

The Fusion of Races as Locus of Memory

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For a long while the dilemma between 'not being' and 'being other' has haunted the history of Brazil. The country's mixed-race condition lay at the heart of the dilemma which reached its apogee in the second half of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. At that point in its history, that is, its emergence as a nation-state, the construction of a national identity became an imperative for the political and intellectual elites of Brazil. In this context, a European, the German naturalist, Carl von Martius, made himself particularly notable for having been one of the first, after Independence, to point out the significance of miscegenation in the composition of Brazilian identity.

Having arrived in Brazil in 1817 as a member of the scientific expedition accompanying the Austrian archduchess Leopoldina of Habsburg, wife of the future emperor, Don Pedro de Bragança, he made many journeys of exploration into the Brazilian hinterland in the company of another naturalist, Johan Baptist von Spix. At the end of his voyages, von Martius wrote a text which was to become a reference work thereafter. Entitled 'How the History of Brazil Should Be Written', it was presented in 1845 at the competition (where he won first prize) organized by the Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro [Brazilian Historical and Geographical Institute],¹ an institution concerned with the historical legitimation of the young nation.

Given that von Martius was surprised to find in Brazil the three human races living "side by side, in a manner unknown in ancient history",² his text should be viewed as one of the compulsory points of departure for the construction of a national history. He emphasized the interethnic reality of the country, where the Portuguese, the Indians and the blacks of African origin were present, by asserting that it was from "the encounter, the mixing, the mutual relations and changes in the three races"³ that the distinctive character of the Brazilian and the Brazilian inhabitant was shaped. Moreover, as he saw it, the role of the historian was to show Brazil as predestined by providence to achieve the mixing of races "entirely different, in their individual features and moral characteristics and physical particulars, with a view to shaping a new and wonderfully structured nation".⁴ This was, to put it differently, the historical mission entrusted to the empire of Brazil, responsible for ensuring the perfecting of the three races, to make "Brazil feel like a complete unity" by constructing a true civilization in the tropics in this way.

According to von Martius, the Portuguese race predominated over the other two, who were judged inferior. According to him, "Portuguese blood, like a powerful river, should absorb the small tributaries of the native and Ethiopian races".⁵ Two implications are already encoded here: on the one hand, a gradual whitening process; on the other, the leadership of the new nation as a task to be completed by the white element as 'discoverer, conqueror, owner'.

Von Martius's understanding of Brazil and its destiny was to leave its imprint first on Francisco Adolfo de Varnhagen, author of one of the classics of Brazilian historiography in the nineteenth century,⁶ and many other authors after him. Among these were the literary critic Silvio Romero, whose work was to become a kind of paradigmatic reference work on the problematic of miscegenation in Brazil, as well as the historian João Ribeiro, the author of a compendium designed for secondary school pupils, which constituted a sort of matrix of republican history.

Although perfectly in agreement with the perspective of the period, von Martius used racial and naturalist criteria to explain Brazilian history, and although he asserted the civilizing role of elites, he none the less acknowledged the positive contribution of the two other races, above all the indigenous,⁷ in the shaping of the people and in the development of Brazilian nationality and culture. He also viewed miscegenation as a decisive event in the advent of Brazilian people, contemplating it with an optimism that was not without human and Christian sympathy for the black and native peoples, designated by him as 'helpless' races. Thus, in his text, one can read that the true historian is the person who can appreciate humankind, the work of the Creator, setting aside their colour in the full confidence of the perfectibility of all parts of the human race. He does not cease to emphasize that the merit of a work of history is proportional to the capacity demonstrated by the historian to come to the defence of the helpless races and to contribute to a truly human legislation followed by actions designed for the moral and civic education of the natives and the blacks. The encounter of the races should make them evolve in the direction of a common development, while taking account of "the energy, number and dignity of the society of each of the races".⁸

Von Martius, whose formulations later provided backing for the myth of 'racial democracy', had touched (in a manner that was, so to speak, prophetic) on a critical point and one still relevant in Brazil today, namely that the human, social and cultural patrimony of nations that have experienced miscegenation is a Pyrrhic victory unless the conditions of full citizenship and effective social integration are guaranteed.

Unlike von Martius, however, other famous Europeans who visited Brazil in the nineteenth century viewed the interethnic nature of the Brazilian population as a handicap to national viability. This was the case with the zoologist Louis Agassiz, of Swiss origin, from the University of Harvard in the United States, who, when he recorded the impressions of his voyage to Brazil between 1865 and 1866 did not conceal his non-acceptance of the mixing of races. He declared himself struck by its decadence and pernicious effects, and the eradication of the best qualities of whites, blacks and natives, as well as by the diminution of physical and mental energies resulting from intermarriage which, in Brazil, "was more widespread than anywhere else".⁹ In addition to his denunciation of the breaking of racial barriers as the product of a wrong-headed philanthropy, he observed:

Let us give the blacks all the advantages of education; let us give them every possible opportunity for success that intellectual and moral culture can give a man who can profit from them; but let us respect the laws of nature and, in our relations with the blacks, let us maintain with the utmost vigour the integrity of the original type and the purity of our own.¹⁰

More radical than Agassiz, Gobineau sketched a scathing portrait of Brazilian interethnicity. Resident in Brazil between 1869 and 1870, he appears to have strengthened

his convictions on racial inequalities, the innate superiority of the white race and the incapacity of the "inferior" races for civilization, as well as the degradation of the "superior races" as a result of the mixing of the races, especially in Latin America.¹¹

According to Gobineau, Brazil had "an entire population of mulattoes, vicious in blood and spirit and terrifyingly ugly";¹² the Brazilians (that is, those of mixed race), the mulattoes and persons of colour, were not types that were "hard-working, active or fertile". He added a commentary on the destruction of mixed-race families and the visibly deteriorating living conditions of the white owners, "in a state close to savagery, in the middle of their slaves, without differentiating themselves either by a more refined taste or by higher moral tendencies".¹³

The ideas of Agassiz and Gobineau were well received in the Brazilian intellectual milieu. None the less, it should be recalled that such a response occurred in the context of a high degree of permeation by European scientific (or pseudo-scientific) ideas in Brazil. Evolutionist, naturalist and determinist explanatory models were then invoked to bestow a scientific character on analyses of the interethnic character of the country. Miscegenation as much as the national character thus became an object of scientific investigation. Authors like Lapouge, Le Bon, Glumpowicz, Taine, Renan, Buckle and Spencer¹⁴ were read at this period and taken as sources of inspiration. Their works were to supply the Brazilian intellectuals with explicative matrices (simultaneously biological, climatic, psychological, racial and cultural) for understanding the specificity of Brazilian nationality.

Thought on the subject of the national and consequently the interracial character from Brazil's men of letters, men of science and statesmen of the period thus proved closely dependent on scientific knowledge of European origin expressed through racial and determinist theories. In one way or another, race was then a central category, a heuristic principle to explain the society, its people and history. The Brazilian 'being' was thus to find a new sphere of manifestation in science.

It was in fact with such a 'scientific' paradigm as the backdrop that the Brazilian intellectuals were concerned for the future of Brazil because of its interethnic condition. Obsessed by the definition of 'Brazilianness', they found in science a model that might be used to determine characteristics capable of defining a national identity and consolidating the unity of the country. It was for such a purpose that they were to make use of the concepts provided by racism that was scientific in origin. These concepts were no doubt the product of an ethnocentric and colonialist perspective. They envisaged the 'others' seen from a European society, viewed as bearers of progress, civilization and developments in science. But these theories inevitably acquired a specific value once they had been used with reference to particular historical conditions like those prevailing in Brazil in the nineteenth and at the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Making use of these theories, despite their determinism and the fact that they viewed miscegenation as an obstacle to civilization, the Brazilian intellectual elites and leaders strove no less to make the nation viable and construct a national identity.

It is precisely because this question of identity was inseparable from that of the national construct, itself inseparable from the resolution or dissolution of differences and specificities in the context of a unifying social cohesion (despite the weight of European theories extolling the definition of ethnic frontiers) that the majority of Brazilian intellectuals did not adopt them in a manner that was automatic or mimetic.

Nor should the ambivalent character of the use made of these theories be forgotten: on the one hand, they served to define the people as miscegenated, ethnically and culturally 'inferior'; on the other hand, they made it possible to determine the national elite as representative of white, educated civilization. In so doing, the elite defined a strategy that at once secured their supremacy and naturalized social and historical differences.

Significant figures in the political and intellectual life, among them the literary critic Silvio Romero, the doctor and ethnologist Nina Rodrigues, the writer Euclides da Cunha, the politician Joaquim Nabuco, the historian João Ribeiro, the sociologists Oliveira Vianna and Gilberto Freyre, each in their own way, incorporated racial categories into their intellectual schemas.

Thus, the writer, literary critic and polemicist Silvio Romero was part of a movement of intellectuals, called 'the generation of 1870', which proposed grounding the debate on nationality in scientific foundations. They constituted the 'School of Recife',¹⁵ after the name of the town which was then a very important centre for the diffusion of scientific culture with its naturalist models. Through their attentive examination of the works of von Martius, Buckle, Lapouge and Gobineau, and the adoption of the racial paradigm, the ideas of Silvio Romero fully highlighted the contradictions of these intellectuals. A pioneer of the ethnological problematic in Brazil, Silvio Romero, like von Martius before him, was to indicate racial fusion as a distinctive feature of the formation of Brazil. Taking the racial criterion as the most appropriate means to conceive of Brazil, they concluded that person of mixed race was the national type *par excellence*.

His assertion has become famous: "we are a country of mixed race, if not by blood, then certainly in the soul. . . it is not necessary to discuss whether that is something good or something bad; it is a fact and that is all."¹⁶ Nevertheless, in the face of this fact Silvio Romero's position was ambiguous. On the one hand, he propounded a negative vision of the Brazilian society of his time, since, like Gobineau, he believed that the Brazilian people had deteriorated because of their interethnic condition, an "interbred and creole"¹⁷ sub-race; on the other, contrary to Gobineau, he believed in the possibility of a future, within the very process of miscegenation, of a victory for the white over the black and native races, from which would come the future historical Brazilian race,¹⁸ original as much from the racial as from the cultural viewpoint. Racial originality in that it had its origins in the fusion of the three races with the progressive disappearance of the "inferior" and their integration into civilization thanks to white predominance. Cultural originality because miscegenation would have enabled, besides racial fusion, a cultural fusion where civilized elements would be mixed with the faculties of the imagination and sentiment proper to the blacks and the natives, which would thus remain as distinctive features of the national character. The new racial type which would emerge would thus be that of a "presumed" white, which, at the end of several centuries, would succeed mixed-race individuals, thus drawing to a close the long process of transition leading to whitening and the assimilation into civilization. Because of this, the history of Brazil would have consisted, for Silvio Romero, of the history of a "melting pot" (or, in his words, of a *caquinho* or cooking pot), where the unifying energy of the country was engendered.

Despite the support for, and accommodation with, biological, evolutionist and *racialist* foundations, and even the principal of racial inequalities in his works, Romero is recognized for his efforts in the direction of, and aspirations for, the rediscovery of a political issue capable of making the national project viable for mixed-race Brazil. He was successful in

this, thanks to a note of optimism¹⁹ in the middle of a debate where the idea of the ethno-historical impossibility of Brazil achieving civilization and progress tended to predominate. Moreover, he attempted to construct a definition of the racial identity of the Brazilian people, viewing miscegenation as a process that was simultaneously cultural, social and historical. It was in this sense that he also spoke of a sociological race. For, even contemplating the role of the physical milieu in the formation of the mixed-race type, unlike Buckle, he believed ethical and cultural factors to be stronger than those relating to the ambient milieu in the shaping of the national character. He also took the influence of foreign ideas into account in determining the national "being", while recognizing that they were necessarily "acclimatized and transformed in the cultural melting pot".²⁰ Silvio Romero also signalled the importance of the blacks – whom he viewed as important agents of cultural transformation – in the formation of Brazilian literature and folklore. It was as a result of this slant that he became a reference point in the field of Afro-Brazilian ethnology at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and exerted a huge influence on his contemporary, Nina Rodrigues.

Nina Rodrigues was another important representative of Brazilian racialist thought. Following Silvio Romero's suggestions, he took "the black as a subject of study". Professor at the Bahia Faculty of Medicine, specializing in forensic medicine, Nina Rodrigues is notable for his enthusiastic adherence to racial paradigms and to theories of biological determinism in the field of medical anthropology, which presupposed ethnic inequalities.²¹ Particularly interested in the study of the "black race", Nina Rodrigues identified, classified and quantified the population of African origin, always alert to interrelations between race and social pathology. His objective was to demonstrate the role of heredity and of belonging to a biological class as rigid determinants of the personal and social destinies of individuals. By using techniques for the measurement of skulls and a physiognomical classification explicitly influenced by Cesare Lombroso's criminal anthropology, he wanted not only to prove the relationship between social and racial differences, but also to highlight the threat of physical and moral degeneration resulting from interbreeding, thence to conclude the impossibility of social, civil and political equality.²² Ironically, whilst carrying out his researches, Nina Rodrigues was confronted with a great number of contradictions and, little by little, was forced to adjust the use he made of his theoretical matrices. Thanks to case studies, he was led to integrate his explanatory schemas within a more culturalist perspective.²³ In truth, within the explanatory schemas he had adopted and whose construction rested upon racial presuppositions, he did not have the constituent parts to understand cultural exchange through the social relations between blacks and whites.

Nina Rodrigues's fear, when faced with this nation of mixed race – of which he was a representative – did not, however, prevent him from carrying out research of real anthropological worth: witness the valuable inventory he drew up of the African nations who had come to Brazil through the slave trade, as well as his investigations into the subject of religious practices and forms of religious syncretism. That said, his strongly socio-biological and eugenicist perspective, and his racial prejudices, prevented him from acknowledging the role of the blacks in the historical and social formation of the Brazilian people.

João Ribeiro's approach to the reality of mixed race in Brazil was quite different. A history teacher at the Pedro II secondary school, at that time the most famous in Rio de

Janeiro, then capital of Brazil, this historian (who was also a philologist and literary critic) found in von Martius and Silvio Romero²⁴ an inspiration which he was able to transform into a powerful and original reading of the history of Brazil. According to João Ribeiro, the mixed-race condition of Brazil should become the touchstone of the political republican project. In his work *History of Brazil*,²⁵ he saw the origin of the republican spirit in the interethnicity of the Brazilian population. At the same time as they had fought for Abolition, the mixed-race members of the population had shown themselves in the empire period to be in favour of a republic. Identifying a *mameluco*²⁶ race that had already been shaped in the seventeenth century, João Ribeiro held this "ethnic creation" responsible for the disappearance of loyalty towards the Portuguese and for the origin, therefore, of Brazilian breaches of trust.²⁷ This "new race" would thus be the physical basis of the political revolution of which the republic, as the liberal and cosmopolitan formula, was the bearer. In his opinion, the mixed-race population would join the liberal cause, bearing in mind its own interests. In his view, moreover, the revolutions in Latin America had been "exclusively ethnic, patriotic and nativist" once the land became, for the Americans and the lower classes, a possession which they were not prepared to share, whatever the liberal spirit of their laws, supposedly of foreign inspiration. On top of that he took up an idea dear to Silvio Romero, namely that "cultural dependence"²⁸ was the result of the mixing of the races. Moreover, 'impure' races already constituted part of the Portuguese, a people of Latin origin, which in an Aryanist perspective was a mark of inferiority in relation to the Saxons, the Germans and even the Slavs. This explains why, in Brazil, as throughout Latin America, the mixed-race population prevailed over "white elements that were not pure, but more homogeneous".²⁹ The interbred condition was thus responsible for the Brazilian people's lack of originality and their compulsion to imitate what was foreign. From the theory of cultural dependence upheld by Romero, João Ribeiro went on to that of political dependence. From there, he concluded that the Brazilians as an American people making up a new race, although marked with the republican spirit, were nevertheless incapable of self-government, comparable in this to other peoples that were the product of miscegenation.

According to such arguments, people of colour were incapable of the perfectibility in which von Martius had believed. In fact, 'as a naturalist', the latter had reckoned that the growing level of European immigration would have made it possible to rise above the character of the primitive layers in the long run.³⁰ And he added, "very fortunately, at the heart of the mixed races, there is an intellectual and moral elite which successfully subjugates and leads them".³¹ In short, according to João Ribeiro, the people lacked the capacity for self-government. Although deprived for centuries of an education that could transmit to them the sentiments, virtues and moral qualities inherent in civilization, the people could none the less count on an elite that was able to represent them.

Curiously, while seeing people of mixed race as bearers of the republican spirit, emblematically manifest through the abolitionist and republican movements, João Ribeiro could nevertheless only accord them a subordinate position over and against the political elites. In 1883, in his work *Abolitionism*, the monarchist Joaquim Nabuco had supported an entirely different position. A politician involved in the campaign for the abolition of slavery, Joaquim Nabuco, like so many other men of his generation, was anxious to create the conditions which would enable Brazil to embark on the path of progress, to engage fully with modernity and thus be numbered among the civilized nations. At the heart of

his thinking he placed slavery, holding it to be the institution responsible for Brazilian backwardness at a material level, for the corrupt character of the country and for the moral weakness of its component parts. The obstacles which prevented Brazil from asserting itself as a nation were to be laid at the door of slavery, not at the ethnic and biological origin of the Brazilian people.

Such a position did not, however, indicate that Nabuco had been able to slough off explanations based on the racist and so-called scientific paradigms of the period entirely. But the fact is that in contemplating the reality of slavery, as he did in the course of the abolitionist debate,³² he distanced himself from the models then flourishing and introduced a more sociological viewpoint into the debate, in order to politicize it. In his opinion, degeneration was not the product of an atavistic characteristic of the blacks and those of mixed race, but the consequence of the brutality of slavery, which morally corrupted slave owners and all the institutions of society. In a perspective different from that of his contemporaries, it was "political miscegenation" not ethnic miscegenation³³ that Nabuco foregrounded. By contrast with the historical experience of slavery in the United States, he maintained that the majority of Brazilian citizens were 'politically of mixed race, with two opposing natures fighting within them: that of the owner by birth and that of the domestic slave'.³⁴ This was the result of interbreeding itself and also of the fact of a social culture in which everyone free and slave, mixed to such an extent that manumitted slaves could themselves become slave owners. In the face of such a situation, Nabuco proposed structural changes for the post-Abolition period, in order to promote economic reform that was capitalist and liberal in nature and to secure social and political rights for the black population – in other words, full citizenship. His concept of social democracy, to be realized within the framework of the imperial state, had not affected the republican José Ribeiro, who made a *tabula rasa* of Nabuco's ideas, as, when all was said and done, the republic did with his plan for limited citizenship.

However, it was during the 1910s and 1920s that the debate surrounding mixed race began to change. On the one hand, its anchoring in biological and racial determinism began to dwindle in the face of explanations then emerging which laid greater weight on sanitarianist and medicalist principles, and this notwithstanding the simultaneous emergence of eugenics.³⁵ As a result of new assumptions, the ethnic origins of the population were no longer viewed as a handicap for the Brazilian nation. This factor was attributed to illnesses, whose remedy need only entail a public health policy.

Moreover, the polarized debate of the nineteenth century between acceptance and condemnation of miscegenation was to take a more cultural turn. Thus, from the 1930s onwards, the positive value of interethnicity was fully recognized in the work of Gilberto Freyre, whose analyses shifted the question from the public space to the private space. Entitled *Casa grande & senzala*, Gilberto Freyre's first great work (the centenary of whose birth exactly coincided with the quincentennial of the 'Discovery') was itself to discover a little more of Brazil.

A sociologist, educated in the United States where he was a pupil of the anthropologist Franz Boas, Gilberto Freyre developed an interpretation of Brazilian culture and society having as its theoretical principle the mutual influence between different races and cultures, articulated according to 'a balance of antagonisms'. In the ceaseless coming and going between the patriarchal house and the *senzala* (the slave quarters), and through interbreeding, the relations between whites and blacks formed a whole and complemented each other.

The ambience constituted by the house of the masters and the *senzala* presented a sort of micro-scenario of Brazilian society. Here, the patriarchal, slave-owning relations prevailed; there, exchanges took place by means of which the blacks were to leave their effective mark on culture and custom: sexual relations and language; diet; skill in crafts; musical taste. According to Freyre's analysis, the black slaves had had a civilizing role and in their turn colonized the Portuguese. He suggests that the relations established in the daily life of the patriarchal family, in other words, the often-close ties between slave owners and slaves in the private space, extended into the public space.

While criticizing the idea of racial inferiority as well as prejudices against miscegenation, Gilberto Freyre did not, however, abandon the concept of race;³⁶ he considered it within the context of culture. His eulogy of miscegenation does not, however, authorize a reading of *Casa Grande & Senzala*³⁷ as a work making Brazil 'a racial democracy' without further comment. Gilberto Freyre did not paint a tender and harmonious image of Brazilian colonial society. It is true that he demonstrated more malleability and a greater flexibility in relation to the slave-owning regime in Brazil, indeed a better balance of the existing cultural antagonisms, but he did not ignore the conflicts, the violence, the cruelty and the forms of exploitation to which the blacks, and also the natives, were subjected. This being the case, there was in Brazil, according to Freyre, uncommon agreement between the different traditions. It was precisely this which made it possible for him to celebrate miscegenation as the dominant feature of Brazilian identity and as a reason for pride.

This rapid overview of the thought of Brazilian intellectuals on the subject of national identity, their relations with the *racialist* approach and hence their dilemmas in the face of the question of mixed race, a survey which has taken us from von Martius to Gilberto Freyre via Joaquim Nabuco, Sílvio Romero and João Ribeiro, has, I hope, given some insight into how, little by little, miscegenation, the fusion of the three races, compelled recognition as a veritable *locus of memory* of Brazilian nationality, in the sense that Pierre Nora gave this concept. As he wrote:

What is interesting, but also complex, about locuses of memory is that they belong to two realms: simple and ambiguous, natural and artificial, immediately open to the most sensitive experience and, simultaneously, drawn out from the most abstract elaboration. They are places in effect in the three senses of the word, material, symbolic and functional but simultaneously, only to varying degrees.³⁸

The idea of the union of the three races has thus been constructed as a locus of material memory, presented as embodied in reality in the physical types of men and women with their practices and cultural customs; as a locus of symbolic memory guaranteeing the national entity a fixed origin; as a locus of functional memory, because it has a pedagogic dimension and transmits a model of social order.

At the end of the 1930s, this locus of memory was well consolidated both as far as its diffusion was concerned and its political and cultural utilization, through school books and works on civics, but also literature, painting and music. Moreover, the role of artists and modernist intellectuals in highlighting the roots of the nation cannot be overlooked. The fact is that the idea of the union of the three races has become ever more widespread³⁹ as a key component in the construction of national identity. It thus occupies a central place in the 'mythology' of Brazilian history.

However, whatever the past and future role of the idea of the union of the three races, there remains a discrepancy between it and the facts. From a social viewpoint, the condition of the blacks and the natives has not progressed sufficiently in the direction of more egalitarian integration. It must be admitted that when the republic of Brazil was instituted at the end of the nineteenth century, a very elitist political model was chosen, incapable of securing the conditions for the effective social integration of former slaves and the exercise by everybody of full citizenship. A large proportion of the population remained marginalized. This confirms how well founded the prodigious warnings of von Martius and Joaquim Nabuco were. In relation to education and employment opportunities, as well as the distribution of income, the situation of the blacks a century after Abolition remains lamentable: they make up most of the illiterate population, 42 in 100; their presence in university education is minimal, 1 in 100; in the Parliament, fewer than 10 of the 500 deputies are black; they are not represented in the diplomatic service, and only 5 of the 357 bishops of the Catholic Church are black.⁴⁰

It is difficult to contemplate these figures without asking about the question of racial discrimination in Brazil. It is not in fact possible to deny the existence of racial prejudices. But nor is it possible to ignore the fact that in Brazil it is less a culture of racial discrimination that has developed than a culture of social discrimination. Admitting this is not to deny the fact that the absence of racial bi-polarity in Brazil, alongside a greater tendency to negotiation⁴¹ and the ideological use of the fusion of the three races, may have, as one great Brazilian historian has expressed it, presented obstacles to the

development of the notion of rights and the political initiative of the blacks in the context of their political and social advancement. In the United States, violent conflict was the price of greater equality; here, greater inequality has been the price of negotiation and a higher degree of preservation of African values.⁴²

In sum, if Brazil has not had real-life experience of racial apartheid, but a dose of racism has been responsible for the social discrimination that stemmed from slavery and the consequent marginalization of the blacks, we should also recall that social discrimination fostered racism and other forms of prejudice. This is why the social problem in Brazil is always very much broader than the racial question, and also encompasses the poor and other categories susceptible to discrimination, such as women and the elderly. If it is true that we should free ourselves of the ideological rhetoric of the mixed race,⁴³ such as is disseminated by the political elite and interiorized by the collective imagination which associates it with the image of Brazil as a 'racial paradise', then it is only the real promotion of ideas of liberty and equality in the context of a social democracy and full exercise of citizenship that will enable us to make the historical inheritance of miscegenation bear fruit, the magnificent human and cultural patrimony that interethnicity has bequeathed as promise of a boundless liaison, 'oceanic'⁴⁴ we might almost say, among humankind.

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Notes

1. On the role of the IHGB in the construction of Brazilian nationality and identity, see Manoel Luis Salgado Guimarães (1988), 'Nação e civilização nos trópicos', *Estudos Históricos*, 1, 5–27.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 32.
3. See C. Friedrich Philipp von Martius (1991), *Como se deve escrever a história do Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Instituto Histórico e Geográfico Brasileiro), first publication in book form, p. 30.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 31.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Varnhagen's famous work was published between 1854 and 1857. There he analyses the war between the Portuguese and the Dutch for possession of the Brazilian Nordeste and sees in the Portuguese victory the emergence of a Brazil that is integrated, Portuguese and monarchic, but whose existence was based on the three races. See Adolfo Francisco Varnhagen (1957), *História geral do Brasil* (São Paulo: Melhoramentos), sixth edition, volume II, chapters 27–30, and volume III, chapters 31–33.
7. Von Martius considered the contribution of the natives with particular reference to the language, symbols and traditions which could sustain the national mythology. As far as the blacks were concerned, he restricted himself to underlining the links between Portugal and Africa, taking account of the slave trade.
8. Von Martius, *op. cit.*, p. 30.
9. L. Agassiz and E. C. Viagem (1938), *Viagem ao Brasil* (São Paulo: Nacional), p. 366.
10. *Ibid.*
11. See G. D. Raeders (1938), *D. Pedro II e o Conde de Gobineau* (São Paulo: Nacional), and (1988), *O inimigo cordial: o Conde de Gobineau no Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra).
12. Raeders, *op. cit.*, p. 96.
13. *Ibid.*
14. My aim here is not to open a discussion on the theories of these authors and their differences, such as, for example, the debate between monogenist and polygenist anthropologists or their appropriation of the ideas of Buffon and/or Darwin. For a more thorough analysis of the diffusion and appropriation of these paradigms in Brazil, see Dante Moreira Leire (1976), *O caráter nacional brasileiro* (São Paulo); Lilia Moritz Schwarcz (1993), *O espetáculo das raças: cientistas, instituições e questão racial no Brasil (1870–1930)* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras); Thomas Skidmore (1976), *Preto no branco: raça e nacionalidade no pensamento brasileiro* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra); Roberto Ventura (1991), *Estilo tropical: história cultural e polémicas literárias no Brasil* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras); Renato Ortiz (1994), *Cultura brasileira e identidade nacional* (São Paulo: Brasiliense); Luciana Murari (1995), *Brasil, ficção geográfica: ciência e nacionalidade n'Os Sertões* (Belo Horizonte: UFMG); Tânia De Luca (1999), *A revista do Brasil: um diagnóstico para a (n)ação* (São Paulo: Ed. da UNESP).
15. It was the name by which Silvio Romero himself designated the group which was formed from the Recife Law School in 1868, around the thinker Tobias Barreto. Other centres such as that of the Polytechnic School or the Military Academy at Rio de Janeiro, or that of the Law School of São Paulo, had a role comparable to that of the 'Recife School' in the diffusion of 'scientific' thought in Brazil.
16. S. Romero (1943), *História de literatura brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio), volume 1, third edition (first edition, 1888). See also S. Romero and J. Ribeiro (1909), *Compêndio de história da literatura brasileira* (Rio de Janeiro: Gracisco Alves), second edition.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 43.
18. This concept was very fashionable among the racialist thinkers of the nineteenth century, especially Gumplowicz and Vacher de Lapouge, well known to Romero, as L. Murai, *op. cit.*, has demonstrated.
19. We should note, however, that some years later, that is to say, in the first decades of the twentieth century, Silvio Romero returned to his first position in relation to the whitening of the Brazilian people. Resuming frankly 'Aryanist' positions, he not only asserted the persistence of the mixed-race type but also imputed to interethnicity responsibility for the lack of political organization in Brazil. According to such views, the Brazilian people were unfit for democracy because of the gregarious nature of the 'inferior' races. See S. Romero (1912), *Estudos sociais: o Brasil nos primeiras décadas do século XX* (Lisbon: Ed. A. Limitada), second edition; R. Ventura, *op. cit.*, pp. 64–6. This attitude of Romero's was to influence the distinguished sociologist,

- Oliveira Vianna. In his writings of the 1920s and 30s, this writer took up the arguments of Romero to criticize the liberal and democratic system and to defend a strong, centralizing state and a corporatist-type system. See O. Vianna (1923), *Evolução do povo brasileiro* (São Paulo: Monteiro Lobato & Co.), and (1938), *Raça e assimilação* (São Paulo: Cia Ed. Nacional).
20. See R. Ventura, op. cit., p. 20.
 21. For Nina Rodrigues's ideas, see Mariza Corrêa (1999), *As ilusões da liberdade: A escola de Nina Rodrigues e a antropologia no Brasil* (Bragança Paulista: Ed. da Universidade São Francisco); Lilia Moritz Schwarcz, op. cit., who clearly demonstrates the influence of Nina Rodrigues's school on schools of medicine in Brazil.
 22. See Corrêa, op. cit.
 23. See Ventura, op. cit.
 24. João Ribeiro and Silvio Romero had been intellectual partners. They had co-authored school textbooks and a history of literature.
 25. João Ribeiro (1953), *História do Brasil: curso superior* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora livraria São José), fourteenth edition, first edition, 1900. See especially pp. 303–20.
 26. João Ribeiro used the term *mameluco* as synonymous with 'mixed-race', as was the practice in the period. See Antônio Moraes Silva (1813), *Dicionário da língua Portuguesa* (Lisbon: Lacerdina).
 27. Note that João Ribeiro develops a line of argument that is always in favour of the split with Portugal, on which he bases his republican reading of the history of Brazil. He thus opposes Varnhagen, a defender of the imperial state, who had constructed an interpretation of the history of Brazil anchored in the idea of continuity with Portugal. For all the nuances relating to the different interpretative models, see Ciro Flávio Bandeira de Mello (1997), *Senhores da história: a construção do Brasil em dois manuais da segunda metade do século XIX* (São Paulo: USP), doctoral thesis.
 28. Silvio Romero (1988), *Estudos sobre a poesia popular no Brasil (1870–1880)* (Rio de Janeiro: Laemmert), and (1901), *Ensaio de sociologia e literatura* (Rio de Janeiro: Garnier). On this subject, see R. Ventura, op. cit., pp. 49–50.
 29. J. Ribeiro, op. cit., p. 306.
 30. Ibid.
 31. Ibid.
 32. See Célia Marinho de Azevedo (1987), *Onda negra, medo branco: o negro no imaginário das elites no século XIX* (Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra).
 33. Nabuco's stance was favourable to ethnic miscegenation as a form of integration of the blacks and the natives in the national community.
 34. Joaquim Nabuco (1977), *O abolicionismo* (Petrópolis, Vozes, Brasília: INL), fourth edition, p. 158.
 35. See Nísia Trindade Lima (1998), *Um sertão chamado Brasil* (Rio de Janeiro: Revan). According to the author, there was no consensus among the Brazilian intellectuals on the subject of the relations between eugenics and sanitarianism, nor relations between the sanitarianist discourse and notions of race.
 36. See Ricard Benzaquen de Araújo (1994), *Guerra e paz: Casa grande & senzala e a obra de Gilberto Freyre* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora 34), pp. 38–40. According to this writer, Gilberto Freyre adopted a neo-La Marckian concept of race, which attributes to physical milieu and to climate a decisive influence on the biological and cultural characters of peoples.
 37. Gilberto Freyre (1969), *Casa grande & senzala: formação da família Brasileira sob o regime patriarcal* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio), fourteenth edition; first edition 1933. See also (1951), *Sobrados e mucambes: decadência do patriarcado rural e desenvolvimento urbano* (Rio de Janeiro: José Olympio), first edition, 1936.
 38. Pierre Nora (1997), *Les lieux de mémoire* (Paris: Gallimard), volume I, p. 37.
 39. It goes without saying that from von Martius to Gilberto Freyre the idea of the fusion of the three races experienced significant variations according to historical context. During the 1930s it was to acquire an important role, given the political culture of the state. As for its function today, it is sufficient to recall that an investigation into Brazilian utopia carried out on the occasion of the quinquennial celebrations revealed that 76 per cent of those questioned believed that the mixing of cultures in Brazil was an example that other countries should follow; 51 per cent asserted that the Portuguese were the people who had contributed most to the construction of Brazil; 29 per cent chose the natives and 28 per cent the blacks. Such an outcome is highly suggestive and demonstrates the power of the interpretative schemas which I have reviewed. See 'A Folha de S. Paulo', *Caderno Mais* (23 April 2000), p. 13.

40. Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), cited in Aílton Mota de Carvalho (1997), 'Casa grande e insensata: reflexões sobre a discriminação social no Brasil', *Caderno de Filosofia e Ciências Humanas*, 8, April (Belo Horizonte), p. 100.
41. As José Murilo de Carvalho has effectively demonstrated. See (1998), 'As batalhas da abolição', in *Pontos e Bordados* (Belo Horizonte, UFMG), p. 78.
42. Ibid.
43. For a current discussion of the consequences of this ideology for the political initiatives of blacks in Brazil, and the importance of ensuring the existence of different identities, see Kabengele Munanga (1999), *Rediscutindo a mestiçagem no Brasil: identidade negra versus identidade nacional* (Petrópolis: Vozes).
44. I make very free allusion here to the expression 'oceanic sentiment', first used by Romain Rolland in a letter to Freud, where it is used to express religious sentiment. See Sigmund Freud (1978), *O mal estar da civilização* (São Paulo: Abril), pp. 131–2.