

**Narratives about a mestizo territory: racial mixtures of Brazil in the perspective of three foreigners in the nineteenth century
(Saint-Hilaire, Louis Agassiz and Louis Couty)**

Flávio Raimundo Giarola*

Abstract: During the nineteenth century, several foreigners toured Brazil with diverse objectives, ranging from diplomatic missions to scientific expeditions that sought to recognize the biological and geographical diversity of the region. On these excursions, travelers also made descriptions of the populations they encountered along the way and developed theses on the development potential of a mixed-race territory with a considerable number of blacks. Thus, our article analyzes the representations about the mestizo and the mestizaje in the travel accounts and in the observations of three foreigners who were in Brazil at different times of the nineteenth: Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, Louis Agassiz and Louis Couty. We argue that the foreign narratives about the racial mix and about the consequences of these mixtures for Brazil suffered little change over the period analyzed, since they were fundamentally driven by the predominant European racialism in the sciences of that century.

Keywords: mestizos; miscegenation; travelers

Introduction

In the 19th century, according to Márcia Naxara, the idea that the accumulation of facts and knowledge would lead to a growing intelligibility of the world was one of the pillars of scientific discourse. In this perspective, observation and description were seen as primary methods for achieving knowledge of a particular object. Thus, travel became important for scientific practice, since the observation of nature and men allowed the collection and recognition of strange environments, little studied or, as was common in the discourse of the time, "uncivilized". According to the author, there were several factors that attracted foreign travelers to the "new world": the curiosity to know and see up close the wonders and/or the exoticism of the colonial world described by those who returned; the

* Effective Professor of History at the Federal Center for Technological Education of Minas Gerais (CEFET-MG); PhD in History from the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG).

growth of imagination about that territory and its wild population, fed since the 16th century; the possibilities linked to colonization and the exploitation of wealth; and the scientific interest based on the conceptions of natural history and focused on the observation and systematization of data that could be extracted from nature and societies from the most diverse places in the world (flora, fauna, minerals, lands, people, customs) (NAXARA, 2004, pp. 141-142).

Most travelers who visited Brazil in the 19th century were naturalists who tended to see man as a component of the natural environment. According to Lorelai Kury, the iconographies and travel reports sought to describe in an exhaustive and profound way the various elements that made up each place, since the understanding of 19th century science sought to describe the totality of elements that acted on a local phenomenon. “It is as if each part contains the whole. A particular physiognomy would follow the same logic of harmonic relations and sympathies that, it was supposed, governed cosmic life” (KURY, 2001, p. 870). Therefore, describing the inhabitants of the country visited was part of a broad perspective, which aimed to apprehend all the characteristics of a territory unknown to most Europeans.

In addition to scientific interest, some travelers were also driven by diplomatic, political and/or economic interests. In other cases, such as Louis Couty's, the trip became permanent, turning the foreigner into an immigrant. However, regardless of the purpose or length of stay, the initial estrangement from an adverse European society, marked by intense miscegenation and the large number of blacks, used to lead to the desire to describe it. At this point, the role of distance in the perception of the traveler is highlighted, which, according to Ana Maria Belluzzo, presents a double aspect of strangeness: its distance from what he witnesses as extraordinary in the foreign place; and the distance provided by the trip in relation to what he experienced in his place of origin, which leads him to review aspects of his ordinary life, placed under a new key (BELLUZZO, 2008, p.3).

In this way, the traveler seeks words, concepts and references that allow him to associate these new experiences with his previous knowledge. In the particular case of narratives about human groups, racialism played an important role in this regard. The racist theories produced in the Old World between the 18th and 19th centuries appeared as a kind of lens used by these travelers to assimilate the different, that is, to recognize that diversity and place it within the European understanding.

The issue of mestizo was one of the characteristics of Brazilian society that most attracted the attention of foreigners who passed through the country in the 19th century. This is because, according to Eduardo França Paiva, the multicolor of miscegenation marked Portuguese America in an indelible way since the Colony. From the contacts established between such diverse origins and world views, driven by power relations molded to the peculiarities of regions and times, individuals and groups were born that were neither Europeans, Africans, nor Indians. “They were mixed race. Mulattoes, pardos, guys, caboclos, they were those born in Colony from the encounter between worlds that are not very similar” (PAIVA, 2001, p. 37).

The situation did not change in the 19th century and, on the contrary, gained greater prominence with the development of racialist discussions.¹ Still using Paiva, the term “miscegenation” itself seems to have appeared in the 19th century, most likely from the scientific approach given to the problem of miscegenation, especially in young American nations. According to the author, it was in the same nineteenth century that the old meanings attributed to the term “hybrid” also changed, which now means the mixture that does not bear fruit, the sterile:

This definition was used for animals and plants and seeds, but, often, explicitly and implicitly, it was associated with human miscegenations and, still, projected on the future of those young nations, many of whom had long past slavery and were markedly strong. and indelibly, all of them, due to the biological and cultural mix. The intellectual, scientific and political views of those times condemned the past and present of these peoples and doubted their ability to “civilize” themselves in the future.

¹ It is necessary to highlight that there is a terminological difference between “racism” and “racialism”. According to Tzvetan Todorov, the word racism refers to behavior, most often done with hatred and contempt towards people with well-defined physical characteristics and different from ours. Racialism, on the other hand, refers to an ideology, a doctrine referring to human races. Racism is an old and probably universal behavior; racialism is a movement of ideas born in western Europe, whose great period runs from the middle of the 18th century to the middle of the 20th century. (TODOROV, 1993, p. 108). Without wanting to challenge Todorov’s valiant distinction, we do not believe that racism is a universal behavior. As Michel Leiris says, racial prejudice is not innate, on the contrary, it is of recent origin. According to the author, many societies investigated by ethnographers exhibit group pride; but although this group considers itself privileged in relation to others, it has no pretensions of “race” and does not disdain, for example, to seek women among the other groups or to sanction occasional alliances with them. In Western Europe, the peoples that the Greeks called “barbarians” were not seen as racially inferior, but as not having reached the same level of civilization as they; Alexander of Macedonia himself married two Persian princesses and ten thousand of his soldiers married Hindu women (LEIRIS, 1970, p. 225-226).

Hybrid and mestizo thus became synonymous with degeneration and barbarism, necessarily occupying a discreditable and dangerous place in the evolutionary chain. The new meanings attributed to the old terms and the lexical derivations were very convenient for this mistaken conclusion (PAIVA, 2009, p. 13).²

Therefore, next to the term “race”, introduced in specialized literature at the beginning of the *19th century*, according to Lilia Schwarcz, by Georges Cuvier, inaugurating the idea of the existence of permanent physical inheritances among the various human groups (SCHWARCZ, 1993, p. 47); the term “mestizaje” also gained importance for condemning, in most cases, the mixture between the diverse “racial types”. Since then, several theories about human crossings have emerged, consolidating a discourse that, almost always, linked miscegenation to the backwardness of certain civilizations. In other words, this racialist look at the mixes fueled the writing of travelers, who almost always used descriptions of the Brazilian “racial” scenario as a kind of proof of the theories that were being produced in Europe.

As a consequence, foreign travelers tended to be disappointed with the type of man they met in Brazil, described as listless, lazy, indolent, among other negative characteristics; in contrast to the exaltation of tropical nature, which caused ecstasy and admiration in Europeans (VENTURA, 1991, p. 32). Thus, these travelers helped to consolidate the image that Brazil was a country predominantly occupied by a population backward in evolutionary terms (RAMOS; MAIO, 2010, p. 31), and that, therefore, was not able to explore the potential their territory. The condemnation of miscegenation and the perception of the blacks' ills for the nation's progress stood out.

Internally, in 1838, the Brazilian Historical and Geographic Institute emerged, which, in view of the process of building the Brazilian National State, sought to outline a profile for the young nation. According to Manuel Luis Salgado Guimarães, since the beginning of the activities of the IHGB, the difficulties of promoting a national project in a society marked by slave labor and the existence of indigenous populations have already

² It is noteworthy that, for Paiva, unlike the term miscegenation, the terms hybrid, semiferous, mixed, mestizo existed much before the racialism of the 19th century, making it possible to go back, at least, to the early years of the Christian era and find some of them registered. "The use of these terms almost always served to evoke a certain 'purity' of origin, cultural and biological, and therefore, so that the hybrids were properly identified and (un) classified" (PAIVA, 2009, p. 12).

been thought (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 6). Thus, the idea of a predominant nation in such an institution was not based, contrary to what could be expected from a newly independent territory, in opposition to the old Portuguese metropolis. Instead, he recognized the Brazilian nation as continuing a certain civilizing task initiated by the colonization of Portugal.

In this way, Brazil could be defined as representing the idea of civilization in the New World. At the same time, however, those who should be excluded from nationality were identified, as they are not carriers of the notion of civilization: Indians and blacks. “The concept of operated Nation is eminently restricted to whites, without, therefore, having the scope that the concept proposed in the European space” (GUIMARÃES, 1988, p. 7).

Even so, in the midst of this debate, based on an initiative by the IHGB, a foreigner had the initiative to interpret the mixed-race character of the Brazilian. The German naturalist Karl von Martius (1794-1868), when winning a contest promoted by the Institute, defended the thesis that the key to understanding the history of Brazil was in the study of the crossing of the three “races” that had formed its population - white, indigenous and black (RAMOS; MAIO, 2010, p. 35). In his text *How to write the history of Brazil* (1845), the author proposed an interpretation of the country that started from the analysis of the formation and constitution of its people, having miscegenation as the central point of the argument. According to the author;

Whoever is in charge of writing the History of Brazil, a country that promises so much, should never lose sight of the elements that contributed to the development of man.

However, these elements are of a very different nature, and for the formation of man converged in a particular way three races, namely: copper or American, white or Caucasian, and finally black or Ethiopian. From the encounter, from the mix, from the mutual relations and changes of these three races, the current population was formed, whose history, therefore, has a very particular character.

(...)

We will never be allowed to doubt that the will of providence predestined Brazil this mixture. Portuguese blood in a powerful river should absorb

the small confluents of the Indian and Ethiopian races (MARTIUS, 1845, p. 408).

Von Martius' interpretation, made *in the mid-19th century*, was perhaps the analysis of a foreigner who most profoundly influenced Brazilian intellectuals who subsequently tried to solve the problems arising from the paradox between the nation's development and the mestizo population. Mainly because there was an optimistic prognosis that the white blood of the Portuguese would tend to overlap in society. For Ana Luisa Fayet Sallas, Martius' ideas about history were formulated from the point of view of a naturalist who, to a large extent, took as a principle the existing differences in Brazilian social formation naturalized data, not treated in its political and economic dimension (SALLAS, 2010, p. 430). Throughout the history of the Empire, driven by racialist discourse, other travelers highlighted, like von Martius, the mestizo characteristic of Brazil as a key element to discuss that society, even though they tended to see more negative than positive aspects in this observation. .

In view of this, the purpose of this article is to analyze the representations of miscegenation and mestizo in the works of three travelers who were in Brazil at different times in the history of the Empire: Auguste de Saint-Hilaire, Louis Agassiz and Louis Couty. Each of these foreigners made important descriptions of the constant mixture between the “races” that occurred throughout the Brazilian territory, and agreed on the indelible mark that these mixtures imposed on that society, reaching very close conclusions about its effects.

We intend to insert ourselves in the debate about travelers in 19th century Brazil, promoting a *comparative analysis* of three subjects separated by a *considerable period of time*. Our intention, in doing this, is to understand, on the one hand, how the political, social and economic issues experienced by Brazil at the time of the trip influenced the description of miscegenation. At the same time, we believe that this *temporal distance* also allows us to ascertain how the gradual development of racialism in Europe impacted foreign representations about Brazil, especially in the construction of a negative discourse about the mestizo. Finally, we intend to highlight the consolidation of an idea of mestizo empire among European travelers, based on the observation that the territory visited had a singularity compared to other parts of the world: the incessant mixture between whites, Indians and blacks. In summary, our hypothesis is that a long-term approach can elucidate

important aspects of changes and permanences in the descriptions of miscegenation in the New World.

The half-breed in the travels of Saint-Hilaire

Frenchman Auguste de Saint-Hilaire (1779-1853) was a botanist who was in Brazil between 1816 and 1822, as part of an expedition organized by the Duke of Luxembourg to resolve an existing conflict between France and Portugal, regarding Guyana. From his arrival, he took advantage of his stay to tour various parts of the territory that still belonged to the Portuguese Empire, collecting specimens of Brazilian fauna and flora. He was in several regions that correspond today to the states of Rio de Janeiro, Espírito Santo, Minas Gerais, Goiás, São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina and Rio Grande do Sul.

Saint-Hilaire followed the moments that characterized the transition that would take Brazil to become an independent country. In this way, mainly in the account of his second trip to the province of São Paulo, he recorded events that marked the end of Portuguese rule and the signs of the birth of the Brazilian Empire.

For the purpose of analysis, we chose two travel reports from Saint-Hilaire to identify the representations that he had in the face of miscegenation in Brazil.

A trip to the headwaters of the São Francisco River and the province of Goiás, he describes the paths taken by the naturalist in 1819, leaving Rio de Janeiro to the headwaters of the São Francisco River and from there to Goiás. The *Second trip from Rio de Janeiro to Minas Gerais and São Paulo* traces the route traveled in 1822, leaving Rio de Janeiro, on January 29 of that year, and passing through the territories of Minas Gerais and São Paulo. We also used as source the text *Historical chart of the Province of São Paulo*, published as an appendix in the edition of the Federal Senate of the reports of the second trip to São Paulo, and which contains a very rich description of the miscegenation among the paulistas.

In the analysis of these works, the perception of the Brazilian territory as a region composed of mestizos is explicit.

The population of France, like all of Western Europe, is perfectly homogeneous - one race of men and there are no slaves. The same, unfortunately, does not occur in Brazil. Not only is slavery allowed there, but three completely different races (and the numerous mestizos that the

connections between them produced) constitute the population of the country. (...) Strange confusion of races, resulting in embarrassing and dangerous complications, both for the public administration and for social morality (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 220).

The above excerpt, taken from the Historical Picture of the Province of São Paulo, was written sometime after the emancipation of Brazil, in 1839, and also some years before the already mentioned text by von Martius. The conception of racial mixtures appears clearly negative, exposing problems for a still recent nation. Its analysis assumes that there is a singularity in the Empire, the miscegenation, but that it was responsible for several obstacles for social development and for administration.

Saint-Hilaire had arrived at these conclusions during his travels around the country and, through his reports, tried to account for the “racial mixtures” he perceived in his itineraries. On his 1819 trip, for example, when describing the inhabitants of the Pari site in Goiás, the French naturalist not only observed the region's miscegenation, but also tried to show that it made it difficult to identify pure whites.

Despite the little sympathy that, in general, exists between whites and mulattos, these mixtures are not very rare in poor families, who cannot be very demanding in alliances. Often, too, families of mixed blood turn white again by new crosses; thus, one of the inhabitants of Pari evidently had a quarter of black blood; He had married a white woman, his son's hair was straight and a beautiful blond. It results from so many different crossings that it is often difficult to decide whether a man is really white, or whether he should be classified among mestizos (SAINT-HILAIRE, 1937, p. 202).

In Pari, the traveler was faced with a mixture that was not limited to the types considered pure (whites, blacks and Indians), but that multiplied with the reproduction between mulattos and whites, according to the report. Later, this continuity of mixtures through mestizos would be a point also noted by Agassiz, who would highlight the elimination of racial purity through this process. For Saint-Hilaire, however, these crossings are responsible for a kind of “whitening”, very close to von Martius' assertion that

“white blood” would overlap with other elements of society, a thesis that would be the basis for many racist discourses of Brazilian intellectuals at the end of the 19th century.³

This is not to say that Saint-Hilaire did not see characteristics inherent to mestizos. With regard to mulattos, he admitted that it could be said that they were more lively in spirit and easier to learn than the “men of Caucasian race”, but maintained the “lack of character inherent in the African race” and had less elevated feelings than the whites”, amplified by the evils of captivity (SAINT-HILAIRE, 1937, p. 65). In this conception, the black and white mestizo manages to present positive characteristics, in balance with negative aspects that, according to Saint-Hilaire, derived both from the influence of the “inferior race” and from the harmful effects of slavery.

A similar description was made by Saint-Hilaire when speaking of his assistant, José Mariano, a mestizo who, according to the naturalist, had black, white and indigenous blood. “This man possessed, in the highest degree, the good and bad qualities that characterize mestizos; he possessed great intelligence, and unusual skill; but it was, at the same time, unforeseen, lavish and vain”(SAINT-HILAIRE, 1937, p. 26). Thus, the mestizo is a kind of nucleus for which the gifts of the “white race” converge and, at the same time, the defects of blacks and Indians.

However, at one time or another, the rare positive traits of the “races” considered inferior can stand out in the mestizos. An example of this is that those who carry the blood of the three “races” and the mulattos, mainly, are not seen as bad workers, since they descend, for the most part, from enslaved individuals. On the contrary, they are skilled, and Saint-Hilaire even recognizes an intelligence that they carry from their white ancestors. At the same time, “these people (...) have all the inconstancy of blacks and Indians; they are without principles, and most without family; used to nomadic life, they cannot get used to dependency”(SAINT-HILAIRE, 1937, p. 69).

³ Like the works of João Batista de Lacerda (1846-1915), one of the great disseminators of the theory of whitening in Brazil. For him, mestizos were inferior to blacks as agricultural labor and in resistance to diseases, however, they had a physical and moral superiority in relation to “blacks”. He believed that the racial crossing would lead, in the course of more than a century, to the disappearance of the “métis” (mestizo) in the country. According to Skidmore (1976, p. 82), Lacerda went so far as to affirm that children of “métis” have already presented, in the third generation, all the physical characters of the “white race”. Obviously, parallel to this process, there would be the total extinction of the “black race” in our environment, exposed to all kinds of agents of destruction and without sufficient resources to maintain themselves, factors resulting from the abolition.

Despite believing in the existence of races and the inherent inequality between them, Saint-Hilaire does not use any great racialist theory to justify his descriptions of mestizos. Perhaps because of this, it is evident the recognition of a kind of hierarchy among the mestizos. In other words, there is almost a balance in the positive and negative characteristics of mulattos and mestizos who have their blood diluted among the three main racial groups in Brazil. However, when his reports target the mameluco, that is, the mestizo of Indian with white, the analysis becomes more critical and less balanced. This becomes clearer when the naturalist speaks of São Paulo, as in his description of the population of Jacareí;

The traces of the indigenous race are much more pronounced in the inhabitants of Jacareí than in the other places where I have been until now. This is not extraordinary, as this region is still a considerable distance from São Paulo, which only has indirect communication with Rio de Janeiro, and where, therefore, the crossings were less repeated. If the pale color, which characterizes the descendants of whites and Indians, is generally more pronounced, the eyes often have a slight divergence.

They are narrower than those of pure-bred Europeans, the nose is often flatter, the molars more prominent. Physiognomies often express sweetness and charm, but they are always expressionless. The men of this region, late in their movements, seem indifferent to everything. They show no curiosity, speak little and are much less educated than those in Minas. The Portuguese language takes in their mouths a sweetness that does not exist in the Portuguese of Europe; but here, this sweetness becomes a cakewalk; the reflections are varied, and there is something childlike, reminiscent of the language of the Indians (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 93-95).

One of the possible explanations for this less benevolent view of the Mamelukes is the fact that Saint-Hilaire feeds a negative perception of indigenous peoples, considered savages and averse to civilization. Furthermore, he considered the influence of their culture on white to be harmful, criticizing the fact that, where the number of natives was high, Europeans adopted their customs and their language. He concluded that the miners

had great superiority over the rest of the Brazilians because they mixed very little with the Indians (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 83).

Blacks, at least, served as a labor force and, despite the evils that slavery caused, it had the positive aspect of civilizing Africans. On the contrary, the indigenous people, in addition to being as unforeseen as blacks, “resign themselves less easily, are more attached to freedom and do not have the same vigor to endure the harsh work of slavery” (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 153).

Saint-Hilaire also considered that the Portuguese were representatives of a “very defective” European civilization and that, in addition to their vices, those of the Indians were added, forming the Mamluks (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 143). According to him, the tendency of the indigenous people was the disappearance, since most of the “wild tribes” had already disappeared and the new crossings tended to make the “traces of this blood” disappear even more in society. However, “there is still, however, an enormous amount of mestizos, which an exercised observation distinguishes without much effort, and which is even repelled, in many parts of the country, by true whites” (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 225).

Faced with an unfavorable racial scenario, Saint-Hilaire visualizes the potential of immigration. If miscegenation had made the population indolent and accustomed to laziness “the European master of the advantage of having a much greater destiny must necessarily gain something, if he works with perseverance and behaves well” (SAINT-HILAIRE, 2002, p. 118). The central issue is that there was an immense territory to be explored, with the greatest natural wealth, waiting only for the work of men free from the vices that the racial mixture had imprinted on society.

That said, despite Saint-Hilaire seeing some positive influence of the white element in the mixtures, especially with the black, and in the long term identifying an overlap of this over the other “racial” elements; in general, a critical interpretation of mixtures is necessary. The existence of a society composed largely of mestizos brings much more problems than benefits for a Brazil that, still linked to Portugal, showed signs that it would soon become an independent nation. This happened since these hybrids either traveled between positive and negative characteristics arising from the progenitor “races” or, in the case of the *mameluco*, they suffered from the evils caused by the indigenous blood.

Louis Agassiz and the degeneration of the mestizo

Louis Agassiz and his wife, Elizabeth Agassiz, were in Brazil between 1865 and 1866, at a *historical moment very different* from that witnessed by Saint-Hilaire. It had been a few decades since independence and the imperial institutions had already achieved some stability with the second emperor. Thus, the diagnosis of miscegenation and its effects occurs before a relatively consolidated nation, albeit a young one.

His expedition, financed by Nathaniel Thayer, traveled through Rio de Janeiro and Minas Gerais, as well as regions of the Northeast and North of Brazil. These trips resulted in the book *Viagem ao Brasil - 1865-1866*, based on the records made by Elizabeth Agassiz and on some observations made by Louis Agassiz himself.

Interested in Brazilian fish, Agassiz maintained frequent correspondence with Dom Pedro II, obtaining, from him, all the necessary support for his enterprise. According to Márcia Naxara, the expedition organized by Agassiz had a definite scientific objective, seeking to gather elements for the understanding and clarification of the theories regarding the evolution of species, which had been researched and discussed by both Darwin and other scientists. In addition, it sought to find elements capable of elucidating the mystery of the origin of life, of its development, of the causalities capable of linking, or not, past and present, explaining this by the former (NAXARA, 2004, p. 161). In view of this, like Saint-Hilaire, he found it necessary to describe aspects of the human types that inhabited the Empire, among them, the mestizos.

At the beginning of the trip, still in Rio de Janeiro, Elizabeth Agassiz made an observation that has a lot to say about her vision and that of her husband in the face of miscegenation between different groups. When noticing a cluster of blacks in the city, he said that there was a need to think about the consequences of their contact with whites, concluding that blacks and slavery had a pernicious influence on masters (AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 45). Although he was not yet dealing with biological miscegenation, properly speaking, a criticism of another form of miscegenation, cultural, was already outlined. Contact between European and African cultures was detrimental to the development of the former, which was amplified by slave practices. Analysis very similar to what Saint-Hilaire had done regarding the influence of indigenous culture on white.

Ahead, still in Rio de Janeiro, visiting the Pedro II school, Elizabeth was impressed with the mestizos who studied at that educational institution and, even more, with the diversity of “races” between students and teachers;

one thing, however, strikes the foreigner when he sees, for the first time, all this youth gathered together: it is the absence of the pure type and the sick aspect of these adolescents; I don't know if it is a consequence of the climate, but a vigorous and strongly healthy child is rare to be found in Rio de Janeiro. The students were of all races, they saw themselves as black and from all the intermediate shades until white; and even the teacher of one of the upper classes of the Latin language was of pure African blood (AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 92).

The acceptance of blacks and mestizos in society was considered honorable by the couple of travelers. However, there was a negative factor: it contributed to the increase in the number of these types in the country. They agreed that, in slave societies, it was common to find specimens of the most varied "races" and, consequently, to observe their amalgam, as occurred in the United States, for example. But, in Brazil, this would have gained unfavorable proportions for the development of society, since it was "as if all purity of a type had been destroyed, resulting in a vague compound, without character and without expression" (AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 180). In this way, unlike those who, like von Martius, considered that the elements of the "superior race" tended to impose themselves in miscegenation; the Agassiz thought that the result of the blends would be the elimination of any pure type. Therefore, we have two important findings: the idea of the absence of prejudice in the Empire and, on the other hand, the negative effects that this led to the "racial" formation of the country.

In Manaus, this observation had become much more evident to travelers:

(...) and the faces showed all shades, from black to white, not to mention the coppery colors of the Indians and the mestizos. There is no racial prejudice here. A black woman - assuming you can see that she is free - is treated with as much consideration and gets as much attention as a white woman. However, it is rare to find a person in society who is absolutely of a pure black race, but they see numerous mulattos and mameluks, as the mestizos of Indian and Negro are called (AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 174).

In the Northern region, therefore, the image of a country made up of mestizos was explicit for the couple. It is at this point that Louis Agassiz wrote some of his main observations about racial mixtures. In this part of the account, Elizabeth transcribes an

entire excerpt from the Swiss naturalist on the subject. The text is an analysis completely influenced by racist theories, very different from the descriptions of Saint-Hilaire. The first, despite showing his knowledge of these ideas, did not go into much detail, just letting on that he believed that there were different races and that they could merge in a negative way and, more rarely, in a positive way. In contrast, Agassiz, on the other hand, sought to interpret the Brazilian population from the perspective of European racial theory. At the same time, it sought to use Brazil as a laboratory to support racialism. In this way, he said;

we know that, among animals, when two individuals of different sex and different species compete in the production of a new entity, this hybrid does not present an exclusive resemblance to the father, nor to the mother and participates in the characters of both. It does not seem less significant to me that this fact is equally true as regards the product of two individuals of different sex, belonging to different human races. The son born to a black woman and a white man is neither black nor white, he is a mulatto; the son of an Indian and a white man is neither an Indian nor a white man, he is a Mameluk; the son of a black woman and an Indian is not a black man nor is an Indian a cafuzo. Cafuzo, mameluco and mulatto participate in the characters of their authors, as much as the mule participates in those of the horse and the donkey. Therefore, with regard to the product, human races are, in relation to each other, in the same relationship as animal species to each other and the word races, in its current meaning, should be abandoned when the number of human species is definitely determined and when the true characters of these species have been clearly established. For me, I believe I am demonstrating that, unless it is proved that the existing differences between the Indian, black and white races are unstable and transient, one cannot, without disagreeing with the facts, affirm the community of origin for all the varieties of the human family. Likewise, it is contradicting the principles of science to make a systematic distinction between human races and animal species (AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 183-184).

This quote, although long, raises some important questions about the basic ideas of Agassiz's thought. Based on the scenario found in Brazil, he tried to defend polygenism, which was very influential among several European scientists in the middle of the 19th

century. According to Schwarcz, polygenists believed in the existence of several creation centers, which corresponded to the racial differences observed (SCHWARCZ, 1993, p. 48). Agassiz tried to prove this idea by comparing human miscegenation with the mixtures that occurred between animals and by defending that there was no original community among humans.

Another racialist theory that Agassiz tried to prove from his observations in Brazil was that of the degeneration that occurred due to “racial” mixtures. At this point, the traveler approached the propositions of Buffon, who, even in the 18th century, made the same approximations between humans and animals and argued that the crossings produced degenerate individuals (POLIAKOV, 1974, p. 141). Thus, according to Naxara, Agassiz assumes that all miscegenation is condemned and sees mestizo with suspicion, as something that has been defiled, having lost its initial purity, the potential force inscribed in the origin of each element that composes it. This means loss for both sides that crossed (NAXARA, 2004, p. 195).

Regarding the characteristics of the mestizos, Agassiz said that the mestizo of white with black, that is, the mulatto, might even have elegant features, a light color, and a lot of confidence in him, but he was indolent. The mestizo of Indian with black, cafuzo, on the other hand, had no delicate features, had a rich color, long, thin and ringed hair, and “his character presents a happy combination of the affable mood of the Negro and the energetic rusticity of the Indian” (AGASSIZ ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 307). Finally, the mameluco “is pale and effeminate, weak, lazy, although obstinate. It seems that the influence of the Indian has the strength precisely necessary to cancel the high attributes of white, without communicating to the product anything of its own energy ”(AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 307). Thus, through different paths, the conclusions are similar in some points to those of Saint-Hilaire: mestizos may have one or another favorable characteristic, but, in general, it is the negative aspect that stands out.

The problem of miscegenation, for Agassiz, is summarized as follows;

the result of uninterrupted alliances between mestizos is a class of people in which the pure type has disappeared, and with it all the good physical and moral qualities of the primitive breeds, leaving in their place bastards as repulsive as the mastinado dogs, which cause horror to animals of its own species, among which not a single one has been found who has

preserved the intelligence, the nobility, the natural affectivity that make the purebred dog the companion and the favorite animal of civilized man (AGASSIZ; AGASSIZ, 1975, p. 184).

Therefore, the mixes tended to perpetuate, since the mestizos mixed with each other, contributing to the elimination of pure types. From these mixtures, nothing was used, creating a population that would look more like a patchwork. If the population of the Peri site, described by Saint-Hilaire, made it difficult to identify mestizos and whites, due to the incessant mixtures of these first ones; for Agassiz, the result was another, a shapeless population, devoid of physical and moral qualities. Thus, the mestizo empire, for the Swiss scientist, did not present many future possibilities, at least with regard to its racial composition.

Louis Couty and the indolent half-breed

In the 1880s, Brazil was moving towards the end of servile work, which generated heated discussions in the press, in parliament and among intellectuals. It was in this context that the Frenchman Louis Couty was in the country. A professor at the Faculty of Medicine of Paris, Couty was hired by the imperial government to occupy the chair of Industrial Biology at the Polytechnic School in 1879. He died in Rio de Janeiro in 1884. In view of this, of the travelers studied so far, Couty was the only one who was in the Empire with a purpose of prolonged stay, that is, he ended up becoming an immigrant.

He did not promote any description of the trip but tried to interpret some aspects of Brazil that he had encountered, especially the issues surrounding the end of slavery. He believed that the country had great potential for growth, but he thought that, for that, it should solve the problem of labor. For the traveler, only the replacement of the slave worker by the foreign immigrant could change the situation of the nation, since it was “better and more economical” than the blacks. In this way, he defended the end of slavery, considering it harmful, but he refused any proposal of insertion of nationals and freed blacks in the free labor market, because they would not be able to follow a daily work regime without coercion.

For the purpose of analysis, we used the works *Slavery in Brazil*, initially published in 1881, and *Brazil in 1884, sociological sketches*, from 1884. In these two works, the mestizo

appears almost always as the “national element” and the author's assessment goes a long way towards the issue of work. The main finding is that these would not be good workers, as they were left to idle. For this reason, he said that “the caboclos, indolent and apathetic, and the slaves need to be replaced by diligent workers, capable of producing, consuming and enjoying the various facilities of exchanges” (COUTY, 1984, p. 170). For him, Brazil needed “useful populations”, such as those in Europe and the United States, that would allow national development.

Of the three foreigners analyzed, Couty was the only one who resorted to national authors to defend his arguments, reflecting a Brazil that had suffered the impact of the intellectual movement of the “1870 generation”; a generation that had, in its repertoire, the ideas of European scientism (ALONSO, 2002), many of which marked Couty's speeches. In fact, both Saint-Hilaire and Agassiz came to complain about the absence of work by Brazilians on the territory in which they lived and on the population that lived there, considering this fact as a symptom of the laziness inherent in society. Couty, in turn, used Silvio Romero and Joaquim Nabuco to come to the conclusion that, due to the “racial” mixes and the strong presence of blacks, Brazil had no people;

We do not deny the qualities of these peasants, mostly of mixed race, almost all descendants of Indians and mainly of freed blacks. They are hospitable, capable of long-lasting efforts and their habits are not aggressive. However, his defenders, those who, like Silvio Romero, consider the mestizo to be superior to the white, or his contenders, those who, like Joaquim Nabuco, lament the fact that the country was colonized by the Portuguese and blacks, come to the same conclusion: Brazil has no people, or rather, the people given to it by mixtures of races and manumission, do not play an active and useful role (COUTY, 1984, p. 200).

The main problem was that “racial” mixtures did not produce workers. Couty, in contrast to Agassiz, even praised the work of miscegenation carried out by the Portuguese, which did not only take place in physical relationships, but also in the “intermingling of customs, moral miscegenation”. However, he regretted the fact that this miscegenation did not build “a people of constant and economic workers” (COUTY, 1984, p. 201). There are some positive qualities in the mestizo, such as hospitality; but the main quality, work, a desired and necessary characteristic for the solution of the problem of slavery, is absent in

the individuals resulting from the “racial mixtures”. Thus, *he strongly disagreed with Saint-Hilaire's argument that some mestizos made good workers.*

Based on the observation that there were no laborious elements in the Brazilian Empire, Couty defended the arrival of immigrants, using a discourse very close to social evolutionism, when he said that, because they arrived in a country where they did not know the language, culture or customs, foreigners were in an inferior position. For this reason, the State should let them fight on an equal footing with the country's inhabitants. If Brazil's peasants proved to be more valuable, immigrants would win. But, if they lost in this competition, they would prove that they are not useful, and, therefore, the government should not provide laws and rights that would benefit them (COUTY, 1984, p. 210).

In *Slavery in Brazil*, he said that, “as a man of science”, I could not believe in equality between men (COUTY, 1988, p. 104). However, he admitted, unlike Saint-Hilaire, that mixing with the Indian provided good elements to the population, but that they could not be used to solve the labor crisis. It said the same thing about pure Indians who were not fit for regular production and, therefore, were left at liberty “to live, or rather, to vegetate at will” (COUTY, 1988, p. 89-90).

If, on the one hand, miscegenation was condemned for producing “useless” beings; on the other, Couty defended the absence of racial prejudice in the country, saying that “millions of blacks and free mestizos are already mixed with the rest of the population in perfect conditions of moral and social equality” (COUTY, 1984, p. 188). In this sense, he spoke of intersections in a very close way to Saint-Hilaire and Agassiz. For him, one of the hallmarks of Brazil was not only the absence of color prejudice, but also the frequent union between individuals of different “races”, who constituted a large mixed-race population, which was not considered to be inferior. His astonishment in this regard was very similar to that of Elizabeth Agassiz when visiting the Pedro II school.

It is not just at the table, in the theater, in the halls, in all public places; it is also in the army, in public administration, in schools, and in legislative assemblies that we find all colors mixed, on equal terms, and in the most complete and least affected of familiarities (COUTY, 1988, p. 52).

He credited the Portuguese for the realization of this harmonic mixture, since, from the beginning, they would have mixed with blacks and Indians. It also said that, in the 19th

century, Brazil still received a large number of immigrants from Portugal, who maintained a penchant for black women.

It is also known that men who did not achieve a certain fortune or even high social positions, in general, retain this curious propensity for mixing colors, and on farms or in the city's rich residences, irregular mixed-race unions often precede to legitimate marriage or coexist with it (COUTY, 1988, p. 60).

According to Cláudia Santos, having embraced the most racialist theses of the time, Couty should consider race relations in Brazil to be quite harmonious, simply because blacks and whites share the same spaces (SANTOS, 2013, p. 168). However, miscegenation also contributed to this stance, since the mixes were seen as a singularity of Brazil, as did Saint-Hilaire and Agassiz. Therefore, Couty's vision of miscegenation was marked by the identification of mixtures as a praiseworthy work, for allowing the absence of racial prejudice; but, at the same time, it did not produce good workers, which led to the need to introduce new elements that could solve the labor crisis of the 1880s. At this point, again, the negative aspects would have overlapped in the "racial" mixtures, creating a deficient population.

Final considerations

The analysis of the descriptions of the three foreigners used as a source for this article allows the perception of some important differences in these reports. However, what draws the most attention are the similarities in the representations of the mestizo, even with a relative temporal distance that separates the trips. In view of this, we can make some considerations about European perceptions about miscegenation in Brazil in the 19th century.

On the one hand, the differences perceived between Saint-Hilaire, the Agassiz and Couty are strongly marked by the period in which these travelers were in Brazil and by the objectives of the trips. Saint-Hilaire describes miscegenations as part of the scenario he encountered, without elaborating on theories. He only reported what he saw and gave his opinions, based on the racialist readings he had already done in Europe. The Agassiz couple, in turn, also reported the mestizo as part of a landscape. However, Louis Agassiz

made a scientific analysis, according to the standards of the time, much more accurate than Saint-Hilaire. Not only did he describe or express his opinion, but he inserted the mestizos of Brazil in a speech about the degeneration that had gained a lot of strength in Europe in the middle of the 19th century. Couty, on the other hand, experiencing the gradual end of slavery in the Empire, sought to account for the problems inherent in the labor crisis, finding in the miscegenation some arguments to show the inferiority of the national worker.

On the other hand, the distribution of the positive and negative characteristics of the progenitor “races” among the mestizos and their consequences for Brazil were also issues that found different formulations among the studied travelers. For Saint-Hilaire, some mestizos could have favorable characteristics and the mixtures between them could form individuals who mingled with whites. However, in a general analysis, the results of miscegenations for a nation in the process of being formed were not reassuring. Agassiz, on the other hand, said that blends would extinguish the positive characteristics of pure types, which would result in a misshapen population. Couty, for his part, like Saint-Hilaire, agreed that some qualities could be seen among the mestizos, but the essential quality, the work, that could solve the great problem faced by the Empire, at the end of the 19th century was lacking.

Despite these differences, the similarities between the three descriptions, however, are more visible. The three travelers, four if we count Elizabeth Agassiz, saw miscegenation as a singularity in Brazil and identified it as the result of an alleged racial democracy, which, instead of curbing, encouraged mixtures. For travelers, it was impossible to speak of the population of Brazil without referring to this characteristic that was intrinsic to its history. At this point, they seemed to agree with von Martius.

However, in the perception of these foreigners, the result of miscegenation was almost always negative. For Saint-Hilaire, the mixtures, mainly with the indigenous, produced bad elements, in which the negative characteristics of the natives predominated. For Agassiz, miscegenation worked to promote degeneration, creating subjects that carried more negative than positive aspects of their matrices. For Couty, miscegenation had created lazy, indolent, therefore useless individuals to compose the necessary workforce after abolition.

These positions were linked to the idea that the potential that nature could provide was canceled out by a population unable to exploit it. If the mestizo was limited in several

ways, the young nation of America had a great challenge of trying to thrive in the midst of such "racial poverty".

Finally, the study of the works of these travelers allows us to conclude that the European vision in the face of miscegenation has not undergone profound changes in an interval of about 60 years. From the founding of the Empire to its final moments, the idea that mixtures produced a deficient population persisted, with the main defects pronounced by racist theories of the Old World. For foreign travelers, the Empire was mestizo, formed by "three races", and, therefore, was very far from the ideal of civilization proposed by European science.

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