



New races, new diseases: the possibility of colonization through racial mixing in History of Brazil (1810-1819) by Robert Southey

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Abstract

The possibility that the climate altered the temperament of people who were not native to a given region was a widely held belief even before the discovery of the Americas. Changes in air, temperature, and diet were believed to contribute decisively to whether races degenerated or flourished. In the New World, the black, European, and indigenous races mixed, reconfiguring European diseases. I explore how historian Robert Southey viewed this mixture of races in a positive light, especially the mixture of indigenous and Portuguese blood, resulting in the *mameluco*. The *mamelucos* from São Paulo are presented in Southey's *History of Brazil* as inheriting the Portuguese enterprising spirit with the tireless nature of the indigenous people.

Keywords: Robert Southey (1774-1843); disease; racial mixing; climate; *History of Brazil* (book).

Pigs, Spanish dollars, and Norway rats, are not the only commodities and incommensurables which have performed the circumnavigation, and are to be found wherever European ships have touched. Diseases also find their way from one part of the inhabited globe to another, wherever it is possible for them to exist.

(Southey, 1829, p.57-58)

Robert Southey was the first to write a philosophical history of Brazil, understood as a macro-narrative that was autonomous from the history of Portugal (Araujo, Pimenta, 2008, p.89). The three volumes of *History of Brazil*, written in English, were published by this man of letters in 1810, 1817, and 1819 in London, and cover a long period of its history, from the arrival of the Portuguese in the lands now known as Brazil to the transfer of the Portuguese court there in 1808. Southey was born in Bristol, England, in 1774, and died of Alzheimer's or some other kind of degenerative disease in Keswick in 1843 (Speck, 2006, p.251). Throughout his life, Southey's literary interests were broad and varied. He wrote several works of poetry and three histories – of Brazil, the Peninsular War, and Portugal (incomplete) – as well as countless essays. Capistrano de Abreu even suggested that *History of Brazil* served as a model in various respects for Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen's *História geral do Brasil* (General History of Brazil). These observations ended up staining the reputation of the latter work as an imitation of Southey's (Mollo, 2005, p.2). Manoel Bomfim added fuel to the dispute and the comparison between the two historians, labeling Varnhagen with unflattering epithets, while hailing Southey as one of the nation's true historians (Gontijo, 2003, p.144). Since its publication, *History of Brazil* has been repeatedly reappraised as an important work both as a reference for later historiographical output and as a meticulously researched work in its own right.

Robert Southey's defense of racial mixing in *History of Brazil* is not a new subject of study. Maria Odila da Silva Dias (1974) explored the importance of this issue, albeit to a very limited extent, when she associated racial mixing with Southey's putative imperialistic tendencies. In her view, the civilizatory mission – the white man's burden in the title of her book – gave the “implicit right to destroy backward civilizations and cultures, which stood in the way of the progress of other peoples. For them [conservatives like Southey, or radical utilitarian reformers] it was a humanitarian duty of destruction” (p.120-121). Dias (p.123) argued that the racial mixing proposed in *History of Brazil* would result in a predominance of “Christianity, European civilization, and English power.” Southey certainly believed in the legitimacy of the occupation of the Americas by Europeans, but because it granted the native people the benefits of the true religion and incorporated this part of the globe into the civilized world (Craig, 2007, p.165). Southey (1809, p.312) was not an intractable razer of non-European cultures, nor was he an *avant la lettre* cultural relativist; rather, he felt that “[i]t is the order of nature that beasts should give place to man, and among men the savage to civilized.” What should have been a natural process was, he felt, sadly sometimes enforced through violence.

I propose that Southey's arguments about racial mixing were not fundamentally linked to British imperialist practices, but to the possibility of Brazil being developed and colonized.

In this sense, it was not a case of white man's imperialism, as Dias holds. Rather, Southey suggested that the colonization of Brazil had been successful, not least because of the success of its racial mix, which helped the Europeans overcome the adversities and differences they faced in the New World. Without black, indigenous, and European people mixing, nature would likely have devoured the biologically unsuited colonizers. It is important to understand here that colonization was not seen just as a military endeavor, but also as having biological and ecological aspects (Bewell, 1999, p.XI).

I should stress from the outset that I have preferred to use the words "mixture," "intermixture," and "blend" to refer to the mixing of races, as they are words that were part of Southey's lexicon. This is different from the approach adopted by Dias, who uses words like "miscegenation" and "mestization" to refer to the mixing of races, not to mention the anachronistic "class," "capitalism," and "commercial colonization." The term "miscegenation" was only introduced to English dictionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century, reflecting new scientific racial theories that defined the quality of interbreeding between people of supposedly different races.¹ The concept of race as employed by Southey was markedly different from the concept that became current shortly afterwards to organize people into different skin colors and corresponding hierarchies. In the early nineteenth century, race was a social concept that was helpful for schematizing human differences, but not for classifying them according to any standards set by biology (Smedley, 2007, p.2). Thus, when the context was disease and survival, the term "race" was employed to explain why particular individuals or groups fell ill or seemed to be resistant to certain diseases or epidemics. As Europeans and even Africans had to adapt to significantly different diets, habits, and climate when they moved to Brazil, it was considered natural that a new race capable of reestablishing this balance between man and environment should be constituted.

Many researchers have noted the importance of Southey's metaphorical use of disease-related words like "infected," "contagious," and "pestilential" in his writings in general (Craig, 2007), and how he paid particular attention to smallpox (Fulford, 2001). Indeed, in his main articles for the *Quarterly Review*, Southey used the language of disease and infection to refer to problems associated with political disputes, moral decadence, and religious schisms, which he believed afflicted Great Britain at that time (Connell, 2005, p.247). Southey certainly used disease-related terms metaphorically to narrate aspects of Brazilian history and the Jesuit missions established near the borders with Argentina and Paraguay. For instance, he said that Paraguay was *infested* with the Agacê Indians, and that it would have been easy to keep the seven towns on the border with Uruguay in Brazil if Brazil had not succumbed to the *disease* called *endemic revolutionary fever* – i.e., independence (Southey, 1810, p.117, 1822, p.323).

However, it has not yet been investigated whether in *History of Brazil* there exists a language of biological and climatic diversity:² a stable explanatory discourse related not just to how diseases emerged, were modified and transmitted, but also to the strategies for staying healthy. This language underpinned the need for interracial mixing and the positive light in which it was seen. Unlike the proposals of contemporary medicine, in the first decades of the nineteenth century the theoretical explanation for the development of diseases in human bodies and their mutability was rooted in the climate – the differences in temperature in different regions of the globe – and the bodily complexion of each individual,

not in microorganisms. A person's bodily complexion, or constitution, was defined by the way their particular humor interacted with the climate or "air" in which they lived and their eating habits. It was a consensus that physical exercise, sleeping and wakefulness, bowel movements (including bleeding) and emotions had a great impact on human health and temperament (Earle, 2010, p.694). According to the Hippocratic theory of humors, the human body contained a mixture of four fluids – black bile, yellow bile, blood, and phlegm – and while each individual may have their own complexion, it was fairly widely agreed that certain races had a tendency to generate individuals with a particular kind of temperament. The Spanish, for instance, were often seen as being choleric because of a preponderance of yellow bile (Earle, 2010, p.691). Southey's knowledge of medical practice came from his reading and his own experience when ill. At no point does he develop his analysis citing Hippocrates or even Galen, although this was quite common amongst non-medical writers (Earle, 2013, p.48-49). The theory of the four humors, albeit with some reformulations, was one of the core principles of western medicine throughout most of the 1800s, when health or illness depended on a balance between these humors and the outside world. This meant that disease emerged when there was an imbalance, especially caused by the climate or diet (Allamel-Raffin, Leplège, Martire Junior, 2011, p.18-19). In this article I focus solely on climate issues, the problems inherent to the "transplantation" of bodies to places other than those to which they were adapted, and how mixing with native blood could help build a race that was more resistant to the diseases that were transmuted or generated in this new climate.

Climate and acclimatization: the language of biological and climatic diversity in *History of Brazil*

In the early decades of the nineteenth century it was common for diseases to be attributed not to microorganisms, but to external agents that altered the internal equilibrium of an individual, such that a disease could transform itself or be manifested differently in different people. It was only as of the second half of the century that disease was thought of primarily as existing outside the body. Previously, diagnoses had focused on symptoms, and "diseases were seen as an open succession of events that could follow a broad range of trajectories" (Edler, 2006, p.384). Individual diseases and epidemics were not the human body's response to a disease-causing agent, but were caused by its susceptibility and individual interactions with the surrounding environment. Received wisdom had it that diseases had a great capacity to adapt and modify in new constitutions and new climates – a topic that attracted particular interest after the discovery of the New World.

Guilherme Piso (1611-1678) was one of the main writers to report on the nosology and prophylaxis of diseases encountered in colonial Brazil. Southey judged his work, *Historia Naturalis Brasiliae*, to be of great value,³ but confused some of the hypotheses about syphilis contained in it. Piso (1957, p.118-121) held that there were at least two types of lues, or syphilis: one endemic in Brazil, called "lues indica" or "bubas," and the other European, "Gallic lues," which was taken to Brazil by the European colonizers. Yet Piso made it clear that there were different genera of syphilis and did not state categorically that it was exclusively American in origin, given that there were several varieties originating in different parts of the

world. Southey (1810) mistakenly claimed to agree with this doctor and naturalist in the view that syphilis “is originally an American disease, modified by ‘transplantation’ to the European constitution; an opinion which agrees with his [Piso’s] remarks upon the physical effects produced by the ‘mixture’ of different races” (p.328; emphasis added). Syphilis was “an old disease assuming a new form by passing from one race to another” (Southey, 6 fev. 1809). In this confusion of information, Southey alters the origin of syphilis, but sustains the argument – widely held until the mid-nineteenth century – that the emergence of new diseases could also come about by their transplantation in new constitutions and that there was a link between this change and the mixture of different races.

In view of the fact that the mixture of new and old races was an imminent possibility in a colonized world, it was important to those involved in such colonization to know how new diseases – as syphilis was thought to be – would behave when they were transplanted into new constitutions and climates, and likewise how to fight them. Southey held that in the New World there were two different phenomena at play when it came to diseases. The first had to do with the modification of a disease by transplantation to new physical constitutions, observed in Europeans and natives. The second had to do with racial mixing, in that the “mixture and intermixture of three different races, the European, American, and African, has produced new diseases, or at least new constitutions, by which old diseases were so modified, that the skilfullest physicians were puzzled by new symptoms” (Southey, 1862a, p.464-465).⁴ Thus, colonization and the intermixture of different races resulted in both a change in existing diseases and the development of new ones.

Much of the understanding of how humans behaved when transplanted into different environments from those in which they were born and to which they were adapted came from observations of the plant world. Southey (1862a, p.467) believed that in Brazil “in no other instance have white men suffered so little in their physical nature by transplantation beyond those limits which have been assigned them.” It was very common for colonial enterprises to involve the remission and receipt of species for the study of biology. In these exchanges, many Brazilian species were taken to European research centers for study and, more importantly, different kinds of plants were taken from the Old World to Brazil, to find out how well they adapted to a different environment from that of their origin. This “was an important activity insofar as it was believed that the climate and environment were determining factors in the different conformation of species and in their different attributes” (Gesteira, 2004, p.14).⁵ The animal and plant kingdoms shared the feature of reacting to the climate in which they lived. If a disease changed according to the climate to which it was transplanted – which also included a change of body, in that each individual was understood as constituting its own “climate” – the same phenomenon occurred in plants and animals. The New World boasted a great diversity of fauna and flora, which led observers to conclude that “the diversity of climates gave rise to differences not only in men, but also in animals and plants” (Piso, 1957, p.48).

The climate had a predominant influence on different living species, and could also be determinant when it came to the diseases people were afflicted by. According to Piso (1957, p.72; emphasis added):

the modern navigations to the New World confirm that ‘just as the habits and forms of life of the people vary according to the different climates in the world, so do the diseases and forms of death differ; and just as the old diseases tend to be extinguished, the unusual trajectories and inclinations of the heavenly bodies, as well as the climate of the southern land, herald the emergence of new ones. Some move to other regions of the world, others do not;’ some, because of changes in the system of life, cease to emerge (so say the authors about Egypt).

Thus, the climate of a given place could contribute to the proliferation or eradication of a given disease. Such was the case of the disease that afflicted the oldest child of Antônio Luís de Sousa Teles de Meneses, governor and captain-general of Brazil and marquis of Minas: “the pestilence had not wholly subsided; and fortunate it was that it ‘was not of a nature to be transported to Europe’” (Southey, 1862d, p.22; emphasis added).⁶ In this case, the Portuguese were lucky, because the ship that left with the patient from Brazil docked in Portugal, and the disease it carried was incapable of adapting to the new climate and thus was extinguished.

There was no major epistemological shift between the beliefs expressed by writers from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and Southey, who was writing in the early nineteenth century, when it came to the importance of climate to the constitution of people and how diseases and the vegetable and animal kingdoms responded to changes in climate. Southey also agreed that mixing different races resulted in new complexions (constitutions), which, like grafts, bore different features from the original. According to Piso (1957, p.72):

Further still: while the sky, the seasons of the year, the diversity of waters and foods and forms of life of all different beings undoubtedly change the temperaments, the ‘intermixture of different nations’ should also be added. Thus, the Europeans who cohabit with American women produce *Mamelucos*; with Ethiopians, *Mulatos*; and Americans, doing this with African negresses, the so-called *Cabocles*. ... ‘It is as if not only did transplanted animals and plants degenerate, but also the peoples taken to different regions and mixed with foreign nations lost their native temperament,’ like rivers which, entering the salty sea, lose the sweetness of their waters (author’s emphasis in italics; own emphasis between inverted commas).

The mixing of races was shown to be inevitable in view of the intimate intercourse between the European, American and African races, but in his analysis, Piso reveals a degree of negativity towards this mixture. There is no such connotation in Southey’s writings, where intermixture is understood as imperative for the successful settlement of Brazil, in that however well adapted the colonizers were, they would not survive without mixing with the other races. The challenge to would-be colonizers of lands as vast as Brazil and with so many different climates was great, and Southey believed racial mixing to be the answer to overcoming the diseases and climatic adversities, since the success of acclimatization could never be counted on.

The theories that involved acclimatization, meaning the investigation of the continuous process of transformation living organisms underwent in environments that differed from those in which they were generated and developed, underwent some major developments in the nineteenth century (Anderson, 1992). Today, “acclimatization” is used to indicate metabolic changes that occur in human bodies when they move from one environment

to another. This physiological phenomenon takes place, for instance, when a person who lives at sea level moves to a considerably higher altitude. Acclimatization normally occurs over a short period of time and is not transmitted to descendants. For Southey, however, acclimatization was a diverse biological phenomenon. The first recorded use of the verb “to acclimate” in English dates back to 1792.⁷ Over the following decades, it featured considerably in the European and Brazilian context, indicating great interest in studying the influence of climate on organisms (Anderson, 1992, p.135; Lisboa, 2013; Caponi, 2007). In the 1810s, however, the term did not have a set semantic use in England, sometimes being regarded as a foreignism because of its French etymology. Many preferred the Saxon “naturalize.” Southey used both verbs in *History of Brazil* indiscriminately, although the more prevalent of the two was “acclimate.”

Throughout the colonization of the New World, the related concept of acclimatization was employed to explain how new arrivals to particular climates or geographical regions were more prone to disease than individuals who were better acclimatized because they had spent longer there. It was believed that once the new arrivals were acclimatized, they would no longer fall sick so easily. It was possible – albeit not for all – to adapt to new climes and withstand the diseases there either by modifying nature – by the mixture of races – or by the acclimatization of men. In Southey’s view, foreigners were more prone to all diseases, whether native or not, as witnessed by the Dutch in northeastern Brazil, where one sailor “in his hatred of the island [island of São Tomás] which had caused the loss of so many brave men, he desired that he might not be buried in so cursed a country,’ but that they would throw him overboard ten or twelve leagues from land” (Southey, 1862b, p.17-18; emphasis added).⁸ Sailors were certainly in a league of their own when it came to diseases, because they had to acclimatize to wherever they voyaged in the line of duty or else they would inevitably succumb to disease. One such case, according to Southey’s account, took place in the captaincy of Bahia, where many people were struck down by a pestilence that had already killed two thousand people in Recife.

From twenty to thirty persons died daily, and of two hundred who sickened in one day, only two persons recovered, so generally did it prove mortal. Not a house escaped without some sick, and in some houses not an individual. In the country it was neither so general nor so destructive. ‘The disease exclusively affected the white race, and of them more particularly the sailors; they were mostly Europeans, and perhaps individuals and families were liable to it in proportion as they were more or less acclimated.’ For many years after it had ceased to be ‘endemic, strangers who came from other countries, or from the interior to any of the cities where it had raged, still fell victims’ (Southey, 1862c, p.329-330; emphasis added).⁹

However, “negroes and every variety of the mixed race were exempt from the contagion” of this unnamed disease (Southey, 1862c, p.331).

There is a hypothesis that has a good degree of currency at the present time that many Amerindians quickly succumbed to the diseases of the Old World because their immune systems were not equipped for them. However, Southey attributed the reduced indigenous population to the custom amongst some tribes of raising just one child, and of practicing infanticide, warring and cannibalism. Aside from these and other factors, because of the “great

and sudden change from a roving to a settled life," "great ravages were made amongst the converts by diseases" (Southey, 1862b, p.384). The indigenous constitution was adapted to a certain equilibrium that was broken by a settled life, as was the case of the Cayaguas: "With these people the Jesuits were very unsuccessful: when any of them were persuaded to enter the Reductions, 'the effect of a stationary life, and perhaps of the open air and light,' was such, that, in Techo's words, 'they died like plants which grow in the shade, and will not bear the sun'" (Southey, 1862c, p.56; emphasis added). Southey (p.398) therefore believed that

'There are physical causes why a transition from the wild to the domesticated state should frequently prove destructive.' The animal frame cannot with impunity bear a sudden and total alteration of diet, habits, and occupations. Unless birds are taken young they die before they can be accustomed to captivity; and even the difference which is thus made in their 'manner of subsistence' is scarcely greater than that which man endures in passing at once from a wandering to a domesticated life. 'Frequent change of air seems to have been almost indispensable to a race who had never been stationary' (emphasis added).

It was as if the indigenous people stopped being acclimatized to Brazil after they moved to the missions and had their diet and customs changed. Their constitution was adapted to a particular way of life, which was altered when they adopted European habits. The indigenous body responded in the same way to the principles of disease as any other body (Earle, 2013, p.171).

The importance of the climate and environment was a bigger question that involved not just the healthfulness of a place, since, according to Southey (1862a, p.464; emphasis added), "'wholesome as the air of Brazil is,' it proved hurtful to many persons whose 'habits' both of life and living had been formed in a 'different temperature;' even, says Piso, as 'plants will frequently die in transplantation, though their removal may have been to a richer soil and happier climate.'" Thus, a salubrious, favorable climate was not necessarily beneficial to constitutions that had been adapted to a different temperature and for this very reason had acquired certain habits. The daily consumption of meat and wine, for instance, should be avoided by newly arrived Europeans or those born in Brazil who wished to have a healthy old age in Brazil (Southey, 1810, p.327). Piso (1957, p.58) explained that "foods which are nutritional or heating, if regulated, fill bodies with blood and heat. If they are not, they tend to generate cold and watery humors."

Southey's focus on habits as reflections of behavior adapted to the climate is therefore crucial. Different climates generated different habits and customs, and it was necessary to change habits that had been beneficial in another temperature if one wished to acclimatize to a new climate, otherwise the body would be visited by disease. It cannot be stated categorically how, in Southey's view, the process of acclimatization occurred and what elements ensured its success. However, it seems to be the case that past habits had to be adapted to the needs of the new climate, and only those that were beneficial for health should be maintained. The Dutch, for instance, managed to placate the insalubrious conditions in the city of Recife, experiencing

less injury than had been predicted, probably less than any other people would have done: 'their diet,' which was more generous than that of the Portuguese, and their 'habit

of smoking,' serving to counteract the pernicious effects of marsh exhalations, and their 'constitutions' also being habituated to such an atmosphere. Their women, however, suffered greatly from the 'change of climate;' for they neither drank nor smoked; and, as was the case at first with the Portuguese women, they 'reared very few children.' They found it necessary to have 'Indian or Negress nurses,' whose custom it was never to wean the infant till the end of the second year, and rarely so soon (Southey, 1862c, p.421; emphasis added).

The Dutch were thus benefitted by the habit of smoking and by having a diet that was better suited to the climatic conditions in Recife. Their constitutions were already adapted to the marsh exhalations, yet this did not stop their womenfolk from having difficulties in bearing children, calling on the help of better acclimatized races, like indigenous and black women, for the survival of new generations. Indeed, without the indigenous and black wet nurses, Southey reminds us, the Dutch would have been wiped out.

at first the Portuguese women reared very few of their children, not one in three; but they learnt at last from the Savages to 'throw aside the load of swaddling clothes, to leave the head bare, and use cold affusion freely, and the climate was then no longer complained of as destructive to infant life.' In these things, and in the knowledge of herbs, which are all that they can teach us, we have yet learnt little from our intercourse with Savages (Southey, 1862a, p.466; emphasis added).

While it was necessary to give up habits understood as being healthy in the climates of origin, there were also places that were more or less propitious for the European constitution. The areas around the Santo Antonio settlement in the captaincy of river Negro were, in Southey's view, completely inhospitable for Europeans, while the Amerindians were very well adapted to them.

Europeans cannot reside there with impunity, because of the 'unwholesome atmosphere.' It is not to be expected that the Japura should obtain any White population, till the delightful country about the rivers Negro and Branco shall be fully peopled; but 'civilization has begun among the native inhabitants, who bring with them into the world constitutions adapted to their birth-place' (Southey, 1862e, p.346; emphasis added).¹⁰

A different state of affairs reigned in Rio de Janeiro, where the European constitution was better adapted than the native: "Europeans felt the ill effects of the atmosphere less than the natives, whom no length of generations seemed to acclimate" (Southey, 1819, p.815). This difficulty of acclimatization experienced by the generations born in the city derived to a large extent from their difficulty in adapting to the atmosphere. In fact, "the city was not healthy: it is built upon low ground, scarcely above the level of the sea; and the waters which descend from the great mountains behind it were allowed to stagnate in marshes round about on every side" (Southey, 1819, p.815). Meanwhile, "winter was the most unhealthy season; though if the marshes were the cause, it might have been thought that the effects would be most perceptible during the summer: but the heat in winter is sufficient to act upon the marshes, and acts upon them more continually, because rain is much less frequent than in the summer" (Southey, 1862e, p.463). The miasma produced in Rio de Janeiro was more consistent with the European constitution, which was adapted to similar climates.

While Southey explained the development of diseases and human beings using the same parameters as those that applied to the vegetable kingdom, he also understood that disease was racially determined insofar as different constitutions had different diseases (Fulford, 2001):

I have a sort of theory about such diseases [fevers], which I do not understand myself, – but somebody or other will one of these days. They are so far analogous to vegetables, as that they take root, grow, ripen, and decay. Those which are eruptive blossom and seed; for the pustules of the smallpox is, to all intents and purposes, the flower of the disease, or the fructification by which it is perpetuated. Now these diseases, like vegetables, choose their own soil; as some plants like clay, others sand, others chalk, ‘so the yellow fever will not take root in a negro, nor the yaws in a white man.’ Here is a noble hint for a theory: you will see the truth of the analogy at once (Southey, 1850, p.257; emphasis added).¹¹

The first outbreak of smallpox in Brazil was in Maranhão in 1555, probably taken there by French settlers (Toledo Jr., 2006, p.23). As Southey (1862e, p.519; emphasis added) noted, “inoculation was not practiced at the beginning of the nineteenth century; this may probably have been owing neither to ignorance nor prejudice, ‘but to the number of negroes, and the certainty that a great mortality would ensue among them, in whatever manner the disease might be introduced.’” Smallpox inoculation was only introduced to Brazil towards the end of the eighteenth century, shortly before the discovery of the vaccine by Edward Jenner (Toledo Jr., 2006, p.25). Aside from the black population, the Amerindians were also considered very vulnerable to the disease. According to Southey, the mamelucos from São Paulo “‘suffered dreadfully from the smallpox, ... perhaps because of their Indian blood.’ Whosoever heard his malady pronounced to be this disease, was prostrated to such a degree that the declaration differed little from a sentence of death” (Southey, 1862e, p.512; emphasis added). Nothing could therefore be better for suppressing this racial vulnerability than mixing with other races that had proven not just to be better acclimatized, but also immune to certain diseases. Obviously, as demonstrated well by the people from São Paulo, with their mix of European and indigenous blood, this process did not produce a perfect race, but one that was in a way more resistant to the new historical challenges. Ultimately, Southey believed that indigenous people would not survive the alteration of the Brazilian climate and the new diseases, and that the Europeans, however much they tried, could not turn Brazil into a new Europe.

The mixture of races in *History of Brazil* and the formation of the Paulista

The climate – manifested in the environment – was directly related to the establishment and formation of the people’s habits and character, but also concerned the possibility of races surviving in environments unlike the ones to which they were adapted. In an essay published in the *Quarterly Review* in 1812, in which Southey reported jointly on *Travels in the island of Iceland, during the summer of the year 1810*, by mineralogist Sir George Mackenzie (1780-1848), and *Journal of a tour in Iceland, in the summer of 1809*, by botanist William Jackson Hooker (1785-1865), he seemed to suggest that the racial mixing that had come about in Brazil with the Portuguese colonization had already taken place in Europe in Gothic times:

They [the Icelanders] had taken possession of a country which was uninhabited, and gaining it thus by occupancy instead of conquest, the great evils of the feudal system had no existence among them. Slavery was unknown amongst the Icelanders, and they escaped those ages of oppression and barbarism, 'through which all the Gothic kingdoms past in their progress, before the conquerors and the conquered were blended into one people, and a common language had been produced by the intermixture' (Southey, 1812, p.51; emphasis added).

If the mixing of races was not an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of humankind, the combination of the components of this mixture certainly was, and for this reason it could lead to new results, as was the case of the *mamelucos*, a race resulting from the crossing of a European with an Amerindian. Ultimately, for Southey, there was no incompatibility between the European constitution and the Brazilian climate, despite all the difficulties experienced in the European settlements because of their habits and constitutions. Even so, it was impossible to deny that this constitution had improved upon being modified by the introduction, primarily, of indigenous blood through the mixture of colonizer and colonized. As Southey (1862c, p.404-405) put it,

'That men of European stock are perfectly capable of all the labour which in such climates' is required for the well-being of man, is proved abundantly by the prodigious fatigues which the Portuguese underwent in seeking slaves to do this necessary labour for them. 'The first conquerors of America were the hardiest as well as the most inhuman of men: a great and general degeneracy had taken place in the Spanish colonies; but in Brazil the ardour of enterprise was unabated, and the Brazilians were not only acclimated by course of time, but owing to the great admixture of native blood their constitutions were originally adapted to the climate in which they were born' (emphasis added).

Southey (16 nov. 1809) thought the *mameluco* to be a "bad breed," not for any original physical or moral flaw, but "because they learnt the evil of both races, and the good of neither." There was, therefore, no degradation of itself caused by the mixture of two races, but a moral degradation that the *mamelucos* inherited from the least attractive habits of both elements of the mixture. The São Paulo *mamelucos* (Paulistas) were involved in expeditions to capture Amerindians for slavery and to search for gold mines, indicating that they had inherited the enterprising nature that was typical of the Europeans, making them known primarily for their spirit of adventure (Southey, 1817, p.567). The *mamelucos* inherited an Iberian intrepidity, which, in many places, had declined with the passing of the centuries. Southey proposed that while "a race of men were growing up fierce indeed and intractable, but who acquired from the 'mixture of native blood' a constitutional and infatigable activity" (Southey, 1862a, p.467-468; emphasis added), the Spanish in Paraguay neglected the discoveries made by the first *conquistadores*, allowing the overgrowth to cover the routes opened up and abandoning the Spanish customs and even the language. Largely because of the policy of *castas* adopted by the Spanish government, which looked down on interracial mixing, the Spanish were unable to sustain their status as colonizers and discoverers. The Spanish character, formed in the sixteenth century, "wise in council, vigorous in action, cool, prompt, decisive, and inflexible," was already poorly represented by the late eighteenth century (Southey, 1862e,

p.257). Southey thus argued that while the Spanish, with their castas, visibly degenerated, the Paulistas maintained the Portuguese spirit of the great navigations alive. If this racial mixture had not taken place, Brazil would probably have experienced the same inertia that had taken place on the Spanish side. It was thanks to the Paulistas that “the House of Braganza, the richest mines, and largest portion of South America, the finest region of the whole habitable earth” (Southey, 1862a, p.468) was assured.

The inhabitants of São Paulo, later known as *bandeirantes*, typified the benefits of this racial mix in that most of the Paulistas were born of a blend of white and indigenous blood.

The city was by its situation almost cut off from any intercourse with other towns; it had little or no communication with Portugal, no trade for want of outlets, but it had every advantage of soil and climate. To such a place adventurers, deserters, and fugitives from justice would naturally resort. They consorted with Indian women, ‘and the mixture of native blood, which everywhere in Brazil was very great, was perhaps greater here than in any other part. This mixture improved the race, for the European spirit of enterprise developed itself in constitutions adapted to the country’ (Southey, 1862b, p.413-414; emphasis added).

Southey clearly stated that there was no racial inferiority in this mix; indeed, that it was quite beneficial for combining the European pioneering spirit with the indigenous constitution, which, being as it was native to the land, was well adapted to the climate and thus more resistant and more suited to survival. In his view, the Amerindians were a docile race that had numerous qualities, such as being quiet, inoffensive, cleanly, contented with little, and patient of fatigue (Southey, 1819, p.762). The Paulistas had, he said, inherited these features from their indigenous forefathers, which granted them an almost unshakable energy and disposition in great undertakings. The Paulistas were audacious, courageous, lawless, and had a strong national feeling (p.348). Unfortunately, he added, their intrepidity was often employed on expeditions to capture indigenous people to enslave them or on quests for gold mines.

Gold extraction had produced neither “regular industry nor good habits” in the captaincy of Minas Gerais, for instance, although many regions, like Goiás and Mato Grosso, would have remained untamed and even unexplored “had it not been for the spirit of enterprise which the passion for gold called forth” (Southey, 1819, p.820). As Southey saw it, both undertakings were clearly detrimental, whether for the decimation and suffering caused or for the rapid acquisition of wealth from mining. He believed that the reprehensible nature of the actions of the Paulistas was related mainly to the effects of the law and religion observed there:

the mamelucos grew up without any restrictions of ‘law or religion.’ ‘Law’ indeed can scarcely be said to have existed in a land where any man committed what murders he pleased with impunity; and for ‘religion ... its place was supplied by a gross idolatry, which had so little effect upon the conduct of its votaries, that while they were committing the most flagrant and flagitious crimes they believed themselves good catholics still, and had a lively faith in the Virgin Mary and the Saints’ (Southey, 1862b, p.414; emphasis added).

Neither the mamelucos nor the indigenous were inferior, nor indeed were the Europeans. The audacious attitude of the Paulistas, which is the same as to say the mamelucos, in their quest for slaves and gold mines did not spring from a flawed character brought about by the

mixture of races, but the poor observance of the laws and the worship of a religion based on idolatry, which absolved all the failings of its faithful through confession. As the law started to be followed, an improvement in the temperament and moral character of the Paulistas and, indeed, all the inhabitants of Brazil, started to be seen (Southey, 1819, p.871).

However much Southey felt compelled to highlight and speak out against some of the actions of the Paulistas, it was equally impossible not to notice that they were “a race of men even more enterprising than the first discoverers” (Southey, 1862b, p.419). The importance of the explorations made by the mamelucos was undeniable, making them a race who had great initiative (“enterprize”), like their Portuguese fathers, and highly resistant to the climate, like their indigenous mothers. In Southey’s view, this “enterprize” was what moved nations towards prosperity (Southey, 1819, p.21). It is therefore no surprise to read Southey’s praise of the Paulistas in his statement that “the lower ranks in S. Paulo are said to be in a very advanced state of civilization, when compared with those of any other town in Brazil; and the higher classes have an ennobling spirit of nationality” (Southey, 1862e, p.500-501). The Paulistas were, then, lofty of spirit.

The conditions in São Paulo at the time when the Portuguese royal family moved to Brazil were largely due to its mixed-race inhabitants, the mamelucos. Southey believed that the success of the Portuguese colonization was also the fruit of its colonial policy, which differed radically from the Spanish when it came to interbreeding. Despite his criticisms of the Portuguese and Spanish colonization methods, he did not believe that either followed a single approach uniformly. He saw the colonial policy of the Portuguese in Brazil when it came to racial mixing as being more successful than the casta system imposed in Spanish America:

But though Brazil was in this circumstance less favoured than the Spanish colonies, it was far more fortunate in a point of the highest importance. The seeds of civil war had not been sown there by that wicked distinction of casts, which has produced so much evil in Spanish America, and must produce evil wherever it prevails. This was the result of necessity, not of wiser councils. Portugal, with its limited territory and scanty population, could not pursue the unjust and jealous policy of the Spaniards, and depress the Creoles for the sake of holding them more completely in subjection. ‘The mameluco was as much respected, and as eligible to all offices, as the man of whole blood, or as the native of the mother country. There were no laws to degrade the mulatto, or the free negro, nor were they degraded by public opinion. And thus that amalgamation of casts and colours was silently going on which will secure Brazil from the most dreadful of civil wars, whatever other convulsions it may be fated to undergo’ (Southey, 1862c, p.471; emphasis added).

By the early 1800s, the hunt for native tribes had ceased, and the indigenous people “saw the Portuguese, not as invaders and persecutors, but as a people rooted in the country ... inviting them to partake the land with them as brethren, and participate in the advantages and comforts of a secure and settled life” (Southey, 1862e, p.497). The felicity of the peoples from mixed race came largely from a lack of distinction of castes. While the Portuguese, as a Christian, civilized people, asserted “a superiority, which the Indians feel and acknowledge,” this was not seen “as belonging to their cast and colour, nor to the right of conquest, but to their state of knowledge; and they call upon the Indians to receive instruction, and to become free members of the same community upon equal

terms” (p.498). This Portuguese policy meant that “in the course of a very few generations, all the remaining Indians will come within the pale of civilization, receive the faith of the Portuguese, adopt their language and their usages, and be incorporated with them as one people” (p.498). The result of this Portuguese colonial practice, derived from the fact that there were not enough people to inhabit Brazil, meant that “[t]he mixed breed, in every shade of intermixture, were exempted from the odious disabilities by which they were debased in the Spanish colonies; and Indians and Negroes had been decorated with honours, and admitted to charges of authority and confidence” (p.97). In this sense, Southey believed that the Portuguese colonization would have better results, because ultimately the country would have a more united, more cohesive population (Craig, 2007, p.158). The mixing of races was a key point in Southey’s interpretation of Brazil, hailed as it was as the key element in the country’s formation (Lima, 2012, p.128-129). It cannot be said that Southey considered the Portuguese colonization worthy of serving as a model for other enterprises, but yet that Portugal was a country of bold, faithful, perseverant men. Brazil was lucky to have been colonized by men with such laudable virtues.

Final considerations

The central position given in *History of Brazil* to the mamelucos of São Paulo is not matched by the mention made of any other racial mix. The “breed” produced by the mixture of black and indigenous people, for instance, the caribocas, is cited in a passage as being orderly, industrious, and highly respected (Southey, 1819, p.841). The mixture of whites and blacks – mulattos – was also secondary in *History of Brazil*. In fact, not only do the mamelucos gain pride of place, but the indigenous people in general populate many more pages than the black people, who Southey mentions only from time to time. Southey (p.552) believed black people to be more resistant, more active workers, and more intelligent than the natives. While the mamelucos tended to live more in inland parts, the mulattoes were predominant in Recife and other coastal towns and cities. In his view, the mamelucos were “finer in person than the mulattoes, and of a more independent character; for though the negro despises the Indian, the mulatto looks toward his white relations with a sense of inferiority, as if the brand of bondage were upon his skin; but the mameluco has no such feeling” (Southey, 1862e, p.428-429). Much was said about the immorality of the mulattoes, accusing them of being vengeful and dissolute, perpetrating the crimes of parricide, incest, and all manner of evils, “[b]ut let it not be supposed, that this depraved race carry in the tint of their skin a leaven of wickedness, ‘an original sin peculiar to the composition of their blood;’” they merely lacked an example of activity and well-directed “enterprise” (p.480; emphasis added). A reading of Aristotle and Pliny could indicate that the black skin of the Africans derived from a change in humor. The heat of the sun dried the body, which produced a bilious residue that darkened the skin. It could also be seen as stemming from the curse of Ham, son of Noah, reported in Genesis. Ham’s son Canaan was cursed by Noah to be the “servant of servants” because Ham did not protect his father’s dignity upon seeing him asleep naked. This suggestion that the dark African skin came from a mysterious biblical curse marks the African body as fundamentally different

from and inferior to the body of white Europeans (Earle, 2013, p.191-192). Southey was probably familiar with both interpretations of the black African skin and tried to combat them by stating that skin color was not indicative of the features of a race.

The centrality of the Amerindians in the racial mixture proposed by Southey could be related to the colonizing ambition to civilize them by making certain adjustments to their way of life. Transforming Africans into Europeans, however, was something nobody called for. For many years, Africans had been understood as a race that was hard to modify, especially because of the color of their skin, or even understood as having nothing to be modified since their characteristic brute force was seen as a positive trait (Earle, 2013, p.193-201). So, the indigenous people won pride of place in *History of Brazil*, while the other potential racial mixtures were less evident, but even so not to be despised: “the mixture of races which has taken place [in Brazil], is both a physical improvement, and a great political advantage” (Southey, 1862e, p.329).

NOTES

¹ See the entry for “miscegenation” in the Oxford Dictionary: <http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/miscegenation?q=miscegenation>. Accessed on March 29, 2014.

² The term “language” is employed here as proposed by John Pocock (2003) for the history of political discourse.

³ The book, published in 1648, was co-authored by Georg Marggraf (1610-1644), but in most cases Southey refers only to Piso, probably because he was referring to the parts of the work written by him. The beginning of the book, “De Medicina Brasiliensi,” was written by Piso, and the end, “Historia rerum naturalium Brasiliae,” by Marggraf.

⁴ Citations in English from Southey (1862a) were sourced from Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, v.1, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-row, 1810.

⁵ Although it was less relevant in this context, it should not be forgotten that botanic mapping was essential for assuring the colonizers new monopolies (Cañizares-Esguerra, 2011, p.7).

⁶ Citations in English from Southey (1862d) were sourced from Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, v.3, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-row, 1819.

⁷ Available at <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/acclimate>. Accessed on July 21, 2014.

⁸ Citations in English from Southey (1862b) were sourced from Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, v.2, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-row, 1817.

⁹ Citations in English from Southey (1862c) were sourced from Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, v.2, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-row, 1817.

¹⁰ Citations in English from Southey (1862e) were sourced from Robert Southey, *History of Brazil*, v.3, London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, and Orme, Paternoster-row, 1819.

¹¹ Letter to Thomas Southey, February 11, 1804.

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