

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

This is the fourth issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde — Manguinhos*, and with one year of work already behind us, we can state that the results have wholly satisfied our expectations. We have enjoyed praise from our readers, and a substantial number of articles have been submitted for publication. We feel this fine reception can be attributed to the quality of the articles published, the balanced diversity of both subject matter and departments, and the journals' refined visual and graphic presentation.

Due to other commitments, Sergio Goes de Paula is no longer able to dedicate himself with the same intensity — and with his trademark perfectionism — to the work of editor, and so I will be replacing him. But since Sérgio will remain on as one of the journal's associate editors, we will be constantly availing ourselves of his discernment and experience, qualities that greatly contributed to solidifying *Manguinhos'* high standards during its crucial early days.

This issue offers a wide menu of substantive options, with a gamut of topics and styles ranging from the traditional academic to the nearly literary. In a study on the history of public policies, Eduardo Marques provides an analysis of the beginnings of the state sector responsible for sanitation policies in Rio de Janeiro, a question explored little in other authors' papers on the relations between the construction of a city, medical theories, and normative processes.

In the field of the history of science, Luzia Castañeda analyzes the evolution of natural history. In exploring its taxonomic matrixes, philosophical underpinnings, and methodological tensions, she is particularly concerned with the redefinition of its object of study as the field of biology emerges. Ideas regarding generation and heredity are addressed using Buffon's concept of epigenesis and Bonnet's concept of preformation.

The remaining two articles are of particular relevance. Mirko Grmek has presented us with a valuable text on the history of diseases, in what is both a fine exemplification of his trajectory as a formulator of concepts and seminal interpretations and as well a reflection of his erudition and enviable capacity to pinpoint the didactically most relevant aspects of the topic at hand. The article is a synthetic presentation of the relations between "pathological reality" and its conceptualization, or between the naturalist and normative approaches; the debate surrounding causality and the classification of diseases; and the framing and categorization of the current topic of 'emerging diseases' from the perspective of Grmek's concept of *pathocenosis*. As such, the text constitutes an important reference point for studies in the area.

Given its style and subject matter, José Murilo de Carvalho's article has the flavor of a literary accounting. In narrating an unexpected discovery — embroideries done by João Cândido, leader of the 1910 Sailors' Revolt — the author weaves a revealing interpretation of this simple finding and the portrayed images. With well-known mastery, José Murilo depicts in bright colors the patterns of this revolt, which provoked

"panic and fascination" among the population back then, overwhelmed by the threat of the most advanced military power of the day, lying in the sailors' hands.

Perpetually cast as coarse and viewed with disdain, the sailors suddenly displayed "Parnassianism in their maneuvers," according to one source from that time. In the image drawn by José Murilo, João Cândido "embroidered the waters of the bay with the slow, majestic evolution of the dreadnoughts." The history of mentalities appears in all its richness when the author analyzes expressions of the values of order and liberty and how the sentiment of rebellion was linked to still recent memories of slavery and, further, when he explores possible interpretations of how João Cândido felt both as "rebel leader" and as the "good black man." All of this is accomplished in fluid, enlightening movements between João Cândido's personal story and the formation of the social mentality of these sailors and the population of Rio de Janeiro. José Murilo treats the relations between historiography and myth with rigor and dignity, as he himself puts it, thereby placing human aspects in high regard and enhancing our respect for heroes.

In the department *Debate*, this same topic reappears in invaluable testimonies on the relations between historiography and literary text, drawn from the experiences of Alberto Dines, Ana Miranda, Fernando Morais, Jorge Caldeira, and Roberto Ventura, all successful historical novelists and biographers, yet none of whom are professional historians. The return to the narrative and its relation to history — object of a rich stream of academic reflection — is posed here as a vivid rendering of these authors' experiences. The creative process; the market-oriented reasons for interest in biographies; the tension between documented knowledge, ignorance, interpretation, and fiction, or between academic and literary styles, gain singular vitality and spice.

Another high point in the current issue is the testimony of Oracy Nogueira, a pioneer in Brazil's social sciences, internationally renowned for his work on race relations and his interpretative distinction between the US's *preconceito de origem*, where racial prejudice is based on ancestry, and Brazil's *preconceito de marca*, where the determinant is skin color. Especially noteworthy are both the observations on the integration of sociology, anthropology, and history highlighted in Maria Laura Viveiros de Castro Cavalcanti's introduction as well as the delightful way in which Oracy Nogueira recounts his experiences and tells us amusing anecdotes about what has motivated and sustained his academic production.

Paulo Gadelha