



Revista Brasileira de História

ISSN: 0102-0188

ISSN: 1806-9347

Associação Nacional de História - ANPUH

Iumatti, Paulo Teixeira; Nicodemo, Thiago Lima
Arquivos pessoais e a escrita da história no Brasil: um balanço crítico
Revista Brasileira de História, vol. 38, no. 78, 2018, May-August, p. 00
Associação Nacional de História - ANPUH

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1590/1806-93472018v38n78-05>

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Personal Archives and Historical Writing in Brazil: A Critical Review

Arquivos pessoais e a escrita da história no Brasil: um balanço crítico

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RESUMO

Considerando o crescente interesse por documentos de arquivos pessoais no mundo atual, procuramos, neste artigo, apresentar um balanço do modo como esses documentos têm sido utilizados, no Brasil, em um campo particularmente aberto para reflexões de cunho teórico e epistemológico: o da história da historiografia – ao qual somamos o da história intelectual e congêneres. Com isso, pretendemos mostrar, a um público mais amplo, resultados teóricos e reflexões que podem ser aproveitados tanto por especialistas como por pesquisadores pouco afeitos a essas áreas, mas que se beneficiam de seus resultados teóricos ao procurarem utilizar documentos de arquivos pessoais em suas pesquisas – tendência crescente à medida que se consolidam e aumentam

ABSTRACT

Responding to the growing interest in personal papers and archives in the contemporary world, in this article we aim to present an overview of how these documents have been used in Brazil within a field particularly open to theoretical and epistemological reflections: the history of historiography – to which we have added intellectual history and other analogous fields. In so doing, we seek to demonstrate to a wider audience theoretical results and reflections that can be used by both specialists and researchers not entirely familiarized with these areas, but who can benefit from the theoretical implications of using documents from personal archives in their historical research. Conversely, we also look to expand the debate on the history of historiography and intellec-

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as instituições de guarda e seus repertórios documentais, no Brasil e no mundo. Inversamente, pretendemos também, ao fazer tal balanço, abrir os campos específicos da história da historiografia e da história intelectual para as reflexões que se fazem em outras áreas, como a teoria literária, com base em documentos de arquivos pessoais. O objetivo é aprofundar o diálogo interdisciplinar e contribuir para um uso mais crítico das fontes em obras de história intelectual e biografias, de forma geral. Palavras-chave: arquivos pessoais; história da historiografia; história intelectual; memória.

tual history towards more interdisciplinary approaches, including the use of personal archives in areas such as comparative literature and literary theory. In short, the overall goal is to deepen interdisciplinary dialogues in the history of historiography and intellectual history, contributing to a more critical use of sources in works of intellectual history and biographies in general.

Keywords: personal archives; history of historiography; intellectual history; memory studies.

Closely linked to the theory of history, the history of historiography is a field open to the appropriation of methods and techniques developed in correlated fields such as literary theory, the history of science, intellectual history, the sociology of intellectuals and the history of culture, all of which have been making increasing use of documents from personal archives. In interaction with these fields, over the last twenty years the discipline has systematically explored questions relating to the study of ideas in their context; to the relation, in diverse instances, between historical discourse and the construction of identities; to the connections between historical discourse and narrative forms; to the relation between the production of knowledge and political and social power; to the politics of memory and forgetting and to the forms and rules of sociability in intellectual life. These questions have been studied in academic research on the work and career of specific historians, on groups or generations of historians, and on the broader institutional spaces through which the production of historical knowledge is supported and disseminated.

In these studies, the forms of historiographic analysis have become ever more multifaceted at the same time as access to documents from personal archives has been increasing.² In this setting, the recourse to such documents has taken place concomitantly with the deepening of a more self-reflexive stance with regard to exploration of the theoretical and methodological aspects

of historical research. This is perhaps one of the main ways through which Brazilian historiography has become inserted in an increasingly globalized historiographic panorama (Revel, 2010, p. 69) – which also involves research developed partially or entirely abroad, in the archives of foreign historians (Palmeira, 2013; Benthien, 2014) – a panorama in which a “mixture of epistemology and historiography” emerges as the common ground, especially from the 1980s and 1990s onward (Hartog, 2011, pp. 247-251). Whatever the case, it is important to note that this stance has enabled a deeper insight into aspects relating to the utilization of documents from personal archives of historians and intellectuals in general, which coincides with a more acute awareness of the importance of their preservation.

At first glance, the proliferating presence of the personal archives of intellectuals in public institutions and their employment in academic research seems to signify a dive into the past. However, what this tendency demonstrates is precisely the opposite. Such proliferation is a clear symptom of deep transformations at a global level, which have led to a multiplication of the forms and speed of the systems of information production and circulation and a revolution in their physical media. Faced by this context, it became urgent for historians to refine the tools used to comprehend these processes of accelerating transformation and their social meaning (Castells, 1999) – since the moment of acceleration also opens up fertile ground for the flourishing of dangerous proposals, such as the law bill legalizing the destruction of original analogue documents after their “digitalization and storage on authenticated optic or digital media” (PLS 146/2007), and which multiply the possibilities for dampening the corrosive potential of history as a discipline and a critical method.

The fact is that we know little about how to deal in the sphere of historical research with the personal ‘hyperarchives’ produced by digital culture (Enniss, 2015, pp. 232-233), especially with respect to characteristics such as the “multiplicity and overlapping of temporalities” (Castro, 2016, p. 185). However, it is important to emphasize that the radical processes that we know observe have their roots in the somewhat chaotic development, from the viewpoint of the *peripheral or semiperipheral countries* (see Wallerstein, 2004), of technological and communicational processes that rapidly proliferated between the end of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first and expanded out from the centre of capitalism. To construct a critical viewpoint amid the turmoil, it is essential to recognize not only that, although initially regarded with

disdain by historical science, documents from personal archives acquired an epistemological relevance over the first decades of the twentieth century (Heymann, 2009, pp. 42-43). The use of archives in the history of historiography as a discipline has always functioned as a thermometer and a laboratory for the sedimentation of disciplinary procedures. The archive was a fundamental element in the stabilization of a disciplinary culture. As Wimmer reminds us, the history of archival evaluation is a history of the writing of history *avant la lettre* (Wimmer, 2015, p. 166). Following this same line, thinking about the future of archives inevitably leads us to problematize the future of history as a disciplinary form.

In this article we propose to evaluate the use of documents from personal archives in works from the history of historiography and similar fields such as intellectual history, with the aim of divulging their results and highlighting paths for future research and critical thought. Our intention is to identify the points where the theoretical-methodological debate has deepened, taking into account the broader context of transformations in the writing of history over recent decades. To this end, we consider four themes: 1. The idea of intellectual ‘networks’; 2. The historicity of the relation between intellectuals and the public sphere; 3. The processes of creation; and, finally, 4. The personal archive as retrospective memory.

ON INTELLECTUAL ‘NETWORKS’

One of the potential contributions of research on the personal archives of intellectuals is a better comprehension of the sociointellectual and institutional networks made evident in the documents. Acquiring a clearer understanding of how particular authors or trajectories are situated vis-à-vis their ‘peers’ provides us with an insight into the configuration of the often highly dynamic and diverse networks in which they were inserted. This question has clear theoretical-methodological repercussions since these ‘networks’ are naturally inserted in wider contexts and help us comprehend more clearly how knowledge circulates within a determined space and time. Such conditioning factors are very far from being merely scenographic aspects given that they determine the very nature of knowledge, its epistemology. In short, the form in which knowledge circulates determines, in part, its nature. Understanding this circulation thus

implies understanding the values, premises and protocols of knowledge production itself.

Over the last 10 or 20 years, the theoretical or conceptual debate on the idea of networks and intellectual circulation has been led to a considerable extent by the influx of French trends and authors, among whom we can highlight the historian Jean-François Sirinelli. Exploring the problem of how to understand the roles of intellectuals connected to political and sociocultural history, the author seeks to reflect on the concepts of itinerary, generation and structures of sociability. The latter, structures of sociability, also called networks, refer to the ties that connect intellectuals, as well as to the spaces around which they are constructed – whether such spaces are literary salons, the offices of a journal or the editorial board of a publishing house. As Sirinelli further argues, forces of adhesion are formed around these structures – through their underlying friendships, unifying loyalties and exerted influences – as well as forces of exclusion – through the positions taken, the debates provoked, the splits arising as a consequence, and so on (Sirinelli, 2003, pp. 248-254).

The use of the concept of intellectual ‘networks’ and their correlates in Brazilian historiography over the last two decades has primarily been linked to the international – and especially French – historiographic context of revalorizing political history and strengthening the so-called history of the present, which reverberated in Brazilian universities, especially in the first decade of the twenty-first century. This not only includes the prominence given to Sirinelli, but also the less systematic, yet still significant, influx of theoretical models deriving from other equally important approaches, such as the ‘connected histories’ of Trebitsch and Espagne (1999) or the ‘cross history’ of Werner (2004) and Werner and Zimmermann (2003), constructed in interdisciplinary institutions located in central countries, involving broad transnational perspectives. This influence can be measured, for example, in a recent collective work edited by Ângela de Castro Gomes and Patrícia Hansen, entitled *Intelectuais Mediadores* (Gomes; Hansen, 2016). Despite its methodological eclecticism, the book reveals from its introduction on a close interaction with the ‘new’ French political history developed at the end of the twentieth-century. In the authors’ view, the use of the repertoire of this approach allows greater attention to be paid to the concrete aspects of cultural mediation and intellectual sociability, thus emancipating thought from the abstract tendency of a history of ideas, as well as antiquated tendencies that

projected the condition of ‘genius’ on the intellectual, an exceptional man (Gomes; Hansen, 2016, pp. 10-11).

Apropos transnational networks and interdisciplinarity, we can mention the work of Christino (2007) on the international networks of Capistrano de Abreu. In this work, the author explores the “mechanisms for producing and disseminating the linguistic works of South Americanists between 1890 and 1929 and their theoretical reference points” (Christino, 2007, p. 29), mobilizing documentation that enables the reconstruction of a Teuto-South-American network: the archives of the Ethnological Museum of Berlin and the Walter Lehman and Paul Ehrenreich Collection at the Ibero-American Institute, as well as the Ethnographic Collection of the Phillips Universität, as well as the collection of Capistrano de Abreu himself, held at the Institute of Ceará (Historical, Geographical and Anthropological). The methodological parameters of Christino’s research stemmed from the linguistics and historiography of this area, and led her to consider factors such as knowing about the “circuit of production and reception of works on South American indigenous languages written by specialists between 1890 and 1929,” in order to “specify what an ‘authentic’ South Americanist meant in the years between 1890 and 1920” (Christino, 2007, pp. 40-41).

There has been no lack of major efforts to comprehend local, national or transnational ‘networks.’ Much the opposite: in a highly diverse universe, we can highlight studies that adopt this perspective to explore the work and careers of two authors belonging to the same ‘network’: Gilberto Freyre and Oliveira Lima. Notably many of the studies on these leading intellectuals were made possible by the existence of the Oliveira Lima Library itself at the Catholic University of America since the end of the 1920s, as well as the organization of Freyre’s personal archives at the Casa de Gilberto Freyre in Recife. Along these lines, we can mention the study by Ângela de Castro Gomes, “Family life: the correspondence between Oliveira Lima and Gilberto Freyre” (Gomes, 2005), which demonstrates the insertion of the authors at the centre of an international network that united Brazilians, Latin Americans, North Americans and Europeans, and focused on the study of themes and questions relating to the Americas. The hegemonic power of the United States was counterbalanced by a growing desire for cultural representation on the part of the Portuguese and Spanish Americas, following an original conception of Pan-Americanism postulated from the nineteenth century on. In these terms, the Oliveira Lima Library formed part of a ‘Pan-American circuit’ that was as political as it was

intellectual, and that, benefitting from the United States interest in Latin America, sought to foster affirmation in the 'North' of the research and visibility of the 'South.'

Knowledge of this Pan-American 'network' of intellectuals surrounding Oliveira Lima and, following his death, partially continued by Freyre, was deepened through the studies of Maria Lúcia Pallares-Burke, *Gilberto Freyre: um vitoriano nos trópicos* (Pallares-Burke, 2005) and, above all, *O triunfo do fracasso* (Pallares-Burke, 2012). In both cases, the research was broadly supported by personal documents and indebted to Oliveira Lima's correspondence. One of the most interesting aspects of these works is the comprehension of how Brazil helped guide the North American race debate thanks to the hypertrophic effect of the concept of miscegenation. From the theoretical viewpoint, this idea contributed greatly to consolidating the quality of the works in intellectual history and the history of historiography, since it broke from the premise of 'influence' generally being exerted by the 'most developed' countries (whether Germany, France, the United States) on the 'less developed.' The reconstruction of intellectual networks through personal documentation sheds light on the complex nature of the exchange of ideas, and teaches us that, even when dealing with concepts that can be traced back to European thought, we need to be attentive to the processes of transformation, creative adaptation and sometimes 'return,' as well as modification of the supposed 'original' under the influence of the equally supposed 'peripheral' (Werner; Zimmermann, 2003).

Critique of relations based on intellectual subordination has been another of the key features of works of historiography or intellectual history, including the investment in understanding other phenomenon recurrent in Brazilian intellectual life: the figure of the 'foreign intellectual' and a type of relation that Rouanet, in his study on Ferdinand Denis, called a conscious exercise in intellectual tutorship. This relation assumes different aspects. From a *pragmatic contamination* – Denis and the romantic generation – to the *pragmatic misreading* that guided the relations between the nascent historiography of the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro (Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute, IHGB) in the nineteenth century and the emblematic figure of von Martius. Here we may also cite the work of Lúcia Paschoal Guimarães and Valdeci Araújo on the network of John Casper Branner, based on his correspondence kept at the Stanford University archives (Guimarães; Araújo, 2004, pp. 93-109). In their study, the authors seek to comprehend Branner's proximity to key people from Brazilian intellectual life. Although focused on elucidating

the relations that maintain Brazilian intellectual life dependent on the exterior, these works provide the material for us to understand these same contexts from the perspective of the multidirectionality of the flow of ideas.

Neither can we ignore the domestic ‘networks’ and structures of sociability based on affect that are very often associated not only with ‘microclimates,’ but also with networks important to the production of regional identities. Take, for example, the study by Karina Anhezini, “Correspondence and writing history in the intellectual trajectory of Afonso Taunay” (Anhezini, 2003): setting out from an analysis of the relations in the IHGB and the IHGSP as *locales of sociability*, Anhezini – drawing inspiration from Sirinelli – seeks to identify some of the meanings of the positions occupied by Taunay in these institutions in terms of his own historiographic production. In addition to the records of the IHGB and the IHGSP, the author uses as a source the Taunay Collection of the Museu Paulista at the Universidade de São Paulo (USP). Taunay was director of the Museu Paulista and his collection forms part of his personal archive, which was assembled and donated over years. For Anhezini (2003), this trajectory was permeated by a network of sociability capable of pointing to relations whose exchanges – observed mainly through his correspondence – played an important role in the author’s intellectual development and establishment as a leading figure in the area between 1911 and 1929. Indeed, the Taunay collection at the Museu Paulista has been utilized by a series of investigators wishing to explore the invention of traditions and processes of constructing/inventing identities, such as, for example, Brefe (2005), whose work makes use of the collection held at the institution.

THE HISTORICITY OF THE RELATION BETWEEN INTELLECTUALS AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

Thinking in terms such as ‘intellectuals’ or ‘men of letters’ in Brazil requires a careful analysis of the historicity of the categories themselves. Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in particular, we are dealing with processes that involve varying degrees of transition from a profile of the ‘polymath’ intellectual – in other words, someone capable of mobilizing many kinds of knowledge – to the profile of the specialist, linked to the development of university disciplines, as well as other institutions like the museums, archives and libraries that multiplied in number over the twentieth century. This

observation prompts us to investigate a trend towards studies that take the specialization, disciplinarization and professionalization of knowledge itself as their principal topic of inquiry.

Among the questions explored in studies of historians based on documents from personal archives, we can firstly highlight the difficult and complex problem of the characteristics and limits of 'public space' and its relation to the private sphere. In fact, personal archives seem particularly capable of supplying answers to questions about the links between the public and private spheres in the trajectories of historians and intellectuals. Examining them, we can identify, for example, particular sets of information, relations, affiliations or questions that remained hidden from view, undeveloped in their public work. In this universe of reflections, however, a number of significant difficulties have appeared, including, for example, those relating to the very definition of the boundaries between the public and the private, or the nature of this Brazilian 'public space' and 'intellectual life' itself, given that, as historians, we are dealing with unstable categories that shift considerably over time. When it comes to the archives of politicians, for instance, it is worth noting that Brazilian politicians frequently were originally or became historians, such as the Baron of Rio Branco, while others of them, like Washington Luís, played a prominent role in the publication of sources at the start of the twentieth century.

It is interesting, therefore, that in a study of the personal correspondence of Capistrano de Abreu – the bulk of which was published in the 1950s by José Honório Rodrigues – Amed utilizes a study by Trebitsch (1992) as one of his main theoretical reference points. These works share the view that letters should be considered political documents and crucial testimony to networks of sociability and ideas that were marginalized or forgotten both in academia and at a political level (Amed, 2006, pp. 190-191). Fernando Amed especially emphasizes the authenticity of Capistrano de Abreu's ideas expressed in his correspondence – which contrasts with the dearth of alternatives found in the Brazilian intellectual sphere of the time, suffocated by the absence of a reading public (high levels of illiteracy) and by the cryptic nature (preponderance of personal and power relations over merit-based criteria) of public spaces capable of disseminating knowledge – the small number of publishing houses, newspapers, journals and research institutions. Following this description of Brazilian intellectual life and public space, the author argues that Capistrano's

letter writing “amounted to a private – subjective – response to an obstruction existing in the public sphere” (Amed, 2006, p. 46).

In relation to Capistrano de Abreu’s personal archive, we should highlight the group attached to the Federal University of Ceará (UFC) that formed around the “Organization of Capistrano de Abreu’s Collection” project at the Ceará Institute. Setting out from the theoretical works of the new cultural history, such as those produced by Chartier, the study by Paula Batista, *Capistrano de Abreu e a correspondência feminina*, also seeks to reconstruct the intellectual’s network of sociability, centring on the mechanisms for ‘exchanging favours’ and reaching a number of different conclusions to those of Amed’s study. Investigating his correspondence with women, the author observes that the homes visited by Capistrano were “locales of sociability,” which performed “the same role as the academic bodies that Capistrano claimed to avoid” (Batista, 2006, p. 88). Corresponding with “major political figures” like the minister and historian Pandiá Calógeras, Capistrano often resorted to clientelist practices (Batista, 2006, pp. 89-90).

Notably one of the coordinators of the project responsible for organizing the Capistrano de Abreu Collection is the historian Giselle Venancio, whose work has invested heavily in research on the personal archive of Oliveira Vianna (Casa de Oliveira Vianna – Funarj). Her work tackles diverse aspects such as the recourse to the library as part of his creative dynamic and writing process (Venancio, 2006, pp. 87-110), as well as Vianna’s vast social network, involving personal, political and intellectual relations, made evident by the dispatch of his publications. Employing the ideas of French researchers of epistolography like Vincent-Buffault and Dauphin, and principally Chartier’s observations on communities of readers and the emergence of the men of letters of the eighteenth century, Venancio shows how Vianna sought to establish his own community of readers. In this sense, his letter writing can be apprehended as a strategy for organizing and developing his relations of sociability and principally for the structuring of a community that ensured the propagation and extolling of his ideas (Venancio, 2001, pp. 23-47; Venancio, 2015).

One of the central figures in Brazilian intellectual history in terms of understanding the institutionalization of knowledge production in the country is without doubt Capistrano de Abreu. Even at a time when the university was yet to become a concrete problem, he campaigned for a specialized field of ‘historical studies,’ helping sediment new analytic procedures and serving as a model for subsequent generations of intellectuals who would become

specialists. This is a view substantially supported, especially in the studies of Gontijo and Oliveira, at least partially by the historian's correspondence. In both cases, the authors mobilize Capistrano's correspondence to comprehend the processes of 'canonization' of the intellectual from Ceará state, evaluating the problems involved in gaining access to his personal archive, only released decades after his death (Gontijo, 2006, pp. 11-12; Oliveira, 2006, pp. 29-35), as well as deepening our knowledge of his network of interlocutors in the field of historical studies and his disciples (Gontijo, 2006, pp. 204-206). These elements contribute to our understanding of "how Capistrano planned to write history, taking into account the practices relating to the profession of historian during his era" (Gontijo, 2006, p. 228) or how, through the work of critique, "he delineates the attributes of his profession and, with them, signals some of the boundaries – then being demarcated – of his discipline" (Oliveira, 2006, p. 48). This theme has been explored in further depth by more recent works that make more or less systematic use of Capistrano de Abreu's correspondence as a basis for understanding the disciplinary processes of writing the history of Brazil between the final years of the nineteenth century and the start of the twentieth (Santos, 2009; Batalhone, 2015).

One important avenue for comprehending the specialization and disciplinarization of historical knowledge – and also neighbouring areas like geography and sociology – has been the increased availability of personal/professional/institutional documentation. On this point, the history of historiography has gained much from the organization and formation of the personal collections of the first generations of university professors and other authors who played a pioneering role in the development of the country's universities. Progress in this direction encounters various structural problems, however, since few universities in Brazil have the resources to safeguard their own institutional memory and store it adequately. Fortunately one exception is Proedes-UFRJ, which even holds documents from the short-lived University of the Federal District (UDF), Siarq (the Sérgio Buarque de Holanda Papers), Cedae and the Edgard Leuenroth Archive at Unicamp, and the Institute of Brazilian Studies (IEB) and Support Centre for Historical Research (CAPH) at USP. In this area, we can highlight the systematic study by Marieta de Moraes Ferreira, *A história como ofício* (Ferreira, 2013), which makes use of the testimony of professors, combined with the private material of academic staff who helped shape their era, like Deffontaines, Hauser, Camilo and Delgado de Carvalho, among others. The work on the institutional activities

of figures like Caio Prado Jr. (Iumatti et al., 2008) and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (Nicodemo, 2008; Nicodemo, 2014) has also advanced through more in-depth explorations of other key authors, including Alessandra Soares Santos's study of Francisco Iglésias and university historiography in Minas Gerais (Santos, 2013; Santos, 2013a). Another recent study has sought to construct a collective biography of the USP professors and students who formed the *Capital* reading group from 1958, often based on sociological references and turning to the personal archives of professors, such as those of CAPH at USP and Florestan Fernandes's at Unesp (Rodrigues, 2011).

Finally, we can note that the personal archive has traditionally been associated with the public prominence or the 'established' reputation of its author. Over the last few years, however, various factors have helped strengthen an alternative and, to some extent, counter-hegemonic agenda, including questions relating to gender, race and political resistance, which has shed light on important aspects of Brazil's 'intellectual tradition,' as well as the nature of its 'public space.' Recent studies like those of Erbereli Jr., based on the personal documents of Alice Canabrava, and Machado, turning to the documents of Cecília Westphalen, enable a better understanding of the difficulties faced by women in rising professionally and achieving recognition in a university world controlled by a vast majority of men (Erbereli Jr., 2016; Machado, 2016). In the field of political resistance, Schmidt's studies emphasize the incorporation of documents from personal archives, as in his study of the trajectory of Flávio Koutzil (Schmidt, 2009).

PROCESSES OF CREATION AND OTHER INTERDISCIPLINARY DIALOGUES

An increasingly important trend over recent years, one directly linked to the exploration of documents from personal archives and even the libraries of intellectuals, has been minutely detailed or even microscopic readings of works. It is worth recalling, however, that this tendency was not primarily developed in Brazil through historiographic studies, but rather – and in pioneering form – by scholars of literature, in interaction with the French school of so-called genetic criticism from the 1970s onward (see Zular, 2002). These possibilities were opened up by the lengthy process of organizing the Mário de Andrade Collection at IEB-USP, a project coordinated by Telê Ancona Lopez and initially dedicated to understanding the background to the creation of

Macunaíma (Lopez, 1975). Involving diverse documental typologies over the years, as well as a deeper study of the marginalia of the books stored in the Mário de Andrade Library, this approach has produced a large number of studies and methodological suggestions. In relation to letters, for example, Moraes has taken these documents as a source for understanding “behind the scenes aspects of the artistic life of a particular period,” as well as exploring letters in closer detail as an “archive of creation” (Moraes, 2007, p. 30). The terrain opened up in the process involves an interdisciplinary dialogue between the history of historiography and literary theory, via the intermediation of genetic criticism – which considers “epistolography a ‘worksite’ or a ‘workshop,’ seeking to unveil the web of invention, the design of an aesthetic idea, when it examines the diverse aspects of the creative process” (Moraes, 2007, p. 30; Moraes, 2002).

Despite the relative absence of dialogue with Brazilian adherents of genetic criticism, as mentioned earlier, Brazilian researchers invested heavily in studying the process of constructing historical works from the 1990s onward, making use of personal archives for this purpose. Thus, and more strictly in the field of historiography, some works sought to interconnect the documents contained in personal archives in order to comprehend the process of developing a particular work. Examples include the explorations of the genesis of the works *Monções, Caminhos e Fronteiras* and *Visão do Paraíso* by Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (Wegner, 2000; Nicodemo, 2008; Nicodemo, 2014), and *Formação do Brasil Contemporâneo* by Caio Prado Jr. (Iumatti, 2001; Iumatti, 2018; Iumatti et al., 2008). Evidently, this type of study depends on the quality and quantity of the available documents, which, in the case of the Caio Prado Jr. Collection, held at IEB-USP, encompasses thousands of documents, including unpublished manuscripts, letters, reading cards and book marginalia. In Iumatti’s study, it becomes clear that examining this vast material reveals an entire series of subterranean epistemological reflections and transformations undergone by Caio Prado’s thought during the writing of *Formação do Brasil contemporâneo*.

THE PERSONAL ARCHIVE AS RETROSPECTIVE MEMORY

One of the most fruitful points of intersection between the history of historiography and personal archives is the study of the constitution of personal archives as an act of memory, actively shaping the meanings that we

attribute to authors and problems. Seen from this viewpoint, investigations of personal archives can contribute to a clearer apprehension of how certain interpretations of Brazil became predominant, insofar as they were constructed through the aggregation of strata of time and meanings. These conditioning factors configuring our subjective gaze, as well as our academic practices, can be seen as layers of contingent meanings that accumulate and can become subject to regressive mnemonic interpretations, setting out from the present and extending into the past, taking into account the various layers of historicity that have helped give form to an object or theme handed down to us (Feindt, 2014, p. 36). From this perspective, the forming of a personal archive presupposes a complex set of factors ranging from the desire to construct a certain memory on the part of the intellectual and his or her circle, to the trajectory of the post-mortem estate (which includes the trajectory of the inventory, donation or purchase, etc.), as well as its potential incorporation by an institution. Clearly, this is just the beginning of the process, since many decisions concerning storage and organization contribute to the archive eventually reaching the public (Campos; Bezerra, 2015, pp. 230-231).

We believe that the question of the retrospective or perhaps ‘multidirectional’ memory associated with personal archives – an aspect that should undoubtedly be incorporated into the investigation of the history of each archive, a history encompassing everything from its formation to interventions, changes and the infinite social, political, etc. vicissitudes that may or may not have led it to be stored at the institution – is something that merits deeper study and better utilization in the field of the history of historiography. Along these lines, we can highlight the work of Ulpiano Bezerra de Meneses, which helps elucidate this relationship. Commenting on various aspects involved in the focus on memory as a problematic issue over recent years, related to the multiple dimensions involved its crisis, Meneses stresses a fundamental point contained in the discussion on documents and archives, one that pervades any contemporary discussion on the processes of classifying archival documents: the production of historical knowledge should be indissociable from the (historical) knowledge of the production of the document in its broadest sense. The complexity introduced by the information society not only generates new technical demands for knowledge, it increases their diversity compared to traditional documentation due to the greater expanse of the sociocultural landscape in which they are situated (Meneses, 1999, p. 24).

Inquiry into the classification processes used in archives by the authors themselves, as distinct from the set of processes mobilized by the archivist a posteriori, can be more systematically incorporated by historiography. Here they are considered as ‘laboratories’ that expose the *modus operandi* of small workshops of knowledge production. This analytic exercise enables the development of forms of theoretical-methodological reflection that can effectively deepen the debate in the history of historiography and the theory of history – an approach that involves exploration of the internal architecture of the collections (see, for example, Venancio, 2015), which can provide a key to understanding the working methods (the historian’s ‘workshop’), projects and actual thought of the historians. In the field of the history of historiography, a number of recent works have paved the way for further development of these possibilities, including Iumatti’s article on his experience of organizing the Caio Prado Jr. Fund at IEB-USP (Iumatti, 2005), Miguel Palmeira’s study of the intellectual career of Moses Finley (2008; 2013), Rafael Benthien account of his experience of researching French personal archives (Benthien, 2014) and the works of Rafael Pereira da Silva (2015) and Raphael Guilherme de Carvalho (2017), which have sought to explore the disciplinary memory constructed around Sérgio Buarque de Holanda “with a fine-tooth comb,” considering even the meanings of his legacy produced or reworked after his death (see too Nicodemo, 2016).

This ‘metahistorical’ concern does not seem to us to conflict with the proposals of the archival field, such as the methodology advocated by Ana Maria Camargo, who argues for standards of organization that take into account the ‘functional attributes’ of personal documentation – in other words, the “close correspondence between the documents and the activities of the person producing them, so as to reinforce and stabilize the evidentiary effect that arises from this *sui generis* relation,” made evident by the social and institutional insertion of the subject in the multiplicity of activities performed in his or her life (Camargo, 2009, pp. 34-35; Camargo, 1998; Camargo; Goulart, 2007).

Despite the paths still to be explored at a deeper theoretical level, we need to recognize the important landmarks that already exist, represented by the work developed by historians and archivists on the history of archives and collections themselves. Generally speaking, the works exploring the formation and construction of personal archives tend to focus on the strategies of monumentalization and the construction of memory and the self. In this context, Ângela de Castro Gomes warned of the ‘fetish’ cast by the documents from personal archives, reflecting on the creation in Brazil during the 1970s of two

of the most important institutions responsible for holding private archives: CPDOC at the FGV and the Edgard Leuenroth Archive at Unicamp. Recalling her own trajectory as a CPDOC researcher, the historian affirmed that the main illusion generated by private archives is the idea that, by storing personal documents not explicitly intended for public consumption, their examination can reveal their producer in a 'true' form: the author is revealed 'for real,' as attested, supposedly, by the spontaneity and intimacy seen to mark much of the records (Gomes, 1998). Prochasson also urges the need for caution with respect to the mediators who effectively shape personal archives. The desire for consecration on the part of the authors of letters themselves and their awareness that the material might eventually be publicized undoubtedly generated various 'traps.' Thinking about the excessive importance conferred by Bertrand Muller, editor of the correspondence exchanged by Bloch and Febvre, to their letters, which Muller presents as an element decisive to the entire history of the *Annales*, Prochasson calls attention to the provisional nature of the ideas and projects contained in the letters, ideas that "are frequently modified or even discarded over the course of the research process" (Prochasson, 1998, pp. 105-112).

Malatian, discussing the Oliveira Lima Library, and Venancio, studying the Oliveira Vianna Archive, have already provided more in-depth explorations of how the place of erudite legitimization drove the creation of archives, libraries and museums, as well as the publication of document collections (Malatian, 2001, pp. 11-28). From this perspective, personal archives stand out as a privileged locus for historical analysis, since they register a form of private accumulation possessing the name of the author him or herself as a specific identificatory mark (Venancio, 2001, pp. 26-27).

If the process of constituting an archive is related to the process of consecrating the still living author and reflects their desire to be remembered, then it is up to the theory and history of historiography to pursue the hermeneutic challenge of more wide-ranging research. Such research is connected on two intersecting temporal planes: the chronological evolution of the thought and sociability of a particular author and his or her network, in contrast to the retrospective challenge of understanding how particular interpretations became crystallized over time, informing the image of authors and themes bequeathed to us historically. As Rebeca Gontijo advises us, we need to know the process through which correspondence becomes published, when this took place, as well as the place attributed to the letters concerned in an author's

overall life and work (Gontijo, 2004, pp. 166-167). We also need to investigate better the social processes through which archives are produced, from the handling of documents by the authors themselves to the explicit and hidden criteria implicated in the social production of the archive – as proposed by Heymann in her work on the archives of Darcy Ribeiro and Filinto Müller; Olívia Cunha, in her study of the archive of anthropologist Ruth Landes; Priscila Fraiz, on the construction of the Gustavo Capanema Collection; and Juliana Amorim de Souza, in her exploration of how the Roquete Pinto Collection at ABL was formed (Heymann, 2005, pp. 43-58; Heymann, 1997; Cunha, 2004; Fraiz, 1994; Souza, 2015).

FINAL REMARKS

We believe that the political moment being experienced by Brazil today, involving the cutting and dismantling of budgets for public and private archival institutions, is deeply worrying. This current trend at national level contrasts with the growing importance of personal archives observable at international level, including the proliferation of collections and the urgency in proposing theoretical-methodological analyses and tools that can account for the multiple forms that documents considered personal have acquired in the digital age. This paradoxical context of an increase in global importance, contrasted with local initiatives to dismantle infrastructure, makes the debate on personal archives in present-day Brazil an issue of high social relevance.

To conclude we propose six fundamental points for us to reflect on private collections and the writing of history – which were not necessarily developed explicitly over the course of the article – taking into account especially the advances made in the history of historiography, intellectual history and neighbouring fields:

1. The need to ‘decolonize’ the theoretical debate. Reflecting on the concept of ‘networks’ and on the historicity of the relation between intellectuals and the public sphere has shown the theoretical-methodological consistency of many empirical works. At the same time, the critical mass produced in Brazil has depended on the influx of a number of international authors who seem to predominate for a time, in some cases with an effect of authority that prevails over their empirical relevance. Without ignoring the need to maintain the international

debate, we believe that very often the works under elaboration can gain methodologically by debating the categories involved in similar experiences at local or global level, though without privileging particular authors a priori. Along these lines, the present text has sought to present itself as a small guide.

2. The need to amplify interdisciplinarity; this gain in the theoretical density of works depends strongly on an interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary work agenda, which considers the advances in research on personal archives in diverse areas, as we pointed out in reflecting on works that foreground the “dynamics of creation.” Along the same lines, we have observed that the kind of document privileged in the vast majority of studies that make use of personal archives is correspondence. Attention should be given, therefore, to the need to expand this spectrum of documents in historical research through the incorporation of book marginalia, reading cards and manuscripts, among the many other kinds of document available in personal archives.
3. The importance of historicizing theoretical-methodological categories. Beginning with the category of ‘intellectual’ itself, the repertoire of categories related to intellectual activities should be responsive to local historical mutations, especially at crucial moments of transformation, such as during the second half of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth when the trend towards specialization intensified.
4. As became clear in our item on intellectual ‘networks,’ research today tends to give more attention to the transnational and global. However, very often the use of personal archives in works on intellectual history, the history of historiography and similar fields in Brazil also tends to set out from a domestic agenda, with sources and/or research topics, authors and/or their texts explored from a national/local perspective (Santos et al., 2017, pp. 161-162). Many of the authors studied, including in various cases discussed or cited here (Oliveira Lima, Gilberto Freyre, Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, Caio Prado Jr., etc.), were embedded in highly dynamic transnational networks. This posture can also help in the consolidation of transversal themes, which go beyond the

focus on a specific author or work, still widely prevalent in Brazilian studies (including those of the authors of this article).

5. The need to consider the meta-history of archives and archival evidence. We seek to show that studies of personal documentation in Brazil have gained much by considering the layers of meaning socially produced over the course of the processes of transformation that inscribe the personal document.
6. Finally, we draw attention to the need to deepen a progressive and combative agenda implicated in the problems of the present: whether by examining socially engaged and democratic issues, such as the problem of authoritarianism and repression, or the history of women and other 'minorities' (as we suggested at the end of the section on the historicity of the relation between intellectuals and the public sphere), or by creating the bases for a better understanding of the huge changes seen in the production, selection and conservation of personal documents at a global level, including here the problems of the humanities in the digital age.

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NOTES

¹ The authors thank the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Level Personnel (CAPES), the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation at the Freie Universität Berlin, PPG History at UERJ/Prociência Grant-Faperj and the Guita and José Mindlin Brazilian Library at USP for their various kinds of support during the research undertaken for this text and during its elaboration.

² “The conceptualization of personal archives is embedded in the general definition of private archives when these are said to consist of papers produced/received by private entities or individuals. What can be specified here is that, as papers linked to the life, work and activities of a person, they are not functional and administrative documents in the sense possessed by those linked to the administration of a commercial establishment or a trade union. They are papers linked to the family, civil and professional life and to the political and/or intellectual, scientific and artistic output of state figures, politicians, artists, literary figures, scientists and so on. In sum, the papers of any citizen who shows an interest in historical research, supplying data on the quotidian, social, religious, economic and cultural life of the time in which the person lived and on his or her own personality and behaviour” (BELLOTTO, 2006, p. 256). Camargo, however, interrogates the meaning of the expression ‘personal archives,’ observing that although “their use is accepted in the Brazilian archival community, it would be more accurate to say archives of people (of this or that person, treated individually) or of occupational categories (state figures, literary figures, scientists, etc.), at least to avoid conflicting with three distinct situations, equally questionable, in which the epithet is applied. I refer to the documents on persons, present in the institutional archives, and, in the sphere of the documents effectively accumulated by individuals in specific sections of the archive; to those that do not result from the exercise of public functions; and to those represented by identity documents” (CAMARGO, 2009, p. 28). Despite the caveat, here we adopt the prevailing terminology.

Article received on February 1, 2018.

Approved on March 16, 2018.

