directly solving social problems (WEHLING, 1999, p.). The IHGB members were conscious of their threefold duties as official researchers of the nation’s past; as natural tutors for its present; and, consequently as the preferred guides for its future. With the aim of delivering universal truths to the uneducated masses, the IHGB members had little doubt that those “who occupied the top of the social pyramid” (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 6) were responsible for vertically spreading knowledge to the bottom population sectors. As the 1847 edition of the IHGB journal made explicit, every Brazilian historian should promote the “political and moral ends of History”:

> [the historian] with the achievements of the past, will teach the present generation about what their true happiness consists of, guiding it to a common tie, inspiring it with the most noble patriotism, with the love for the monarchic-constitutional institutions, the religious feeling, and the inclination to the good manners. (RIHGB, 1847, p. 287)

Nevertheless, if most IHGB members rarely questioned their central roles in the “didactic nationalism” (DIAS, 1972, p. 36) of the period, or the distinct positions of the elite group of instructors and the lower-class to be instructed, it was equally clear that there still were no historiographical essay, thus, Martius also travelled extensive parts of Brazilian territory, notably with zoologist Johann Baptist von Spix, producing an extensive number of scientific and illustrated studies on Brazilian flora and fauna. He was the initial editor of one of most comprehensive taxonomic studies of Brazilian plants of its time, *Flora Braziliensis* (1840-1906), of which a complete digitalized copy can be accessed at: [http://florabrasiliensis.cria.org.br/](http://florabrasiliensis.cria.org.br/)

A complete digitalised version of Southey’s *History of Brazil* can be read at the University of Sao Paulo (USP) site: [http://www.brasiliana.usp.br/node/411](http://www.brasiliana.usp.br/node/411)

67 Allusions to Cicero’s classic ideas regarding the pedagogical uses of historical knowledge are recurrent in the writings of IHGB members, one of the most significant being found in the very opening text of the first IHGB journal in 1939, written by Cônego Januário Barbosa da Cunha: “We need only to attain to what Cicero has to say about History, to soon discover all benefits which can be expected from an Institute particularly dealing with it (…) History (writes the Roman philosopher) is the witness of time, the light of truth and life's teacher”. (RIHGB, 1839, p. 9)
appropriate books or didactic materials to properly teach Brazilian history or, more importantly, to advance national pride. Until the early 1820s, Brazil’s history was viewed as nothing more than another chapter of Portuguese global expansion. It would be only after political independence was achieved that an analogous historiographical emancipation would be pursued. Martius’ relatively short essay, in many ways, would fill this void. Promptly his text consolidated a sort of master-plan for the Brazilian pedagogic-historical narrative under construction.

In spite of his lack of historiographical research credentials, Karl von Martius’ erudite scientific background and intellectual grasp of European academic tendencies certainly aided him in impressing the IHGB judges. Indeed, Martius’ work was judged superior to that of the second submitter, Henrique Júlio Wallenstein, among other things, because the latter followed historian Titus Livius’ method of organising historical events in precise periods, divided into decades. The IHGB’s referees regarded this model as outdated. In contrast with Martius’ work, they condemned Wallenstein’s method as “purely fictional and artificial, which can be convenient for the historian, but in no way is able to produce a history in the philosophical genre, as is currently required” (RHIGB, 1847, p. 279) (Italics in the original).

By purposefully opting to compose his How to Write the History of Brazil in a “philosophical” approach, Martius demonstrated awareness of the shifts, the competition and hierarchies among at least five modes of historical writing in vogue when he submitted his dissertation to the IHGB. Popular at least since the end of the Ancien Regime up to middle of the nineteenth-century, when they would gradually lose ground to so-called professional or “scientific history”, these five historiographical currents have been summarised by historian Arno Wehling as:

The history-fiction, understood as a work of art, still had a great number of supporters, which would culminate in the historical romance and romanticism. Walter Scott has been regarded as its foremost representative and even Ranke acknowledged the importance of his work. (…) The historical chronicle appeared as a frequent option, naturally limited by its narrative form and its lack of ambitiousness. It remained strongly traditional, subjective and impressionist. (…) This was different from another form of chronicle [the erudite chronicle], guided by methodological rigor in the selection of texts (…) in accordance to the procedures defined by the Abbot Mabillon. The historical rhetoric, following a Cicerian tradition, having scarce or no commitment with documental evidence, still had supporters in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Finally, the philosophical history, an Illuminist novelty that searched in the social world for - in Montesquieu’s famous expression - similar regularities and laws to those Newton had discovered for the physical universe. (WEHLING, 1999, p. 31) (Italics added)
Clearly, although Martius’ self-declared affiliation with a “philosophical” approach to historiography was tactical, it was not the decisive factor for his winning submission. Indeed, beyond the appeal of any fashionable epistemological trend, the main reasons for his approval were the judges’ favourable reception to his dissertation’s main themes. They noted, especially, the way in which they “corresponded, on the political-ideological level, to the interests and ideals for the consolidation of the state and the nation in Brazil” (WEHLING, 1994, p. 32). Written in 1843, published in the IHGB Journal of 1845, and finally granted the winning prize in 1847, How to Write the History of Brazil was particularly unique at the time for providing an unapologetic approach and feasible research solutions to the then taboo theme of Brazil’s multiple ethnicities:

The focal point for the reflective historian ought to be to show how, in the successive development of Brazil, the conditions were established for the perfecting of the three human races which were placed side by side in this country, in a manner hitherto unknown. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 443)

In a period in which most elite members were averse to and pessimistic about Indigenous or African contributions to Brazilian society, at least half a century before Afro-Brazilian slaves were officially freed, and at least one century before the first official portrayals of a culturally-mixed nationality, Martius’ writings emphasised that the diverse Brazilian demographic context should not only be seen as beneficial, but as a distinctive marker of the country. To advance his argument, Martius employed the compelling rhetorical device of comparing Brazilians’ miscegenation to the English case and by reassuring Brazil’s place inside a Hegelian-inspired, universal timeline of progress:

Both the history of nations and that of individuals show that the genius of history (of the World), which guides humanity through its paths, whose wisdom we always have to acknowledge, not a few times has crossed races in order to achieve the most sublime purposes inside the order of the world. Who would deny that the English nation owes its energy, its strength and perseverance to the mix of Celtic, Danish, Roman, Anglo-Saxon and Norman peoples! Something similar and perhaps even more important has been proposed by the genius of history, joining not only peoples of the same race, but from completely different races. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 442)

Martius was well aware that, no matter how cautious and rhetorical he was, the association of Indigenous, African and mestizo lower-classes with the predominantly white Brazilian ruling class could incite anger and controversial responses. The first part of his essay is clearly intended
to co-opt his readers, by appealing to logical-historical reasoning and to generous doses of optimism. Indeed, in order to please intellectuals who repeatedly tried to show their European counterparts that, despite the transatlantic distance, Brazil also cultivated humanist, liberal and religious ideals, Martius would make clear that his arguments were not only based on the authority of a “philosophical history”, but also on what he referred to as an “enlightened Christianity”:

I know that to many Whites, such a combination of inferior races might seem a belittlement of their prosapia; however I am convinced that these men will not be found among the voices who argue for a philosophical history of Brazil. The most enlightened and profound spirits, on the contrary, will find that, in the investigation of the roles of the Indian and Ethiopic races to the historical development of the Brazilian People, there is a new incentive for the humane and reflective historian. I believe that a philosophical author, absorbed by the doctrines of the true humanity, and by an enlightened Christianity, will not find anything in this opinion that may offend the susceptibility of Brazilians. To appreciate men for their true values, as the most sublime work of the Creator, and abstracting them from their colour or their previous development, is today conditio sine qua non for the true historian. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 442) (Italics in the original)

In order to better illustrate his ideas, Martius suggested a hydraulic metaphor for the likely route of Brazilian national development. According to Martius’ highly visual narrative proposition, Brazil’s history could be seen as the confluence of three “rivers” representing the "Caucasian", "Ethiopian" and "American" races inside Brazilian territory. As many researchers have noted, Martius’ ideas were relatively brave for directly putting racial mixing in the forefront of the national identity debate; he was not, however, laying groundwork for future theories of a “racial democracy” that many Brazilian intellectuals would later adopt, theories that persist even today. On the contrary, in order to appease local "Caucasian" elites, Martius relied on philosophical reasoning and religious beliefs to declare that the "will of Providence” would guarantee that the “Portuguese blood, through a powerful river, will absorb the small tributaries of the Indian and Ethiopic races” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 443).

Thus, writing about what can be described as a history of the future of Brazil, he would compensate for what was then seen as a troublesome multi-racial present by prophesying an “optimistic” national development. As Lilia Moritz Schwarcz noted, although Martius’ history of Brazil consisted of “its three formative races”, he made sure to arrange it “in an orderly way and respecting biological hierarchies and inequalities”, emphasising how the country’s “future would be undeniably white, predictable, and secure” (SCHWARCZ, 1999, p. 32).
Martius’ “hydraulic” metaphor had great appeal to contemporary Brazilian “Caucasian” elites precisely because it dealt with their most problematic national issue, multi-racialism, at the same time as it assured them of an evolutionary redemption, namely, the triumph of a European-like civilisation. His encouraging appraisal of Brazil’s diverse racial composition, thus, should not be misunderstood as an early manifestation of cultural relativism or as of proto-antiracist discourse. On the contrary, his unwavering optimism is better understood in accordance with his philosophical and pragmatic historiographical preferences. Beyond all of the implicit problems, Martius argued that black and Indigenous populations conferred uniqueness upon Brazil, an argument which was particularly gratifying inside the rising romantic search for national cultural/historical specificities. Above all, his words conveyed to concerned readers an uplifting message: racial diversity posed no threat, as long as the Portuguese-descendant population was physically and intellectually dominant. He would sum up this position, once again, appealing to his philosophical and pragmatic history:

In its essential points, the history of Brazil will always be the history of one Portuguese Branch; but if it aspires to be complete and to deserve to be named a pragmatic history, it can never exclude its relations with the Ethiopic and Indian races. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 454)

As the IHGB’s referees would didactically recapitulate in justifying the award to Martius, despite all of the racial diversity, the influx of European blood in Brazil offered an unshakable reassurance for the country’s development:

If the Portuguese, as the conqueror, is without any doubt the most powerful and essential motor; the forces of the Indigenous and imported blacks, which also contributed to the physical, moral and civic development of the nation, should not be neglected without the risk of perpetrating a major mistake in history. If the Portuguese blood, as a voluminous river, absorbs the tenuous confluents of the American and Ethiopic races, from this promiscuity nevertheless should result something new and peculiar in the social organisation (RIHGB, 1847, pgs. 280-281)

Thus, far from a balanced composition formed by the encounter of three comparable cultural matrices, different from the symmetrical image of an even triad of fluxes merging to create a fourth social organisation:
Martius’ hydraulic metaphor is more accurately represented by a central (Portuguese) course that firmly assimilates the smaller (racially-diverse) branches, as it evolves into the future Brazilian nation:

It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss in detail every section of Karl von Martius’ original plan of “how to write” Brazil’s history. For now, it is sufficient to note that, in conformity to the presupposed uneven volumes of each of the three “rivers”, his dissertation also dedicates an unequal amount of space to the Portuguese, Indigenous and African histories. Approximately six pages were dedicated to listing what should be investigated regarding the “Portuguese and their
part in the History of Brazil” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 447). This number clearly outweighed the nearly three pages describing the “Indians and their history as part of the history of Brazil” and, even more, the mere one page describing the “African race in their relation with the History of Brazil” (MARTIUS, 1845, pgs. 444, 453). This disproportion, of course, was directly linked to the tacit hierarchies between the spaces reserved for European, Indigenous and Afro-descendants in the history of Brazil.

Forming the presumed powerful base of Brazilian national organisation, Martius suggested an extensive study of every historical, social and cultural aspect of the Portuguese colonisation, in order to “show how the arts and sciences were established and developed here as a reflex of the European life.” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 451) (Italics in the original). His plan suggested the need to start history with the early Portuguese entrepreneurs who had helped to shape the nation’s territory and whose acts as “warriors in face of the Indigenous” had “greatly contributed to the fast discovery of the hinterlands of the country” (MARTIUS, 1845, p, 448). According to Martius, the study of Brazil’s first centuries was also inextricably connected to the understanding of the Portuguese maritime expansion and commercial enterprises in Asia and Africa. It was equally necessary to comprehend in detail all of the political, juridical and economic forms of organisation that the European colonisers had transplanted to the south of the Atlantic, along with an examination of how poetry, rhetoric and “other sciences” had “influenced the scientific, moral and social lives of Brazil’s inhabitants” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 452). An enormous place was also reserved for the study of the role of Iberian Catholicism and religious groups, such as the Jesuits, in paving the way for the colonial and national processes.

Concerning the study of Indigenous groups, Martius advised future historians to pay special attention to their languages, mythologies, religious manifestations and other “vestiges of their symbols and juridical traditions”. As many studies have shown, Martius was particularly concerned with the understanding of the distant past of Indigenous populations in Brazil (WEHLING, 1994). Similar to most of his nineteenth-century colleagues, he also held the belief that existing Indigenous populations were on the verge of extinction, that they were the last representatives of vanishing races. However, contrary to the then common definition of Indigenous populations as culturally “static”, as living in preserved “primitive” forms or in a state of social “infancy” in relation to “older” civilizations, Martius thought that the Indigenous peoples descended from an ancient great civilisation. In fact, even if Brazil lacked similar archaeological evidence such as that found in Mexico or Peru, Martius had little doubt that the Indigenous in
Brazil - especially the Tupi-Guarani - were “peoples in ruins”, who shared a past as glorious and epic as that of the Incas or Aztecs:

investigation has proved that here is not found a primitive state of man, and that in contrast to the sad and desolating condition that covers the current Brazilian Indian, he is not but the residue of a very old, and since then lost, history. We cannot doubt that all of the (the Tupi-Guarani) tribes belonged to a single and great people, which undoubtedly had its own history, and which from a flourishing state of civilisation, fell to the current state of degradation and dissolution in the same manner as observed among those peoples who spoke the language of the Incas, or the Aymara. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 445)

Martius was particularly brief and cautious when approaching the study of Africans. Guided by a self-declared “enlightened-Christian” morality, his text had made clear that philosophical historians should never distrust “the perfectibility of any part of mankind”, and always act by the principles of a “noble philanthropy” to “defend in their writings the interests of these in so many ways helpless races” (MARTIUS, 1845, pgs. 443, 444). Accordingly, he emphasised the necessity of studying “the condition of the imported blacks, their habits, civic opinions, natural knowledge, superstitions and prejudices, defects and virtues of their own race in general”, along with the role of blacks in helping to shape Brazilian “popular myths” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 453). Again however, Martius tactically evaded, seeking to avoid raising suspicion or fears among his white readers. Even if he directly called for the study of the “introduction of black slaves” in Brazil, he clearly avoided commenting on the troublesome issue of evaluating its consequences to the development of Brazil. Rather, he left this task for future works:

There is no doubt that Brazil would have much different development without the introduction of black slaves. Whether for better or for worse, this problem should be solved for the historian, after he has the opportunity to consider all the influences that African slaves had to the civil, political and moral development of this population. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 453-4)

Ingeniously, Martius managed to transform what was then a highly sensitive issue - almost always seen as a political nuisance and a national embarrassment - into a relatively calm historiographical field of study. That is, he cleverly bypassed the implicit polemics related to Brazil’s massive African population, by directing the attention of his readers to the open research opportunities related to this theme:
The Portuguese literature offers very little regarding what is referred to as the universal history of the slave trade. An author would provide a very important service if in his history of Brazil this subject was fully and extensively dealt with. (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 454)

To persuade even more the members of the recently founded IHGB, Martius once again drew parallels between the Brazilian academy and those in Europe, suggesting how local historians could take advantage of the theme of slavery to contribute to work of their European peers:

Of great interest are the questions about the primitive state of the Portuguese trading posts, both in the coast and in the interior of Africa, and of the organisation of the traffic of blacks. These circumstances are almost entirely unknown in Europe. Only lately, the English have published information on this subject, yet it seems represented largely from one side only (…) (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 454)

In retrospect, it is understandable how Martius’ work seemed so impeccable around the time of its publication. It had been carefully crafted to satisfy each and every reader’s expectation: it was intentionally written in the most updated historiographical approach; it appealed to the “universal” humanist-Catholic values shared by most members of the Brazilian elite; it rhetorically aligned the emergent (and apprehensive) Brazilian academic circle to the well-established European models; it touched on the inescapable theme of the historical and existing presence of Indigenous and African populations in Brazil at the same time as it confirmed the Portuguese blood/river as guaranteeing Brazil’s pre-eminent space among the civilised nations.

At the time of its submission, Martius had many reasons to suspect that his dissertation would be well received by the IHGB. Indeed, two years later, he would learn from the IHGB referees that his work was “extensive and profoundly thought”, “wisely explained” and “exuberantly satisfied the programme of the Institute”. (RIHGB, 1847, pgs. 279) What the Bavarian botanist could not have predicted was the scope of his legacy. While publications on Brazilian history have undeniably experienced numerous editorial/thematic changes since the nineteenth-century, it is not an overstatement to say that many of them continue to follow Martius’ 1845 original plan.

This is especially true regarding a specific narrative model I denominate in this thesis as a “general history” of Brazil. Although this classification refers to a heterogeneous set of publications and authors of different qualities and from different epochs, I conveniently define any general histories of Brazil by their shared and easily identifiable goal: the ambition to narrate Brazilian history from its supposed beginning to the end.
Extremely popular both in universities and in schools, in textbooks and introductory manuals, a true bestseller both in Brazil and abroad, this type of publication is devoted primarily to answer two structural questions. How did the Brazilian state come to existence and maintain its unity? How did the Brazilian nation come to existence and maintain its unity? The desire to offer answers to such complex structural questions may also help explaining why most of these publications sought support in narrative strategies of immediate recognition: [1] the personification of a protagonist: “Brazil”; [2] the opposition between the allies - “Us”, the Brazilians - versus the enemies – both the external “Others”, the Dutch, French, the Portuguese after the 1822 independence, and the internal “Others”, autonomist maroon societies and so-called tapuiás and any other “untamable” Indigenous societies; [3] establishing a clear beginning to the narrative: the symbolic “discovery” of Tupi-Guaranis by the Portuguese in 1500; [4] defining the middle pages of the narrative: the establishment of Brazilian Colonial and Imperial periods; [5] the end of the narrative: the contemporary-republican period); and [6] last but not least, the ends and moral of this story: “Our” existence, the solid consolidation of the Brazilian people.

This and the following chapter will meticulously document IHGB historians’ central role in creating these general history-type narratives, which have been widely adopted since the nineteenth-century until today. For now, it is just important to note even though Indigenous and African populations have been given increasing attention “as parts” of the nation's history, general histories of Brazil – similar to Martius original plan - continue to depict them as secondary characters, with the prime protagonist roles still reserved for Portuguese and other Euro-Brazilian descendants. To use again Martius’ “hydraulic” metaphor, it is possible to affirm that the trickle of pages dedicated to Indigenous and Africans histories are dissolved amidst the flood of pages focusing on Euro-Portuguese perspectives.

In addition to the disproportionate importance attributed to several Brazilian ethnic groups, Karl von Martius’ formula also offered an enduring solution for future general history narratives to represent Brazilian national time. Indeed, it would not be hard to adapt Martius’ river metaphor to the popular timeline model with which books usually explain the succession of historical periods. Just as tributary African and Indigenous cultures were seen as converging with

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68 The important work of Maori researcher Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) simply states that Indigenous peoples across the world are now analysing how history has made it impossible for Indigenous to exist textually in these discourses because they form only introductory chapters, which would then prevent the progressive forward movement inside national histories. A central point of Linda’s book is to insist that Indigenous represent themselves. She provides a convincing critique of Western history along 10 lines in Chapter 1 and offers 25 projects in which Indigenous are now engaged to lead to the decolonisation of methodologies and self-determination.
a powerful European flow, so the countless histories of millions of Tupi-Guaranis, Jes, Cariris, Tucanos, Charruas and other Indigenous peoples, along with the several African Yoruba, Fon, Ashanti, Hausa-Fulani and other ethnicities - all of whom managed their respective notions of past, present and future - were melded into one single Gregorian-Newtonian timeline organised around Portuguese conquests. Consequently, diversified non-European chronologies, alternative concepts of time, forms of registering events and temporalities were amalgamated into one single “national” calendar.

As a direct result of racial hierarchies and temporal reductionisms inaugurated by the nineteenth-century historiographical imagination - for which How to Write the History of Brazil was a quintessential text - Indigenous and African populations since then have been usually confined to the “first chapters” of Brazilian history books. As will be fully illustrated later in the analysis of Francisco A. de Varnhagen’s work, in consonance with Martius’ emphasis on studying Indigenous’ distant past, books on Brazilian history since the nineteenth-century have as a rule reserved some opening chapters for the first Brazilians who inhabited “pre-historical” or “pre-Cabralian” times. However, the history of Indigenous peoples rarely goes beyond the first moments of colonisation. This type of representation has helped to reinforce a widespread idea in the Brazilian imaginary that Indigenous populations have a static and brief location within the national narrative chronology; that is, that they were basically present only in the beginning of the history of Brazil, never progressing beyond the first chapters of books (SOUZA LIMA, 1995).

Similarly, in line with Martius’ suggestion that historical studies should concentrate on the theme of slavery, African populations have also been traditionally confined to the opening of national narratives. Typically, they are situated at the turn of the period often called “Colonial Brazil”, either working for or struggling against the slave system in organised revolts or quilombos (maroon societies). At most, the history of African populations is highlighted around the end of the nineteenth-century, in order to explain the abolition of slavery. Here again, African and Afro-Brazilian agency tends to be downplayed in relation to the study of legal/abolitionist battles fought in urban and predominantly Euro-descendant circles.

A glance at the index of what is arguably the most popular “general history” of Brazil written for English-speaking audiences by a Brazilian author, Boris Fausto’s A Concise History of Brazil

69 The term refers to the Portuguese sailor Pedro Álvares Cabral, considered by traditional historiography as the “discoverer” of Brazil in 1500.

70 These include the active role of Euro-descendant Brazilian statesmen in the creation of supposed benign state laws (such as the Free Womb Law of 1871, or the Sexagenarian Law of 1885) and the engagement of high-ranking elite and state-related figures, such as Princess Isabel who signed the Golden Law (Lei Áurea) of 1888, which formally freed the remaining slaves.
Brazil (1999), reveals an example of the outstanding – yet seldom discussed - endurance of a Martius-type organisation of chapters into the present. Boris Fausto adopts the year of the Portuguese arrival in 1500 as the symbolic beginning for his narrative. Indigenous peoples are once again basically confined to the book’s opening pages, while the discussion of African populations is predominantly and predictably limited to the theme of slavery:

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Although Brazilian historiographical production has undoubtedly changed since the late nineteenth-century, I deliberately opt to focus on certain constants. Beyond all expected philosophical, moral, religious and thematic transformations from the 1840s to today, it is necessary to recognise how most narratives on the history of Brazil, consciously or not, still echo a Martiusian-like script. That is, they tend to be constructed in an editorial format in which relatively brief (and usually initial) pages dedicated to Indigenous and African history are assimilated into a predominant Portuguese-oriented narrative of the national formation:
Fig 3.5 Pages “general” histories of Brazil

The implicit analogy between the turning of pages and the passage of historical time has generated a rather perverse educational consequence in most of these editorial projects: from the beginning of the seventeenth-century, readers experience the virtual disappearance of Indigenous and African populations from history. As the story unfolds, Indigenous and African populations are gradually and symbolically buried in a remote and safe past. Most books produced since then, in this sense, have conducted a silent but implacable historiographical genocide against the ancestors of the majority of Brazil’s mestizo, Afro-descendant and Indigenous populations.

Finally, Martius’ model appears very effective in validating hierarchisations and erasures of non-whites precisely because its narrative formula is not simply Eurocentric – the accusation directed at most nineteenth-century literature - but, above all, Euro-oriented. Martius, as well as the local “Caucasian” elites for whom the work was intended, was well aware that Brazil’s complex demographic background could never be simply reduced to an all-exclusive European-Brazilian perspective.

Yet, in a context defined by slavery with risks of a “Haitianisation”71 of Brazil, in which on-going territorial battles were still fought against so-called untamed Indigenous populations, Martius’ major merit was precisely (and paradoxically) his declaration of non-European populations as essential parts of the national narrative. The perspicacity of his “hydraulic” metaphor, therefore, rested on its ability to join three apparently mutually exclusive (racial) variables into one harmonious (national) equation. In this sense, it managed to invert, at least at the narrative level, the territorial fragmentation, social exclusion and intellectual pessimism of the time. As seen, however, Martius was successful in his proposition only because it allowed for a

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71 The term refers to the common fear among Brazilian slave owners that the country experience a similar successful slave revolution such as the one that resulted in the Haitian independence (1791-1804).
tricentric preamble of the national narrative at the same time that it conferred the bulk of the storyline and its epilogue to an “optimistic” European-oriented development.

Beyond all of the expected nineteenth-century Eurocentric or racialist thinking that informs Martius’ work, perhaps the main reason for its unanimously positive reception at the time - and also for its twenty-first century repercussions - rests on the fact that it is based on a sophisticated and ambivalent logic of inclusion/exclusion. The point to be noted, therefore, is that Martius’ centrality in outlining “a paradigm of national identity that still serves as a reference in Brazil today” is not merely related to the fact that it pioneered “the notion of the three races” later adopted as a Brazilian national discourse (DUTRA, 2007, p. 45). Rather, it is because it authorised future works to adopt plural Tupi-Luso-Afrocentric beginnings that subtly and “naturally” gives way to a unidirectional Euro-Lusocentric narrative:

Fig. 3.6 Tri-racial beginning and Eurocentric continuation

It is likely that Martius’ inclusive tri-racial beginning is precisely what made possible the long-term and unreflecting acceptance of its exclusive Euro-Lusocentric middle and ending of the national narrative. In fundamental ways, decades before pseudo-scientific theories would justify racist-eugenic solutions to the theme of Brazilian multi-racialism⁷², Martius had already

⁷² How to Write the History of Brazil pioneering ideas are even more remarkable if one remembers that one of the most influential treatises about the hierarchy of races - and certainly one which would have a great impact among
formulated a subtler, yet compelling, metaphoric-narrative formula for promoting the steady “whitening” of Brazil’s history.

A subtle but significant corollary of Martius’ dissertation *How to Write the History of Brazil* is the implied narrative formula: how to (gradually) stop writing the history of Indigenous and Africans in Brazil.

As comprehensive as it seemed then, the IHGB members had at least one pointed criticism of Martius’ work, which was that there was still no possible way to write a history of Brazil that covered every relevant topic raised in his essay:

Here is a [small summary] of this important work, in which all historical requirements were fulfilled. If anything can be said against this work, it is that the history to be written based in its prescription is likely to be impractical for the present time; which just confirms that it is too good. But this is merely a matter of time: here is the model for the time when it becomes feasible (RIHGB, 1847, p. 287).

Yet, less than a decade later, Francisco Adolpho Varnhagen, often considered the “founding father” of Brazilian historiography, would competently achieve the task of developing Martius’ initial insights into a complete narrative. As will be shown in the next chapter, since the 1850s Varnhagen’s works also interpreted the history of Brazil as necessarily marked by a relationship between Europeans, Indigenous and Africans. Despite Varnhagen’s publicly open anti-romantic position, and recurrent arguments about so-called cultural backwardness of Indigenous and African societies, many sections of his paradigmatic *História Geral do Brazil* (General History of Brazil) are dedicated to the so-called “Indians of Brazil” and many pages discuss “African slavery” which, according to him, had introduced so many blacks “into Brazil that they have to be considered, today, as one of the three elements of its population” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pg. 182). Building on Martius’ initial insights, Varnhagen also assisted in the consolidation of an influential narrative model that also managed to simultaneously cite and

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Brazilians intellectualists - Comte Arthur de Gobineau’s *Essai sur l’inégalité des races humaines* (An Essay on the Inequality of the Human Races) would be published only in 1853–1855, almost a decade after Martius’ publication.

suppress the presence of Indigenous peoples and African-descendants, informing history books and paintings since then.
Son of a German military engineer and a Portuguese mother, born in the then Captaincy of São Paulo, Varnhagen lived his early years in Portugal, where he pursued his formal education. He returned to Brazil in 1840, soon becoming first-secretary of the IHGB and one of the institution’s most prolific and respected researchers. Although critics as early as Capistrano de Abreu have pointed to Varnhagen's interpretative limitations and writing skills (WEHLING, 1999), no one has yet denied his erudition as a historian, based on his ground-breaking research both in Brazilian and European archives and extensive use of primary sources. At a time when European scholars were starting to professionalise history by adopting more rigorous and empirical methodologies, Varnhagen was working in parallel to supply Brazilian historiography with an analogous “scientific” status.

Among his prodigious lifetime works, Varnhagen’s most celebrated is unarguably the Historia Geral do Brazil (General History of Brazil) published originally in two separate tomes, in 1854 and 1857. Although he never acknowledged his debt to Karl von Martius, most contemporary researchers see echoes of Martius’ ideas on Varnhagen’s book (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 17). Varnhagen was a “tributary of Martius” (CARVALHO, 2008, p. 572), transforming the Bavarian’s initial script into a nearly 1000-page detailed and fully documented history of Brazil. Particularly, drawing influence from Martius’ relatively short and essayistic text, Varnhagen managed to write a complete narrative that also stressed “the involvement of the three races in the formation of the Brazilian people” while also emphasising the “importance of Catholic traditions and the colonial elite’s right to supremacy” (DUTRA, 2007, p. 45).

Varnhagen was aware of his privileged position as the first Brazilian writer able to produce a comprehensive “general history” of Brazil in the post-independence period. To reinforce the significance he attributed to his own efforts, he proudly opened his publication with a quote from José da Silva Lisboa, the Viscount of Cairu, a prominent Brazilian intellectual and politician: “the

74 Historians do not unanimously accept Martius’ influence over Varnhagen's work. Prominent names such Ronaldo Vainfas (2006) argue that Varnhagen ignored the most important aspect of the Bavarian’s dissertation, that is, to study Brazilian history by acknowledging the tri-racial mixture in the formation of the Brazilian nation. Bradford Burns also affirms that no one “seriously followed (Martius’) suggested plan” until the works of Gilberto Freyre in the 1930s (cited in Sommer, 1991, p. 153). However, as the close analysis of Varnhagen's work in this chapter will document, Varnhagen’s narrative effectively approaches (even if only in a few pages) the history of Indigenous and African populations. As a result, despite his personal undeniable prejudice against non-Europeans, Varnhagen’s historical narrative - similar to Martius - displays an Indigenous and African beginning that, promptly, shifts to the Portuguese and Portuguese-descendants historical experience. In this sense, Varnhagen can be interpreted as taking Martius’ hydraulic metaphor to its most radical form: reducing Indigenous and African “streams” to almost insignificant trickled pages.
importance of a General History for any independent State is recognised in any educated country” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, Dedicatory). Naturally, this confidence was grounded not only in the qualities Varnhagen credited to his new book, but also in the favourable reception his previous writings and research collaborations as an IHGB correspondent in Europe had in Brazilian educated circles. That positive reception, along with many political-academic rewards, helped him establish a close relationship with the Emperor D. Pedro II. In his dedication to the monarch, Varnhagen reemphasised the assumed reciprocal relations between the study of national history and Brazilian national development. He invoked the “Cicerian-philosophical” historiographical perspectives that guided the works of most Brazilian historians. He would also take the opportunity to show gratitude and underscore the importance of the monarchy’s support of the IHGB:

All Brazil knows that the Historical Institute owes its existence to the generous support of Your Imperial Majesty; being its de facto Immediate Protector, Your Imperial Majesty sheltered it inside the palace itself, attending its literary sessions in order to foster the study of the history of the homeland, a task so important to the splendour of the Nation, to public education and to the good government of the country. (VARNHAGEN, 1854, Dedicatory)

An analysis of Varnhagen’s 985 pages and 68 sections is not possible here. It will be sufficient for my purposes to underline the basic themes and the narrative structure that shape Historia Geral do Brasil. This is a necessary prelude to a discussion in the last part of the chapter on some of Varnhagen’s enduring impacts on the manner in which Brazilian written and visual histories have been produced since that time.

As with previous studies on Varnhagen, I also assume the importance of interpreting his work in view of the inseparable political and epistemic dimensions in his work; that is, to contextualise his writings as the work of a man who was both a conscious supporter of the recently founded constitutional monarchy and an historian actively engaged in the then recent attempts to professionalise his discipline by relying on the scientific method and documentary sources (WEHLING, 1999). Beyond his academic ambitions, Varnhagen was openly “Lusophile and Bragantine, praising the Restoration of the Bragança House, the same dynasty as the Brazilian Emperor, his patron” (VAINFAS, 1999, p. 2). As a consequence, although the General History of Brazil is “very well documented” for the scientific standards of the time, it is also unashamedly

75 These numbers correspond to the two tomes of the 1st edition of General History of Brazil (1854 and 1857)
centred on the achievements of the European settlers and their successors. In his narrative, the history of “the Portuguese colonisation and the construction of the Brazilian state are entwined” (MOLLO, 2007, p. 99-100).

Accordingly, the book opens with an “Introduction to the Discovery of America” followed by numerous sections dedicated to the macro-themes of the “Discovery of Brazil” and the “Decision to colonise it”. This beginning includes several related topics including the “Rights of the Portuguese to colonise Brazil”; the “Exploration of its Coast”; the “Treaty of Tordesilhas” that divided the Americas between the Iberian nations with papal approval; the “establishment of the colony” of São Vicente as the first permanent Portuguese settlement; the rights of the first “Captain-majors and settlers”; as well as a description of the “Intellectual culture of the metropolis” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pgs. 8, 13, 35, 54, 72).

In conformity with Martius’ earlier script, Varnhagen’s narrative was similarly unable to avoid a “tri-racial” beginning for the history of Brazil. Indeed, despite his public opposition to the Brazilian Indianist-Romantic movement, Varnhagen dedicated many initial sections of Historia Geral do Brazil to describing what he called the “Indians of Brazil.” In addition to his recurring assaults on Indigenous peoples, summarised in his (in)famous statement that for the “savage” Indigenous “there is no history: there is only ethnography” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 108), many parts of his narrative focus on the Tupi-Guaranis who inhabited most of the coastal areas before the Portuguese arrived.76

Similarly to Martius, Varnhagen also regarded local Indigenous peoples as representatives of a ruined grand civilisation that “had decayed to a state of savagery” (WEHLING, 1999). He alerted his readers that the “unflattering pages” dedicated to Indigenous populations in his book were the result of the horrendous “situation in which the peoples who inhabited Brazil were found”, living in a state not “of civilisation but of barbarity and backwardness” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pgs. 107-108). Furthermore, he argued that since they lived in “the infancy of humanity”, their moral codes were analogous to those of young “individuals”. As a consequence, the lives of Indigenous peoples - like that of immature children – were inseparable from “smallness and misery” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 108).

For Varnhagen, the moral deficiencies exhibited in Indigenous societies were equivalent to their physical weaknesses. Furthermore, they explained to him why the original local populations had been nearly eliminated from Brazilian territory after their contact with European settlers:

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76 Refer to the sections VIII, IX, X and XIII of VARNHAGEN (1854)
The facts mentioned confirm what we already mentioned in another place: that the peoples of European origin placed into contact with those from the land did not exterminate them, but absorbed them: merged with them. This is the real reason why the Indian type has almost absolutely disappeared from our provinces (VARNHAGEN, 1854. pgs. 204-5) (Italics added)

As was common to most of his intellectual peers, Varnhagen’s ethnocentrism was often accompanied by an “Enlightened-Christian” compassion toward Indigenous heathens. Just as the Portuguese civilisation had brought cultural and material benefits to the “new” world, Varnhagen also believed that the will of Providence had helped to save a land previously filled with the “germs of discord, vices, poisoning and anarchy” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 107). Without the arrival of the Christian missionaries to the “extremely sad and degraded” tribal lands, he believed that the “brawls (between Indigenous) would perpetuate the savage anarchy on this sacred soil, or would leave it without any population” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 107). Varnhagen did reserve some pages for the description of local religious practices, but only to reach the conclusion that the “only strong belief (held by Indigenous peoples) was the obligation to avenge themselves on strangers”, and that the “excessive spirit of vengeance was their true faith” (VANHAGEN, 1854, p. 121).

Varnhagen proceeded to reinforce his anti-Indigenous rhetoric by suggesting that Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s then popular image of “natural man” was not compatible with American Indigenous groups:

The Philosopher of Geneva, guided by his genius and philanthropic intentions, idealised, but did not meet the savage! Unfortunately, the serious study of human barbarism in all countries proves that without the restraint of laws and religion, these sad mortals are so inclined to ferocity that they almost metamorphose into beasts (…) (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p.133)

Indigenous inferiority, for Varnhagen, could be verified not only in the many examples of primitive technology and immoral customs described in his book, but also in their verbal communication: “As in all American languages, (...) strong “f”, “l” and “r” articulations were not found. Their language denoted, as was expected, an intellectual backwardness” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p.110). By referring to the supposed absence of these three phonemes in the Tupi-Guarani’s language, Varnhagen was directly reviving a colonial Portuguese justification for their cultural dominance and natural rights over the “discovered” land. Indeed, settlers as early as Pero de
Magalhães Gândavo argued that the absence of “F’s”, “L’s” and “R’s” among Indigenous was a direct reflection of their societies’ lack of “Faith, or Law, or Royal ruler”.

The transcription of extracts from Historia Geral do Brazil that condemn material and immaterial aspects of Indigenous culture could extend for many more pages. The point to emphasise, however, is how Varnhagen’s book, regardless of his open disdain for local populations, and analogous with Martius’ ideas, also validated an editorial format that secured a place for the so-called “ancient inhabitants” of Brazil (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 138), while reducing them to only brief opening chapters of the national narrative.

In the same manner, General History of Brazil would also follow Martius’ short plan regarding the study of African populations. Varnhagen not only confined his study of Africans and their descendants to secondary and relatively insignificant number of pages, but basically limited their several histories to the single theme of slavery. Even though he recognised that the principles of slavery were “previously admitted by all peoples”, and that existing “nations of Europe and even the Gospel” tolerated it, Varnhagen affirmed that the main reason for the Portuguese enslavement of Africans was retaliation and a “kind of continuation” of the “religious battles” against the Moorish enemies (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 182). Since “Lisbon (had become) an enormous slave market” much before the “Discovery of Brazil”, he deduced that the arrival of the first Africans also coincided with the arrival of the earliest Portuguese caravels:

In our understanding, the African slaves were brought to Brazil during its early colonisation; and, naturally, many of them came on board the first vessels that landed here; including Cabral’s fleet. (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 181-2)

Building once again on Martius’ early formulations, Varnhagen agreed that, despite all implicit problems slavery posed to the country’s development, the “vast entrance (of Africans) to Brazil” required any credible historian to accept them as “one of the three elements of its population” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 183). But beyond his pragmatism as a historian, Varnhagen was equally cautious in approaching Brazilian historical racial dilemmas. In the end, he opted for a narrative formula that could both meet with the scholarly standards of his time while it also comforted Brazilian elites’ anxieties about the national future. Like Martius, Varnhagen also predicted that the African river (blood) would eventually dissolve into a major European course.

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77 Gandavo’s (1576) manuscripts would state that “a língua deste gentio toda pela costa he huma: carece de tres letras scilicet, não se acha nella F, nem L, nem R, cousa digna de espanto, porque assi não têm Fé, nem Lei, nem Rei; e desta maneira vivem sem justiça e desordenamente”.

In accordance with the Bavarians’ hydraulic (racial) metaphor, his writings were also ambivalently situated between the pragmatic resignation of a philosophical historian and the racialist optimism of a nationalist intellectual:

we believe it is our duty to devote a few lines to dealing with the origin of these people, to whose strong arm Brazil owes, principally, the work of the manufacture of sugar, and, currently, the culture of coffee; but we hope that there will come a day when the colours are combined in such a way that the characteristics of African origin will totally disappear in our people and, as a result, any accusation of the ancestry of a generation who suffered the shackles of slavery. (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pgs. 182-3) (Italics Added)

Varnhagen admitted that his book was not concerned with describing the “extensive collection of the different nations of black races” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 183) transported to Brazil. Rather, following the “open opportunities” for Brazilian historians to research “the organisation of the traffic of blacks” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 454), he concentrated his narrative on the theme of slavery. In the relatively few sections allotted to African populations, Varnhagen cunningly summarised three interpretive reasons and outcomes of slavery that enjoyed popularity among nineteenth-century academic circles. The first assumed that the African slave trade to Brazil was also, and in equal measure, the responsibility of complicit local Africans themselves, whose tribes experienced continuous internal wars, and who acted as slave dealers for the Portuguese:

We could say that the importation of black incomers to Brazil, made by traffickers, took place in all (African) nations, not only on the coast of Africa that stems from Cape Verde to the south, and even beyond Cape of Good Hope and back to the territories of Mozambique; nor less on the hinterlands in which (these nations) were at war, during which they made many prisoners, without killing them. In these nations, individual liberty was not secured; therefore the strongest sold the weak, the parents their children, and the victorious, much more so, their defeated enemies. (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 183) (Italics Added)

Secondly he argued that despite its undeniably horrendous nature, slavery had at least some positive impacts on the lives of Africans since they were introduced into a more advanced culture, built upon Christian morality and civilised laws. Even though the “act of slavery was unjust”, Varnhagen concluded that:
as these people came to Brazil, and were treated by the conditions of Roman slavery, that is, as a venal thing or moveable property, *they improved their luck* (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 184) (Italics added)\(^7^8\)

Varnhagen’s third argument was physically based: unlike the Europeans of the time, for whom history had reserved a non-manual, intellectual and civilising mission, or even from the local Indigenous peoples, who were destined to be saved by catechisation, slavery in Brazil could not have occurred if not for the “vigorous arms” of western Africans. Their nations, after all, were not only “fecund” and overpopulated, but also had physical and mental “propensities” to adapt to harsh work under the tropical sun:

> The fecundity of these races in their countries was such that, if ships from all parts of the world departed in the search of them, it would be able to populate the entire orb with blackness. These people usually belonged to the region that the ancient geographers called Nigritia; distinguished mainly by the ease with which they endured the work on the coast of Brazil, a talent coming from their physical strength, from the similarity of the climates and, not least, from *their cheerful spirit*, perhaps the greatest gift with which *Providence endowed them to endure the fate that awaited them*; for, with their monotonous song, but always in tune and melodious, they disguised their great suffering. (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 184) (Italics added)

Like most of his professional peers, Varnhagen recognised that the nation’s present and future would have been different without “the great latitude of the introduction of Africans” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 182) into the country. However, not all of *Historia Geral do Brazil* is a direct condemnation or a lament of the misfortune of African migration. Besides their “cheerful” character and “melodious” singing, Varnhagen also attempted to praise African nations for having brought to Brazil “primitive technologies” such as the *monjolo* (mortar); for the “introduction of some plants such as the quimbombós, quiabos, maxixes, black beans”, as well as for some “food and *quitutes* (treats) known by their African names, especially in the (province of ) Bahia”. He

\(^7^8\) Adding to these “positive” aspects of introducing slaves to Christianity and codified law, many nineteenth-century intellectuals already shared the opinion that African groups coming to Brazil also benefited from the relatively more “tolerant” and less “segregated” Luso-Brazilian society. In this sense, it is curious to see how Varnhagen too - almost 80 years before Gilberto Freyre’s popularised his own interpretations that the Brazilian “racial democracy” was largely based on the relatively “benign” character of the Portuguese colonisation - also emphasised the supposed benign nature of Lusitanian inter-racial relations in comparison with Anglo-Saxon ones. While recognising that the Portuguese had also enslaved Africans, he argued that this happened in Brazil “perhaps more smoothly than in any other country in America, starting with the United States of the North, where the anathema accompanies not only the condition and colour, but also all of its gradations; on this point, as on many others, our monarchy (is) more tolerant and free than this arrogant republic, which crows so much about its free institutions, but whose aristocratic citizen, in political, civil and social meetings, does not allow the lighter brown (pardo) to sit next to him, regardless of how vast his talents and virtues are” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 183).
also noted how slavery had enlarged the written and spoken vocabulary of the Portuguese in Brazil and abroad, since African languages had introduced words such as “quitanda, quenga, senzala, côco, macaco, papagaio and many others admitted even in Europe” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pgs. 184-5).

Regardless of any of their recognisable contributions to the national language and culture in general, or their roles in “increasing public wealth with their work”, Varnhagen did not hide his dismay with the historical presence of Africans in Brazil. Even if they were to “totally disappear”, slaves had already left a negative impact on the Brazilian population since they had “perverted customs, because of their indecorous habits, their shamelessness, and their tenacious audacity” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 185).

Far from a complete analysis of Varnhagen’s typically negative treatment of African and Indigenous populations, it is essential to note the way in which General History of Brazil not only followed but exaggerated the “disproportion” of pages dedicated to non-whites analysed earlier in Martius’ work. Indeed, apart from a few other dispersed lines, only 5 of the 31 sections of its first volume are directly related to the histories of Indigenous nations (sections VIII, IX, X, XIII, XVIII); only 2 of the 31 are dedicated to African populations (sections XIV, XX). The imbalance is even greater in the second tome. Even if some scattered paragraphs mention topics such as the “Palmares maroon society” or the “Indian resistance”, there is not a single section directly devoted to African histories among a list of 32 others; and only one section79 was clearly dedicated to a discussion of the place of Indigenous groups in the history of Brazil.

The thematic and numerical discrepancies between the pages reserved for Europeans, Indigenous and Africans in the history of Brazil, along with the careful limiting positioning of non-Europeans at the “beginning” of time, offer abundant evidence that Varnhagen’s book also followed Martius’ option to abandon tri-racial chapters that gradually (and increasingly) gave way to an exclusive Euro-Lusocentric narrative. Undoubtedly, though, Varnhagen’s legacy lies well beyond the fact that he competently developed a complete narrative based on Martius’ provisional draft. Although How to Write the History of Brazil was unanimously acclaimed at the time of publication, it is fair to say that Historia Geral do Brazil - despite the controversial debates it often engendered - would have a greater long-term impact over Brazilian educated society. Ultimately,

79 Very different from the “ethnographic” attempts of the first tome, though, this single “Indigenous” section called a “Preliminary discourse: the Indians in face of the Brazilian nationality” is basically a manifesto that Varnhagen wrote in response to the popular Romantic literature of the time. In other words, it was not simply another of his anti-Indigenist conclusions added to the previous ones seen in the first volume. Rather it was an anti-Indigenist reaction to the way poets and writers were adopting Tupi-Guarani-inspired elements as national symbols.
it was Varnhagen’s factual-based and “well documented” work, and not Martius’ “innovative ideas” that consolidated the model of narrating the country’s history which most nineteenth-century intellectuals ended up adopting (VAINFAS, 1999, p. 2).

Furthermore, unlike Martius’ speculative plan, Varnhagen’s straightforward and dense narrative offered clear educational applicability. Indeed, as soon as the second volume was launched, it was incorporated into one of the earliest Brazilian history textbooks, *Lições de História do Brasil (Lessons of History of Brazil)*, by Joaquim Manoel de Macedo (CEZAR, 2005). As a result, Varnhagen’s writing began very early to impact on the understanding of Brazilian history not only among adult readers but also primary and secondary students as it was read not just inside the prestigious *Colégio D. Pedro II*, but also “disseminated in other schools throughout the country, either because teachers would adopt this same textbook, or because other manuals began to appear following the same *varnhagenian pattern*” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 213) (Italics added).

In summary, due to his pioneering research techniques, indisputable erudition for the time, his disciplined and abundant writings and the prestige the IHGB support conferred on them, Varnhagen’s works began to inform succeeding scholarly works and didactic materials as early as the late 1850s. More than 150 years after its publication, however, there is little consensus among researchers regarding the way in which *Historia Geral do Brazil*’s model still resonates among current academic and general interest books on the history of Brazil.

Historian Nilo Odalia went as far as to argue that because Varnhagen’s narrative appeals not only to nineteenth-century elites, but also to influential contemporary “Brazilian bourgeois” groups, he can be considered “the founder of a Brazilian historiographical current that is *active until today*” (ODALIA, 1997, p. 24) (Italics added). For different reasons, Arno Wehling also agrees on the long-lasting impact of Varnhagen’s work. Due to its “intrinsic scientific merits”, and to its role in constructing a widespread “interpretative matrix of Brazilian history”, Varnhagen’s work “became a paradigm in Brazilian culture” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 195). For Wehling, however, Varnhagen’s importance began to be displaced around the 1960s and 70s “with the establishment of post-graduate history programmes in Brazilian universities”. Informed by then new Marxist and Annales-inspired approaches, Varnhagen’s work was regarded as a “negative paradigm by the new researchers, who were concerned initially with economic conjunctures and soon after with social history and cultural history” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 218).

In the next pages, rather than evaluating which of these scholars is more accurate about the scope and limits of Varnhagen’s legacy, I will demonstrate that it is possible to elaborate on both...
Odalia and Wehling’s views without falling into contradiction. That is, while agreeing that most “methodological and epistemological assumptions” that informed Varnhagen have been rejected (WEHLING, 1999, p. 218), I will also argue that at least some subtler aspects of his work are as “current today as when (they were) first heard” (ODALIA, 1997, p. 42). In particular, I argue that Varnhagen’s writings helped to consolidate two ubiquitous – yet usually unnoticed - forms of representing the history of Brazil, which I denominate here as quadripartition and state-nationalism.

As will be shown, quadripartition and state-nationalism have not only shaped the ways written discourses on the history of Brazil have been produced since 1857 to this day, but they also offer fresh angles from which to understand the works of the painters studied in this thesis.

4.1 The creation of a quadripartite model of Brazilian history

The term quadripartition refers to an orthodox model of conceptualising Brazilian history into four self-contained and successive temporal periods. It can be schematically represented by a familiar tetradic organisation of the Brazilian timeline, resulting from what traditional historiography regards as the three key national dates, specifically, the so-called “discovery” of Brazil in 1500, the 1822 independence movement and the 1889 proclamation of the republic:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indigenous Brazil</th>
<th>Colonial Brazil</th>
<th>Imperial Brazil</th>
<th>Republican Brazil</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1822</td>
<td>1889</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
```

Fig 4.1 Quadripartite model

“Indigenous Brazil” corresponds to the years between the occupation of the territory by the first Indigenous nations and the Portuguese arrival in the sixteenth-century. It is frequently referred to as “pre-European” or “pre-Cabralian” Brazil, in reference to the Portuguese navigator and so-called “discoverer”, Pedro Álvares Cabral. Although usually defined as the longest of the “four” national periods, it is invariably the shortest narrative.

In quadripartite narratives, the moment the Portuguese caravels anchor on Tupinikin’s land in 1500 inaugurates a new national epoch, “Colonial Brazil”. Historians normally dedicate
extensive chapters to what are often considered the most complex centuries of Brazilian history, marked by sweeping themes such as the initial Portuguese settlement; the contact, extermination and catechisation of Indigenous people; recurring wars against Dutch and French invaders; and the establishment of latifundia farming based on sugarcane, cotton, tobacco and the profitable African slave market, along with other economic activities.

The year 1822 is central to quadripartitioned interpretations of Brazilian history. On that 7th of September, the young Portuguese prince Dom Pedro I declared Brazilian independence from Portugal. Unlike the republican movements that broke with Iberian colonialism in most other South American countries, Brazil became the only self-declared constitutional empire on the continent. In 1840, Dom Pedro II succeeded his father and the cycle known as “Imperial Brazil” formally ended only at the turn of the twentieth-century.

The 1889 creation of a republican system defines the fourth and final period in quadripartitioned Brazilian timelines. Despite the political turbulence of the authoritarian years of the Vargas Era (1930-1945) and the more recent Military Coup (1964-1985), “Republican Brazil” is usually considered as a continuous national period from 15 November 1889 to the present. It is also the decisive and concluding era in the formation of Brazilian national society.

Successive generations of Brazilian historians have dramatically diversified their subjects, methodological approaches, epistemological affiliations and political-moral views. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy how the great majority of teachers, researchers and writers continue to adopt this division of the country’s history into these four basic and sequential periods with few changes to this day. Indeed, it remains the favoured model in most contemporary publications dedicated to narrating what I denominated “general histories” of Brazil: any academic or non-academic work that attempts to present a complete view of Brazilian history, from its supposed pre-colonial origins to present times.

For example, the contents and introduction of the relatively recent collection *The Brazil Reader: History, Culture, Politics* demonstrates explicitly the accepted quadripartite order. The book’s authors, although declaring no wish to be “all-inclusive”, define Brazil’s chronology and “historical evolution” from “before the conquest to the recent return to democratic practice” (LEVINE; CROCITTI, 1999, p. 7, 9) (Italics added):
While neither authoritative nor reliable, *Wikipedia* has become an unavoidable resource not only for the general public but also - even if assumed - for many academics as well. Similar to other online or printed encyclopaedias and reference books, the Portuguese version of the *Wikipedia* entry, “History of Brazil”, is based on an unambiguous quadripartitioned scheme:

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**Fig 4.2 The Brazil Reader, Levine and Crocitti (1990, Index)**
Yet, while structuring the chronological arrangement of most contemporary academic books and other didactic resources, the division of Brazilian history into these four periods is not always obvious. Quadripartition is not merely a straightforward, rigid, replicable formula that didactically and forcibly ensures the naming of these four periods in every publication. Rather, it is better understood as a ubiquitous logic of interpreting and organising Brazilian history into four macro-periods, which is made explicit or implicit depending on the writer. As a result, quadripartition is frequently expressed more subtly, through the use of paraphrases and/or synonymic expressions. For reasons of intelligibility and readability, writers frequently opt to sub-divide one or more of these four macro-periods. This is especially common with the long “fourth” Republican period (1889-present); it is often didactically subdivided into briefer chapters such as “Old Republic”, “New Republic”, “New State” “Military Government” and “Re-democratisation”.

A striking example of quadripartition’s numerous variations is found in Robert Levine’s *The History of Brazil*. In it, the expressions “Indigenous Brazil” or “pre-Colonial Brazil”, normally used for the “first” national period are replaced by the term *Earthly Paradise*80, while the “second” national phase, “Colonial Brazil”, is re-cast as *Early Brazil*. Although Levine maintains the standard “Independence and Empire” terms to refer to the “third” macro-period of Brazilian history, he opts to subdivide “Republican Brazil” in order to emphasise the disruptive “Vargas Era” and the “Military coup” years, along with the re-democratisation process:

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80 It is important to note that the chapter *An Earthly Paradise* is not only restricted to the period called here as “Indigenous Brazil”. Levine dedicates only the chapter’s opening lines to what he refers as the Brazilian geological “primeval times” and the “first Brazilians” living before the Portuguese arrival (p. 1). The rest of the chapter is a summary of other Brazilian historical and contemporary topics. Nonetheless, although brief on the themes directly related to Indigenous history, this opening chapter perfectly reinforces the editorial-chronological logic denominated here *quadripartition*, since it briefly invokes the “first” (Indigenous) Brazilian phase prior to 1500, while preparing readers for the “second” (Portuguese) colonial period starting after 1500.
By means of even more creative paraphrasing and sub-divisions, a quadripartite formula is employed in E. Bradford Burns’ _A History of Brazil_ (1993). The book’s first chapter, _Interactions_, euphemistically refers to the “first” Brazilian macro-period. The chapter’s initial description of the pre-colonial “land” and “Indian” population is immediately followed by a description of “The European” arrivals. While employing a familiar expression (_The Colonial Experience_) for the “second” national phase, the book refrains from using the usual terms “Imperial” or “Republican” Brazil for the following two macro-periods. Instead, it adopts the expressions _Nation Building_ and _New Brazil_ to refer, respectively, to the beginnings of the “third” and “fourth” Brazilian periods:
Perhaps subtler and more common is the “non-linear” quadripartition of Brazilian history. In this model, narratives start with the “Colonial” period and then return to survey “Indigenous” Brazil. Indeed, at least since Varnhagen’s 1854 book, most general histories open with the Portuguese “discovery” of Brazil in 1500, and then follow in a non-linear narrative to briefly “contextualise” the history of Indigenous populations prior to European arrival.

“Non-linear” quadripartitioned formulas not only invert the chronological ordering of the “first” (Indigenous) period and the “second” (Colonial) period, they also incorporate the former into the latter. In other words, “Indigenous Brazil” is often reduced to a sub-chapter of “Colonial Brazil”. This is the consequence of Brazilian historians’ “enduring resistance” to what they consider as “a domain only for anthropologists (MONTEIRO, 2001, p. 4). It also derives from historians’ enduring Eurocentric bias that Indigenous oral-based history - while defined by contemporary historiography as important - is relatively sparse or even “inaccessible” to research methods when compared to the abundantly documented Portuguese experience. Consequently, many writers open their narratives with the “second” (and implicitly more thoroughly documented and therefore “trustworthy”) history of the Portuguese “Colonial” period. Afterwards, they tend to return to the supposed more speculative and scarce information about Indigenous societies before 1500.
Boris Faustos’ bestselling *A Concise History of Brazil* is a prime example of this non-linear quadripartition. Its first chapter, *Colonial Brazil (1500-1822)*, predicably starts with the theme of the Portuguese expansion and arrival in Brazil. It is then immediately followed by the sub-chapter, “The Indians”.

![Fig 4.6 Detail: A Concise History of Brazil (Index)](image)

After this non-linear opening (from the well-documented Portuguese sixteenth-century conquest to a brief digression to mention the previous and largely undocumented centuries of Indigenous land ownership), the writer returns to the theme of “Colonisation”. From there, Fausto resumes the traditional quadripartite sequence, preparing the transition to a chapter dedicated to the third “Imperial” period:

![2 IMPERIAL BRAZIL (1822-1889)](image)

Subsequently, three chapters are devoted to the many phases of the fourth “republican” period:
Joseph Smith adopts a similar non-linear quadripartitioned approach in *A History of Brazil*. Similarly to Fausto, he opens with a chapter entitled *Colonial Brazil*, with the first topics devoted to the “Discovery” and the “Conquest” by the Portuguese. Against this opening Luso-centric colonial background, Smith very briefly returns to acknowledge the estimated “3 to 5 million” Indigenous peoples that inhabited the land “several centuries before the Portuguese arrived in 1500” (SMITH, 2002, p. 31). After this succinct narrative rewind and after concluding with the “drastic decline of the Indian population”, Smith proceeds to pave the way for a chapter titled *The Empire*. It is followed by the concluding chapters that examine distinctive phases of the “fourth” Brazilian republican period (*The First Republic, Era of Getulio Vargas and From military to civilian rule*).

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to compare the countless examples of linear or non-linear, explicit or subtle, forms of quadripartition reproduced in Brazilian and foreign books annually. Moreover, this is not the place to investigate the reasons why this orthodox chronological logic of dividing the country’s history has proven enduring and versatile; adopted and adapted not only in books, textbooks and other didactic materials, but also into multiple cultural artefacts. Rather, it is sufficient to note that the division of Brazilian timeline into four *Indigenous, Colonial, Imperial and Republican* macro-periods is not a self-evident phenomenon, nor the result of any natural or inevitable chronological order in the country’s history.

Rather, the quadripartition has to be seen for what it really is: a resilient intellectual construct *initially* outlined in the middle of the nineteenth-century. Indeed, while such
quadripartite schemes seem today a logical and/or expected way of identifying the basic phases of the national history, this chronological division is largely the outcome of a question initially posed by the first IHGB members: how to correctly organise the important episodes of the history of Brazil?

Although it may seem banal or self-evident from a contemporary standpoint, this question was not only highly relevant at the time of the institute’s founding but, furthermore, it had no convincing answer. Indeed, the only seeming consensus among most IHGB founding members was the urgency with which they needed to react against the many chronological and thematic inaccuracies found in the works of previous writers. The first documents detailing the IHGB’s institutional goals already mention the necessity to produce “general histories of Brazil, since there was no justification for the only existing History of Brazil to be written by an English author, Southey” (WEHLING, 1999, p. 38). The Institute’s secretary, Januário da Cunha Barbosa, urged members to work on a new general history that would “purify the errors” and “disfigured accounts” found not only in the writings of Robert Southey but also in other earlier “national and foreign works”:

The heart of the true Brazilian patriot shrinks inside his chest when even modern events, such as independence, are distortedly told. It is not my goal now, gentlemen, to point out all the errors that saturate the many works about the Empire of Brazil. This honourable task will certainly be achieved by the members of our Institute: it offers an incredibly vast field of investigation for those (IHGB) partners aware of the necessity of remedying these ills. (…) This task (…) will be made easier with the collaboration of the many enlightened Brazilians in the provinces of the Empire, which will add with their works and observations, to serve as members of a body of a general and philosophical history of Brazil. (RIHGB, 1849, pp. 9-10) (Italics added)

The IHGB journal’s earliest editions recurrently return to examine how to accurately organise Brazil’s historical periods, episodes and “illustrious biographies”. The minutes of the Institute’s first meeting, 1 December 1838, indicate that the members planned a discussion at the next meeting to “determine the true epochs of the History of Brazil, and whether it should be divided into Ancient and Modern, or which should be its divisions” (RIHGB, 1839, pg. 45).

The IHGB affiliates discussed this theme at their second meeting held two weeks later. It also inspired Marshal Raimundo José da Cunha Matos to write, Essay on the system of writing the Ancient and Modern History of the Empire of Brazil (Dissertação acerca do sistema de escrever a História Antiga e Moderna do Império do Brasil). Subsequently published in the IHGB journal
a few years later, the essay boldly asserted that Brazilian history was essentially defined and demarcated by the Portuguese arrival and the later 1822 political emancipation. While not completely ignoring the immemorial Indigenous land occupation, Matos reflected the popular consensus of most other IHGB members. Succinctly and in similar fashion, Januário da Cunha Barbosa had already summarised the country’s history as the period beginning with “the fortunate discovery made by (sailor) Pedro Álvares Cabral, (and) ending with the proclamation if our glorious Independence” (RIHGB, 1840, p. 584).

With his essay, Matos was one of the first writers to outline the soon-to-be accepted form of “dividing” Brazilian history into distinctive and successive periods:

There should be three epochs of our history: 1st, it should be dealt with the aboriginals or autochthonsous; in the 2nd, should be comprised the eras of the Portuguese discovery and of the colonial administration; in the 3rd, we cover all the national knowledge since the day the Brazilian people constituted themselves as independent and sovereign, and embraced the system of a imperial, hereditary, constitutional and representational government (RIHGB, 1863, p. 129). (Italics Added)

In addition to the ideas drawn from Martius’ work mentioned earlier, Varnhagen also relied on Matos and other early IHGB reflections on the most adequate way of organising Brazilian historical periods to add intelligibility and persuasion to his book. In this sense, one of Varnhagen’s primary merits was again to competently enhance, elaborate on some of the Institute members’ initial drafts.

In fact, in the rather detailed subtitle of his book, Varnhagen already anticipated and summarised the logic of the basic chronological division through which he thought Brazilian general history was correctly organised:

GENERAL HISTORY OF BRAZIL, that is, the discovery, colonisation, legislation and development of this State, today an independent empire, written in the presence of many authentic documents collected in the archives of Brazil, Portugal, Spain and Holland. (VARNHAGEN, 1954, cover) (Italics added)
In Varnhagen’s interpretation, Brazilian history was above all a linear and jubilant narrative linking the brave pioneering Portuguese who crossed the Atlantic leading an epic colonial enterprise to their descendants who, in due course, separated from the fatherland to launch an even greater venture, the Empire of Brazil. Based on the keywords discovery, colonisation and independence, Brazilian history was a thread linking the first generation of sixteenth-century maritime explorers to the nineteenth-century generation of constitutional imperial subjects, to which Varnhagen proudly belonged.

Despite his open anti-Indigenous and anti-indigenist positions cited earlier, Varnhagen could not avoid acknowledging the presence of massive local populations before the Lusitanian landing. By opening with the details of the Portuguese colonisation of Brazil in 1500 and then “returning” to casually mention the earlier presence of Indigenous populations, Varnhagen

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81 Although Varnhagen’s Historia Geral do Brazil ends with the theme of the Brazilian independence, it does not reserve significant or detailed chapters to this theme. Nonetheless, Varnhagen publicly acknowledged that no “general history” would ever be complete without a comprehensive understanding of the emancipation period that lead to creation of the Brazilian autonomous Empire. In fact, after formally promising to work on this theme himself - both in his dedication to Emperor D. Pedro II and in the last pages of the Historia Geral do Brazil-, Varnhagen eventually published in 1874 another influential work, History of the Independence of Brazil, which can be interpreted as a late “supplement” to the linear and sequential narrative he inaugurated in his first books.
inaugurated the common “non-linear” procedure of inverting the temporal order of the “Colonial” and “Indigenous” periods cited earlier.\

Although using a non-linear narrative option, Varnhagen’s near thousand-page book followed the basic chronological division suggested in Marshal Cunha Matos’ preceding essay. While the central narrative core described the numerous aspects of the “Brazil-Colony” period, Historia Geral do Brazil not only admitted the “antecedent” time of the “Indians of Brazil” but also concluded with the “third” national phase starting with the “declaration of independence and the Empire” (VARNHAGEN, 1854-57, indexes).

Obviously, as they died many years before the 1889 collapse of the monarchic regime, neither Varnhagen, Martius nor any of the first IHGB members could have predicted the emergence of a “fourth” republican period in Brazilian history. However, most were aware of having helped to establish a basic chronological model for future books. This was clearly manifest in Varnhagen’s writings, in which he reiterates his confidence in having offered the “first step”, “the first general summary” and the “first collection of facts which (…) should be included in the General History” of Brazil (VARNHAGEN, 1857, Preface). He was equally certain that his narrative would soon be continued from his end point. In a prophetic statement referring directly to historians “who soon will appear”, Varnhagen foresaw this near future when his work would be completed:

These [historians], having contact with all that has been done, will judge it with justice; and I almost dare to say that the more defects they might find, that is, the more they study it, more they will appreciate this preliminary text which I have offered them. HGB, Preface, p. XXIII.

Indeed after 1889, most republican historians facilely added a “fourth” period to the former tripartitioned formula implied and popularised in Varnhagen’s writings. Thus the quadripartite model of Brazilian history outlined herein should not be seen as a model imagined and established exclusively in the pages of Historia Geral do Brazil. Rather, it was the gradual and collective achievement of successive generations of historians, both prior to and after Varnhagen. Nevertheless, although many IHGB members had earlier suggested and outlined ways to organise

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82 Most likely because of the strong criticism he received from the French geographer D’Avezac, Varnhagen inverted this chronological order in the second edition of Historia Geral do Brazil, in 1877, by repositioning the sections about “Indigenous” history in the beginning of the book, just after an opening section dedicated to a general geographical description “Brazil” (CEZAR, 2006). The point to be noted is that, despite the different “non-linear” and “linear” approaches adopted respectively in 1st and 2nd editions, both of Varnhagen’s publications respect the Indigenous, Colonial and Imperial phases suggested in Matos original chronological plan.
Brazilian historical periods, ultimately, it was *Historia Geral do Brazil*’s detailed chronology and dense - yet didactic - organisation of Brazilian periods that would in due course serve as a reference model for most history books written after 1857.

In summary, while the methodological and epistemic assumptions that guided Varnhagen’s writings are generally rejected today (WEHLING, 1999, p. 217), Nilo Odalia’s insistence on the contemporary endurance of his ideas is not entirely exaggerated. As shown in the short sample of quadripartitioned formulas found in contemporary books, writers of narrative Brazilian history still tend to adopt the basic temporal landmarks *initially* sketched by the IHGB members and implied and epitomised in Varnhagen’s work. Although the nineteenth-century historiographical decision to organise Brazilian history into Indigenous, Colonial and Imperial macro-periods (later complemented by the “fourth” Republican one) is, objectively, only *one way* to interpret Brazilian historical time, the repetitive and unchallenged use of this model has endured to become often mistaken as *the* history of Brazil itself.

Before tracing how this ubiquitous *quadripartite* logic also informed the works of nineteenth-century history paintings, it is necessary to analyse a second nineteenth-century historiographical legacy I denominate *state-nationalism*. As will be shown, initially sketched at the IHGB headquarters and exemplarily summarised in Varnhagen’s writings, *state-nationalism* has helped to silence the presence of Indigenous peoples and African-descendant populations in both visual and written histories of Brazil. This theme is a main topic of this chapter’s concluding pages. To avoid conceptual confusion, clarification of how *state-nationalism* is manifested in most general histories of Brazil since Varnhagen is in order.

### 4.2 State-nationalism in “general” histories of Brazil

During an informal lecture, Brazilian historian Luiz Felipe de Alencastro ironically evoked the professional tendency to project *national* history discourses over *pre-national* times. According to Alencastro, this historiographical anachronism is so commonly evident among Brazilian history writers that “even dinosaurs” are often considered “typically Brazilian” (brasileiros da gema) in their texts. As with any good joke, Alencastro raises the important point of Brazilian historians’ enduring mistake of projecting relatively modern cartographies, feelings of identity and political vocabulary of contemporary Brazil onto periods in which, objectively, the national state did not

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83 Lecture at the 5th Congress on the History of Bahia, in 2001, organised by the Instituto Histórico Geográfico da Bahia (IHGB).
exist as a social formation. As a result, they teleologically incorporate histories that predate the nation-state into Brazil’s grand national narrative.

Benedict Anderson has pointed to a similar problem permeating the writing of national narratives elsewhere. According to Anderson, there is a paradoxical perception of national history not only in Brazil but in most contemporary nation-states: social formations that are objectively recent - having emerged only from the nineteenth-century onward - that are generally viewed subjectively as “ancient” in the eyes of its citizens (ANDERSON, 1991, p. 5). Confronting a similar conundrum, Etienne Balibar has argued that one explanation for this subjective antiquity rests on the ability of national narratives to incorporate pre-national elements into contemporary plots. National narratives would be composed of a "multitude of events, qualitatively distinct, dispersed in time" that do not necessarily belong "to the history of a nation". Balibar suggests that the understanding of national histories usually resides in the anachronism of supposing that “the formation of the nation appears as the fulfilment of a ‘project’ stretching over the centuries”. He adds that this retrospective illusion is twofold:

It consists in believing that the generations which succeed one another over centuries on a reasonably stable territory, under a reasonably univocal designation, have handed down to each other an invariant substance. And it consists in believing that the process of development from which we select aspects retrospectively, so as to see ourselves as the culmination of that process, was the only one possible, that is, it represented a destiny. (BALIBAR, 1991, p. 86)

Following from these ideas of Alencastro, Anderson and Balibar, I define state-nationalism as a historiographical tendency of equating histories that occurred in areas that only one day would be part of the existing Brazilian territory to the general history of the Brazilian nation-state. The state-nationalism documented in Brazilian history books produces a double temporal illusion: the anachronistic projection of the present over the past and the teleological reduction of the past to the present as destiny – in other words, as if there were no other possibility.

Noticeably, the most common manifestation of state-nationalism occurs with the indiscriminate use of the noun "Brazil" and the adjective "Brazilian" to refer to Tupi-Guarani and other Indigenous societies before the arrival of the Portuguese. In fact, what most quadrivalent narratives commonly define as the first chapter in “Brazilian” history, so-called “Indigenous Brazil”, is a perfect synthesis of this anachronism.

However, state-nationalism does not only affect the historical sovereignty and the territorial autonomy of multiple Indigenous peoples. It homogenises and assimilates under the
name of “Brazil”, several distinct social constructs/formations that coexisted and succeeded one another within the territory today defined as the Brazilian national state: [1] the thousands of Indigenous nations that lived in (and understood as theirs) the land before and after the Lusitanian arrival; [2] the Portuguese colony popularly called "Brazil" from the sixteenth to the early nineteenth-century; [3] the constant "archipelago” of quilombos objectively autonomous and resistant to the Luso-Brazilian political-juridical system; [4] the United Kingdom of Portugal, Brazil and Algarve (1815-1821); and [5] the independent Brazilian national state that begins to emerge from this period forward, with the diverse internal Indigenous nations that exist to this day within a singular state with porous borders.

Implicit in state-nationalist narratives is the curious idea that a territory that only in 1822 would be unilaterally declared as the Brazilian independent state - which for the previous 400 years had been a fragmented territory disputed between Portuguese settlers, diverse Indigenous peoples and defiant quilombolas (maroons); and which for at least 12,000 years (GUIDON, 1992) before was exclusively occupied by millions of autonomous Tupi-Guaranis, Jes, Cariris, Tucanos, Aruaques, Charruas, Panos and many others - was somehow pre-determined to become part of “Brazil”. “Brazilians” by fate and force of this historiographical bias, dragged into a state-nationalised chronology and enthralled in Braziliancentric categories, these populations (along with their competing socio-political-cultural projects) are almost always deprived of their preferred societal self-identification.

A glance at the books cited earlier illustrates how, despite their indisputable editorial qualities, most contemporary “general histories” of Brazil tend to slip into state-nationalist.

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84 The paraphrase refers to the expression “Arquipélago de Capricórnio” coined by historian Luiz Felipe de Alencastro (2000). As it will become clearer along this thesis, by using the term “archipelago of quilombos”, I will argue that the formation of maroon societies, despite their territorial and temporal discontinuity, regardless of the enormous differences between them, can be seen together as a type of autonomous and constant sociopolitical formation existing throughout the history and territory of what is called today the Brazilian national state.

85 It is essential to note that the concept of state-nationalism, coined by the author of this thesis, should not be confused with nationalism. Even though the word “nationalism” is still a subject of debate and controversy, it generically refers to a strong feeling of belonging of a population to a specific nation; a sentiment usually based on the premises of a common history, language, kinship and usually associated to the rights of statehood and natural attachment to a specific (national) territory. Naturally, theories on nationalism have varied enormously throughout different disciplines, authors, periods and regions. It is not the case here to attempt to list the many positions on the theme, which have often created emotional divisions between those who regard nationalisms as “good” or “bad”, as liberating historical forces or as ideological constructs, as the manifestation of immemorial-inherited bonds or of recent-invented traditions. For the purposes of this chapter, it is sufficient to re-affirm the “modernist” approach (GELLNER, 1997) adopted here, according to which nationalism is seen as a relatively new phenomenon, directly associated with the emergence of nation states from the end of the eighteenth-century. The concept of state-nationalism, on the other hand, refers to a specific historiographical perspective: the tendency of historians to project contemporary national maps, political categories and nationalist feelings to periods in which, objectively, the national state did not exist. Of course, since the formation of nation-states is also closely related to the establishment of history as an academic discipline (GUIMARAES, 1988) (BERGER, 2007) and to the spread of a collective historical-
interpretations of the past. Thus, with no clear differentiation between pre-national\textsuperscript{86} and national periods, these “general history” books continue to repeatedly project the contemporary map of Brazil onto millennia before the Portuguese crossed the Atlantic, or onto centuries before the first attempts to create a national state.

Robert Levine, for example, casually declares that “the first Brazilians came to (New World) as long as forty-thousand years ago”, or in stating that “In 1500, Captain Pedro Álvares Cabral landed on the Brazilian coast” (LEVINE, 1999, p 1) (Italics Added). Similarly, the Brazilian Reader mentions the “hundreds of native tribes (who) inhabited Brazil at the time of the arrival of the Europeans, the earliest going back at least 10,000 years” and “the Brazilian natives encountered by the Portuguese” (CROCITTI and LEVINE, 1999, pp. 11-2) (Italics Added). E. Bradford Burns comfortably speaks of “Indians inhabiting Brazil at the opening of the sixteenth-century” and expresses no doubts that the “history of Brazil began with the arrival of the Portuguese” (BURNS, 1993, p. 9) (Italics Added).

The tendency to state-nationalise populations or lands that, objectively, never belonged to “Brazil” and onto which no “Brazilians” had ever set foot is contested occasionally. Despite using expressions such as “today-Brazil” or “the land that would be someday Brazil” in a clear attempt to avoid teleological and anachronistic lenses, Boris Fausto also recurrently reverts into typical state-nationalist phrases such as “the Brazilian coast (where the) Tupi-Guarani lived” or the “millions of Indians (who) lived in Brazil at the time of the conquest” (FAUSTO, 1999, p. 9).

\textsuperscript{86} The term “pre-national” refers to social and cultural structures that, objectively, existed prior to the material and symbolic emergence of modern nation-states. In the words of Etienne Balibar, these “structures appear retrospectively to us as pre-national, because they made possible certain features of the nation-state, into which they were ultimately to be incorporated with varying degrees of modification. We can therefore acknowledge the fact that the national formation is the product of a long ‘pre-history’. This pre-history, however, differs in essential features from the nationalist myth of a linear destiny. First it consists of a multiplicity of qualitative distinct events spread out over time, none of which implies any subsequent event. Second, these events do not of their nature belong to the history of one determinate nation. They have occurred within the framework of political units other than those which seem to us today endowed with an original ethical personality. In other words, non-national state apparatuses aiming at quite other (for example, dynastic) objectives have progressively produced the elements of the nation-state or, if one prefers, they have been involuntarily ‘nationalized’” (BALIBAR, 1991)
Clearly, the use of Brazilian-centric categories to refer to non-Brazilian times and spaces is not a recent habit. Rather, this has been a historiographical practice widely followed at least since the first IHGB members. Indeed, Marshal Raimundo José da Cunha Matos had already summarised the IHGB’s early conclusions that narratives on the “History of Brazil” began with the “Brazilian aboriginals” (Italics Added). For Matos, even if it was “buried under mountains of fables” or “presented the most extravagant origins”, the millennia of Indigenous history unambiguously belonged “as part of the History of Brazil” (RIHGB, 1863, pgs. 129, 132, 133) (Italics Added).

Karl von Martius also reinforced this idea by declaring “the Indians and their history as part of the History of Brazil”. Analogous to the historical reductionisms still found in many contemporary books, Martius was one of the first writers to assert that so-called “Brazilian” history started long before the “time of the (Portuguese) conquest”, with the “history of the primitive residents of Brazil” (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 444) (Italics Added).

But it was only after Varnhagen’s Historia Geral do Brazil that state-nationalisation of time and space would find a definite form and a permanent place in most general history books. In conformity with his nineteenth-century peers, Varnhagen’s writings are also based on the fundamental state-nationalist assumption that the history of “Brazil” was somewhat already preordained in immemorial times before the Portuguese arrival. Varnhagen also frequently mentions Indigenous peoples “inhabiting Brazil” before the “influx of Christianity and of civilisation”, or the Tupi-Guarani language that was spoken “in all corners of Brazil” at the time the Portuguese disembarked. (VARNHAGEN, 1854, Second Edition, pgs 15, 22) (Italics Added).

Varnhagen’s state-nationalist positions regarding Indigenous peoples are often expressed in conflicting and contradictory ways. As earlier noted, Varnhagen vehemently disagreed with the romantic-indianist literature of the time; therefore in his Historia Geral do Brazil, he openly opposed the then common assertion of Indigenous populations as “the true puritan Brazilians and the most legitimate representatives, in the past, of today’s nationality” (VARNHAGEN, 1857, p. XV). In fact, he frequently relies on expressions such as “the land which today is Brazil” or the “territory that today constitutes Brazil” to distinguish the “savage” land belonging to Indigenous peoples from the “Brazilian” one dating from the arrival of the Portuguese settlers.

Despite his proudly anti-romantic and Lusocentric positions, though, even Varnhagen could not avoid reserving space in his book for what he also called “The Indians of Brazil” (1854, p. 97). Varnhagen was not inclined to “the logic of concessions” – a fact that led him to engage in many moral and epistemological arguments with eminent romantic-intellectuals of his time.
Nevertheless, Indigenous populations also ended up as “the initial extras in his history” (CEZAR, 2006). As result, similarly to Martius’ and other IHGB work, Historia Geral do Brazil also reinforced a soon-to-be orthodox practice of situating Indigenous populations as an incontestable “part of” Brazilian history. Not surprisingly, in the case of Varnhagen, the more remote their place in history was, the better: “so are the Tupis the Jasons of our mythology, they are the Phoenicians of our ancient history, they are our Norman invaders in barbarian times” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 106).

Beyond the contradictions and controversies regarding the “Brazilian” status of Indigenous peoples, Varnhagen clearly advanced another equally important state-nationalist pillar for the interpretation of history: assuming that “Brazil” began as the result of a maritime “discovery” on the 22 of April of 1500. Motivated by his profound devotion to the Braganza house still governing Brazil at the time, Varnhagen embraced the Portuguese nautical journey - and the resulting colonial enterprise - as the official birth of the country. More importantly, Varnhagen’s book advanced the canonisation of a still common teleological interpretation that sees in the Portuguese landing the initiation of a process that, necessarily, would lead to the future formation of the Brazilian autonomous nation-state. Implicit in Varnhagen’s interpretation of history was the teleological argument that the “discovery” of Indigenous peoples by the Portuguese was predestined to lead, four hundred years later, to a peaceful transition to independent Brazil.

Indeed, Varnhagen’s narrative continually emphasises that the formation of Brazil was a linear, predictable and unavoidable preordained passage from colonial times to the independence period. Accordingly, his book repeatedly celebrates the efforts of the settlers in the many colonial captaincies who, moved by the “ties of the heart”, would contribute to “future Brazilian unity” (VARNHAGEN, 1857, p. 297-8). Unlike the heterogeneous populations of Indigenous peoples, mestizos, slaves and poor Iberians that also inhabited “Colonial Brazil”, the settlers that Varnhagen celebrated were usually members of the Portuguese fidalguía (nobility) who had chosen to cross the Atlantic:

Brazil flourishes today with the possession of all the comforts and ornaments of the most educated nations [...] (we deserve these benefits from being descendants of) Correas Sás, Souzas Coutinhos, Pires, Costas, Azevedos, Pereiras and some many other illustrious argonauts, who for the glory of the nation, to spread our faith, for a new splendour in these colonies, left the nest of their beloved land (VARNHAGEN, 1857, S XLV, p. 975)
If Varnhagen’s Lusophile, elitist and anachronistic interpretation of the mythical “1500 beginning” of Brazil can be contextualised inside the historicist-romantic intellectual environment of his time, the reasons why so many contemporary books still share this state-nationalist interpretation of history are not clear. Even though the Portuguese noble Pedro Álvares Cabral, objectively, did nothing more than to unilaterally claim the lands that ancestrally belonged to Tupinikins and Tupinambás as part of the absolutist Kingdom of D. Manuel I, why have so many Brazilian historians since the nineteenth-century, regardless of their often antagonistic political and epistemological affiliations, adopted this same date as a symbolic beginning of the country? Whether to celebrate the Lusitanian “discovery”, to condemn the “invasion” of Indigenous land, or simply to attest to the significance of this bi-cultural “encounter”, distinct generations of successive historians continue to consider 1500 – for better or worse - as the year of Brazil’s “birth”.

It is important to note that recent Brazilian historians are alert to the problem of projecting the map of contemporary “Brazil” over territories/populations that existed prior to its historical formation. In the context of the widespread national celebrations of the so-called “500-years of Brazil” in the year 2000, for example, historians João Paulo G. Pimenta and Andréa Slemian challenged the many “careless statements” that insisted on calling the Carta de Caminha (Letter of Caminha) the “birth certificate” of the Brazilian national state. Against the anachronistic and teleological interpretations of history widely supported by the Brazilian government of the time, both historians noted that there “were no Brazilian State, laws, symbols, nation or society” in 1500 and that nothing “suggested that the history of that region would become what it is today, nothing allowed us to suppose that in that moment what was being ‘born’ is what today we call Brazil” (PIMENTA and SLEMIAN, 2003, p. 42) (Italics in the original).

In a similar vein, historian Patricia Melo Sampaio has also pointed to the impracticality of trying to transpose the premise of a “Brazilian” territorial unity – so associated with the current Brazilian imagined community - to the colonial past. Far from the homogenous (nationalised) map of today, Sampaio reminds that we are not talking about a "country" before the independence, but only about “different colonial areas that maintained degrees of autonomy”. She explicitly comments on what is so “often ignored by certain historiographical sectors: that the “Brazilian” colony was not a unity in the eighteenth-century, nor in the first decades of the nineteenth-century (SAMPAIO, 2009, p. 55). Recent studies also suggest that the nonexistence of a “Brazilian” territorial unity reflected the very profuse feelings of belonging and different political-identity
vocabularies of the inhabitants. This was true not only among Indigenous peoples and African populations, but also among the Portuguese living in the colonial provinces prior to independence:

The formation of the Brazilian State occurs amid the coexistence of multiple political identities, each of which, by expressing collective plans recognised themselves as unique, and guided alternatives for future (...) local resident populations, excluding the ones who worked for the metropolitan administrative apparatus, and did not use the term Brazil to refer to a territory belonging to a collective political identity (...) [There were] no Brazilians, no political identity that went beyond a regional one. In fact, this comes as no surprise. The cohesive force of the Luso-American space was undeniably the metropolis, and the continent of Brazil represented, to the population in the colony, no more than an abstraction. It is correct to affirm that the conception of the “collection of parts” that were generically named as Brazil took place inside the Portuguese bureaucracy. (JANCSÓ and PIMENTA, 2000, p. 58) (Italics in the original)

Yet, while the number of academic publications that emphasise the desirability of differentiating the contemporary nation-state from previous social formations increases incrementally, historical distortions and teleological inaccuracies like these persist (PIMENTA and SLEMIAN, 2003, p 10). Many of these examples are particularly evident in narratives dedicated to what I defined as a “general history” of Brazil. Not surprisingly, following the trend of recent academic research, authors of these “general histories” have also been attempting to avoid anachronism and teleology. However, despite good intentions, at least two of the most widespread strategies to tackle these issues have, ultimately, only helped to reinforce what I have defined as state-nationalism.

The first strategy is to abandon the use of the word "Brazil" to refer to the territory before independence in favour of a term seen by many as more appropriate, namely, "Portuguese America". Beyond the sincere attempts to avoid historical anachronism by differentiating the Portuguese colony (popularly known as Brazil from the sixteenth to the nineteenth-century) from the independent Empire of Brazil after 1822, this cosmetic exchange of words in general histories has often created as many or more problems than those it has attempted to solve. The first problem is the lack of consistency of this proposed substitution throughout the books. Indeed, it is very common to find the word "Portuguese America" used in one paragraph and "Brazil" or "Brazilian lands" in the following. As a result of the indiscriminate use of these substitutions, significant semantic-historical confusion is produced, often interfering with the understanding of the text. With these careless references to rather discontinuous social-political experiences as if they were synonymous, books present an ambiguous and inaccurate contiguity between “Portuguese America” and independent “Brazil”.
However, concerns vis-à-vis the use of “Portuguese America” are not merely a question of semantic ambiguity, or inconsistency of editorial practices. Despite recognition as the most geo-politically (and epistemologically) correct term, it may, in fact, establish the opposite. In fact, it is not hard to interpret the idea of a “Portuguese America” as inaccurate, from a historiographical angle, and as offensive, from a multiculturalist viewpoint. While the term may deflect some historical anachronism related to the undifferentiated term “Brazil”, it is also often responsible for an ethnocentric view of pre-national populations. Specifically, it contributes to the silencing of voices and the blurring of the geography of peoples who never acknowledged or belonged to any "Portuguese America". Regularly employed in the hope of improving political-geographical vocabulary of the past, this expression has generated even more complex ethical-ethnic questions for the present. As the indiscriminate, inaccurate use of the word "Brazil" has often led to a state-nationalist interpretation of history, the term "Portuguese America" implies another equally illusory hegemonic perspective: that all the territory ruled by the contemporary Brazilian state, during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries supposedly was the property of the Portuguese Crown.

Complexities involved in the usage of the term “Portuguese America” become even more manifest when confronted with the essential – yet often overlooked - fact that between 1.0 and 8.5 million estimated Indigenous peoples (CUNHA, 1992, p. 14) inhabited the so-called “Portuguese-American” territory at the time of the Portuguese arrival. However, in most general histories of Brazil, their presence is obliterated as early as the arrival of the first Lusitanian caravels. Typically, texts and images erase the representation of any Indigenous geography in favour of descriptions and graphics based exclusively on the progression of the Portuguese colonisation. As a consequence, the simultaneous presence of millions of Indigenous peoples, who lived in and defended their territories before and after the arrival of the Portuguese, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth-century periods of official colonisation, is virtually ignored. Their histories, chronologies, cosmogonies, artistic, cartographic, epistemic and political knowledge, objectively independent in relation to the Portuguese monarchy, are too often condensed, subsumed and/or overlapped by chapters devoted to the period called "Colonial Brazil".

In a similar way, the term “Portuguese America” does not do justice to the complex reality of countless self-governing maroon societies that emerged to escape Portuguese rule. Historiography on quilombo groups has revealed how heterogeneous these social experiences were (GOMES and REIS, 2006). The traditional idea of remote quilombos hidden in deep jungles - normally inspired by the paradigmatic example of the famous Quilombo de Palmares - has been
complemented with research on various smaller scale quilombos, many of them near cities, which often have intimate and symbiotic networks with urban slave groups, freed peoples of African-descent and even with Euro-descendant residents (ALBUQUERQUE and FILHO, 2006). Yet, despite vigorous contemporary research on slavery, notably on the resistance to captivity, general histories of Brazil normally treat maroon societies as brief exceptions or anomalies inside what is regarded as the clear and safeguarded perimeters of the “Portuguese America”.

As with the “disappearance” of Indigenous peoples, the term “Portuguese America” contributes to concealing the nature of maroon societies - no matter how small or large, isolated or urban, brief or sustained – which should be taken collectively as self-ruling societies (simultaneous with the Luso-Brazilian colonisation ANJOS, 2009), as self-declared independent territories exterior to “Portuguese America”. Thus, paraphrasing Luiz Felipe de Alencastro, maroon societies can be interpreted as a recurrent archipelago of sovereign pan-African organisations that, throughout every century of the colonial enterprise, continuously challenged Portugal’s attempts to impose political and geographical sovereignty/supremacy.

For these reasons, although the use of the term “Portuguese America” is regarded as a good strategy to counter historical anachronism, I judge that it is an ineffective, even counterproductive strategy. A second increasingly common (ineffective) strategy is the initiative to produce narratives in which readers can better distinguish differences between pre-national and national times. Affirming the 7th of September of 1822 as a symbolic and more accurate beginning for Brazilian history, for example, has been a direct way to reinforce this approach:

![Fig 4.8.](image)

This narrative strategy seems a logical, sequential step following on from the previous one. After all, resulting soundly from the success of the independence movement, all of the lands

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87 It should be clear that the graphic representation used above (created by the author of this thesis) is only didactic-symbolic way to refer to the many historians/publications that adopt the Brazilian political independence (formally declared in the year 1822) as a more adequate beginning to history of the national state. Naturally, the many researchers and publications challenging anachronisms in the way Brazilian history is interpreted have usually relied on much more sophisticated approaches and models to explain the complex theme of the national formation. As seen
previously belonging to “Portuguese America” would be inherited by the newly declared country “Brazil”. Certainly, the choice of defining the formation of the Brazilian national state after the proclamation of its formal political emancipation seems a more accurate path from a historiographical viewpoint. It avoids basic historical anachronism by challenging the “foundational myth” (CHAUÍ, 2000) of Brazil’s origins in the so-called “discovery” of 1500.

However, some problems also derive from this narrative option, regardless of the good intentions of those who employ it. Above all, the same kind of artificial assumptions of homogeneity found in the term “Portuguese America” are also implicit in references to the post-1822 territory as the “Brazilian state”. Indeed, the immense territory that would be designated as the Empire of Brazil, in reality, was initially nothing more than an audacious, unilateral declaration by a rather small group of like-minded individuals, most of them from high-ranking political, economic and military positions in Rio de Janeiro and several other provinces. In this sense, most of the territory that in their perspective was declared as independent and “Brazilian” continued to be, not only in 1822 but during many decades to come, what it had been for at least the three earlier centuries: [1]- a complex and fragile arrangement of former colonial provinces, many of them with strong regional and anti-Rio de Janeiro identities; [2]- a dynamic territory of traditional Indigenous groups, most of which lived in complete autonomy from any external Brazilian government, with others living in varying relationships with Luso-Brazilians, either under military-religious control, or engaged in spontaneous or strategic alliances, while others continued the incessant border warfare with settlers; [3] - a territory marked by what was referred to as a recurrent archipelago of quilombos.

Thus, in objective terms, to designate all of the claimed 1822 territories the Brazilian state is simply another tactic to obscure the need for a polyphonic narrative by resorting again to the straightforward state-nationalist formula of an exclusive and linear timeline. It is another form of disrespect, a disregarding of the need to represent the heterogeneous map of populations and...
political/cultural loyalties, all of which coexisted and disputed this nineteenth-century territory. That threatening heterogeneity is obscured by the brand name: the well-known and easily recognisable image of modern “Brazil”.

Above all, it is a way to avoid two basic issues that have challenged most Brazilian historians, and authors of “general histories” in particular: the acknowledgment of plurinationalities and the representation of simultaneity.

4.3 Martius and Varnhagen’s legacies: challenging whiteness in Brazilian history

In his efforts to illustrate the “power and ubiquity of race” in nineteenth-century North-American visual culture, art historian Martin A. Berger chooses the insightful (and unorthodox) path of restricting his analysis only to works conspicuously distanced “from the politics of race” (BERGER, 2005, p. 2). Berger believes that racialised perspectives should be studied in visual discourses that have no apparent links whatsoever to race. Therefore, he not only avoids the selection of artworks “containing obvious racial themes or tropes” but also refrains from the analysis of any “image that includes nonwhites” (BERGER, 2005, p. 2). As the author explains, the exclusion of artworks depicting non-white peoples seeks not simply to avoid the frequent criticism of transforming supposedly “neutral” artworks into “treatises of race”. More importantly, it aims to shift the analysis of race and art in a rather distinct direction, specifically: to the racial representations that North-Americans of European-descent have produced of themselves, or what he commonly refers as whiteness.

According to Berger, studies showing how artists have historically produced hierarchical representations of whites and nonwhites have been the object of many competent “progressive” analyses, many conducted by “well-meaning whites” (BERGER, 2005, p. 4). However, often ignored is the way in which whiteness conditioned the “sight, beliefs and actions” of European-Americans, not only by structuring their “interpretation of the visual world” but also by allowing them - self-consciously or not - to impress their “values onto the visual products around them” (BERGER, 2005, p. 173).

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88 Berger’s definition of whiteness is not new. Rather, he draws from a long-established, heterogeneous and interdisciplinary scholarly area of investigation focused on the history and socio-cultural aspects of peoples self-declared and/or classified by others as “white” and, particularly, the study of whiteness as a widespread ideology in European and European-colonised countries. Whiteness - defined as a social-ideological construct starting with (and intrinsic to) modern colonialism - helped to ensure that a particular frame/gaze based on European civilisation became so normative and pervasive in contemporary societies, that it remains mostly invisible and/or unacknowledged. Warren Montag competently reconstitutes this “universalization of whiteness” by analysing the emergence of some of
Berger adds that this relative lack of attention that European-descent scholars and artists have given to the representation of themselves and of their world is perhaps linked to the gradual institutionalisation of whiteness in mainstream North-American culture. He suggests that the original motivation for the production of racial thoughts and practices among Christian-Europeans in US society (the necessity of creating a divide between themselves and the threatening proximity of African and Jewish populations) was eventually dissolved in the late nineteenth-century US society. It increasingly allowed “European-Americans to think ‘racially’ without needing a nonwhite presence to activate such patterns of thought” (BERGER, 2005, 173). This created long-term and unanticipated racial problems for contemporary US society by allowing:

the logic of race to seep into all spheres of American culture and newer, more insidious discrimination to take root. As the racial values of European-Americans were embedded into society’s dominant discourses and structures, nonwhites found themselves increasingly out of step with America’s most entrenched values and institutions. With “normative” standards of thought and action those espoused by whites, people of colour were always marked as deviant. (...) The racial values of Euro-America, once expressed primarily in the violent acts of individuals and groups, now found outlet in anonymous structures perfectly tailored to meet the imagined needs of whites (BERGER, 2005, p. 174).

Beyond his reflections on contemporary US racial debates, important to this thesis is Berger’s suggestion that normative whiteness also affected the specific field of art history. Indeed, one of the main purposes of his book, *Sight Unseen*, is to investigate the establishment of a rarely acknowledged form of racial blindness that marks art historical studies. He suggests that since methods of inquiry in art history were “forged in a culture unattuned to whiteness”, they all exhibit intrinsic limitations to the examination of race. Specifically, they result in an endless “feedback loop: methods that privilege visual evidence combine with our cultural blindness to whiteness to ensure that texts containing only white people – or those containing no people at all – have nothing to say about race” (BERGER, 2005, p. 14).

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the first theories on the “white race” in the text of Enlightenment philosophers. Montag wittily demonstrates how whiteness eventually started to function as a “norm” that, while “appearing to homogenise the human species (in conformity to the ideals of universality)” instead furnished “the criteria of its internal differentiation all the way down to the animal who possesses not a single human characteristic”. He adds that as a human norm, whiteness “is always glimpsed only negatively: it is what allows us to see the deficient and the abnormal without itself being seen. (...) Accordingly, in its most historically effective forms, whiteness does not speak its own name. It may be nothing more than the principle in relation to which all (other) races, nations, peoples are classified and hierarchized (...) established to measure the degree to which all (other) races have fallen short of it, a definition of human that renders them subhuman. Whiteness is itself the human universal that no (other) race realizes.” (MONTAG, 1993, p. 291-2). For more on whiteness studies, see: Kolchin (2002), Hill (1993), Berger (1999).
Since methodologies and theories in art history are strongly based on the “primacy of vision”, Berger suggests that historians frequently ignore crucial “discourses circulating outside art objects (that) circumscribe their significance”, thereby, narrowing the scope of their art inquiries (BERGER, 2005, p. 14). To be precise, he asserts that the centrality of “visual evidence” for both formalist and contextualist approaches - even if the visual material is only a point of departure for contextual analyses – tends to limit not only the range of formal properties and “social factors deemed ‘appropriate’ for discussion” (BERGER, 2005, p. 21), but also often fail to notice subtler cultural discourses. As Berger writes:

Although methods privileging visual evidence are sure to uncover narratives prompted by an artwork’s formal properties, they are destined to overlook more basic meanings generated by invisible discourses circulating in a common culture. These shared discourses help animate the meaning of art, because those of us who produce and interpret art have our vision partly structured by discourses whose cultural work precedes – and need not to be activated by- individual art works. As counterintuitive as it might sound, these invisible discourses are more revealing of a culture than its artworks, given their unobtrusive work in establishing limits on the range of meanings that a text, and a culture, might produce. To reconstruct the meanings of visual artifacts for their original audiences, then, we must ask what the works were not about. Focused on unseen discourses that no amount of looking can tease out (BERGER, 2005, p. 22) (Italics added).

Although comparative studies on race between the South and North-American contexts are notoriously complex, this thesis will demonstrate that some of Berger’s ideas are useful to approach Brazil’s historical and contemporary racial dilemmas. This does not mean a literal application or a naïve, mechanical transposition of Berger’s ideas (or any theories of whiteness) to the Brazilian context. Rather, I simply suggest that some reflections on race relations and colour blindness in the US, raised in Berger’s book, provide productive analogies to contrast and approach specific manifestations of whiteness in Brazil. After all, as Brazilian sociologist Patricia de Santana Pinho accurately noted, whiteness has been a “transnational force”; an epistemic and aesthetic “‘standard’ against which the identities of ‘Others’ have been produced” in both Americas (PINHO, 2009, p. 44). As such, whiteness is widely accepted as a norm within Brazilian intellectual and artistic circles. This is not to say it is admitted as such. Due to Brazilian specific

89 In regard to comparisons between the manifestation of whiteness and colour blindness across the Americas, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva has recently raised the interesting hypothesis that a Latin-American type tri-racial classification is beginning to take ground in contemporary US, which might affect the “300-year-old racial drama in the country.” According to Bonilla-Silva, rapid rise of Latino and Asian minority populations might reshuffle “the biracial order typical of the United States, evolving into a complex and loosely organised triracial stratification system similar to many Latin American and Caribbean nations” (BONILLA-SILVA, 2003, p. 178-9).
racial dilemmas mentioned earlier – particularly, the persistence of national racial-democratic beliefs - there are still few studies on whiteness in the country. Furthermore, there is the issue of “the invisibility of whiteness” since Brazilian:

self-proclaimed whites have historically been subjects and not objects of the gaze that has racialised the world around us. Consequently, it is hard to even name whiteness. Even among academics, the terms branquidade and branquitude trigger reactions of weirdness precisely because the terms identify this comfortably unacknowledged force. While permanently concealed, the power of whiteness is lived by everyone in Brazil, and it is always operating either in opening or closing doors of opportunity and achievement (PINHO, 2009, p. 42).

In significant ways, while not naming the term as such, the previous two chapters have also been dedicated to the study of the origins and spread of branquitude throughout Brazilian history. Indeed, instead of directly relying on the concept of whiteness, I argued that other and analogous “invisible discourses” produced by self-declared white Brazilian elites dramatically shaped the interpretation of the history of Brazil. I conveniently identified those discourses as hydraulic metaphor, quadripartition and state-nationalism. Although often “unseen” in contemporary books, or frequently taken for granted as simply self-evident and common sense ways of organising history, I showed that these ubiquitous forms of seeing the history of Brazil are themselves historical, being gradually crafted and “traditionalised” since the works of various nineteenth-century historians.

Furthermore, I argued that the construction of Brazilian discourses on race should also be analysed in the early historical written and visual narratives produced at the IHGB and the AIBA. Without discounting the influential racial theories that entered the country in the 1870s, I suggested that earlier works from Karl von Martius and Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, although not directly dedicated to the theme of race, produced some of the first – and most enduring - hierarchical representations of European, African and Indigenous populations in Brazil.

The first chapter of this thesis also addressed the close and often complementary relationship between the production of historical knowledge at the IHGB and the AIBA. Specifically, it emphasised how Brazilian painters, beyond their individual talents and intellectual autonomy, produced historical paintings intimately informed by the works of respected professional historians of the time. I suggested that because of this proximity between the way nineteenth-century written and visual histories were produced, contemporary research findings on IHGB’s documents offer art historians useful insights for the reinterpretation of AIBA’s paintings.
Finally, it will be possible to show how the critical interpretation of *How to Write the History of Brazil* and *Historia Geral do Brazil* made in this and in the previous chapter can assist art historians in reinterpreting nineteenth-century Brazilian imagery. As demonstrated earlier, the *hydraulic metaphor*, *quadripartition* and *state-nationalism* themes popularised by IHGB historians have entered the “mainstream” production of history discourses. After more than 150 years, their ways of organising “Brazilian” historical themes have also been fully “decoupled” from the nineteenth-century realities of slavery and wars against Indigenous peoples in which they were originally published.

Since all three concepts were coined based on the critical reading of authors who were not *directly* devoted to the theme of race, works informed by hydraulic metaphors of the nation, quadripartitioned divisions of Brazilian epochs and state-nationalised historical categories provide far more subtle – often, devious – ways of hierarchising and excluding Indigenous and African populations from Brazil’s history. Analogous to Martin Berger and Patricia Pinho’s conception of *whiteness*, the institutionalisation of the hydraulic metaphor, quadripartition and state-nationalism in (written and visual) history narratives has been relatively ignored in contemporary studies. An awareness of their normative ways of interpreting Brazilian history may assist in approaching national society’s defensiveness/blindness to *branquitude*. It can aid in analysing and challenging racialised perspectives in texts and images that have no *apparent* links whatsoever with racial issues.

Most of the “general history” authors cited, for example, would probably not accept any criticism of racism/racialism in their narratives. Contemporary writers, after all, are honestly committed to creating if not neutral, at least theoretically updated and ethically rigorous history narratives. Yet, analogous to Berger’s ideas, I detected a clear racially-hierarchised model informing the editorial format of these “general histories” of Brazil not by focusing on the indisputably respectable *contents* of those works, but rather by indirectly asking what they “were not about” and left out of the narrative. Analogous to *Sight Unseen’s* self-assumed “counter-intuitive” focus on the invisible, and its indirect method of investigating racial bias, this thesis will continue to employ the *hydraulic metaphor*, *quadripartition* and *state-nationalism* as key categories to reflect upon the enigmas of race relations (TELLES, 2004) present in Brazilian visual history.

After all, *both* historians and painters in the nineteenth century have helped to frame a model for interpreting Brazilian history that continues relatively untouched until today. While IHGB historians are considered founding fathers of a written Brazilian historiography, painters at the
AIBA were also pioneers of a visual one. If names such as Karl von Martius and Francisco A. Varnhagen drafted the basic plot of how future generations would read the history of Brazil, the likes of Pedro Américo and Victor Meirelles were equally central in sketching basic perspectives of how they would see it. For each basic part of this “general history” of Brazil being written at the IHGB, it is fair to say that a reciprocal and supplementary visual narrative was being forged almost simultaneously at the AIBA. The awarding of Martius' essay “How to Write the History of Brazil”, in 1847, is considered a foundational moment for the development of a history of Brazil in the nineteenth-century. Even though no analogous fine arts award was created, AIBA members were similarly engaged in discovering a way of how to paint the history of Brazil:

![Fig 4.9](image)

As will be seen in the next chapter, just as the concepts of hydraulic metaphor of the nation, quadripartition and state-nationalism provided useful angles to reinterpret historians’ works, so they can open new readings of history paintings. This is especially true regarding non-acknowledged branquitude/whiteness discourses and other Brazilian racial enigmas informing apparently racially-neutral visual representations.

Some of these enigmatic features were anticipated in the analysis of Martius’ legacies. Indeed, the official recognition of Martius’ work by the IHGB (and, consequently, by the Imperial government of the time) can only be interpreted as a paradox: how a country that as early as 1847 chose to award a pluri-racial model of narrating the nation’s history was also - by this very act - contributing to the relegation of African and Indigenous populations to an implacable silence or exclusion from the majority of future history books? As we have seen, Martius’ tri-racial inclusive beginning of Brazilian history is one of the reasons why publications – ever since - have
comfortably adopted exclusionary Luso-Eurocentric middle, ending and ends in their narratives, without running the risk of being accused of ethnocentrism.

This ambivalent logic of inclusion and exclusion in Martiuss text is so subtle that even a highly sophisticated historian, such as Ronaldo Vainfas, suggested that Martius’ “innovative proposal” was ignored or overlooked in the nineteenth-century, but that we should celebrate recent historiographical trends that recapture the “racial and cultural” miscegenation themes proposed “by Martius, more than a century ago” (VAINFAS, 1999, p. 12). Vainfas recognises that Martius “introduced (the theme of mestiçagem) poorly and unintentionally”, since he “prioritised the Portuguese contribution” over the African and Indigenous ones. Nevertheless he notes that at least Martius had the “ethnological sensibility” to “outline the issue of cultural mix” as an essential mark of Brazilian history, even though he did not fully “develop it” (VAINFAS, 1999, p. 2).

On the other hand, Chapter 3 illustrated Martius’ near immediate acceptance and enduring - even if “unseen” - legacies. If Martius did not fully develop all of his ideas, Varnhagen and other succeeding historians rapidly carried them out. In this sense, not only has the hydraulic metaphor of the nation been used since the nineteenth-century to today, but it also facilitated the incorporation of this Brazilian-style expression of whiteness even in the most “well-intended” and “progressive” of historical narratives since then. The essential point is to understand how Martius and Varnhagen’s major contributions to the reinforcement of racial hierarchies and to the exclusion of Africans and Indigenous peoples from history narratives are precisely because their writings are not direct theorisations of race.

Popular from the 1870s until the 1930s, the ideals of whitening the Brazilian population are mostly rejected today. However, the hydraulic-metaphor of the nation, quadripartition, state-nationalism - three specific Brazilian manifestations of whiteness present since the 1840s - linger as contemporary unresolved issues.

By means close reading of Pedro Américo’s famous painting Independência ou Morte! (Independence or Death!), the next chapter demonstrates how these three key concepts coined from the interpretation of Martius’ and Varnhagen’s works provide fresh angles to reinterpret not just the painting’s specific subject matter, but the theme of the Brazilian independence as a whole. Specifically, I illustrate how a critical understanding of these two historians allows for the reframing of what whiteness-based and nationalistic visual histories such as Américo’s often
ignore: that throughout the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, the consolidation of Brazilian independence was built upon the decimation and occupation of self-determining territories of several Indigenous and maroon societies.
Chapter 5 - At the margins of Napoleonic Art and Brazilian Politics: Re-interpreting Pedro Américo

The first-time viewer of Pedro Américo’s colossal painting *Independence or Death!* is likely to be disorientated by the seemingly simultaneous movement - apparently disorganised - of more than 40 exultant horsemen. In addition to the meticulously drawn anatomies of overlapping steeds and formally dressed equestrians, the painting also presents the spectator with details of Brazilian countryside. Américo depicts its vast rugged topography of red soil, covered by asymmetrical and stumpy flora, sparsely populated by rural workers, travellers and humble houses.

Amongst the dozens of figures depicted, the image of a rider raising his sword commands attention. Positioned at centre stage, at the edge of a small hill in the middle-ground, the figure exhibits a slim silhouette under a resplendent blue jacket with a thick moustache that disguises a narrow, pointed face. It is evident that almost every gaze is focused on his actions. From the title of the painting and the iconography depicting the members of the Bragança royal family exiled in Brazil since 1808, there is no doubt that the man is Prince Pedro, portrayed at the moment he declares the independence of Brazil in 1822.

Fig 5.1 Pedro Américo. *Independência ou Morte!* (*Independence or Death!*), 1888. Oil, 415 x 776 cm. São Paulo, Museu Paulista da Universidade de São Paulo (USP).

This chapter provides a thorough examination of Américo’s painting. Beyond that bewildering first impression, a close analysis reveals that Pedro Américo’s work is actually a well-balanced composition that represents every shape in a dynamic - yet stable - structure. In addition
to its ingenious geometrical and chromatic arrangements, Independência ou Morte! can be interpreted, as this chapter will demonstrate, as a disconcerting allegory of the Brazilian nation-building process during the late nineteenth-century.

As will be demonstrated, Américo’s work has also contributed to the dissemination of an interpretation of Brazilian independence as a relatively peaceful and non-traumatic process, especially when compared to neighbouring Spanish-colonised nation-states. Furthermore, using the concepts of the hydraulic-metaphor of the nation, state-nationalism and quadripatition coined in the previous chapter, the last pages will challenge what nationalistic-anachronistic interpretations of history such as Américo’s often ignore: the consolidation of Brazilian independence was achieved through the expansion, occupation and negotiation over the “foreign” and self-determining territories of many Indigenous and maroon societies.

5.1 The history of the history painting

When Américo’s painting was first exhibited in 1888 at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of Florence, more than 65 years had elapsed since the proclamation of Brazilian independence. That exhibition was attended by numerous royalty, including Emperor D. Pedro II and Queen Victoria of England (ROSEMBERG, 2002) By then, after some initial uncertainty concerning which date best represented the country’s emancipation from Portugal (KRAAY, 2010), the majority of Brazilians considered the 7th of September of 1822 as the most important day of the national calendar. Thus it is not surprising that Américo chose a colossal 7.76 by 4.15 meter canvas to portray what most of his contemporaries also regarded as the greatest national act: the moment when the then Regent Prince raised his blade defiantly and liberated the country with his shout, “Independence or Death!” By refusing orders from the Portuguese Courts calling for his immediate return to the Iberian Peninsula, Dom Pedro shielded Brazil from supposed threats of re-colonisation orchestrated by Iberian politicians.

Américo’s previous history paintings A Batalha de Campo Grande (The Battle of Campo Grande) and A Batalha do Avahy (The Battle of Avahy), were completed two and four years respectively after the War of the Triple Alliance episodes portrayed (ROSEMBERG, 2002). By contrast, the decades separating the creation of Independência ou Morte! and the actual independence day posed practical challenges to Pedro Américo. The most significant of these was the demand for historical truth expected from the artistic genre with which he was engaged. As discussed earlier, as the Chaired Professor of History Painting at the Imperial Academy of Fine
Arts (AIBA), Américo created works that were evaluated not only in terms of artistic inspiration and technical virtuosity, but also according to historiographical standards of the time. Many of the criteria being developed by professional historians were also used to judge the production of visual histories.

Thus, it was no coincidence Américo relied on every primary and secondary source available to approach an event he not only did not attend, but from which he was so chronologically distant. In contrast to the many eyewitnesses he was able to interview for his earlier works, as well as his privileged access to their personal military uniforms, maps and other abundant artefacts recently used in battle, the creation of Independence or Death! was largely based on documents the painter himself had to unearth in family archives, or others eventually shared with him. In order to confer more historicity (BURNHAM and GIESE, 1995) upon his artwork, Américo also relied on daguerreotypes and the memories of those “people - children or young at the time - in kinship with any participant of the (independence) act, who could remember physiognomic details or any other of their characteristic aspects” (ROSEMBERG, 2002). All of these archival or oral sources, although less authoritative than firsthand memories or artefacts of those who personally experienced a historical event, were nonetheless accepted as a method for validating historical narratives. Art historian Isis Pimentel de Castro cunningly argued that nineteenth-century Brazilian painters who could not directly “see” a historical event (Opsis) could nonetheless claim they had indirectly approached it through research; that is, that they at least had “heard” about it (Akoe) from reliable sources (CASTRO, 2009, p. 33).

Pedro Américo was committed to satisfying late nineteenth-century historiographical standards; he documents that commitment in the text he wrote explaining the process of creating the painting. Published in Florence on the 31st of January of the year of the image’s exhibition, the 15 pages of the dissertation O Brado do Ipiranga ou a Proclamação da Independência do Brasil (The Cry of the Ipiranga or the Proclamation of the Independence of Brazil) are divided into two main sections, entitled “The Fact” and “The Painting”.

As the title indicates, the first section is dedicated to providing a credible factual account of the events that led to the proclamation of independence on September 7, 1822. In this sense, Pedro Américo’s narrative does not differ significantly from that of most historians of the time. Indeed, in a few opening paragraphs, the painter recapitulates the main events that culminated in the declaration of independence. He opens with the crisis of the Ancién Regime that changed the “souls of subjects into the souls of citizens”, leading to the “fundamental French Revolution ideas (...) that reverberated in Brazil” (MELO, 1888, pp. 13-14) and to the rise of Napoleon that,
ultimately, resulted in the transmigration of the Portuguese Royal family and the political crisis between the two sides of the Atlantic.

Américo exceptionally detailed the Portuguese Prince’s travel through Brazil in 1822, during which time he would become the country’s first emperor. Based on eyewitness accounts that inspired Pedro Américo’s work (MATTOS, 1999), it is possible to identify precisely the site of the portrayed event as the bank of the Ipiranga River, a usual stop for those travelling through the then Captaincy of São Paulo. It is also possible to name the small group of high-ranking civilian and military officials standing to the left of the Prince. Organised in a semi-circle formation on the right half of the painting, those horsemen represent part of Dom Pedro’s personal guard escorting him from the city of Santos to São Paulo. Later, they will be known as the “Dragons of Independence”.

The painter also recounts the original political aims of the journey; the itinerary through small cities in the province of São Paulo; the names of the officials and civilians escorting D. Pedro; all of which culminate in a dramatic and seemingly real-time description of the moments leading to the “Cry of the Ipiranga”:

[as D. Pedro stops to rest near the bank of the Ipiranga stream he] sees two horsemen approaching him hastily (...), coming from Rio de Janeiro. They were Major Antonio Ramos Cordeiro, Honour Guard, and the officer of the Supreme Military Tribunal, Paulo Bregaro, both of whom were responsible for delivering important letters to D. Pedro. Little did they know that they carried in those papers the decree of our political emancipation! (...) Just after reading them, D. Pedro (...) stared at his travelling companions, and said with deep emotion: ‘So many sacrifices for Brazil ...and yet they are constantly digging our grave!’ Then, he sat up straight [magnificou sua fisionomia], a light shining in his eyes, and, as though he had discovered the talisman of the future greatness of his adopted country, he draws his sword and cries resolutely: ‘Independence or Death!’ A sublime cry, which was repeated and enthusiastically greeted by the guards of honour, who, with swords drawn reproduced the martial gesture of the August Advocate of our independence, thrilled by the grandeur of an event that was as unexpected as it was important (MELO, 1888, pp. 16-17).

It is only in the second section of the dissertation that Américo attempted to coherently link historical facts with his aesthetic principles. To demonstrate his bona fides as both skilful painter and credible historian, he opens the section “The Painting” with a convergent definition of artistic and historiographical practices. He declares the “artist” as a “sort of historian restricted by the demands of aesthetics and the uncertainties of tradition” (MELO, 1888, p. 19, italics added). This was not the only paragraph in which the painter admitted “restrictions” on his creation. In
fact, most of Pedro Américo’s text appears as a deliberate effort to anticipate and thereby refute criticisms regarding the limits - as well as the complex blurred borders - between fact and fiction in his artwork. Pre-emptively, Américo commented on the difficulties of reconciling historical truth and academic aesthetic standards in the very first paragraph of the second section. Provocatively, he specifically highlighted this difficulty for painters like himself, who stood so distant from the actual historical event:

> It is difficult, if not impossible, to restore in the mind, and to coat with the appearance of reality, all the details of an event that happened more than half a century ago; especially when the contemporary witnesses who transmitted it to us were not skilled in the art of observing and writing. (MELO, 1888, p. 19)

In addition, from the opening lines, Pedro Américo clearly adopted a conciliatory rhetoric as a way to defend his work. Several art historians have pointed out that Pedro Américo produced his painting amidst an intense debate between so-called “idealistic” and “realistic” artistic tendencies in Brazilian art (CARDOSO, 2007, SCHLICHTA, 2006, MATTOS, 1999). Indeed, just a few years before, critics accused the painter of mistakenly departing from academic (idealistic) standards. Specifically, Américo was at the centre of what was unarguably the most important art controversy in nineteenth-century Brazil, later known as the “Artistic Debate of 1879” (A Questão Artística de 1879). In the AIBA General Exhibition of that year, Américo’s monumental *The Battle of Avahy (A Batalha do Avahy)* was displayed alongside the equally massive *The Battle of Guararapes (A Batalha de Guararapes)*, by the rival artist, Victor Meirelles. Unlike Meirelles’ and most other academic painters’ noble and morally dignified war scenes, Pedro Américo blatantly represented the bloody, chaotic Paraguayan warfare. Critics and spectators at the time were astonished by a work that, for the first time in Brazilian art, depicted the war “in all of its hideousness, all of its crimes and all of the explosive barbarities” (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 116).
The apparently intentional aim of the organisers to create a public polemic involving the two rival painters proved successful. Encouraged not only by the quality of other works presented, but especially due to the publicity of the artistic clash between the two most renowned imperial painters at that time, there was massive attendance at the General Exhibition. In terms of relative numbers, the 1879 exhibition still holds by far a national record of viewers when compared to any other art exhibition in Brazilian history. It received 292,286 visitors over a period of 62 days, an
impressive number, considering that the population of Rio de Janeiro during that year was about 300,000 people (CARDOSO, 2007).

Gonzaga Duque, indisputably the most famous (and feared) Brazilian art critic at the time, wrote of how Américo’s painting “aroused considerable commotion in the Rio press” and among art critics. As an anti-academic, Gonzaga Duque praised Américo’s painting as “brilliantly executed”. Further, the critic noted how the painter’s work had brought to the surface “a long-standing dispute between academics and innovators”, since:

the artist abandoned the outworn academic lines of composition, and composed the subject as he best understood it, to communicate more directly the impression he received. For some, this way of proceeding is an unforgivable error, because it neglects the most austere principles of art (DUQUE-ESTRADA, 1888, p. 119).

Such an artistic “abandonment” was particularly serious in view of the alignment - previously discussed - between the AIBA’s artistic and the monarchy’s political powers. Paintings that subverted academic principles could be interpreted as a direct criticism of the monarchic system itself. For this reason, members of the growing republican movement publicly supported a work that contrasted in so many ways with the glorifying images of battles made up to then. As a self-declared monarchist, a personal friend of emperor D. Pedro and a public employee of the imperial bureaucracy, it is unlikely that Pedro Américo intended to criticise the regime he supported and on which he depended. In this sense, art historians have interpreted Independence or Death! as a type of personal statement made by Pedro Américo of his “return” to the academic style – or, at least, of his acceptance of most of its principles – and, therefore, a public declaration of his loyalty to the monarchy (MATTOS, 1999, p. 117).

Returning to the painter’s dissertation, it was perhaps in the hope of avoiding similar artistic (and political) polemics between “idealism” and “realism” that his text recurrently stresses the ambiguous place of history paintings, both as conveyors of “truth” and products of the “imagination”:

Reality *inspires* the painter, it does not *enslave* him. It inspires him in what it contains as worthy to be offered to public contemplation. (…) And if the historian removes from his work all incidents that disturb the clarity of his lessons and the greatness of his goals, the artist has even more reasons for doing this; since he is motivated by the aesthetic impression his work should produce in the viewers (MELO, 1888, p. 19)
It was due to this “moral and artistic value” of paintings that Pedro Américo opted to represent D. Pedro on the “chestnut horse” his companions alleged he was riding, disregarding “a certain popular tradition” that claimed the Regent Prince actually travelled on a humble “donkey” (MELO, 1888, p. 20). Further, it was also in the name of “worthy” examples that he avoided any reference to the popular version with regard to Dom Pedro’s great “gastric discomfort” on the 7th of September, which forced him often to “depart from his Honour Guard”. Although the painter admitted that the young Prince’s intestinal condition “was effectively real”, since it was registered by eyewitnesses, he concluded that its portrayal was contrary to the “moral role of paintings and, consequently, undeserving of contemplation by posterity” (MELO, 1888, p. 20). Motivated by an analogous artistic-moral responsibility, Pedro Américo also chose to embellish the “excessively modest” clothing the Honour Guards were probably wearing with the “helms, fringe epaulettes and gloves” of the “ceremonious and shining” period of the 1820s (MELO, 1888. p. 20).

After initially assuming his artistic principles took precedence over less important historical facts, Pedro Américo is careful enough to reiterate his commitments to historiographical accuracy. In Pedro Américo’s own words, a history painting:

should be, as a synthesis, based on the truth and reproduce the essential facets of a fact and, as an analysis, the result of a large number of arguments derived from consideration of credible and probable circumstances, and of the acquaintance of the laws and conventions of art (MELO, 1888, p. 19).

Indeed, the research methodology the painter details in the following parts of his text would probably please any professional historian at the time. Pedro Américo, for example, is eager to underscore that his composition was based on the “uncontested testimony of many who witnessed the episode”. By rhetorically naming the authors of each of his primary sources - most of them military officials who travelled alongside the Prince -, Pedro Américo is confident to affirm his work was not only “rigorously inspired by reality” but that it was also “guided by rationality” (MELO, 1888, p. 21). As with other Brazilian imperial artists who often quoted previous artworks both as a proof of erudition and as a rhetorical strategy to authenticate their own works (COLI, 2005), Pedro Américo also recalls his research of earlier painters and iconography “spread through the provinces of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro”. By studying preceding models, and also by being personally allowed to copy the “portraits of D. Pedro’s companions” by their respective families, the painter could claim even more accuracy for his work; including details such as the type of
moustache fashionable among young men at the time, including Prince Pedro (MELO, 1888, p. 22).

Also in accordance with historiographical methods, Américo supports his claim of truthfulness by citing his ample use of secondary sources. He directly thanks and names many historians and other writers who “provided him with their special writings on the subject”, as well as with the “original documents on which they based” their research. He also acknowledges the civil and military authorities, both in Brazil, Portugal, England and Austria, who “facilitated his laborious research” by providing him with documents and literary suggestions (MELO, 1888, pp. 21-2). Furthermore, Américo details his visits to libraries, archives and research travels, some of which included in loco investigations of the site of the “Cry of the Ipiranga”:

Exceedingly scrupulous, I went twice to São Paulo, after searching compulsively in the National Library, the Historical Institute (IHGB) and private collections for works whose contents could aid me; I visited the glorious hill of the Ipiranga in the company of Mr. Baron of Ramalho, Chairman of the Monument that will be erected there, under whose eyes I drew from different parts of the site (where) the event took place (MELO, 1888, p. 22)

The requirement of visiting the actual site of a history painting was a lesson Américo possibly learned from earlier critics. Indeed, less than a decade before, many critics including the most celebrated Brazilian writer of the time, José de Alencar, cited that the failure to travel to the Paraguayan conflict zone was one of the major faults in A Batalha do Avahí:

the painter did not visit the place of action, he did not scrutinise with an investigator's eye that land still soaked in blood, he did not use a guide to show him the different points were the various episodes of this fearful struggle occurred, which history calls the Battle of Avahy. This is the first weak point of the painting by Pedro Americo. (cited in SCHLICHTA, 2006, p. 166)

Because of this, Alencar argued the painter was not able to be "faithful to essential points of his artwork". Among other critiques, the eminent writer publicly warned audiences attending the 1879 AIBA’s General Exhibition that Américo’s painting was less an accurate historical scene than a product of "efforts of imagination, a lot of fantasy and idealism" (cited in SCHLICHTA, 2006, p. 166). Pedro Américo’s recurrent insistence on the fact that his new painting was the result of on-site observation of the Ipiranga’s surroundings was a clear attempt to avoid similar criticism.
During his travels to the “diverse cities in the province of São Paulo”, Américo proudly evokes his discovery of “many facts that would be hard to be obtained otherwise”, as well as his acquisition of military “uniforms, helmets and other objects from the period” (MELO, 1888, p. 22). After the visits to the hill of the Ipiranga, the painter could also claim to have “sufficiently studied” the landscape’s vegetation, river and the unevenness of the terrain. Traveling also enabled him to document that “São Paulo’s atmosphere is more diaphanous than that of Rio de Janeiro”, and that wood burning from August until October dims the air throughout the province. The painter explains that these regional differences explain much of the colouring used in the painting, such as the “hesitancy of the sunlight hitting the horse riders and the ground” (MELO, 1888, p. 25).

From a contemporary standpoint, though, it seems likely that Américo’s representation of the Brazilian independence declaration depended on his travels and available primary and secondary sources as much as on the influential contemporary interpretations being constructed by imperial historians at the time. In other words, without disregarding the artist’s substantial documentary, biographical and geographical research, a significant part of Américo’s artistic interpretation also reflected the limits of the imperial frames and the optic of the state (ANDERMANN, 2007) in which the painter lived. Along with the abundant iconographic and stylistic details captured for art historical analysis, Américo’s painting also offers an interesting case to reflect upon the very changes in the way the theme of the Brazilian independence was represented during the late nineteenth-century, as well as the painter’s work inextricable relation to the changes in both scholarly and political powers of the time.

To acknowledge relations between text and context in Américo’s painting is not to imply that his work mechanically reflected findings by nineteenth-century historians, or subserviently followed the political agenda of the Brazilian empire. Rather, Pedro Américo’s painting is analysed here as an example of how artists actively responded to the transformations of their own times, which often led to changes in the artistic strategies they employed to ensure veracity (and circulation) of their works. As in any painting tradition, history painting in Brazil is also understood in this thesis as an “unstable genre” that re-adapted its codes and practices depending on the “changing historical contexts” and “the emergence of new forms of historical consciousness and ways of thinking about history” (GREEN; SEDDON, 2000, p. 8).

Acceptance of the premise that changes in nineteenth-century “historical consciousness” informed the practice and demanded creative responses from painters of the time, leads logically to a meta-historical discussion of how recent changes in our own historiography have also
challenged our images of the past. By accepting that nineteenth-century “ways of thinking about history” are essential to understanding the dynamics of history paintings from that period, the next pages will also explore the way findings in our recent *historiography* of nineteenth-century historiography can also – as a corollary - open fresh readings of these paintings.

As outlined in chapter one, contemporary historiography - unlike that favoured by romantic-imperial historians - views the Brazilian declaration of independence as the culmination of a growing conflict between Portuguese nationals living on opposite sides of the Atlantic (JANCSÓ; PIMENTA, 2000; MAXWELL, 2000; MALERBA, 2003). Napoleon’s expansion over the Iberian Peninsula forced the Portuguese Royal family - along with tens of thousands of members of the courtly society - to flee abruptly from Lisbon. The monarchy justified the move, which curiously relocated the metropolitan capital to the then most prosperous (and safeguarded) colonial city, Rio de Janeiro, as a tactical and temporary way of “saving the Portuguese nation”.

Although the King’s return soon after the French forces were expelled in 1814 was expected, Dom João VI managed to extend his exile in Brazil until 1821. A year before, a liberal revolution erupted in Porto subsequently spreading to other Portuguese cities. The discontented Iberians demanded not only the immediate return of the exiled royal family, but also that the King swear his unconditional allegiance to the first Portuguese constitution that was being drafted. This signalled the end of centuries of successive absolute Portuguese dynasties. It was also two years before 24-year-old Prince Pedro, in coalition with powerful local men, and in spite of the likely punishment he would receive in Portugal for disobeying the Portuguese courts, declared himself as the first emperor of independent Brazil.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to cite the diverse interpretations of the Prince’s motives for remaining in Brazil; and the reasons for why some local elites opted for a monarchic emancipationist project, rather than a republican one⁹⁰. It is sufficient to say that the outcome was that after D. Pedro I’s eventual 1831 abdication the Brazilian constitutional empire survived with the eventual 1840 elevation of his son D. Pedro II to power, whose long and relatively stable reign extended to 1889.

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⁹⁰ Although central, Brazilian historiography has not reached a conclusive opinion about this theme. A popular economic-centred interpretation suggests that regional elites, all of whom depended on a slave-based economy, embraced the “monarchic” project centred in Rio de Janeiro because it seemed the only option able to hold the continental territory of the Portuguese colony together. Fearing the potential collapse and fragmentation of the territory into multiple republics and, especially, fearing the potentially infinite slave revolts that could result from a lack strong central government, rural-provincial elites tended to support Dom Pedro’s central government. For more on this theme see Keilla Gringberg and Ricardo Salles (2009).
A personal friend of renowned figures such as Luis Pasteur and Arthur de Gobineau, admired by eminent European thinkers including Friedrich Nietzsche and Victor Hugo, translator of Greek poetry (SCHWARCZ, 2004), Dom Pedro II forged his reputation as an enlightened king and active patron of Brazilian arts and sciences: “the Emperor's passion was the life of the mind, not the unsavoury realities of political conflict. Or at least that was the image he successfully projected” (SKIDMORE, 1986). Indeed, surpassing the records of his father and grandfather, D Pedro II also conceived a “state-sponsored culture as a ‘natural’ aspect of his stewardship” (NEEDELL, 1999, p. 3). As mentioned, it was with Pedro II’s rule that many imperial cultural and scientific institutions, such as the AIBA and the IHGB, gained financial stability and undisputed authority as centres for the production of “official” knowledge in nineteenth-century Brazil.

Moreover - and essential to the interpretation of Pedro Américo’s painting - it was during his long reign that IHGB historians advanced political discourse vis-à-vis the triumph of Brazilian independence. Incorporated in that discourse was the fact that Brazil avoided the territorial division and civil wars seen in its republican Spanish-speaking neighbours, essentially due to the merits of the monarchical system adopted91. Indeed, throughout the nineteenth-century, with persuasive state supervision and funding, Brazilian intellectual elites promoted a “stable-civilised” image of the local monarchy in contrast to the “fragmented” civilian-rule of bordering countries. This largely resulted from the works of “both conservative and progressive canonical historians”, for whom “the political wisdom of the (white and male) elite of colonial Brazil” was crucial to enable “a smooth transition from colony to nation, without the bloodbath and fragmentation that characterised the process of independence in Spanish America” (CAO, 2008, p. 95).

Among its various layers of meaning, Pedro Américo’s painting can also be interpreted as a visual representation of this carefully crafted historiographical discourse: the image of Brazil’s post-independence as a united and tranquil period, which was only possible under the House of Bragança. Thus, well beyond the portrayal of an ephemeral political act temporally confined to the year of 1822, or geographically circumscribed to a minuscule area in the then Captaincy of Sao Paulo, the painting also presented its contemporary viewers with a twofold message: the presumed

91 Historian Arno Wehling suggests that contemporary Brazilian history adopts three basic theses to try to explain the successful Brazilian unity around the Bragança family, especially during the Second Reign. The “traditionalists”, which were already taking shape amidst early nineteenth-century nationalism, emphasise the merits of the “Majority Coup”, which granted then 14-year old Pedro II the right to rule (and keep the country together.) “Marxist” inspired interpretations (cited in the previous footnote), emphasise the role of rural elites in controlling attempts to fragment the territory, especially those which potentially threatened the slave-based economy. The last type of interpretations, draw on the works of Max Weber to emphasise importance of an influential bureaucratic establishment existing throughout the Imperial government. (WEHLING, 1999, p. 32)
indefinite reign of the Brazilian monarchy and the indivisibility of the Portuguese-speaking nation it righteously created in South America. In view of this powerful message, it is ironic that Américo’s painting was first exhibited in Florence precisely one year before a republican coup overthrew the Brazilian monarchy; and that the painting’s final elevation to its prominent place inside the Museu Paulista would occur during an already fully established Republican regime.

5.2 Napoleonic paintings and Pedro’s painting

Perhaps it was precisely the rising Republican movement of late nineteenth-century Brazil that motivated a self-declared monarchist such as Américo to imbue his image of the Bragança monarchy with all of its former power. It is tempting to interpret the painting’s excessively cohesive formal structure – in which characters are loyally and hierarchically organised around two semi-circles that meet on the upper figure of the Emperor - as one of the last and desperate symbolic acts of a decadent and collapsing monarchy to try to restore order and reclaim its splendour.

By conveying an image of stability that so sharply contrasted with the troubling political context in which it was produced, Américo’s painting did not really differ from analogous paintings of other modern rulers such as Napoleon Bonaparte. Similar to Napoleon’s attempt to promote an image of permanence and stability of his short-lived empire, Américo’s painting - beyond the historical irony of being displayed only after the monarchic tradition collapsed in Brazil – perhaps was intended also to disguise the “unstable and defensive condition” of the Brazilian monarchy in the late nineteenth-century. Analogous to Napoleon’s tactical visual association with Charlemagne, the image of the first Brazilian emperor at his apotheosis also represented both the appeal of a “timeless tradition” of Lusitanian kings and “a transparently masterminded piece of modern propaganda” (PORTERFIELD; SIEGFRIED, 2007, p. 4).

In fact, Américo’s painting displays numerous characteristics that explicitly borrow from a “Napoleonic” painting tradition. To illustrate the impact of post-revolutionary French art on Américo’s work, art historians have frequently analysed Independence or Death! in comparison to Jean-Louis Meissonier’s 1807, Friedland (ROSEMBERG, 2002; MATTOS; OLIVEIRA, 1999; SCHLICHTA, 2006; CHRISTO, 2005; CARVALHO, 1999). The French painter’s gallant portrayal of Napoleon’s victory over the Russian army is clearly a direct model for Américo’s own composition of the Brazilian emperor’s “victory” over the Portuguese colonisers.
Analogies between the works reference their similar overall structure, including the semi-circular organisation of the horsemen around their respective leaders; the spotlight placed on both emperors on the hilltops slightly to the left and in the middle-ground of the paintings and the vignetting of the borders; and the balanced and horizontal division between the rugged grass-lands and the wide cloudy skies. Both paintings also share details that include precise anatomical drawings of the horses; the fixed, formal and equestrian-statue appearance of both emperors in contrast to the vigorous movements of the other figures; the raised sword salute by the officers; and the small devoted entourage standing beside both emperors.

As one of the most celebrated French battle painters of his time, it is unsurprising that Meissonier would constitute an unavoidable model for Pedro Américo (ROSEM BERG, 2002). However, it is important to analyse Independence or Death’s similarities to 1807, Friedland not only with respect to Pedro Américo’s familiarity with and direct reference to the French painter’s specific work, but also to a wider “Napoleonic” painting tradition that informed the careers of both painters. Pedro Américo’s artworks are only understood if related to his extensive period living in France, during which he undertook training equivalent to most academic painters of the time. Indeed, at the age of just 15, the precocious painter received a scholarship from the Brazilian Empire and headed to Paris. Between 1859 and 1864, he was enrolled at the then denominated École Nationale et Spéciale des Beaux-Arts, where he trained with people such as Léon Cogniet, Sébastien Cornu, R. Fleury and, most likely, with Horace Vernet (CHRISTO, 2005).
Although many decades had passed since Napoleon’s death, several of the artistic transformations initiated during his government were still in effect at the time Pedro Américo lived in France. The visual exaltation of the nation, for example, as well as the conveyance of morally dignified messages, and the inspiration of neo-classical motifs and aesthetic principles were characteristics still valued in the work of painters, notably those who undertook academic training. Furthermore, even if there was mounting criticism of Beaux-Arts’ conventions throughout the nineteenth-century, including its hierarchies among painting’s genres (TRODD; CARDOSO, 2000), history paintings remained highly regarded in France and in most countries in which academic influence had spread, such as Brazil.

Yet, as with most aspects of French culture, the Revolution also brought great changes to the “unstable genre” of history painting. In particular, the post-1789 changes in power that ranged from the beheading of Louis XVI to the rise of a civilian as the most powerful man in Europe coalesced to challenge the very criteria by which historical facts deserved to be eulogised in painting. Prior to the French Revolution, what historians today refer to as “recent events” were usually not seen as worthy subject matter for history paintings. Instead, traditional academic painters usually sought in ancient times – especially in Greco-Roman or biblical traditions – the examples to inspire their historical narratives. The gradual incorporation of “recent history” into paintings had been provoking considerable controversy not only in continental Europe but also in Britain and the United States. One notable case was Benjamin West’s portrayal of British general James Wolfe in contemporary military uniform at the moment of his death (AYRES, 1993). In the French context, it is recognised that Louis-François Lejeune and Antoine-Jean Gros’ representations of relatively recent battles “raised the issue of what people could accept as art”:

Before the Revolution, current events simply were not represented at the official Salon exhibitions: such subjects were considered wholly inappropriate for the fine arts. For artists and audiences alike, the government's demand for images of the political present raised an especially challenging question: was contemporary history suitable subject matter for the fine arts? Before long, as the Revolution devolved into war, that question acquired a more specific focus: could contemporary military history be considered a fit subject for painting? (SIEGFRIED, 1993, p. 236)

In addition to the portrayal of recent events, another significant shift in post-revolutionary history paintings was the break with the tradition of depicting rulers in deified forms. This was one of the many consequences of the broader secular and constitutional changes for which large sections of
the French population had fought. Revolutionary artists were at the centre of the aesthetic and political changes taking place (JOHNSON, 2006). In addition to the many provocative allegories of liberty and bravery of the French nation, as the revolution unfolded artists also increasingly produced historical images of Napoleon Bonaparte. Beyond any political and/or diplomatic achievements of previous civilian leaders such as Danton or Robespierre, Napoleon’s triumphs evolved as the principal symbol of political change. Having a military officer as a major leader insured that the revolution “could be represented only by victorious battles that had been fought under its auspices” (HASKELL, 1993, p. 282).

Indeed, Napoleon was integral to the revival of battle painting that had “declined steadily since the early eighteenth century, when the monarchy’s pursuit of peace led to neglect of the genre” (SIEGFRIED, 1993, p. 235). Revolutionary artists were careful to portray the emperor not in the fashion of previous tyrants, but as a lawful ruler. In stark contrast to the uncontested supremacy that European monarchs enjoyed since medieval times, Napoleon’s rise to power was not based on divine or ancestral sanction. Rather, the new emperor preferred to be seen as having earned his rights - including the highly symbolic right of self-coronation in the presence of the pope himself in 1804 - from his actions as a military strategist and a political genius. Although the political use of history paintings long preceded the Revolution, “it acquired a particular urgency in Napoleon’s case as a secular source of authority that stood in for the sacred authority previously invested in kings” (PORTERFIELD; SIEGFRIED, 2007, p. 7).
Many of these transformations in the representation of visual history resulting from the Napoleonic era would also influence Brazilian art. As mentioned in the first chapter, this was a direct result of the French Artistic Mission (composed of many disillusioned post-revolutionary French painters) that came to Brazil funded by the exiled Portuguese king, and of the successive AIBA scholarships awarded in the nineteenth-century to Brazilian painters to study in France.

Returning to the recurring comparisons between Américo’s and Meissonier’s works, it is noteworthy that both share the two “Napoleonic” characteristics mentioned above. Both images address not only what were then still relatively recent events but also portray the emperors as revered - both by their respective troops inside the canvas and their subjects and spectators outside of it - not because of their ancestry or any self-evident and/or pre-destined right to rule. Rather, they are exalted for their concrete actions; for their proud victories in two distinct theatres of war. In contrast to earlier portraits of semi-divine monarchs, both emperors are depicted as warrior-heroes (CARVALHO, 1999), whose leadership was not passively inherited but actively fought for and, therefore, meritoriously earned.

Decades before the making of Independence or Death!, and analogous to the practices of the Bourbons and other European houses, artists had also produced sanctified images of the Braganças for dissemination throughout the American, African and Asian colonies of the Portuguese empire. In the specific case of Brazil, Lilia Moritz Schwarcz’s biography of D. Pedro II has demonstrated how the production of charismatic images of the second emperor, from his infant years until shortly before his dethronement, played a key role in preparing and prolonging his reign (SCHWARCZ, 2004). However, as art historian Cláudia Mattos acutely noted, the representation of monarchic authority also changed during the near half century of Pedro’s regime. Mattos identifies an initial phase in which the depictions of the Brazilian emperor drew on late-baroque representations of absolutist European monarchs (MATTOS, 1999, p 85). These were often personal portraits, through which the monarch displayed not only the indisputable power of his crown but also stood as a symbol of the state itself. As the only European house to rule from a tropical court, paintings from this phase tend to blend the austerity of the European portrait

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92 Even if Pedro I was not directly engaged in a war – in the strict sense of this word - the Brazilian emperor’s 1822 episode signalled that he was brave enough to start a war if needed; even if this resulted in the break with his Portuguese ancestry/noble house. Thus, similar to Napoleon, Pedro’s image conveys and emphasises his warrior-type qualities, even if these had not been tested in the concrete field of war, but only expressed through his formal commitments to the Brazilian Independence, summarised in his “Independence or Death!”.
tradition with the colourfulness of local motifs such as pineapples, tobacco, coffee and palm trees or even toucan feathers which composed D. Pedro II’s cloak (SCHWARCZ, 2004).

Fig 5.6 D. Pedro II in the Opening of the General Assembly, Pedro Américo, Oil, 1872, 258 cm X 205 cm. Museu Imperial, Petrópolis, Rio de Janeiro

However, it was only in a second phase that personified allegories of the state were gradually devoted to paintings that privileged actual historical narratives; many of these portrayed the acts of heroism in recent wars fought in the name of the King. As battle scenes gradually replaced allegories, the representational model also began to follow “the principle of action, that is to say, of the narrative” (MATTOS, 1999, p. 89).

Due to the specificities of the Brazilian independence process, though, this “Napoleonic” way of representing state power through earned-military performance did not follow immediately. Unlike France, where visual histories acquired an unprecedented popularity (and propagandistic role) concomitantly within the context of national-revolutionary movements, the production of the most celebrated Brazilian history paintings occurred only many decades after 1822. Members of the French Mission such as Debret and Taunay, as well as their local pupils such as Manoel de Araújo Porto Alegre and later AIBA students, including Pedro Américo, had produced historical images soon after the independence unfolded. Although artists had created absolutist-type representations of D. João VI and bothPedros at least since 1808, only in the second half of the
nineteenth-century were paintings produced that were associated with what Mattos identifies as the “second phase” of representing monarchic power. Large-scale and nationalistic Brazilian battle paintings, of the type that Napoleon’s painters such as David, Gros and Girordet had fashioned since the beginning of his regime (HASKELL, 1993), only began to be produced in Brazil after the 1860s.

Several political factors contributed to this relatively late development and popularity of the genre. The turbulent post-independent years led to the abdication of D. Pedro I in 1831. That was followed by an equally tumultuous civil Regency which ruled the country until 1840, when the second Pedro II claimed the throne. From the break with the Portuguese motherland in 1822 to the late 1840s and from the southern provinces of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina to the northern parts of Bahia, Pernambuco and Pará, the country experienced frequent revolts, many in pursuit of separatist agendas. In addition to internal struggles, Brazil and the United Provinces of River Plate (today, mostly Argentina) experienced recurring territorial disputes during most of the 1820s. In this context of imminent territorial fragmentation and border conflicts, marked by onerous and treasury consuming battles, the focus on and the funding of the arts was certainly not a priority for the Imperial bureaucracy during the first years of the AIBA (CARDOSO, 2000). Further, there were no neighbouring continental models as territorial and financial instability of post-independence had also challenged the formation of artistic communities in other Latin American countries (ADES, 1989). In addition, Rio de Janeiro’s efforts to contain provincial revolts were made both through force and by means of negotiation. Images of imperial armies killing provincial soldiers, or celebrating the defeat of regionally proud cities such as Salvador, Recife, Belém or Porto Alegre, would certainly not have advanced the central government’s efforts to retain loyalty of local elites. Perhaps this virtual lack of imagery depicting Rio’s military victories over the ephemerally self-declared Confederation of the Equator and the Rio-Grandense and Juliana Republics, as well as against the Sabinada, Balaiada and Cabanagem movements were the result of a deliberate tactical diplomatic strategy.

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93 As mentioned, one of the most important outcome of these border tensions was the Independence of Uruguay in 1828.
94 The Confederation of Equator was a revolutionary and autonomist movement in North-eastern Brazil. In 1824, as a response to the centralist and absolutist decisions of the Imperial government located in the Rio de Janeiro, the provinces of Pernambuco, Ceará, Rio Grande do Norte and Paraíba declared an independent republic, which was quickly defeated by imperial forces. The Republics Rio-Grandense and Juliana were emancipationist movements in the southernmost part of Brazil that emerged during the Farroupilha Revolution, another regional war against the centralist character of the Brazilian empire. The Sabinada (Bahia, 1837-8), Balaiada (Maranhão, 1838-41), Cabanagem (Pará, 1935-40) were provincial revolts that occurred during the turbulent years of the Regency elected to rule the country between D. Pedro I’s abdication in 1831 and 1840, when D. Pedro II was old enough to rule the country.
Nevertheless, the absence of visual histories depicting internal wars was undeniably in accordance with the preferred image of a constitutional and orderly monarchy that many Brazilians endorsed. Unsurprisingly, the first national history paintings, besides being “large in scale, lofty in tone, noble in expression, and didactic in intention” (BURNHAM; GIESE, 1995, p. 1) as elsewhere, also emphasised highly desired internal tranquillity and stability within Brazil. Although constructed by historians, painters and other intellectuals, many of whom were directly funded by the Empire, this image of a serene nation should not be understood as deceptive propaganda or as an ideological lesson for a naive population. Similar to the nation building processes of places as distant as Scotland, Brazilian paintings were popular because they competently “articulated collectively shared beliefs” (MORRISON, 2003, p. 224) of Brazilian nationalists at the time. The extent of these “shared beliefs” (especially depending on the class, ethnicity and region of an individual), as well as the existence of other nationalist and alternative political projects, are entirely different issues.

While many Brazilian nationalists indeed described the independence as a “revolutionary” process, they were also proud to contrast it to the radicalism and violence that marked the French, North American and (especially) the Latin American processes. In his study of changes in political vocabulary during the independence years, João Paulo Pimenta demonstrates that many Brazilians still celebrated the independence “revolution” according to the etymological meaning of the word as an expected “cycle”. Consonant with this definition, the Brazilian revolution was neither traumatic nor violent. Rather, it was a predictable event evolving from the country’s long cycle towards political maturity. Just as a son eventually matures to live separately from his mother, so would any colony eventually attain autonomy from its motherland (PIMENTA, 2009, p. 57). This “natural” course of history was at the base of influential books such as Varnhagen’s *Historia Geral do Brazil*, discussed in chapter four.

This accepted popular discourse of internal peace and stability constructed by written and visual histories contrasts sharply with subsequent representations of celebrated Brazilian military victories and battles that occurred miles away from Rio de Janeiro or any provincial capital city, often in Paraguay. Indeed, the War of the Triple Alliance (1864-70), in which Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay joined forces against the Paraguayan army led by Francisco Solano López, became the inspirational source for most famous Brazilian battle paintings95. Among the numerous

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95 The War of the Triple Alliance, from 1864-70, was the most extensive and bloodiest interstate war in South American history. It was particularly devastating to defeated Paraguay, who suffered territory loss and economic sanctions from the coalition of Brazilian, Argentine and Uruguayan forces, and whose male population was almost
drawings, lithographs, commemorative medals and other visual materials, history paintings received more state funding than any other visual media that represented the war (CARDOSO, 2007). As expected, the authoritative and large-scale images of the Brazilian army crushing enemy forces well suited the monarchy’s intent to reaffirm its internal power and civilising role while, at the same time, contrasting it to the supposed barbarian and chaotic nature of the neighbouring republics.

Brazilian painters portrayed each of the famous battles won by the Triple Alliance forces, such as Riachuelo, Humaitá, Avahi and Campo Grande. In each, Brazilian high-ranking officers such as the Duque of Caxias, General Osório, the Count D’Eu, as well as their commanding officers and soldiers, were depicted as noble, brave and robust in action. Even if they were not directly representing D. Pedro II on the battlefield, they implicitly acknowledged him as their ultimate hero. Since the Emperor established his bona fides as a “king-warrior” from earlier personal travels in Paraguay (SCHWARCZ, 2004), he could now be portrayed as a commander-in-chief while based at Rio’s headquarters. Just as Napoleon’s military fame grew from his ability to coordinate many battles led by his officers throughout diverse European fronts, so could Brazilian Napoleonic-inspired paintings celebrate Pedro’s strategist talents even when he was sitting on the throne in the Paço Imperial.

The creation of Independência ou Morte! has to be understood within the political and economic context following the War of the Triple Alliance. In 1888, nearly 20 years had passed since Solano López’s defeat. The celebrations of the Brazilian victories had turned sour because of the country’s near bankruptcy resulting from the costly war. By then, the “king-warrior” was 63 years old. Political opposition, led by increasing numbers of republicans, abolitionists and dissatisfied war veterans (SKIDMORE, 1974), often ridiculed the monarchy through newspaper articles, cartoons and other media. At that moment of rising republican pressure, it seemed necessary to remind the nation of “how much Brazilians owed to the house of Braganza” (CHRISTO, 2009, p. 1158). Pedro Américo’s painting cannot be dissociated from this rise, and the subsequent saturation and decline, of works that celebrated the military “glories” of the second empire. In this sense, the painter’s choice to return to 1822 can be interpreted as tactical, since it

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entirely decimated. For details on the several and still conflicting explanatory models regarding political and economic reasons behind the war, see BETHELL (1995), MOTA (1995) and ABENTE (1987).

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96 Cecília Helena de Salles Oliveira (1999, p. 73) research shows how Pedro Américo was not initially invited to paint a piece for the inauguration of the Museu Paulista. Rather, Pedro Américo offered his work to the organising committee. The committee initially refused the painter’s offer, arguing that there was no available funding for such a
provided late nineteenth-century audiences with its large youth cohort that was born into a declining empire with an image of the Bragança monarchy in all its magnificence. Furthermore, it shifted the focus from the old and discredited emperor to the relatively untouched image of his father as the nation’s pioneering military hero. In contrast to the aging second emperor, surrounded by critics and conspirators, Américo portrays the first emperor as unyielding, robust and stable in the company of his faithful forces. Above and beyond the political turmoil, D. Pedro I’s sculptured figure emphasises the balance, gallantry and rationality seen in many revolutionary paintings inspired by Greco-Roman notions of beauty and nobility. In the absence of ancient temples or palaces, the overlapped horse soldiers suggest a solid structure that intriguingly evokes a Roman-type arch. Analogous to one of Jacques-Louis David’s quintessential neo-classical pieces, the *Oath of the Horatii* (1784), Américo’s soldiers are also pledging to honour the freedom of their *patria*, even at the cost of death.

Yet, the numerous obvious and subtle “Napoleonic” art traces in Américo’s painting, with their regard for action and bravery, have discouraged attention to some of the painting’s details. Specifically, the intense focus on the defiant figure of the Brazilian emperor, as well as on the wave of loyalty emanating from his riders, probably distracted attention from the three relatively passive characters portrayed on the far left of the canvas: a half-dressed man pulling an oxcart in the foreground, a fully-dressed bearded man mounted on a horse in the middle ground, and the tiny silhouette of a man walking with his mule near rear horizon.

![Fig. 5.7 Detail: Three civilians](image)

Costly work such as a history painting. The painter had to rely on his “personal relations” with influential imperial bureaucrats to overrule the committee’s position.
5.3 At the margins of “Napoleonic” art and Brazilian politics

Américo’s representation of these three civilian spectators is a significant contrast to Meissonier’s work, whose frame reserved spaces exclusively for the French emperor’s entourage. The image of anonymous and modest non-actors also departs from any clear didactic and morally-elevated purpose expected from a history painting. Furthermore, passively watching the event from a distance, Américo’s trio contrasts sharply with the brave, active and leading roles of figures who were granted access to most “Napoleonic” paintings.

In anticipation of viewers’ surprise and criticism, Pedro Américo used his dissertation to briefly defend his unorthodox representation of the three men. He affirmed that his decision resulted from an initial idea that “distinguished people” had suggested to him to depict the “herds of mules” characteristic of the countryside of São Paulo. Since this suggestion seemed inappropriate for a “painting of such esteemed subject matter”, Américo affirmed that he decided instead simply to represent “an oxcart, to recall the usual placidity of (the travel) stops” in the captaincy of São Paulo (MELO, 1888, p. 6). The painter asserted that the modest figures in the left corner balanced the composition. Although admitting to their “large dimensions due to their location in the forefront” of the painting, Américo maintained that they were nothing more than “mere accessories”, serving only to “accentuate the physiognomy of the scenery of the proclamation of the independence” and to “complete the linear harmony of the composition” (MELO, 1888, p. 6).

Art historians have raised questions about the curious presence of the three men. However, going beyond Pedro Américo’s own claims that the figures metonymically stand for residents of the Brazilian countryside, or that they are mere compositional details, recent critics have investigated their symbolic and allegorical meanings.

In line with a near consensual interpretation among art historians, Cláudia Valadão de Mattos refers to the man in the left foreground leading cattle both as a caipira (rural worker) and as a mestizo. Yet, more than simply denoting the manual labour and mixed ancestry of many Brazilian countrymen, Mattos also argues that the peasant has a specific “rhetorical” function in the composition, due to Pedro Américo’s conception of him as a figure with whom viewers promptly identify. Due to “his position, and his size and proximity” to the viewer, Mattos suggests that “through [the mestizo’s] eyes, we turn back to D. Pedro, participating in the represented event” (MATTOS, 1999. p. 89). Moreover, since the figure of the caipira is located at the bottom
edge of the image, he not only accentuates the unevenness of the contours of the terrain but, more importantly, he alludes to the very hierarchies of Brazilian post-independence society:

The representation is produced by the gap (real and symbolic) created by the artist between our figure of identification and the Prince. The simple rural man (and with him, we) is forced to turn his gaze upward to see D. Pedro, who, in turn, resembles more an equestrian statue in his pompous, and somewhat artificial attitude. Here is the reason why D. Pedro is found in the middle-ground and is represented in a smaller size than the figure of the caipira (or than the soldiers in the foreground). Only then could the artist establish a hierarchy between the figures needed to visualise its interpretation of history. (MATTOS, 1999, p. 91)

Developing Mattos’ interpretation, Consuelo Schlichta suggests that the caipira-mestizo character has an even greater allegorical function. She argues that the humble miscegenated rural worker, passively watching the independence being proclaimed, represents the Brazilian nation as a whole. In emotionally-charged terms, Schlichta implies that he represents a nation being ignored and sidelined by its own emperor. According to her interpretation, the painter “does not grant [the caipira] any dignity”, in total contrast to the elegance of D. Pedro’s figure. Although belonging “to the mass who revolves around the hero”, the mestizo consequently “does not belong either to his entourage or his Honour Guard”; he is a mere “spectator being forced to turn his face in order to see the birth of Brazil decided by D. Pedro I” (SCHLICHTA, 2006, p. 225).

Sociologist Caleb Farias Alves (2003) agrees that the caipira has an allegorical function. However, he associates the figure not with the entire Brazilian nation, but with the paulistas, residents of the province of São Paulo. Caleb locates Pedro Américo inside a broad genealogy of intellectuals and artists who, through distinct ways, promoted the discourse of the prosperous and evermore dominant province of São Paulo. The painting commissioned from Américo was to be permanently exhibited in the Monument of the Ipiranga being built with subscriptions from the São Paulo elite. Although Americo’s painting preceded the historiographical boom that would celebrate positive images of paulistas (CHRISTO, 2002), his painting is part of a broader iconography that sought to change the images of isolation, rudeness and backwardness associated with caipiras, mestizos, bandeirantes and other residents and symbols of provincial-countryside life. Caleb viewed it as an attempt to associate them with the notions of bravery, resilience and entrepreneurship, and as pioneer settlers of the Brazilian hinterlands.

Although apparently secondary, the figure of the mestizo caipira walking through the Ipiranga hills can also be associated with a gradual displacement of an imperial iconography
almost exclusively centred on images of the court based in Rio de Janeiro. As unproductive as counterfactual speculations may be, it is tempting to wonder if *Independence or Death!* would have become such an iconic painting if not for the humble *paulistas* located inside the painting and, above all, for the wealthy ones outside of it. At the time that the emperor was travelling from Rio to São Paulo when the actual independence was declared, so was national power/wealth shifting from Rio to São Paulo at the time the representation of independence was produced 60 years later.

While not contesting the preceding rhetorical, figurative or socio-political analyses, the absence of the other two civilian characters is noteworthy. Regarding this silence, Consuelo Schlichta goes as far as to describe the *caipira* as a “lonely figure” in the corner of the painting (SCHLICHTA, 2006, p. 207), overlooking the fact that he is, at least in compositional terms, completely bound together with the other two human figures and their respective animals.

In the research for this thesis, the only author found who explicitly attempts to interpret the three figures as a group was art historian Liana Rosemberg. In a relatively small passage of her book, Rosemberg corroborates Américo’s own version that the figures have a compositional role since they create a “counterpoint with the horseshoe-shaped formation of the Emperor’s Guard”. She affirms that the elliptical perspective that involves the figures accentuates the “notion of depth” of the field, making observers feel they are “watching the scene from a distance, from below” (ROSEMBERG, 2002, p. 68). Furthermore, Rosemberg also presents her own symbolic interpretation of the painting, affirming that the heterogeneous characters Américo portrayed (in which she includes the three civilians on the left) exemplify “diverse understandings of the (independence) episode as it was seen” through the eyes of those occupying socially distinct positions in nineteenth-century Brazil. She suggests that the painter visualised a range of emotional reactions to the 7th of September from distinct members of Brazilian society. These ranged from the “celebration of the elite” seen in the figures of the Prince and his entourage, along with the “enthusiasm” of the military guards to the “apathy” of the figure of the mounted bearded man on the left middle ground (who she identifies as a bourgeois traveller) and the “indifference” of the tiny silhouette of the man with his mule in the horizon, as well as the “surprise” of the *caipira* pulling the oxcart (ROSEMBERG, 2002, p. 69).

Researchers will probably never conclusively decipher the numerous layers of meaning and sentiment suggested by the figures on the left side of *Independence or Death!* Pedro Américo’s rather brief explanation of his decision to portray them – justified solely in terms of compositional and regional and demographical requirements - sounds at times more like a riddle.
he created to encrypt them rather than an elaboration of his actual motivations. Américo may have expected conclusive explanations to be found in his images not in his words. In this respect, it is important to recall a public lecture Pedro Américo delivered a few years earlier, in the presence of the Emperor, at the inaugural ceremony of the AIBA’s course of “Aesthetics, Art History and Archaeology”. At the occasion, he intriguingly and provocatively suggested that, beyond any written “codices” and “forgotten names and titles”, it would be only in the artists’ works that future generations would search for the “symbol(s) of our times” (MELO, 1888, p. 19).

To conclude the formal, contextual and iconographic analysis of the painting – and, in a way, also to honour Américo’s provocation, I offer one additional allegorical interpretation. In the second chapter, I argued that nineteenth-century historiography, especially after Karl von Martius’ initial insights and Francisco Varnhagen’s ambitious work, advanced the consolidation of a narrative model that simultaneously cited and suppressed the presence of Brazilians of Indigenous and African descent from historical narratives. In this chapter, I cited the ways professional IHGB historiography informed and demanded creative responses from AIBA history painters. Although Américo does not directly cite either Martius’ or Varnhagen’s works, the constructs of “state-nationalism” and “hydraulic metaphor” of the nation are useful in an analysis of the subtle ways in which his painting also manages to simultaneously evoke and hide Indigenous and African histories from its visual narrative of the independence.

Brazilian Art historians are inclined to see miscegenated physical features in the caipira on the lower left. On the contrary, the bearded man mounted on a horse at the upper left – at least from a Brazilian viewpoint - tends to be recognised for his Iberian-European traits.

Fig 5.8 Detail: “Iberian-looking mounted man”
On the other hand, the strokes of black paint used in the tiny figure wearing a straw hat in the background, as well as the burden of his manual-subservient labour, would likely lead Brazilian viewers (today and in the nineteenth-century) to identify him as one of the countless slaves of African-descent working in every Brazilian province at the time.

Fig 5.9 Detail: “African-descendant slave pulling an ass”

A comparison of the positioning of Américo’s three characters to those in the previously discussed *The Redemption of Ham* is instructive. In that painting, Modesto Brocos portrays characters representing the African, mestizo and the Iberian features.

Pedro Américo’s three characters, more than simply standing on the left side of the canvas, are also positioned at the limit of the wide dirt path. This path begins precisely on the bottom middle of the painting, where the first “Dragon of Independence” stands, and finishes its curvy way on the top left corner, where a rider of the emperor’s entourage commands a white stallion. Analogous to the way Brocos not only positioned the African grandmother on the outer edge of the paved entrance of the house (nation), but also “merged” her with a palm tree, Pedro Américo’s choice to represent the trio marching over the wild grasslands, and not on the safe, neat path, is hardly accidental. While most art historians have emphasised the elliptical arrangements that bind together most elements in the painting, little attention has been given to this wide curve of dry, clay-red land that simultaneously links and separates the left trio - the spectators - from the other men - the actors.

In the spirit of a contemporary discourse of justice and social equality, Consuelo Schlichta argued that the placing of the *caipira* on the left corner represents the nation being shamefully sidelined in contrast to the protagonist elite members. Yet, however unfair and deplorable his
position might appear to a contemporary eye, it is unlikely that any of today’s social awareness would have motivated Américo. Even if Brazil had adopted a fairly liberal constitution in 1824, and even if republican and civil rights agendas had been rising since then, the country was still a staunchly monarchical system when Pedro Américo produced his painting. As in any imperial court, most members of the Brazilian elite cherished hierarchies and noble privileges free of any shame or guilt. Just as notions of “opportunity” and “social mobility” are revered in the doctrines of today’s declared democratic and meritocratic systems, so did the notions of “favour” and “privilege” seem self-evident to most living in an aristocratic and nepotistic society such as nineteenth-century Brazil. Historian Emília Viotti da Costa notes that the “capitalist ethos (…) made little sense in a society where human relationships were defined in terms of reciprocal obligation and the protocol of favour prevailed over the competitive ethic” (COSTA, 2000, xxiii-xxiv). In fact, the painter himself was not only proud of his proximity to the Emperor, his high place in society and the preferential treatment it implied, including having many paintings directly commissioned by, and directly representing, the imperial government in international exhibitions such as the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1889 (CARDOSO, 2007), but he was also proud to be officially addressed as “His Excellency”, since the day he was awarded with the Imperial Order of the Rose (MARTINS, 1994, p. 87).

Beyond any elite ethics and pride of the time, however, history paintings were privileged spaces through which nobility and political leaders projected the noble, the honourable and the illustrious: it was not a place to “sideline” or humiliate subjects and/or lower classes. As suggested, Pedro Américo’s painting intended to commemorate an historical event as much as it aimed to deliver a message to its contemporary viewers. In addition to praising the valorous 7 September 1822, he expected to advance a renewed positive, hopeful and reinvigorated image of the second empire at a time in which criticism and rejection of D. Pedro II’s government reached epic proportions. This “message” seems clear in the pompous and charming representation of his father’s group at the right side of the painting. However, historians still have to resolve the ambiguity of any equally “noble” message Américo intended with his “plebeian” representation of the men on the left. Rosenberg’s interpretation of emotions reproduced in the faces and bodies of distinct members of Brazilian society in 1822 is undeniably credible. Yet, it is equally important

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97 Américo’s pride of his noble title is better understood by recalling the ambivalent relationship between the ethics of Capitalism and the ethics of patronage at the end of nineteenth-century in Brazil. Emília Viotti notes that, since Brazilian capitalist economy at the time grew “within a web of patronage”, the bourgeois gentilhomme typical of Brazilian elite, avid for profits and titles of nobility, was ambivalent about the bourgeois ethic and its corollary, liberalism”. (COSTA, 2000, p. xxiii)
to ask which emotions the painter wanted to produce in late nineteenth-century Brazilian spectators. For answers, an examination of the intersection between the 1822 foundation of the Brazilian state portrayed in the painting with the intense debates concerning the development of the Brazilian nation 60 years later when painted is necessary.

In the second chapter, I argued that, decades before a “whitening” solution became popular in Brazil as a product and reaction to the pessimism of foreign racial theories entering the country, historians had offered their own “hopeful” interpretation of the development of the Brazilian nation. Specifically, it revealed the appeal of Martius’ hydraulic metaphor of the nation to the self-declared “Caucasian” Brazilian elites; above all, it directly dealt with their most problematic national issue, multi-racialism, while it assured them of a future national “redemption”: the eventual triumph of a European-like civilisation. His plan of “How to Write the History of Brazil”, later elaborated by Varnhagen, offered an inspiring vision to anxious readers: Brazilian racial diversity was not a threat as long as European-descendants remained demographically and culturally dominant. As earlier cited, informed by these ethno-historiographical premises, subsequent books on the history of Brazil have tended to dedicate comparatively few (and usually only initial) pages to Indigenous and African history, which are assimilated into a predominantly Portuguese-driven narrative of the national formation.

Américo’s painting can only be fully understood in relation to the racial debates and national anxieties evident in Martius’ and Varnhagen’s pioneering works. As with those history texts, Américo’s visual narrative’s immediate acclaim (and resilient popularity until today) derives in part from its subtle reinforcement of racial hierarchies by relying on apparently racially-neutral and self-evident historiographical reasoning, rather than on direct citations of scientific-ethnographical theories. Unlike openly racist treatises of the time, Américo’s narrative has been extremely popular since the nineteenth-century because it is equally based on an ambiguous formula that includes Indigenous and African ancestry at the same time that it excludes them. Analogous to the works of Martius and Varnhagen, his painting also suggests a tricentric racial preamble of the national narrative while reserving the bulk of the plot for an “optimistic” European-oriented development. There is no better way to illustrate this dialogue between historians’ and artist’s works than by returning to the painting.

Researchers who declare the caipira-mestizo as a symbol of the whole Brazilian nation (or, by extension of the paulistas) appear only partially correct. Indeed, only an analysis of the three men on the left that contrasts them with the with the emperor’s entourage leads to a conclusive interpretation of the national allegory. Cláudia Mattos’ suggestion that Brazilians quickly identify
with the figure of the caipira is only partly accurate. Contemporary sophisticated viewers - born after the collapse of twentieth-century openly imperialistic, eugenic and Nazi-Fascist movements and intimately familiar with racially-democratic discourses and mestizo-based concepts of the nation directly supported by the Brazilian state since the 1930’s until today - are inclined to see themselves in the figure of the caipira. However, this was most certainly not the case for late nineteenth-century nobles and the elite class who attended art exhibitions, and for whom Pedro Américo originally intended his work. Although D. Pedro II acknowledged that his vast empire was populated by mestizos resulting from the indisputable mix between European settlers and Afro-descendant women (notably, due to patriarchal-sexual violence since colonial times), he traced his genealogy purely to his Portuguese and Austrian ancestors, and not on any West African monjolos, capindas, angolas. Similarly, although Pedro Américo would have certainly agreed that mestizos belonged in his paintings just as they belonged in Brazilian society as a whole, the painter himself probably claimed his ancestry exclusively as European; with no mixing with any potiguaras, tabajaras, kariris original to the land that would be later known as Paraíba, where the painter was born.

In sum: while elite members were apt to theoretically acknowledge Brazilian society’s racial mix, or even to celebrate it in romantic artistic and political fashions, it was still decades before they would publicly accept miscegenation as part of their own family histories. It seems that K. von Martius was prescient in detecting Brazilian elite fears of becoming mestizos and to translating those fears into a hopeful message. In a subtle passage of his essay, while honestly admitting that Indigenous and African “bloods” would inevitably affect the “physical, civil and moral development” of Brazilians, he relieves readers’ anxiety by assuring that “this mix would occur in the lower classes” (MARTIUS, 1845, pp. 442-3).

From this line, and returning to the terms Mattos used in her “rhetorical” analysis, it is fair to argue that most elites viewed the independence episode through “the eyes” of those situated on the right side of the painting. That is, they “participated in the event” either as part of the courtly group portrayed near the emperor (whether they were genuine monarchic supporters or disguised seditionists), or as part of a larger mass of disciplined subjects represented in the figures of the guard’s men. Among the left trio, the only possible figure with whom they could potentially identify with was not the mestizo but the bearded man. The latter displays the essential Iberian-looking traits with which Brazilian elites identified, but he also possesses the “bourgeois” symbols pointed out by Rosemberg. Unlike the mestizo and the Afro-descendant, he is fully dressed and booted. As seen in Brocos’ painting, a barefoot was usually a sign of slavery in nineteenth-century
Brazil. Besides his high boots and complete clothing, the bearded-man is also the only one within the left trio who is portrayed symbolically riding a horse. In contrast to the African-slave and the mestizo-caipira, who respectively stand alongside (and at the same level as) their mule and cattle, the bearded man rides a fine stallion, comparable to any found in the emperor’s entourage.

The reasons for Américo positioning of this Euro-descendant horse rider among the trio on the left are unknown. Perhaps this traveller was yet another local representative type for the painter’s self-declared intention of portraying the “placid” countryside of São Paulo. Maybe he was adding nothing more than another “accessory” needed to balance his composition. Situated on a clear opposite side of the dirt road, behind and away from the monarch’s view, the man could even implicitly allude to the Brazilian republican movement rising at the fringes of the court, notably among paulista elites. It might even indicate a subtle proof of Pedro Américo’s supposed silent inclinations to Republican ideals (CARDOSO, 2007).

I suggest that the civilian trio on the left, to which the bearded-man is only one piece of the puzzle, stands as a sub-narrative inside the painting’s main narrative. Indeed, Américo’s painting seems to draw a clear line between the intrepid “actors” crowded on the right side of the painting and the three modest “spectators” figures on the left. Although the space devoted to the trio is visibly smaller, it is by no means less important to the overall understanding of the painting’s symbolism. Analogous to the clearly defined path that separated past and present in Brocos’ visual narrative, the clay-red paved road that separates the emperor’s group and the civilian trio might also allude respectively to two interdependent - yet distinguishable - historical moments, namely: the formation of the state and the development of the nation.

The task of Brazilian political leaders, from 1822 until the last provincial revolts in the late 1850’s, was to consolidate the state, especially with regard to its territorial integrity (MAGNOLI, 1997). Indeed, it was only after the legal constitution and recognition of the state’s perimeters and sovereignty, that political administrators, as well as writers, artists, scientists and other intellectuals, began to focus on the theme of the formation of the Brazilian nation (SCHWARCZ, 1999). The previous analysis of the painting A Primeira Missa no Brazil (The First Mass in Brazil) documented how romantic literature and historiography pioneered this inquiry into the Brazilian national identity. Those initial works were marked often by idealistic representations of both “valiant” Portuguese settlers and “noble” Tupi-Guaranis who they had “discovered” and “peacefully” mixed with. Romantic interpretations of Brazilian nationality began to be challenged by a new generation of thinkers emerging after the 1870s; the latter were exponents of the “Flock of New Ideas”, in the renowned expression coined by Silvio Romero.
Informed both by new scientific principles and naturalistic art paradigms, social scientists such as Romero and Capistrano de Abreu and artists such as Almeida Junior and Aluízio de Azevedo offered challenging (and often pessimistic) images of Brazil. In contrast to earlier romantic foundational narratives, which projected the birth of Brazilian nationhood to early colonial times with the providential and “harmonious” mix between the intrepid European father and the virginal Indigenous mother, 1870s thinkers emphasised the unfinished and conflictive character of the nation. Yet, while scientific-naturalistic thinkers raised questions about the dilemmas of establishing a civilised nation inside a tropical, multi-racial environment, they largely continued with the romantic search for an authentic national “soul”. For most late nineteenth-century Brazilian political leaders and intellectuals, the constitution of the state had been pretty much concluded on the fields of war and diplomatic tables in the 1822-45 period. No one then was certain of when or if a homogenous, harmonic and unified Brazilian nation would be formed.

Previously, I explained how Pedro Américo, probably due to the criticisms and political embarrassments arising from his earlier creation of a “naturalistic” representation of the Battle of Avahí, decided to use Independence or Death! to publicly re-affirm his commitment to academic-monarchic principles. Finally, I argue that the division between left and right in the painting appears to express precisely these political-artistic tensions lived by the artist, as well as echoes of the national and scientific debates in which he was immersed. With these factors in mind, it is easier to understand why the image of the state, represented by the emperor and his group, predominate in size and is represented as paved, solid and stable, in contrast to that of “unfinished” marginal nation represented by the rude countryside and the trio on the left. Indeed, Américo dedicated almost all of his painting to depict the “conquered” boundaries of the state, symbolically located from the reddish paved dirt to the right of the canvas. This is the side of the painting that contains all of the “Napoleonic” elements symbolising state power previously discussed. It is only the three civilian figures, wandering submissively over the prairie in the company of their animals and tools, who escape the idealistic representation. Operating at the margins of Napoleonic art and Brazilian politics, and possibly taking another personal risk, Pedro Américo dared to reserve a small space of his canvas for a rather naturalistic representation of Brazilian men and nature. Strategically, he used his dissertation to argue that he was simply complying with academic rules of balance and rhythm. Yet, the barefoot and bare-chested men wearing torn clothing and straw hats, the reference to ordinary animals such as donkeys and cows, as well as the depiction of activities based on manual-labour or banal ones, such as traveling, all suggest a shift from academic to realistic-naturalistic themes.
The choice of three figures to represent the nation was surely deliberate. European, African and Indigenous ancestry was an unavoidable topic for scientific and naturalistic-oriented intellectuals who speculated about the present and future of Brazil and Brazilians. Indeed, taken as a self-contained sub-narrative inside the painting, Américo’s three men can be seen as a triangular racial allegory of the nation centered on the upper angle of the bearded man. In a commanding position and fully dressed on his powerful stallion, the Iberian-looking man occupies a clearly distinguished superior position in relation to the other two men. Because of his means of transport, signs of weath and lighter-skin, he alone among the trio could easily blend into the emperor’s group. Therefore, he is the only one outside of the noble-military entourage with whom elite art audiences could possibly identify.

It is not a surprise that the African-looking man is the smallest of the three. Almost fading into the horizon, half-covered and amalgamated with the loads and lumps of the mule at his side, the representation of the slave suggests an embarrassing “detail”. He seems to be walking away from the picture, dragged there by the vanishing point of the painting. As previously mentioned, discourses celebrating African heritage and legacies to the Brazilian nation would only begin to appear after the 1930s (BORGES, 1995). Although many travellers and photographers registered the images of Africans and Afro-descendants in nineteenth-century Brazil, there are scarcely any oil paintings that focused on Brazilian Africans (CHRISTO, 2009). Indeed, painters linked to the AIBA (and to the earlier Royal School of Sciences, Arts and Crafts) tended either to completely avoid or to disguise Afro-Brazilians in official images. Jean-Baptiste Debret, for example, excluded Afro-Brazilians in his oil paintings informed by neo-classical models, restricting their representation to smaller and lesser noble formats such as watercolours (NAVES, 2001). Although working within academic painting traditions, Nicolas-Antoine Taunay’s works depict the image of slaves in the form of relatively indistinct details inside the broader Brazilian landscape (SCHWARCZ, 2008). Among the numerous AIBA paintings depicting the War of the Triple Alliance, the thousands of Afro-Brazilians who served as Vontuntários da Patria (Fatherland Volunteers) are minimally represented, such as the presence of one lone Afro-Brazilian soldier among the dozens of European figures of Pedro Américos’ A Batalha do Avaí. At the time Pedro Américo’s painting was made, the burden and shame of having one of the last fully functional slavery systems in the Americas was a topic most elite Brazilians preferred to avoid. Indeed, many farmers (notably those from the increasingly lucrative coffee plantations of São Paulo) were calling for the importation of Europeans to work in place of African-slaves. The pressure for the Brazilian government to subsidise the importation of Germans, Italians, Spanish
and Portuguese was both a pragmatic economic measure to compensate for farming changes that the eminent proclamation of the abolition of slavery would bring and, simultaneously, a tactical way to implant doses of the redemptive European “blood” into the population.

Of more importance to my thesis, I note how the tiny African-looking man disappearing into the horizon matches the “hydraulic” representation of the nation. Like Martius and Varnhagen, whose pages reserved relatively smaller spaces for Afro-descendants than to Indigenous and European populations, Américo’s representation is as small as it can be. Similar to the historians’ works, by associating this single Afro-Brazilian with the burden of slavery, Américo also ignored the ubiquitous presence and the heterogeneous professional activities that Afro-Brazilians undertook in most cities and rural areas at the time. Just as Varnhagen hoped that one day Brazilian “colours be combined” in a way that traces of “African origin will totally disappear in our people” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, pgs. 182-3), so did Pedro Américo, more than 30 years later, represent his African-looking character nearly disappearing as he merges with the colours of animal, tools and plants in the horizon.

The authoritative and central position of the man representing European-descendants and the vanishing condition of Afro-Brazilians are fairly straightforward messages. Now, I return to the always ambiguous and unstable identity of the Brazilian mestizo. Completing the racial triangle, there are many reasons to suppose that the caipira is of Indigenous ancestry. Decades before the acknowledgment of African contributions to the nation, it is most likely that Américo was still borrowing from romantic ideals that assumed that the only type of miscegenation worth recognising resulted from the supposed subservience (and sexual inclinations) that Tupi-Guarani women had towards Portuguese settlers. Accordingly, the caipira would be likely identified as a mameluco, a word that referred to children of Indigenous and European ancestry. Probably he had no African kinship and, therefore, was not a mixed mulatto (as the character fading on the horizon pulling a mule probably was).

Furthermore, similar to romantic representations that emphasised Indigenous peoples’ propensity to achieve rapid progress when correctly guided and aided by Europeans, the caipira also exhibits ambivalent signs of “civilised” behaviour and “savage” costume. Although he still walks barefoot in the manner of his ancestors, he is at least half dressed with manufactured garments. Curiously, despite being torn and ragged, his clothing is of the same white and red colours as the spotless uniforms worn by the Dragons of the Independence to his right. In the place of the steel blade carried around his waist by the officer closest to him, the caipira has a smaller dagger tucked into the scarlet fabric around his belly. Although he does not have the necessary
money or training to ride a horse, he is nonetheless carrying out the dignified work of transporting animals and goods for his master. Analogous to many of his Indigenous ancestors who headed to the coast to trade *Pau-Brasil* trees for goods brought in the first Portuguese ships, the nineteenth-century *mameluco* cuts and transports logs for a living, and is likely to receive some compensation after delivering them to one of the Portuguese descendants who employs or owns him. In the absence of an imposing whip, used by the horse riders to control animals from above, the *caipira* peacefully marches with both hands controlling the chord and stick used to hold animals together. Despite being partly obscured in shade, his pointed chin, nose and goatee bear some resemblance to other Iberian-looking men in the picture. The *caipira’s* head is not a place yet for the ostentatious golden helmet of the Dragons of the Independence. However, as the tanned mark on his chest from a previous shirt symbolically suggests, his skin is already adequately white to require sun protection from his yellow hat.

The reproduction of the painting in this thesis does not permit a full view of the Ipiranga River on the bottom part of the canvas. Some drops of water can be seen splashing from the stomping legs of the horse of the second “Dragon” to the right of the *caipira*. It is highly suggestive that the mestizo is not only one of the closest figures to the river, but he is the only one whose body actually faces its waters. Indeed, the wide step taken by his left leg and the route of the movement implicit in his bent right knee (mirrored in the shape and angles of the legs of the cow just beside him), suggest that the mestizo is poised to momentarily cross, thereby immersing himself in the emblematic national river. Decades before, Martius proposed a persuasive image of a river to explain both the history and future development of the Brazilian nation. Coincidentally or not, the *caipira* is sufficiently racially-mixed to be sun-burnt, is half-integrated into the nation due to his disciplined work, and is in a compliant position towards the authority of the Portuguese Prince. Thus, Américo’s mestizo follows a similar direction to the Indigenous tributaries Martius’ predicted would be calmly absorbed by a “powerful” Portuguese-dominated river.

Analogous to the ambivalent narrative formula of inclusion and exclusion of non-European histories outlined in Martius’ and Varnhagen’s works, *Independência ou Morte!* also concedes that African and Indigenous legacies should be considered “as parts” of the nation’s narrative. Yet, they have no place in the conquered, pacified and stable territory of the state occupied by the Bragança monarchy and elite members on the right side of the painting. Rather, across the road from the realm of power, they are simply secondary characters of the allegorical nation on the left, while a central position belongs to another Euro-Brazilian descendant. The “problem” of the
Brazilian nation’s multiracialism is acknowledged, while a noble and hopeful message is conveyed.

Brazilian history books tend to briefly mention the beginning and end of slavery. Similarly, the African body in Américo’s painting is a detail poised ready to fade away, after dutifully concluding its manual obligations. The Indigenous legacy in his visual narrative, being calmly absorbed or tragically exterminated as in romantic literature, seems now sufficiently unimportant to deserve any distinctive paint. Indeed, with the passage of time, and following the expected course of the national river, Indigenous nations’ characteristic biotypes and cultural fashions are assimilated into the near-civilised, always peripheral, indistinct body of the mestizo. Meanwhile, the thousands of ancestral names of the first inhabitants of Pindorama\(^98\) are reduced to the homogenous and ahistorical category of the caipira.

It is important to note that Pedro Américo - in creating a painting that both celebrates the conquered borders of the Brazilian state while approaching the dilemmas of the formation of the Brazilian nation - also relies on another concept detailed in the second chapter: state-nationalism. Similar to the way K. von Martius and F. Varnhagen constructed their historical narratives based on the premises of the indivisibility of the national territory and the exclusivity of national time, Américo’s historiographical frame does not allow for the inclusion of any alternative national projects or feelings of belonging situated outside of the national-state. Similar to most intellectuals of the time, whose written and visual are often based on (and limited by) Brazilian-centric and anachronistic categories, his image blocks any attempt to acknowledge plurinationalities or to reflect on autonomous social formations that, simultaneously, occupied, disputed and regarded as theirs the territory unilaterally declared as independent “Brazil” at around 1822.

In the last section of this chapter, I focus on such peoples who were independent at the moment of Brazilian independence and for whom, contrary to a symbol of emancipation, the independence process meant the mere continuation of the colonial project itself: the quest to subjugate, to “civilise” (SCHULTZ, 2005). If, through non-teleological and decolonised perspectives, European modernity cannot be dissociated from Latin American coloniality (QUIJANO; WALLERSTEIN, 1992), and if the creation of Latin American republics cannot be understood without acknowledging the destruction of Abya-Yalas and Tawantinsuyus, it is equally true that Brazilian “freedom” cannot be fully understood without its inextricable relation to the military and symbolic conquest of pindoramas and quilombos.

\(^{98}\) *Pindorama*, or “Land of the Palm Tress”, is one of the Tupi names traditionally used to refer to parts of territory known today as Brazil. (PORTO-GONÇALVES, 2009).
As will be further detailed, this section is fundamental not only to better understand the logic of inclusion and exclusion operating in Américo’s history painting, but also to develop the notion of *aesthetics of the opaque* coined in the second chapter, which constitutes a pillar of the Web site that complements this thesis.

5.4 Independent from independence: Indigenous nations and maroon societies during the emergence of the Brazilian National state.

Comparative studies recurrently return to the question of why Brazilian independence, unlike that in former Spanish colonies, was not followed by the fragmentation of the South American Portuguese Empire into multiple nation-states (MAXWELL, 2000). Territorial integrity and the nation’s cohesion are often referred to as distinctive Brazilian features within the wider Latin American independence context. However, it has been argued that this historiographical approach, based on the premises of the homogeneity of time, population and geography, silences the histories of several societies that coexisted with, but were not subjugated by, the newly independent Brazilian state. Indeed, the often celebratory narrative tone of the independence process tends to disregard the fact that what political elites in 1822 unilaterally declared as the “Empire of Brazil” was, in fact, a territory also largely belonging to autonomous Indigenous nations and self-ruling maroon societies, each of which expressed feelings of belonging to their own “imagined” cartographies and political systems. As detailed in the “quadripartition” discussion earlier, most narratives of a “general” history of Brazil also tend to project relatively modern cartographies, feelings of identity and political vocabularies belonging to contemporary Brazil over periods and territories in which, objectively, the national state did not exist as a social construct. In other words, they tend to reduce histories of areas that only in future would become part of the existing national territory to the specific history of the Brazilian nation-state.

This virtual absence of plural and synchronic non-Brazilian populations does not derive from the complexity of studying Indigenous and quilombola’s histories in themselves. Beyond the recurrent (and fair) argument emphasising the methodological obstacles to reconstituting the history of oral-based societies, much of the relative silence that still marks the representation of autonomous Indigenous peoples and quilombolas has to do with an epistemological and educational tradition that has shaped the writing/teaching of Brazilian history since the nineteenth-century. Brazilian educational field was informed by “guidelines of the Portuguese culture” and as a result “Brazilian schools continued to be shaped by its homogenising character and silencing of
differences, especially those coming from Indigenous and African civilizational matrices” (AZEVEDO, 2010, p. 142).

Along this same line, it is easy not only to agree with but also expand John Monteiro’s argument that the relative absence of Indigenous (and also quilombola) groups in Brazilian historical narratives is related not only to methodological impasses - especially to the assumed lack of primary sources – but that it reflects a much older historiographical tradition that has privileged Luso-Brazilian narratives:

the greatest obstacle keeping Indigenous actors from entering Brazilian historiography seems to lie in the historian’s resistance to this issue, considered, for a long time, as a domain only for anthropologists. In fact, the isolation of Indigenous peoples, even though already announced with the first colonial writers, started to be constructed in a more definite war with the initial creation of a national historiography in the mid nineteenth-century (MONTEIRO, 2001, p. 4).

As detailed in previous chapters, the dissemination of this “official” Brazilian history that “isolated” Indigenous and African populations from the centre of the narrative was not a spontaneous process; rather, it was a calculated and state-funded project that began in the headquarters of the Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute (IHGB) in the then capital of Rio de Janeiro and later spread through other institutions, such as the Imperial Academy of Fine Arts (AIBA).

Successive generation of scholars have criticised the IHGB production of historical knowledge since the nineteenth-century. Particular attention has been given to the way its “official” narrative tended to reduce representation of provincial/local alterities, chronologies and their legitimate - often unorthodox - interpretations of history. Arguably, no other form of research until now has better challenged the idea of a single and homogenous Brazilian national timeline than the works of what is frequently called “regional history”. This expression, of course, ironically encompasses nearly every part of contemporary Brazil, excluding Rio de Janeiro, parts of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Indeed, the vigorous “regional” input from researchers from Bahia, Pernambuco, Rio Grande do Sul, Pará and other states has effectively challenged what has been called a “Riocentric” approach to narrating Brazilian history, that is, a “story told exclusively from the point of view of Rio de Janeiro” by historians who developed “the assumptions of the Court ideology, reducing the independence to the construction of a unitary State” (MELLO, 2004, p. 11).
Nonetheless, I propose that even histories of these provinces have been commonly written through what I denominate a state-nationalist lens. The development of regional studies has influenced recent general history narratives of the independence period to acknowledge the ongoing tensions between the central government and defiant regional movements. Yet, because of the pervasive nationalistic-anachronistic perspective, these regional episodes are normally described as rebellious, “disobedient” acts of “members” of the Empire of Brazil. Thus, insubordinate movements or even territories which formally declared independence from Rio de Janeiro, such as the Confederação do Equador, the República Rio-Grandense, República Juliana, are usually portrayed as “parts” of a “whole”.

The use of quotations marks in the terms mentioned above is not a mere detail. The main point here, again, is to provoke interpretations beyond the lens of the “Riocentric” historiography: to imagine exteriorities to the imagined community. Thus, beyond alluding to the mere memory of "rebel moments", the aim here is to call for non-teleological historiographical narratives on the distinct potential and existing non-Brazilian projects around the independence period. I do not disregard the important autonomist experiences such as the Rio-Grandense Republic, the Juliana Republic, the Confederation of the Equator or any other criollo-led movement that carried in itself other distinct national-type potentialities (JANCSÓ; PIMENTA, 2000). Yet, this chapter focuses on the challenges of representing other varieties of emancipated experiences, notably, of those societies that were already and remained independent at the time of the 1822 declaration: countless Indigenous peoples and maroon societies.

A comprehensive challenge to the way nationalistic-anachronistic narratives have silenced historical voices of these innumerable non-Brazilian societies has commanded the attention of collective and multidisciplinary research and educational efforts from anthropologists to historians and, especially of Indigenous organizations and Afro-Brazilian collectives.

With regard to the history of maroon societies, the works of geographers such as Rafael Sanzio Araújo dos Anjos who, by recreating historical maps that visibilise quilombos as constant temporal-geographical movements, have provided fresh insight into the territorial and social dynamics operative parallel to the Luso-Brazilian colonisation are significant. In his important work of ethno-historical cartography, Anjos suggests that beyond interpreting quilombos as mere exceptions inside “Brazil”, it is important to view them as thriving free colonies (povoados livres). Instead of studying quilombos individually, he argues for a study of the “quilombagem”, that is, on the recurring process of territorial resistance and sovereignty in the face of the oppressive colonial system:
a movement of organised, territorialised resistance, with identity and conducted by
Africans, previously enslaved and by their descendants throughout the period of
the slavery system. (...) Still with no visibility inside the current official Brazilian
system, important quilombo territories that existed in “colonial Brazil” could be
references to the true independent political states that were formed in the contexts
of social and economic conflicts and threatening the stability of dominant classes
(ANJOS, 2009, p. 54).

Anjos’ arguments become powerfully persuasive when viewed together with his cartographic
representation of the quilombola presence throughout the entire territory, during every century of
the Luso-Brazilian colonization and after the Brazilian Independence process:

![Image of cartographic representation of quilombola presence in Brazil](image)

Fig 5.10 “Main Quilombos and revolts of African and Afro-descendants
in Brazilian territory, fifteenth to nineteenth-centuries” (ANJSO, 2009, p. 65)
Although not focusing on maps, and limiting his study only to the city of Salvador and its surroundings, João José Reis’ detailed descriptions also evoke the image of the processes of quilombagem around the main centre of nineteenth-century Bahia:

A great part of African community life was reconstituted and recreated in the surroundings of the capital. The hills, bushes, lagoons and rivers there served as an ecological basis for the development of an independent African community, almost clandestine. The city was surrounded by quilombos and religious terreiros (REIS, 1987, p. 70) (Italics added)

In the same book dedicated to the Muslim-led slave mutiny of 1835, João Reis refers to a series of “revolts that multiplied from the beginning of the nineteenth-century”, before and after the 1822 declaration of independence. One curious aspect of many of these rebellions is the aspiration to create independent monarchies by the rebellious slaves:

In May of 1822, 250 slaves from the engenho Boa Vista, in Itaparica, rebelled. But they were quickly controlled. Around the month of September, in the town of Sao Mateus, “manumitted blacks and slaves raised themselves against whites and browns(pardos)”, according to a police report. The movement was defeated and two African were jailed, one of them was candidate to be King. (This and other revolts show that not only whites, but also slaves had their own Monarchic projects in Brazil…) (…) After the war, three years would pass until a new rebellion, in the 25th of August of 1826, in Cachoeira. Once again the leader declared himself “king of the Blacks” and his partner as “queen”. The movement was immediately defeated in a battle in which the queen resisted until her death and the king only surrendered to the police after being severely wounded (REIS, 1987, p. 95).

Salvador was by no means the only city surrounded by autonomous quilombos and/or shaken by autonomist rebellions of slaves before and after independence in 1822. In the article O outro lado da independência, historian Marcus Carvalho focuses on the profuse quilombola movements around Recife-Olinda in the 1817-1823 period. According to Carvalho, even though the first months of 1822 brought unexpected and urgent matters to the province, the destruction of the Quilombo do Catucá was the most important topic in the government´s meeting on the 20th of March:

According to the meeting´s minute, complaints about Blacks in quilombos near the capital had been raised “once again”. An ordinance had been issued authorising Colonel Cristovão d’Olanda to hunt them. The provincial government’s
intervention shows the incapacity of individuals to control quilombos with their own resources. As shown in the minute of the meeting, it was not the first time that they were complaining about the attacks from blacks. Despite the uncertainties about the decisions that the provincial government would have to make concerning the fast developments in Rio and Portugal, there was an agreement that the government could not refuse the task, hard and onerous, of collaborating to stop the quilombolas (CARVALHO, 2006a, p. 14).

According to Carvalho, in another essay dedicated to the same quilombo, despite living relatively close to powerful Recife, Catucá maroons would maintain their political autonomy at least until the end of the 1830s:

> The explicit mention of the existence of houses in the forests shows that there was an opportunity for the rebels to build a sedentary life, with the formation of families, the basic unit for the construction of the notion of freedom for the slave. The troubled years (for Pernambuco) certainly gave Catucá residents the chance to build if not an alternative society, at least a place of freedom, next to sugar mills and the main urban centers of the province. (CARVALHO, 2006)

But the formation of quilombos was not limited to the once prosperous slave-based north-eastern provinces. The multiple and long-lasting maroon societies living near the very capital of Rio the Janeiro were described as a “hydra” by historian Flávio dos Santos Gomes:

> The ‘heads’ of this horrifying creature were the diverse communities of runaways that emerged shortly after 1800, and yet at the dawn of the twentieth-century tormented residents and police authorities. In 1878, one year after sending more expeditions to destroy them, the minister of Justice stated the need to adopt immediate solutions, besides the usual – and normally - inefficient police actions. It was necessary to destroy for ever these strongholds of fugitives, stopping them from reproducing ‘as in the fable of the Lernaean Hydra’ (GOMES, 2006, p. 25)

Far from the coastal cities, studies have also mapped the numerous formation of maroon societies in the continental hinterlands. In her studies of quilombos in the territories which today constitute the states of Mato Grosso and Mato Grosso do Sul, Luiza Volpato describes how maroons societies managed not only to preserve their freedom for extended periods, but how many of them were often demographically and militarily stronger than Brazilian towns:

> In the second half of the nineteenth-century, there were several slave ranches, but the provincial authorities did not consider themselves armed enough to face them
In referring to the quilombo Sepotuba in 1863, the president of the province Herculano Ferreira Pena considered that it already had a century of existence, being seen as one of the oldest in Mato Grosso. If he was correct, the maroons would be contemporary to the Portuguese occupation of that region and older than the very own town of Vila Maria. The data supports the hypothesis that this was a huge quilombo, feared by the authorities and local population (VOLPATTO, 1996, p. 229).

It is not my purpose here to cite the vast examples of recent studies mapping self-governing quilombola groups living in isolated, clandestine, and in many cases, in symbiotic relations with Luso-Brazilian cities all over the nineteenth-century, or the autonomist uprisings that spread throughout every part of the current Brazilian territory\(^9\).

For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to emphasise a fact that can be clearly inferred from the accumulative research on maroon societies: inside the area that has been traditionally (and reductionistically) regarded as being the “Portuguese America” before 1822, and as the “Brazilian state” after this year, were in large part territories that also belonged to autonomous maroon groups. If most quilombos, when viewed individually, were indeed relatively small and short-lived experiences, quilombagem, seen as process, was a continental and recurrent phenomenon producing free and reinvented pan-African experiences:

We understand quilombagem as a permanent rebel movement organised and guided by slaves themselves, which occurred during the whole Brazilian slave system (…) The quilombagem is an emancipationist movement that predates, by far, the liberal abolitionist movement; it has a more radical character, without any mediation element between its dynamic behaviour and the dominant classes’ interests. The quilombo figures, thus, as the most representative module of resistance (either because of its quantity, or because its historical continuity) that existed. It established a social, cultural and military border against the system that oppressed the slaves. (MOURA, 2004. p. 22)

To reiterate, this chapter calls into question a historiographical perspective still present on the “general” written and visual narratives of Brazil. If maroon movements have been typically seen as isolated and small-scale events, “official” historiography has also found ingenious ways to silence Indigenous peoples’ sovereignty and agency, before and after the Brazilian independence. Again, it is not possible here to trace the works of an enormous list of historians, anthropologists and other intellectuals who constructed this interpretation of history. Throughout the thesis, I

\(^9\) For an ambitious attempt to list and give names to the hundreds of quilombos that emerged, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth-century, in virtually every part of the current national state, please refer to MOURA, Clóvis. *História do negro brasileiro*. São Paulo, Ática, 1989.
documented how, at least since Martius’ metaphor of the “powerful Portuguese river” which would absorb the “small” African and Indigenous streams, and Varnhagen’s influential declaration that for Indigenous groups “there is no history; there is only ethnography” (VARNHAGEN, 1854, p. 108), imperial thinkers and institutions have embraced cultural and racial theories that condemned Indigenous as “scientifically” inferior peoples (SCHWARCZ, 1999). Further, art exhibitions and scientific museums have typically denied coevalness to Indigenous populations (ANDERMANN, 2007) representing them either in an allegorical past or in the process of social degeneration (NOELLI; FERREIRA, 2007). Finally, most of the nineteenth-century discourse popularised a still widely accepted image of Indigenous seen either through romantic or deterministic historiographical lenses, either predestined to assimilation or condemned extermination, thus, simultaneously without a history and without a future (MONTEIRO; 2001).

It is no easy task to reverse a long-established, deeply rooted prejudiced knowledge tradition controlled by Brazilian elites who consider themselves either as Euro-descendants – therefore, still heavily prejudiced against the historical contribution of non-Europeans – or as racially-democratic mestizos – therefore, racially-blind to discuss whiteness or any form of Brazilian-style expressions of racism. To contribute to the specific study of what general history books call the independent state “of Brazil” after 1822, I argue that it is logical and imperative for contemporary historians to recognise the innumerable Indigenous nations and African maroons that never became “Brazilian” after D. Pedro I’s shout. If the historian’s job, among others, is to provide a multifaceted interpretation of socio-political dynamics in the past, it seems essential to recognise for example that beyond the old dichotomy of assimilated tupis versus soon-to-be-dead tapuias, there was a much wider spectrum of sovereign Indigenous groups that defended and understood as theirs parts of the territory unilaterally declared as “Brazilian” in 1822. The official history initially produced at the IHGB, however, by declaring “Brazilian” all nineteenth-century space, time and populations, defined Indigenous groups as unarguably belonging to “Brazil”, categorising them as either part of the national project or as enemies of the state. In other words, that they “were already ‘virtually extinct or supposedly assimilated’” (KODAMA, 2005, p. 114).

Beyond misleading dichotomous representations – and in line with Indigenous movements and intellectuals - current historiography seems to have a long task ahead to aid in the reconstitution of the map of autonomous Indigenous groups that resisted or never acknowledged the authority of the Brazilian emperor or that either negotiated and/or fought for their geopolitical-cultural sovereignty not only during the imperial period, but also throughout the twentieth-century. As with most other historiographical transformations, much of the task will be
centred on reinterpreting primary sources. In addition to the monumental archival, but also archaeological and oral research needed, a great part of the task of reverting the invisibilisation of Indigenous groups will be semantic: detaching the adjective “Brazilian” from self-ruling Indigenous groups and avoiding the misuse of the word “Brazil” to refer to Indigenous-controlled lands. The substitution of “autonomous” or “self-ruling” for every allusion to the “savage” or “untamable” Indigenous groups found in historical documents is a much needed and effective semantic strategy to challenge nationalistic-anachronistic narratives.

In this respect, perhaps no other primary source has provided more abundant documentation of numbers and locations of autonomous Indigenous groups than the countless so-called “travels around Brazil” narratives of nineteenth-century local and foreign scientists, artists, politicians and explorers. More than 50 years after the proclamation of independence, for example, the voyage report of IHBG member João Severino da Fonseca offers a hint of the diverse nineteenth-century populations coexisting in what today is the southwest of Brazil. After estimating the population (including slaves) of the Matto-Grosso province as around 50,000 people, he also calculates as approximately 9,000 the population of “semi-savage” Indigenous. In his words, these were people who had been “living in aldeamentos” or in “more or less contact with civilization”. More important to the argument of this chapter, though, is his estimate of the 24,000 so-called “savage” Indigenous:

whose tribes known are eighteen in number, namely: aráras e caripúnas, in the Alto Madeira, jacarés, cenabós, pacahás, cautariós, in the Baixo Mamoré, mequênes, parecis, mainbarés e cabixis, in the Guaporé and in the Paraguay; coroás in the beds of the Cuyabá and S. Lourenço; bacauhyris and cayabis in the Paranatinga; nhambicuáres, between the rivers Peixe and Arinos; cayuás in the hinterlands of the ridges of the Anhambahy and Maracajú. (FONSECA, 1880, p.19)

Indeed, nineteenth-century travelogues and scientific reports are filled with descriptions of the “savage”, “uncivilised”, “nomad” and “aggressive” Indigenous groups that inhabited, in the viewpoint of the narrators of course, “Brazilian” lands.

In an 1846 expedition, ordered by the government of Minas Gerais, Pedro V. Reinault referred directly to other autonomous Indigenous groups, the Jyporocas. It is interesting to see how Reinault, although recognising that the land originally belonged to the “botocudos” who had been chased away by local mining entrepreneurs, emphasises the aggressiveness and savagery only of the very Indigenous peoples who had been forcibly expelled:
(but the Jyporocas) who, at great cost the (local entrepreneurs) had managed to chase away, but having become so resented for having being thrown away from their lands, had made a last effort and continued to run independently through their measureless possessions. Their presence and atrocities terrorise in such way entrepreneurs, that none of them, despite the lack of money that affects this land, dares to go (…)\(^{100}\)

Naturally, the news of “savage” Indigenous peoples are found not only in travel reports, but in virtually every document describing any nineteenth-century province inside so-called “Brazilian” lands. In his memoir of his Captaincy of Goyas, Luiz Antonio da Silva Sousa reserved many pages for an inventory of the dozens of “savage nations” spread to every part of the territory:

*Cayapos*. A very cruel and populous nation, with whose attacks prevented the initial expansion of the captaincy, but who many still live to the south of Villa-Boa. *Chavantes*. A fierce and large nation, living in Carretao, even though many live in the bushes between the rivers Araguaya and Tocantins: they are cruel and robbers. *Goyas*. A more white nation than the other Indians of this captaincy; peaceful, and already extinct. *Crixás*. A fierce nation, which inhabited the place where there is a village with its name. *Canoeiros*. An extremely cruel nation, belligerent, which does not run, resisting in combat until they die, using even the women and the fierce dogs that they bring with them (…)\(^{101}\)

For men like P. Fonseca, V. Reinault and L. Souza, and most other intellectuals in the nineteenth-century, the continental and indivisible perimeters of the Brazilian state were taken as a given. Indigenous people living in “Brazilian” lands, during most of imperial times and even long after the turn to the republic, were given the option to either assimilate peacefully or to be compulsorily hunted down and killed.

In a book about the Xavante historical resistance and negotiation of their traditional territories, Seth Garfield gives a comprehensive account of how Indigenous political and territorial autonomy was progressively destabilised not only during Portuguese colonisation but also throughout Brazilian Imperial and Republican regimes. The book documents the struggle of


Xavantes from “the second half of the nineteenth-century to the mid-twentieth-century” to defend their traditional territories, claimed first by the Portuguese as part of the kingdom, and later by the independent Brazilian state as part of the state of Mato Grosso:

A history of resistance to Portuguese and Brazilian expansionism and defense of socio-political autonomy fuelled Xavante belligerence. The incorporation of Indigenous populations into the nation-state was fundamental to the growth of Brazil’s regional and national economies and its emergence as a continental power. (...) Enjoining Indigenous peoples to surrender territorial control and political autonomy in the “national” interest, state-planners affirmed exclusive know-how and capacity to engender better Indians: sedentary agriculturists disciplined rural labourers, market consumers, and patriotic consumers. (GARFIELD; 2001, p. 2) ( Italics added)

Alongside state administrators and politicians, many nineteenth-century intellectuals aided in paving the way for the subjugation of “Brazilian” Indigenous peoples. As a famous and extreme example of this, it should be recalled that the complete extermination of the “savage” and “untamable” Kaingangs was publicly supported by one the most respected scientists of the time, Museu Paulista´s director Hermann von Ihering:

These Indians who in the years 1880-1886 committed countless and barbarous burglaries and murders, making difficult the colonisation of this zone. The current Indigenous of the State of São Paulo do not represent an element for work and progress (...) since the savage Caingangs are an impediment to the colonisation of the Sertão regions in which they live, it seems that there is not another way, that one can resort, than to exterminate them. 102

As with any historical investigation, nineteenth or early twentieth-century sources should not be taken as truths or proofs, but only as points of departure for further investigation. Proper recognition of Indigenous peoples’ historical agency demands a collective effort from historians, anthropologists and, in particular, from the Indigenous peoples themselves. Regarding attempts to better understand and visualise the traditional ownership of the territory that would be declared as the “Portuguese America” and as independent “Brazil” after 1822, for example, it is important to mention the pioneering works of Curt Nimuendaju (2002). Despite his use of sources of variable reliability (DANTAS; SAMPAIO; CARVALHO, 1992), Nimuendaju produced, arguably, until

now, the most ambitious ethno-historical map of the distribution of the heterogeneous Indigenous groups following the arrival of the Portuguese colonisers.

Fig 5.11 Indigenous population in the areas of present Espírito Santo, extract from Curt Nimuendaju’s (2002) map.
Clearly, Nimuendaju’s map still relies on a Eurocentric cartographic representation of the territory that, as corollary, does not challenge the whiteness framing/gaze intrinsic to such visual representations. Yet, to the Brazilian research and educational context, Nimuendaju’s map undoubtedly constitutes an advance toward the acknowledgement of plurinationalities and cultural linguistic heterogeneity of a nation-state that—although formally mestizo since the 1930s—continues to know basic information only about the Portuguese speaking-descendant part of its history. Again, written, visual or cartographic analyses produced by historians and anthropologists should not be taken as conclusive works; neither should primary or secondary sources be used either to confirm or refute the traditional occupation of the land by current Indigenous populations. As Manuela Carneiro da Cunha suggests, even though Indigenous groups should be granted recognition and rights over their lands because of historical colonisation, “this does not mean to prove Indigenous occupation with written documents, which are not only deficient, but whose authors had also had their interests, in most cases, antagonistic to the Indigenous peoples” (CUNHA, 1992, p. 22). There is no point trying to tackle Eurocentrism only with Eurocentric categories (MIGNOLO, 2002). The task of contemporary historiography, in this sense, is to learn from Indigenous, Afro-descendant and social movements, especially from the way they have been challenging the concepts of Eurocentric history and calling for the decolonisation of methodologies (SMITH, 1999). In summary, more than attempting to write histories about Indigenous nations, contemporary historians should try to listen and learn from how Indigenous peoples are telling their own histories. In this process of mutual and respectful recognition, historians might learn how “to re-establish the importance of Indigenous memory, transmitted through oral tradition” inside written-based Eurocentric universities. In turn, since intellectuals still play important roles inside Brazilian state’s bureaucratic and literate structures, they might play an important role in joining forces with Indigenous groups that attempt to legitimise oral-based traditions inside Brazil, “giving it voice and legitimacy in Justice” (CUNHA, 1992, p. 22).

Accordingly, it was never the purpose of this chapter to try to list all autonomous – allegedly “savage” and “fierce” – Indigenous groups living in their sovereign territories at the time the Brazilian independence was declared. As expected, the very brief examples and unrefined use of primary and secondary sources in the previous pages were simply a sketch of independent

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103 Martin Berger (2005, p. 54-5) notes how contemporary maps, far from a neutral construct, are also representative of a whiteness gaze and a European-scientific tradition upon a determined territory.
societies. They were another way to make explicit what interpretations of history based on the *hydraulic metaphor* of the nation, *quadripartition* and *state-nationalism* often ignore: that, throughout the nineteenth and twentieth-centuries, the consolidation of the Brazilian national state was based on a process of expansion, conquest and negotiation over the “foreign” and “self-determining” territories of many Indigenous and maroon societies.

It should also be clear that the suggestion of a study of independent nineteenth-century Indigenous and maroons groups does not mean to revive old “culturalist” or “materialist” (GOMES; REIS, 1996) interpretations of slave or Indigenous forms of resistances to captivity. In this chapter, I have not called for a return to concepts such as “counter-acculturation” or to interpreting Indigenous and maroon groups through the prism of their marginalisation (GOMES, 2006), that is, as societies that existed completely “far away” from slavery, heroically secluded from Luso-Brazilian imperial powers. In this sense, it is fundamental to note that the need to recognise the political-territorial autonomy of many Indigenous and maroon groups should not be misinterpreted here as geographic isolation. As most recent studies have suggested, the agency of Indigenous individuals and slaves varied broadly. It ranged from clandestine “hydric” symbiotically living close or inside urban perimeters to Amazonian groups who had been born in freedom and never “had a master” (FUNES, 1996); from individual suicides to collective revolts; from frontal confrontation to conscious negotiation; from long-term legal-abolitionist fights to daily acts of sabotage. By proposing a critical reading of Brazilian general histories, I reaffirm this heterogeneous map of resistance both to Portuguese and Brazilian colonial practices: not only of the diverse responses to slavery and to territorial conquest by Indigenous and maroon groups, but also of their continuous – even when *momentary* - histories of freedom.

By challenging nationalistic-anachronistic narratives, I hope to contribute to an ongoing debate in Brazilian historiography arguing for the need of critical and long-term interpretations of the nation-building process. Contrary to a widely disseminated interpretative tradition, I have underscored that what was declared as the “Brazilian” state in 1822 was and continued to be a fractured and disputed zone for years to come. In addition to provincial elite-lead revolts, a significant part of the Indigenous, African and mestizo populations confined within the perimeters of what was declared as the Empire of Brazil, continued to ignore concepts such as the Brazilian state or nation; remaining largely unfamiliar with any sentiment of nationhood as long as they could. Historians have acknowledged that, in the beginning of the nineteenth-century, there could be a state called Brazil but hardly any Brazilians (SCHWARCZ, 2004); that, similar to most other emerging nation-states, the spread of feelings of belonging and political loyalties inside
“Brazilian” territory were not formed spontaneously or immemorially, rather, they would demand a long-term combination of diplomatic, educational and, notably, coercive-belligerent strategies.

Nonetheless, throughout this thesis, I have argued that contemporary specialised-academic historiography probably has made more progress in challenging nationalistic-anachronistic interpretations than written and visual narratives dedicated to what I denominated here as a “general” history of Brazil. Similar to Pedro Américo’s painting, whose state-nationalistic frame completely encompasses and incorporates territories and populations that objectively were never part of the history of the national state, so most visual interpretations of Brazil continue to promote a form of historiographical genocide against societies that need to be visualised and respected in their respective pasts, on the basis of their own sovereignties and subjectivities. In many ways, analogously to the “powerful” Portuguese river that would absorb “Indian and Ethiopian” populations predicted by Martius in 1845, current narratives of the “general history” of Brazil, based on powerful Braziliancentric categories, insist on draining the abundant sources of the history of free Indigenous and maroon societies.

In the next and concluding chapter of this thesis, I detail the practical experience of constructing an Internet web site designed to re-interpret chapters in Brazilian history by using nineteenth-century paintings as a means to achieve this. The meticulous analysis of Independência ou Morte! (Independence or Death!) in this chapter will serve as the main structure for the construction of this site. Through graphic manipulations of the original painting, I present practical examples of art historical Web narratives that aim to introduce fresh interpretations both to the painting itself and to the topic of Brazilian Independence.

With the attached publication of this chapter and its interdependent and complementary digital page, my goal is to offer convincing written and multimedia arguments as to the utility of Web design as a productive - yet relatively unexplored - platform not only for meticulous art historical analysis but also for challenging writing conventions within this discipline. Therefore, beyond merely addressing specific topics of the (visual) history of Brazil, this Website is conceived both to meet art historical methodological standards and, at the same time, to examine the scope and limitations of analytical writing in this field.
Conclusions:

The submission of this thesis coincides with the year anthropologist João Batista de Lacerda prophesised that Brazil would have finally become a mainly “white” society. In 1911, based on authoritative whitening theories, the then director of the Museu Nacional in Rio de Janeiro had no doubts that the Brazilian population in 2012 would be made of 80% whites, 17% Indigenous peoples, 3% mestizos and no remaining blacks (TELLES, 2004, p. 29). Ironies of history, the Brazilian 2010 census registered that the country’s self-declared mestizos (pardos), Indigenous peoples and blacks, for the first time ever, surpassed the number of self-declared whites.

But Lacerda’s predictions almost prevailed. At least until the 1960s, the number of Brazilians of African and Indigenous descent steadily dropped in official censuses. The reasons for this decline, of course, were not found in pseudo-scientific theories that stated the superiority of European blood. Rather, they were a historical and cultural phenomenon. Similar to other former colonies, Brazilian society has traditionally valued European descent. The celebration of miscegenation and racial democracy after the 1930s did not challenge the ways aesthetic/cultural/physical features associated with European heritage remained as more important than those of African and Indigenous ancestry. As a result, Brazilians of paler skin have habitually chosen to declare themselves “whites”, while the large sectors of the population strategically relied on one of the many variations of the term mestizo (pardo) to avoid being classified as “blacks” and “Indigenous”.

Thus the changes in the 2010 census are not spontaneous. Rather, they are the result of a long history of activism by Indigenous and Afro-Brazilian movements, combined with the fight of progressive intellectuals and politicians. The last decades in Brazil witnessed several campaigns for raising Afro-Indigenous pride; the passing of anti-discrimination laws; the fight for the recognition of ancestral Indigenous and quilombola rights and lands. In this more favourable context, most contemporary Indigenous peoples have managed to strengthen local and pan-indigenous identities. Afro-Brazilians have also been able to demand a more equal participation of non-whites in public political offices, companies and media, one that that reflects Brazil’s multi-

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<sup>104</sup> According to the 2010 census, 47.7% of Brazilians considered themselves as “whites”, while 43.1% as “pardos” (mestizos/browns), 7.6% as “pretos” (blacks), 0.4% as Indigenous peoples and 1% as “amarelo” (yellow/Asian). Source: http://noticias.uol.com.br/cotidiano/ultimas-noticias/2011/05/12/mudanca-na-divisao-racial-do-brasil-e-reflexo-de-mais-pessoas-se-assumindo-negras-diz-ipea.htm
ethnic composition. Against a long-established belief that Indigenous populations would inevitably be assimilated into a grand-mestizo homogenous mass, Indigenous peoples grow at a faster rate than any other populations inside the Brazilian territory. Indigenous peoples previously declared extinct by historians and anthropologists are gradually reappearing, while others continue to emerge through intricate processes of ethnogenesis. The state’s recognition of rural and urban *quilombos* throughout the country is also on the rise. In the specific field of education, affirmative action has been finally adopted in most public universities. Two important laws (2003/2008) finally made the teaching of African, Afro-Brazilian and Indigenous history and culture official in secondary schools.

These undeniably positive recent transformations, however, are far from solving racial tensions in the country. Despite rigorous anti-racist legislation, for example, systematic acts of racially-based discrimination, jokes and insults continue. Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous peoples remain clearly underrepresented in mass media, politics, higher education, the justice system and other power positions inside society. While Indigenous peoples in Brazil hold relatively large number of reserve lands, several Brazilians see this as an unfair privilege and not as a historical right. This often results in a complacent silence and/or approval of the frequent invasion of Indigenous lands by farmers. It also often turns public opinion against the need of state recognition of several traditional Indigenous and *quilombola* territories still not officially endorsed by law. This year, Brazil officially surpassed Great Britain in becoming the sixth largest economy in the world. It is a member of the increasingly influential BRICS, a Latin American powerhouse and a leader in G-20 conferences. Yet, it remains a country in which the great part of the population, mostly made of an Afro-Indigenous descendant population, still experiences poverty and social exclusion. Brazilian society changed sufficiently in the last decades to elect a mestizo, informally-educated, former plumber and then a former guerrilla-fighter woman of Bulgarian-descent[^1] as the country’s last two presidents. This clearly challenged the custom of electing Euro-descendant, highly-educated males to office. However, there is no sign of when the first self-declared Afro-Brazilian or Indigenous president will be elected.

While written in Aotearoa New Zealand, my thesis is closely connected to these ongoing changes and enduring racially-based impasses in contemporary Brazil. Recent transformations in

[^1]: President Luis Inácio “Lula” da Silva (2003-2010), born from a rural family in the poor province in the Northeaest of Brazil, was a co-founder of the Brazilian Labour Party (PT). After losing the 3 elections, he was finally became president in 2002, and was relected in 2006. He left office in 2010 as the most popular president in Brazilian history. Dilma Rousseff, a professionally trained economist, joined an left-wing and urban guerilla to fight the Brazilian military regime. She was imprisoned and tortured. In 2005, she became Chief of Staff to then President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. She was elected presidente of Brazil in 2010, becoming the first woman ever to hold the office.
the country have also had indisputably positive impacts both on academy historiography and on the teaching of history as a whole. Contemporary historians and teachers have had success in challenging Euro-Androcentric narratives written from “above” with more inclusive and polyphonic works that include women, non-Europeans and working-classes in Brazilian history. Yet, without discounting such shifts, my thesis deliberately focused on permanencies. Particularly, I argued that contemporary histories of Brazil continue to be informed by nineteenth-century legacies.

To prove my point, I documented the pioneering efforts of historians and painters in inventing a history of Brazil in the nineteenth-century. The first chapters meticulously compared how intellectuals and artists linked to the IHGB and AIBA, sharing political and epistemological agendas, played a central and complementary role in inaugurating visual and written interpretations of history that actively contributed to the nation-building process during the post-independence era. Directly funded by the Imperial government and in convergence with a broader transnational romantic movement, I demonstrated how nineteenth-century intellectuals took on the monumental task of addressing how to write and how to paint the history of Brazil. As a result, in a few decades, Brazil managed to disseminate a highly successful national self-image of a monarchic state that, while possessing a unique culture and history, displayed universal civilised features allowing a position alongside other European states.

The comparison of nineteenth-century history and painters served me for three basic reasons. First of all, by placing a simultaneous focus both on printed and painted media, I aim to contribute with several scholars calling for the need to expand Anderson’s print-capitalism hypothesis and to investigate how visual discourses were also essential to nineteenth-century Latin American nation-building processes. Bridging a common academic separation between the disciplines of history and art history, I provided a detailed study of the influence of historiography on art production and vice versa. By contextualising the individual talents and personal ambitions of historians and painters against a larger macro-political background and state project, I presented fresh evidence of how the construction of foundational Brazilian national-historical discourses relied both on texts and images, on print-capitalism and on art “subsidism”.

In the second place, the comparison of historians and painters was strategic to illustrating how the interpretation of Brazilian history as a unique, relatively peaceful and straightforward process - especially when compared to neighbouring states - is itself a historical construction. My detailed analysis of the peaceful and blessed image of The First Mass in Brazil demonstrated how Victor Meirelles is part of a romantic genealogy of intellectuals who have disseminated an
interpretation of the formation of the Brazilian nation-state as “edenic”. As was seen, such interpretations are in sharp contrast to an equally long list of “satanic” views of the Brazilian land and its populations. My close analysis of Pedro Américo’s *Independence or Death!* also documented how the image of a society which made the transition from colony to nation-state almost entirely peacefully is also a historical construct. Similar to Spanish colonies, Brazil experienced internal frictions, regional revolts, declarations of independence and centrifugal republican movements against the central monarchic authority of Rio. Territorial unity was negotiated and fought for. It was not a given. Furthermore, I argued that - from the viewpoints of Indigenous peoples and maroon societies who were already *independent* at the time of the 1822 independence - the Brazilian nation-state basically continued the threatening, belligerent policies of the Portuguese crown.

Thirdly - and arguably the biggest contribution of the thesis to nation-building studies on Brazil - I suggested that interpretations of the history of Brazil (and of Brazilians) produced as early as the 1840s at the IHGB inaugurated an enduring narrative model that has effectively silenced and erased Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants from Brazilian written and visual histories. Decades prior to the dissemination of the 1870s racial theories, through the use of rather subtler ideas, nineteenth-century intellectuals helped to create an interpretation of history that departs from a tri-racial beginning and quickly turns into a Luso-European-centric narrative. I argued that Martius and Varnhagen’s major contributions to the strengthening of racial hierarchies and to the exclusion of Africans and Indigenous from history narratives were exactly because their writings are not direct theorisations of race. I coined the terms *hydraulic metaphor* of the nation, *quadripartition* and *state-nationalism* to identify this Brazilian-style manifestation of *branquitude* (whiteness) in narratives from the nineteenth-century until today. Furthermore, in my close analysis of Pedro Américo, I demonstrated how these three concepts provide fresh angles for art historians to investigate the representation - and invisibilisation - of European, African and Indigenous-descendant Brazilians in history paintings made at the time.

 Academics have successfully challenged the pseudo-scientific whitening of the Brazilian population for decades now. The current Brazilian census indicates that Brazilian society as a whole is also finally overcoming cultural-historical whitening that resulted from colonisation. However, this thesis has argued that a type of *historiographical whitening* continues in the pages of books and canvases of paintings.

 I emphasised this by documenting how best-selling “general histories” of Brazil, written both by Brazilians and Brazilianists, tend to start by briefly mentioning Indigenous and African
populations. Progressively, though, these populations are left in the first pages of books: safely in the past. Echoing Martius’ sophisticated and ambivalent logic of inclusion and exclusion, these books exemplify how to (gradually stop to) write the history of Indigenous and African populations. In addition, following state-nationalist and quadripartite models written since Varnhagen, these books tend to employ Brazilian-centric concepts, maps and chronologies that block the acknowledgement and understanding of plurinationalities and simultaneities. Non-Brazilian identities are usually reduced to and trapped inside chapters called “Indigenous”, “Colonial” and “Imperial” Brazil. In my analysis of Pedro Américo, I illustrated how this historiographical whitening also informs one of the most famous AIBA paintings, one that continues to be widely reproduced, illustrating books, textbooks and other media until today.

Unfortunately, thus, anthropologist João Batista de Lacerda’s prediction is not so off the mark after all. An analogous growth of Afro-Brazilian, Indigenous and mestizo populations seen in the current census is yet to be seen in written and visual histories.

Philosopher Marilena Chauí affirms that a democracy is not simply a political regime of laws and order. Rather, what characterises true democracies is the continuous creation, consolidation and guaranteeing of rights. The assessment of Brazilian history is but one of the many changes needed if the country ever wants to establish something close to a genuine racial democracy. Similarly, Stuart Hall notes that discourses of identity are not fixed essences. Rather, like every historical construct, identity discourses also experience inevitable and intermittent changes. They belong to the past (who we likely were), to the present (who we think we are), as much as they belong to the future (who we will likely become). In this sense, they are a “matter of being” as much as they are a “matter of becoming” (HALL, 1996, p. 212). By establishing a critical dialogue with past historians and artists, by joining efforts with contemporary fellow researchers studying changing national identities, this thesis is dedicated to the multiethnic, plurinational, socially and environmentally just future of the region known today as “Brazil”.

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106Originally part of a campaign to elect the current president Dilma Roussef, a successor of president Lula, this complete interview is available at the Brazilian political blog Viomundo:
Appendix - Pixeling Paintings: Reframing Brazilian History with Digital Tools

Clio’s (the muse of history) closet is extremely varied, and her outfits are made of cloths whose different textures do not necessarily obey the written text or the image that the text reproduces. The regime of historical imagination follows the logic of a specific time and place determined by a complex matrix of factors in which historical writing is only one outcome (GONZALEZ-STEPHAN, 2006, p. 136).

Curiously the most dominant, all embracing and ubiquitous communication fabric of recent times - one whose gossamer fibres are so extensive that they have altered simultaneously not only the closet of Clio but of all other Muses – is associated with one of the simplest textiles, one with the most concise of names: net. In these concluding and admittedly speculative last pages, I take advantage of the Internet’s ambivalent composition, marked by the double metaphors of simplicity and ubiquity. Specifically, I demonstrate how relatively simple and concise Web techniques may open up potentially unlimited perspectives from which to view historical narratives.

In order to support my arguments, I detail the practical experience of constructing a Web project designed to re-interpret chapters of Brazilian history, with the use of nineteenth-century paintings as a means to achieve this. The painting Independência ou Morte! (Independence or Death!), completed by Pedro Américo in 1888, is the main visual-historical source for the site. Based on the previous chapter’s detailed analysis, I present practical examples of historical Web narratives that stimulate fresh interpretations both of the painting itself and of well-known theme of “Brazilian Independence”.

My goal in these last pages, to be read together with its interdependent and complementary digital page, is to present convincing written-based and multimedia arguments as to why Web design is an effective - yet relatively unexplored - platform for art historical analysis and for enhancing interpretive writing within the discipline. Therefore, beyond merely addressing specific topics of the (visual) history of Brazil, this Website is conceived both to meet art historical methodological standards and, at the same time, to question the scope and limitations of writing in this field.

Before detailing the Web project specifically conceived as part of this section, I will briefly situate it within a broader debate on e-history and digital humanities. Additionally, I explain how/why I started experimenting with multimedia initially.
1.1 Heterographies in Historiography: The Web and Perspectives on Historical Writing

Among futurists who seek to predict the long-term impact of digital media on contemporary societies, doubt and uncertainty are rampant. While profound transformations are clearly underway and palpable, attempts to forecast how new technology and telecommunication will reshape human lives are usually dismissed either as vaguely fictional or as entertaining, yet unproductive, speculative mind games.

Such doubt arises because both science and science-fiction have a shared record of failed prophecies. Amidst this speculative debate, historians have claimed relatively less space than journalists, political scientists, sociologists, writers and visual artists in which to share opinions on this topic publically; conventionally, they are viewed as professionals trained only to predict the past. Yet, as the growing numbers of papers, journals and symposia attest, research on the challenges and possibilities offered by digital media expands exponentially among academic historians.

In this context, a simple question that demands complex answers challenges historians universally: “will the Web provide us with a better understanding of history?” If consensus seems implausible for such a philosophical inquiry, it is because a second and even more complex question is implied: has any previous media or other technological revolution provided historians with “better” histories? Evaluations of the positive and/or negative effects of any media on history scholarship - and on human knowledge as a whole – are subjective and necessarily depend on the historian’s moral and political values.

For example, optimists claim that the Western print revolution had an important consequence in undermining the medieval monopoly of knowledge by the Catholic Church’s manuscripts, monasteries, monks and other literate elite. Skeptics, on the other hand, argue that the massive printing of books led to an authoritarian assumption of written-based technologies as the most reliable form of transmitting human knowledge; as a consequence, countless successful oral, graphic, weaving, carving, musical and corporal language traditions were suppressed. In Latin America, or at least Spanish America, this debate arose more recently over Angel Rama’s thesis in The Lettered City, which argued that a parallel reality was established through print that

107 This exact question was recently proposed as a main discussion topic in the Symposium ‘Contemporary history in the digital age’ (Luxembourg, 15th–16th of October, 2009)
maintained authority and control in the hands of the lettered elite, who did not identify with its own people, but only with European lettered culture.

The examples seem endless. Did photography offer more faithful ways of registering historical scenes, or did it promote a naïve, simplistic understanding of visual sources that induce audiences to disregard the subjectivity, selectivity, intervention into reality and political bias present in every artist’s actions? Has television introduced historical themes to general audiences otherwise intimidated and/or indifferent to the historian’s specialised, commonly esoteric, writing? Or is television responsible for disseminating obsolete historical debates that, in effect, distance audiences from current and more fruitful historiographical research? Are history-based blockbuster movies promoting the discipline globally and opening new professional opportunities for historians such as scriptwriting? Or is the film industry’s subservience to reductionist and elliptical conclusions based on time constraints, market demands and bottom-line profits threatening decades of judicious history education backed by academic research?

To circumvent unproductive controversy vis-à-vis the Internet’s impact on history, teaching and research, scholars eschew “techno-skeptic” and “cyber-enthusiast” dichotomies in favour of a more pragmatic position (COHEN; ROSENZWEIG, 2006, p. 3). This consists of simply accepting the Internet as a mode of communication that, in spite its relatively recent emergence, will have enduring consequences for contemporary societies. Instead of questioning the benefits or costs of the Internet, many historians are opting to investigate how to optimise hyperspace use in convergence with academic research. Daniel Cohen summarised this more practical attitude as a way “to find a middle ground where we could make optimal use of new technology to further our own scholarly end”.

In and of itself, no technology of communication delivers better or worse history knowledge; only humans using such means are so capable. Therefore, it is naive to anticipate that digital media might be the exception. Perhaps the initial question “will the Web provide us with a better understanding of history?” should be reformulated: how will a better understanding of the Web enhance the work of the historian?

In addition to the judgmental challenges, historical examples suggest that successful knowledge producers have understood and used the most up-to-date communication technologies at their disposal. Ancient Greeks could not hope to be persuasive in Agorá debates without years

of practicing the rhetorical and other oratorical skills required by traditional Hellenic societies. European medieval minstrels would never achieve recognition without a comprehensive grasp of lyric poetry and the rules of musical composition, as well as the virtuous practice of at least one instrument, such as the harp, fiddle, flute, flageolet or cittern. Griots throughout African history had to be trained in sophisticated mnemonic techniques, body languages and storytelling performance in order to be respected as a repository of collective oral traditions.

In analogous ways, this is in part why professional historians have been arduously training how to write for the last two centuries. Yet, if historians have succeeded in publishing and disseminating their work - as attested by the diverse and ever-growing corpus of prints, journals and books - the same cannot be said, yet, about successful use of digital media, including the Internet. Since the 1990s, efforts to publish digital histories have expanded, with increasing numbers of history Web sites for example- produced either by universities, professional historians and dilettantes. (COHEN; ROSENZWEIG, 2006). Nonetheless, as Daniel J. Cohen correctly pointed out, most historians have underutilised the potential of several digital media, among them, the Internet:

One senses, however, that the medium of the Web has not been exploited to its fullest if the best we can say about historians’ use of this highly advanced computer network is that it has become a giant, global fax machine, faithfully reproducing and distributing copies of historical documents (primary and secondary), related commentaries and professional missives. (COHEN, 2004, p. 294)

That historians have not seized digital media for day to day work may be related to the profession’s well-established strength: their expertise in writing texts. Successful Internet publishing demands multimedia tools and specific skills, as the expectations of Internet users/readers differ from those of print consumers. Historian Paula Petrick accurately noted that since “academics are primarily text people”, it is frequent for us to overlook the fact that “writing for the Web is different from writing for print” and that “transferring hard copy material directly to the Web without giving some thought to altering its format will exasperate visitors” making it harder for a quick access to information they are used to and desire (PETRICK, 2000, p.1) Historically, successful individuals have been those who were familiar with and skilful in the use of the most modern means of communication. Historians may need to familiarise themselves more intimately with the Internet and other digital formats and develop the appropriate skills.   E. H.
Carr’s famous question almost half a century ago has been inevitably upgraded: What is digital History? \(^{109}\)

Roy Rosenzweig and Daniel Cohen’s *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web* (2006) is arguably the recent work that best advanced the debate on the dilemmas and opportunities academic historians face in working with and publishing on the Internet. Beyond its competent evaluation of rapid technological changes and the resulting pressure on academic history, the book also has a comprehensive and didactic discussion on technical issues of Web publishing. It addresses topics as diverse as choosing domain names, web hosts, general principles of design, building audiences and even funding for a Web project.

However, although *Digital History* raises relevant and up-to-date questions on changes in the production of knowledge which affect historiography, much of it is dedicated to what may be characterised as a *general* discussion of digital media. In other words, although the “qualities of digital media and networks” referred to in the book undeniably allow “us to do things better” (2006, pp 3-9), they seem helpful not only to the work of historians but to potentially every other person willing to use the Web to enhance professional practice. Indeed, most of the characteristics highlighted by Cohen and Rosenzweig, such as capacity, accessibility, flexibility, diversity, manipulability, interactivity and hypertextuality, are potentially useful not only to digital history but to any form of digital scholarship. Being *general* qualities of digital media, they offer opportunities for any professional hoping to optimise their works using the Web, historians included.

Without discounting the merits of Rosenzweig’s and Cohen book, they fail to address one fundamental question: what are historians’ *specific* contributions to this dynamic hyperspatial landscape? Of course, several historians are increasingly aware of the required *general* digital skills, such as: developing proficiency with the tools of technology; solving problems collaboratively and cross-culturally; designing and sharing information for global communities to meet a variety of purposes; managing, analysing and synthesising multiple streams of information simultaneously; and creating, criticising, analysing, and evaluating multi-media texts. \(^{110}\) However, just as general characteristics of digital media and emerging new literacy demands must be addressed by historians, is it not also a propitious moment to investigate *specificities* in digital


history writing? In other words, just as past generations of historians competently developed particular historiographical methods and styles based on print-based technologies, is it not the moment for historians to rethink the discipline’s practices and methodologies in accordance with the digital environments?

Historians’ publications have usually differed from those of journalists, sociologists, political scientists, educators and other writers; thus, many of disciplinary idiosyncrasies may continue with the production of Web pages, blogs, animations, games, movies and other forms of digital production. How will the stages from planning to presenting historical digital works differ from those of other knowledge producers?

Fortunately, many historians are beginning to ask what “historical scholarship [will] look like in the networked electronic medium of the Internet and what forms of historical narrative might be enhanced or enabled” (THOMAS II, 2004). In this context, some scholars are beginning to ask how new technologies can go beyond inspiring (word-based) writing to transform historians’ concept of writing. This is the case of a collection of essays, Manifestos for History, with its unambiguous challenge to historians to reflect on the use of “twenty-first century technologies” in order to engage “with wider publics” and to be “brave enough to experiment with language, image, sound, colour and any other elements of presentation that will make the past live and vibrate and terrify us once again” (JENKINS; MORGAN; MUNSLOW; 2007, foreword and pg. 13). Recent publications such as this signal that, despite the historian’s fondness for linear and coherent texts “in crisp black fonts on a white page”, there is an urgent need to explore the advantages of the Web and produce “new forms of history that can only exist online” (COHEN, 2004, p. 294).
As a contribution to this emerging debate, I have coined the concept of *historiomediography*: a multimedia approach to writing history. In contrast to the widely adopted verbocentric definition of writing, historiomediography focuses on how to overcome historians’ relatively restricted training in word editors, such as Microsoft Word, when contemporary historiography clearly could benefit from a broader preparation in audio, visual, animation and Web software.

This neologism has been helpful to me, both in my research and teaching activities. By proposing a historiomediographic approach, I challenge the conventions of writing and reading history in which I was trained as an academic historian. By gradually incorporating my self-taught skills in computer graphics and Web design into my academic work, I see *beyond* their undeniably pertinent general uses for “gathering, preserving and presenting”. The use of these multimedia resources enables me to produce historical digital narratives that integrate complementary and hybrid verbal, visual and aural languages.

Such a multimedia approach challenges historiography, with its stable and long-established association with written formats. It may also challenge, or even threaten the strictly-trained historian who is satisfied with working only with words.
My interest in this topic derives, in part, from a challenging meeting with a historian who disapproved of such experiments. As an undergraduate, I sat in a lecture in which an expert on Brazilian visual history analysed the works of the two painters I analysed in this thesis, Victor Meirelles and Pedro Américo. Enthusiastically, I approached the lecturer afterward and shared through prepared computer graphics my interpretation of the same paintings. I was surprised by the historian’s negative response that “my iconoclastic approach was not respectful of the original sources.” I was genuinely puzzled since my goal was to use computer graphics to synthesise, in one image, the main theme of the lecturer: those paintings are revealing of the Eurocentric discourses informing Brazilian intellectuals at the time. Although the lecturer deconstructed and intervened in the paintings with words; it was curious how this same person appeared surprised, and even offended, with an equivalent deconstruction using a different literacy skill.

If historians are adequately comfortable to intervene and to deconstruct historical paintings in words, why should it matter if the re-interpretation is in the visual codes from which the paintings are essentially composed: lines, shapes, textures, colours? I argue that graphic and Web design should be viewed as a complementary path to the (verbal) critical analyses that historians produce from historical sources, paintings included. Beyond our attachment to the traditional academic concept of (verbally) interpreting and writing history, there are no genuine theoretical barriers to stop us from analysing visual or aural media through the use of other images or sounds. Apart from our lack of skills and our disciplinary habits, there is no aprioristic reason or obstacle for academic scholarship to be also published in the form of “rigorous” and “dense” historical Web sites, movies, animations, and video games.

The ontological task herein is to go beyond thinking of themes such as the history of or on the media, to acknowledging history as media. The old philosophical riddle “If a tree falls in the forest, and no one is around, does it still make a sound?” can be usefully paraphrased: if a historical episode occurs, and there is no historian around to tell it, is it still history? Indeed, epistemological debates have been marked by reflections on the limits of the scientific method.

In the case of historiography, most modern historians tend to agree that the past cannot be reconstructed, no matter how honest, erudite and careful a researcher may be. Positivist-Rankean ambitions to show how the past “really happened” have shifted to - no less complex - attempts to offer plausible and multilayered interpretations of it. This is equally true regarding the use of visual sources in history. Unlike common nineteenth-century and early twentieth-centuries assumptions that the work of artists were “replications of the real”, art historians today point to their selective gaze and cultural bias as human constructs:
the notion that representations in the form of paintings, drawings, lithographs, and engravings can mirror reality has been since well put to rest. ‘Pure’ visual documentation is impossible. Observational neutrality is a fiction. Perception is never unmediated or value-free (BELL, 1992)

As Alun Munslow notes, if the past is an ontological reality largely incomprehensible and inaccessible to human beings, history is always a cultural, limited and selective form of knowledge, therefore, necessarily “a constructed narrative” of this past (MUNSLOW, 1997, p.108). As a way to remind readers of this illusive correspondence between past and history, Alan Munslow uses the expression: the past-as-history.

However, it is also important to add that any historical narrative is necessarily embedded in a corresponding media format. If the past can be defined as an ontological reality independent from human representation, history, on the other hand, does not exist outside of books, articles, classrooms, films, etc. In addition to its empirical dimension of primary and secondary sources; its content dimension of dates, names, facts; its epistemological dimension of concepts, theories and paradigms, history is also formed within a mediatic-technological dimension. In other words, history is also intrinsically a medium (text, sound or image) expressed through a technology of communication (clay, papyrus, human body, books, cinema)\footnote{I adopt here the distinction between media and technology as defined by Michael Moore and Greg Kearsley (2011) for whom, different from popular usage, these words should not be taken as synonyms. Even though the word “technology” has multiple meanings, it can be considered as a “practical application of scientific knowledge” (this includes human inventions as diverse as the wheel, paper, radio, satellites, computers, etc.). The word “media”, on the other hand, should be seen as the way information is represented. Through this more strict meaning of the word, there are four types of media: text, image (static or dynamic), sounds and artifacts (p. 7).}.

Just as Alun Munslow alerts his reader to this misleading - yet still common - correlation between the concepts of past and history, it is necessary also to decouple the equally common, modern association between text and history. In this appendix, I argue that the past-as-history has gradually become a past-as-written-history. The neologism historiomiography is an expression that permanently reminds the reader of the reductionism of associating historiography only to written formats. The word maintains a permanent focus on the potential multimediality of writing history: the past-as-written-visual-aural-history.

Beyond such philosophical-epistemological issues, my historiomiographic approach has enabled me to demonstrate how accessible graphic and Web design development tools - combining epistemological concerns, academic rigor, technical erudition and aesthetic beauty - open creative and critical paths for historians who wish to rethink their disciplinary approach
while, at the same time, offering practical contributions to important topics in Brazilian historical studies. It has been particularly useful as well in my teaching experiences, enabling the use of technological didactic tools that are the common currency of a new generation of readers and students increasingly receptive to faster new media-based communication. Indeed, the use of new media in the planning of my history classes created an attractive, productive link to capture the attention of today’s students who are frequently accused of impatience or being resistant to intellectual learning.

Indeed, such issues are raised by educators worldwide, not only history teachers in Brazil. Of central concern is the increasing difficulty of engaging students in reading and writing activities. Many teachers confess their inability to motivate students to read a basic bibliography, such as textbooks, or to write a minimum number of lines of texts. As a result, there are frequent and nostalgic comparisons between “contemporary students as hopelessly underprepared, or less bright or motivated than previous generations”112. This presumed increasing indifference towards verbal fluency is often associated with the popularity of mass communication and, more recently, with digital culture related to digital media. Indeed there is concern among adults “over young people's perceived lack of interest in reading, predicting all kinds of dire intellectual and social outcomes as society is ‘dumbed down’ and kids blank out over video games and stupid television rather than honing their wits on reading”113. The speed, ease and abundance with which contemporary media provide information is often assumed to have led younger generations to become "unstable" and "passive", un-equipped with the concentration required to enjoy a simple novel, or bored with the slow pace of a written argument.

Initially, I used the concept of historiomediology to re-situate the "location" of this supposed educational problem: what if it is actually we, teachers and researchers, who have enormous difficulties with reading and writing? After all, if we are to seriously address the alleged “loss” of motivation of many students for traditional learning of verbal language, we must also admit, as a corollary, that most of them are fully motivated to acquire learning experiences based on sound, image and multimedia formats which are frequently incomprehensible to us. Contemporary students can access an extraordinary range of non-formal education delivered in digital formats— music clips, iPods, videogames, comic books, LAN centres, podcasts – with which the majority of researchers and educators are not familiar. The verbal vocabulary used by

many students may seem disappointing\textsuperscript{114} when tasked to write conventional essays or to read books. Yet, no previous generation came of age with such familiarity with image-sound based environments\textsuperscript{115} and with non-linear forms of writing\textsuperscript{116}. While the chances of finding youngsters inclined to become traditional poets or novelists arguably may be progressively decreasing, it is ever more common to find aspiring bloggers, designers, graffiti artists, musicians, cartoonists, dancers, hackers, fields that prioritise non-verbal and post-print communication.

In favouring a historiomiediographic approach, I inevitably adopted two assumptions about my teaching and research activities: [1] instead of blaming students for any of their supposed faults, it is actually we, teachers and researchers, who urgently have to broaden our abilities to read and write; [2] literacy is the ability to interpret and produce meaning simultaneously through verbal, aural and visual codes.

To return a last time to the question that opened this appendix: “will the Web provide us with a better understanding of history?”, I argue a conditional “no.” However, a better understanding of how to write multimedia history on the Web, for the Web and, above all, how to write it as Web, will probably lead us to a much more direct, compelling and mutually respectful relation with a greater number of contemporary (on-line) readers. While it seems naive to expect the Web to provide us with a better understanding of history, its competent use may help achieve another equally important task: providing others with a better understanding of historians.

1.2 Admiring the Aesthetics of the Opaque

Image, in Latin America, historically constitutes a contested site, one at which figurations of identity and alterity are constantly reproduced as well as reassembled and re-signified. National iconographies, as they become hardened and stabilized, viabilize the State as a central instance of interpellation, yet they seem to retain, at the same time, part of the charge of otherness from which their iconicity derives, and which, at certain historical junctures, may suddenly be unleashed in counter-images and anti-icons. (ANDERMANN; ROWE, 2006, pp. 2-3)

For professional historians, an aspiration for multimedia literacy may seem impertinent, overwhelming and/or chimerical, especially for those challenged by the mastery of verbal conventions. If we are still learning how to competently write and read with words, why bother seeking proficiency in multimedia and Web design? After all, there are capable Web masters, programmers and graphic artists available to assist historians in need of their “technical” skills.

In evolving transdisciplinary enterprises such as the Web with its complexity and rapid changes, division of labour is inevitable. It is unrealistic to think that historians - or any other professional – can have expertise in the countless Web languages and technologies. Nonetheless, just as historians are able to perform basic structuring and formatting of their works in conventional text editors such as Microsoft Word, it is reasonable to assume that they would also benefit from producing basic multimedia content using simplified, off-the-shelf Web and graphic design software. Such a do-it-yourself approach is especially recommended given the increasing centrality of the Web for daily teaching and research tasks. It is also useful in view of the growing number new media-based readers and unpredictable “technical” services costs. In this regard, William Turkel and Alan MacEachern have employed a witty gastronomic analogy to emphasise why at least some historians “might want to learn to program”:

If you don't program, your research process will always be at the mercy of those who do. (...) What we're suggesting is that the rest of your scholarly life has already gone digital. To use another food metaphor, imagine that digital sources are like sugar (and who wouldn't like to think of them that way?) In medieval Europe, sugar was a rare and expensive spice. Although some people might know how to use it in a dish, most people didn't ever need to think about it. Fast forward to the late 19th century, when sugar made up a relatively large proportion of many European diets. Not everyone needed to know how to make dessert, but it was no longer a rare skill. In the 21st century, some forms of sugar (e.g., high-fructose corn syrup) have become very difficult to avoid. (Italics added)

Gaining facility and familiarity with a technology that is rapidly becoming as common as “sugar” may motivate some historians wishing to learn basic multimedia and Web design. However, the main motivation for learning multimedia should be its relevance to each historian's specific research interests. As coercive as they might seem, pressures from the technology market or from this digital native generation of students/readers should not be the main criteria of historians in deciding whether or not to embrace multimedia literacy; rather, I argue that the

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possibilities of using it critically, creatively and contextually in research and teaching activities should be their primary concern.

Returning to Turkel and MacEacherns’ food metaphor, it is useful to remember that sugarless diets are still a common option, as well as the use of honey, maple syrup or other sweetener of daily life. Just as a cook’s recipe will anticipate the correct ingredients, so will each historian’s goals come first in his or her decision to embrace or ignore multimedia writing. The desire to bake a chocolate cake should come before the necessity of buying sugar, not the opposite. Historiographical projects are to decide the use of multimedia, not the caprices of the technology industry.

Although I emphasise that computer graphics and Web design tools offer relatively unexplored paths for art historians who wish to reinterpret paintings, I do not naively suggest that every art historian embrace this approach. While I do assert that academic writers can enhance their work through the conjoint use of written, visual and aural media, I am not suggesting that this is a necessary path, nor do I claim that using multimedia in academic work is an “original” mode of historical expression.

On the contrary, the call for digital histories is not new. At least since the 1960s (THOMAS, II, 2004), historians have speculated on how computers and digital technologies could optimise the accomplishment of several tasks, which include but are not limited to: new cliometric and quantitative findings; making evidence public (since there is virtually no space limitation in cyberspace); making arguments non-linear (since through hyper-linking it is possible to move in multiple and varied directions); and making on-going revision, participatory writing and collaboration integral parts of the historical endeavour (since electronic text could be collectively and easily edited). Despite the undeniable increase of recent online publishing, the optimism of some Web historians has often given way to more cautious approaches, even to scepticism in some cases. This scepticism is in part due to readers’ limited enthusiasm for examining large, sometimes unfocused masses of material, as well as the emergence of Web historical experiences of doubtful quality (or even deliberately erroneous) content. In this context of virtually uncontrolled and near instantaneous forms of making historiographical knowledge public, many academic historians have been reflecting on the potential failure of such modes of publication, or simply asking why scholars should pursue such a direction.

To reiterate, I do not argue that technology itself can or will enhance historians’ writing abilities or enrich interpretations of artworks. In my view, historiography is, above all, concerned with reinterpreting evidence, with raising new questions and offering ethical, plural and plausible
interpretations of the past. It is not simply a descriptive discipline. Therefore, if historians are willing to reflect upon the way they distribute their findings, they should be motivated, necessarily, by the desire to offer more compelling answers to the specific research questions they raise.

Accordingly, I do not base my case on technophile suppositions that it has universal applicability or self-evident merits when applied to academic research. Rather, it is based on the pragmatic conviction that it provides specific ways to improve the interpretation of the art historical works investigated in this thesis. Specifically, that it opens fruitful ways for historians to acknowledge and make visible the centrality of the historical agency of Indigenous peoples and Afro-Brazilians and, therefore, to challenge central pillars of Brazilian historiography produced since the nineteenth-century.

As earlier documented, Brazilian history painters, informed by nineteenth-century historiography, developed subtle and effective ways to erase non-European populations from their work. Although contemporary Brazilian historiography has severely criticised nationalistic and Eurocentric aspects of these visual representations, I also suggested in Chapter 4 that a Brazilian-style “unseen whiteness” remains ubiquitous and relatively unchallenged in both visual and written historical interpretations.

Specifically, after a detailed analysis of K. von Martius’ and Francisco A. Varnhagen’s works, I coined the concepts hydraulic metaphor, state-nationalist and quadripartition to illustrate how this Brazilian “unseen whiteness” informs the editorial formats of “general” history books. In Chapter 5, I illustrated how these three coined concepts are useful in reinterpreting “whiteness” discourses informing the Pedro Américo painting Independence or Death!

The task of my interdependent Internet-based project is to build on my critical review of Brazilian national visual histories in previous chapters. In it, I created a multimedia project centred on Independence or Death! that combines the fresh Chapter 5 interpretations of the painting. As a result, the goal of this Web-based project is ambitious: [1] to present on-line readers with art historical formal, aesthetic and symbolic analyses of the painting; [2] to contextualise the painting inside the Brazilian post-independence historical period; [3] to challenge and reframe the way the emergence of the Brazilian nation-state continues to be interpreted as the result of a relatively peaceful and unidirectional history, especially when compared to its Latin American neighbours; and [4] to present a palpable example of how post-writing exercises can open practical benefits for art historical research.
The primary contribution of this Web-based project to the understanding of Américo’s work lies beyond the critical interpretation of its formal features, subject matter and symbolism. As counterintuitive as it may seem, much of the art historical interpretation will be located on the *unpainted spaces* outside the frame of this painting. Indeed, the task ahead of the Web-based project is not only to thoroughly understand how the “unseen” discourses of the *hydraulic metaphor*, *quadripartition* and *state-nationalism* have helped to structure the composition, colours, textures, contrasts, themes and characters inside Pedro Américo’s paintings, but also to challenge them by remembering the countless Indigenous and African populations excluded from its visual narrative. If these three specific manifestations of Brazilian whiteness have helped to subordinate, exclude and confine the historical agency of countless Indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants to a *state of opacity* in most nineteenth-century history paintings, I believe that multimedia initiatives can help to better understand this as an art historical theme, and to challenge some of its contemporary pedagogical effects.

In order to achieve this, nineteenth-century paintings will be defined here not only as pictures executed (and finished) in paint, but *also* as unfinished canvases to which computer graphics and Web design can add continuous and potentially infinite *imagined* pieces of meaning. Conventional art historical methods and theories provide the essential procedures for interpreting visual evidence; computer graphics and Web design, on the other hand, offer the tools to investigate what can be conveniently called the *aesthetics of the opaque*: the vast range of images dedicated to Indigenous’ and Africans’ historical agency that were *never* painted:

![Fig 6.2 Aesthetics of the opaque 1](image-url)
For my thesis - this text document and related Web page - I have used: [1] the text editors Word and Open Office; [2] the image editor Photoshop; and [3] the animation and interactivity editor Flash and [4] the Web page editor Dreamweaver. I have used these technologies to write about these “opaque chapters” of Indigenous and African histories within the Brazilian territory. These tools produce heterodox outcomes, unlike those in most art history theses. Besides providing relatively simple ways for illustrating how Américo’s painting is limited by a state-nationalist Brazilcentric lens/framing:

Fig 6.3 Aesthetics of the opaque 2

Multimedia permits potentially unlimited possibilities to approach the history of populations whose cultures and subjectivities were much more complex and larger than any AIBA representations; and who never really belonged inside the perimeters and canvases of the nation-state:
Fig 6.4 Aesthetics of the opaque 3

Beyond the sketchy examples above, the main task of this Web-based project, by reframing traditional history discourses exemplarily represented in Américo’s painting, is to contribute to the general effort of those arguing for the need for decolonial and polycentric aesthetics” (SHOHAT; STAM, 2000). There is no need to describe every feature of the Web project. Since it is intended to be a self-explanatory and self-sufficient narrative of the history of Brazil – intelligible also to those who will never read this thesis - I will limit the reference to indicate its on-line address: www.genaro.me

\[118\] http://transnationaldecolonialinstitute.wordpress.com/decolonial-aesthetics/
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