

## Romantic Indians: Robert Southey's Distinctions

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My title conflates only two of the many topics encompassed by Karl Kroeber's extensive competencies and irrepressible curiosities, but they are two of the most salient and long-standing: Romanticism and Native America. In one among his many publications on Native American storytelling—and he is adamant that this material is not to be misconceived as “literature”—Kroeber, in gloriously typical contrarian spirit, opens with a sharp injunction against any prospectively passive consumption: “The form of American Indian storytelling is entirely different from the form of our storytelling. . . . your conception of what myths are and what practical functions they served for Native Americans is probably wrong” (ed. *Native American Storytelling: A Reader of Myths and Legends* [2004]1). By way of introducing a book intended for school and college courses, the challenge here offered is admirable and the ethical commitment impeccable: “our most important responsibility is so far as possible not to impose our preconceptions of form and purpose on narratives from peoples whose social, intellectual and religious traditions radically differed—and continue to differ—from ours” (10). In other words, his advice to readers and students is that they begin by assuming that next to nothing is known and that they adopt a policy of the wisest possible passiveness.

Contemporary pedagogic culture is no more at risk of aggressively imposing ethnocentric categories on alien materials than of wallowing in a lazy acceptance of difference itself, the recognition of which is not always a prompt to open-mindedness or discovery; it can also take the form of a bland acknowledgment of everyone's right to do his own thing. The Romantics faced these same questions and others like them. Their acknowledgment of Native American difference took various (and variously imperfect) forms, many of which are well-known: the noble savage, the degenerate primitive, the inspired orator and eloquent singer of the death song, the child of nature, the model for confederated civil society. North America was not the principal site for Romantic interest in the foreign: India, the Middle East, the Mediterranean, France, Germany and Italy all received more attention. Wordsworth, Keats, Byron and Shelley barely mentioned the Americas, although there was a lively pattern of transatlantic crossings during the 1790s and after 1815: Paine, Cobbett and Priestley among others all spent time in the New World. Moore's *Poems Relating to America* appeared in 1806, and Campbell's *Gertrude of Wyoming* was a best-seller in 1809. Moore's sequence combines anacreontic sociability and melancholy with a negative view of the new American democracy that Joel Barlow had celebrated, and barely mentions its first peoples. Campbell's address is more complex, and blends an anthropological and ecological curiosity with a contact narrative that both educates the reader into the cultural habits and

traditions of the natives while exploring the fateful results of French and British uses of Indian warriors in the wars of 1756-63 and 1776-83.

Campbell's encyclopedic aspiration lends an aura of honest discovery to his poem: its extensive footnotes explain such things as the mocking bird and the Manitou. He is committed enough to the historical record that he retracts in later editions of the poem the harsh picture he had given of the Mohawk chief Brandt, who is at first blamed for the Wyoming massacre but is later deemed to have been “not even present at that scene of desolation” (*The Complete Poetical Works*. . . ed. Robertson [1968] 92). The poet had simply been following the historians, and the historians, he later discovered, got it wrong. But Campbell finesses the violence of that same record, claiming that the details are “disagreeable, and even horrible” (44); their omission allows Gertrude a clean and eloquent death un-disfigured by the scalplings and graphic carnage that characterize contemporary printed images of the event. Hers is a fine and moving death amid a more general “scene of death” (71) that is not described. The death and torture of the defeated American troops and the subsequent massacre of civilians are passed over. As a contact narrative, then, the poem leaves a demonized but later rehabilitated villain, Brandt, and a noble “last of his race” figure in Outalissi, the Oneida chief who first rescued the young male hero and who at the end sets forth with him on a campaign of revenge. Campbell's last word is that “it is, unhappily, to Britons and Anglo-Americans that we must refer the chief blame in this horrible business” (92).

Campbell, then, is a respecter of the otherness of the other in so far as he exonerates the natives from being prime movers in the violence and inhumanity of war, which is now fought on a grander scale and with more far-reaching global consequences than ever before in rural Pennsylvania. But his decorous restraint about the details of the massacre sentimentalizes the natives by consigning them to a more innocent world. The poet is of course reacting against one tradition that depicted America's first nations as bloodthirsty savages; but in avoiding this discursive trap, might he be falling into another in absolving them of any critical participation in the horrors of war? Is the pattern of violence then as now generated by struggles for empire and global supremacy not more likely to involve everyone in some degree of ugly or indefensible behavior? It does so not in obedience to some simple principle of spreading the blame, so that where everyone is guilty none need take responsibility, but because the unbearable stresses limit situations and the onset of unforeseen and uncontrollable consequences. Can one expect a writer of poetic fictions to encompass the moral and histori-

cal complications that arise when one nation or culture violently imposes itself on another, and to do so without massive simplification or visible recourse to the hoariest racist, romantic or face-saving assumptions?

The poet who comes closest to passing this test is, I believe, Robert Southey. He is familiar to most readers principally as the turncoat pilloried by Byron, one of the worst of the young Jacobin hopefuls who renounced their past convictions and turned to the defense of the establishment, picking up a helping of government silver along the way. But Southey's poetic personality is more complicated than such a narrative allows. He was, throughout his career, a determined transcriber and critic of the horrors of war, a scholastically curious documenter of the rituals of burial and remembrance observed by various societies at various times, and a careful analyst of the effects of cultural contact between strangers. Among the Romantics, perhaps no one except Felicia Hemans was as compulsively given to the personae and performance of cosmopolitanism, whether in language-learning and translation, in assumed poetic identities, or in deploying a poetic geography of global proportions. But Hemans' greatest American (and her own favorite) poem, *The Forest Sanctuary* of 1825, does little to explore or explain the new world except as an unsatisfying backdrop to the overwhelming nostalgia of its protagonist.

Southey's presentations of the American scene are more complicated, involving their readers in a demanding negotiation of the possibilities for keeping apart the friend and the enemy, the homeland and the foreigner. At the end of his life he was at work on the dramatic poem, *Oliver Newman*, the unfinished manuscript published posthumously in 1845. It tells the tale of rivalries and hostilities between settler factions in seventeenth-century New England, and is as unsparing in its recognition and critique of slaveholding among the colonists as it is respectful of an unresolved combination of admirable and unadmirable qualities among the natives. From the start of his career Southey was writing short poems on Native American topics, and a full consideration of this element of his work would call for extended discussion of his extraordinary and underappreciated epic, *Madoc* (1805). Here I shall address another unduly neglected poem, *A Tale of Paraguay* (1825), which was a poor seller when it was published and has been little read since—Southey's biographer Mark Storey finds it “a very strange poem” (*Robert Southey: A Life*. [1997] 306). It is a remarkably full rehearsal of the dynamics of the contact and conversion narrative and of issues arising from engagement with the other; as such it cannot be reduced to a legitimization of the European presence in South America.

Paraguay had achieved its independence in 1811, as part of the cycle of South American revolutions of which Southey in his persona of public Englishman did not generally approve. And there is indeed enough evidence in the poem to allow at least one of its recent critics to find

Southey's poetic persona unpalatable: Herbert Tucker writes that he “thunderously endorses” the supersession of native by European culture (21). More persuasive, I think, is the case set forth by Tim Fulford for an authorial consciousness seeking to uphold the virtues of a missionary effort detachable from military violence but at the same time disapproving of the “moral servitude that it brought” and very much aware that Christianity itself could be read as just another tribal cult.<sup>1</sup> Fulford notes that Southey's Guarani Indians fulfill many of the utopian stereotypes associated with the failed Pantisocracy scheme of the poet's radical youth, and that the details of their isolated lives are drawn so lovingly that it is difficult to see why they need to be “rescued” by the Jesuits (22). The *Tale* thus becomes an encomium to “paternalist colonialism” (37) which is marked by “anxiety and guilt” (40).<sup>2</sup>

One can accept many if not all of the ideological limitations Fulford points out while yet remaining unsure of the directive that this “very strange poem” issues to its readers; one does not need to try to exonerate Southey the man in order to find Southey the poet worthy of a careful attention. The poem begins with a long extract, in un-translated Latin, from Martin Dobrizhoffer's 1784 history of the Abipones, a text that Southey himself had encouraged Sara Coleridge to translate in 1822, but which here stands in its original language, functioning as a speed bump that must have been as intimidating to many of its original readers as it is today.<sup>3</sup> This tactic sends a number of signals. It certainly communicates Southey's scholarly and cosmopolitan credentials, and as such excludes those who cannot be “gratified with . . . the lively singularity of the old man's Latin”.<sup>4</sup> It also suggests the remoteness, even otherness of the scene of the narrative, estranging it from any assumption of transparent meaning. Southey begins his preface by worrying over the relation of fact and fiction in the use of history as the basis for poetry. Dobrizhoffer's “original” Latin stands as the best source, better than the “abridged translation” also available to be consulted, and also as the sign of the demands and responsibilities of all acts of translation, acts whose pertinence to the matter of understanding other times and places can only be pondered at all as long as they are not suppressed.<sup>5</sup> The point is only made clearer when one reads on to discover that the story here related is itself about the complexities and, I would argue, tragedies of contact experiences wherein the responsibilities of cultural translation are not or cannot be fully acknowledged. Jesuit generosity is itself enabled only by the military conquest of the Guarani by the Spaniards; it works to compensate for the very violence that makes its own good intentions both possible and necessary, and it is also itself an important agent of colonial settlement. Similarly, smallpox that does most to destroy the natives is an unintended consequence of the very presence of the colonizers. Their ability to prevent the disease (made explicit in Southey's opening praise of Edward Jenner) which they later acquired promises a less catastrophic imperialism, but only after the events here recited have long passed by.

Southey's "father's gratitude" (1: 1) to Jenner speaks from the heart of a man who lost four of his own beloved children and whose dedication to his daughter Edith May, who has reached the age of ten, only enhances the sense of anxious parenthood that had been by no means fully dispelled by the modern science of the early nineteenth-century. And the tale of Paraguay he tells is a story of death, the utter bleakness of which is hardly mitigated by kindly priests and a last-minute baptism. In this he expands considerably on the bare bones of Dobrizhoffer's text. There is no pre-contact moment in the narrative. The Guarani have already had contact with Christians, and have already been decimated by conquest and disease when Quiara and Monemma find themselves alone in the forest, sole survivors of an already-displaced community of their own kind. They are also thereby cut off from the conventions of Guarani culture, which encourages polygamy and infanticide. This is the first of Southey's rather complicated points: that the ideal innocence enabled by nature's laws can be experienced only in exile or apart from one's given society, and indeed from *any* society, including that of the best of Christian communities. This state of nature comes after culture; it is created by an instinctive disposition but such instincts cannot survive even in tribal communities. Culture, it seems, is a negative influence. Contact with the colonizers has also destroyed positive elements of tribal culture, for instance the Guarani burial customs that had been disturbed by the impact of the "spotted plague" (1: 5). Such innocence as can be established is then established after contact and somewhat adventitiously, and it cannot last. No more is nature simply a reinforcing presence: Quiara is killed by a jaguar leaving Monemma with a son (Yeruti) and a daughter (Mooma) about to be born. The ideal family circle is broken as soon as it is created.

When the kindly missionary comes upon the isolated forest dwellers, the vague familiarity of his doctrines and his demeanor persuades them to abandon their home in nature and join the Christian settlement. They thus lose also their immunity to culture, which even in its form as a benevolent Christianity is culture still. The children had been learning about the world from their mother's stories, and what they heard was both appealing and terrifying: they warmed to the pleasures of social life but recoiled from tales of violence and hatred (2: 22f.). Monemma equips them with a basic notion of a deity, of an afterlife in which some sort of justice is dispensed by the appropriate transmigration of souls, and of a spirit world marked by the return of the dead to the realm of the living. She also passes on the outlines of a popular Christianity she had heard in her own youth—stories of mother-worship and deliberate pacifism. It is this creed, so much in accord with their own lived life in the forest, that inspires Yeruti with the desire to some day encounter a "minister of Heaven" (2: 57). When the meeting comes, in other words, there is already a predisposition to trust the missionary effort and to accede to its requests for re-socialization. None of these details about the mother's storytelling habits and their consequences are in either Dobrizhoffer's Latin or the trans-

lated English text. This is one of the topics Southey chooses to develop; his Guarani family has both a series of myths of its own and some pre-exposure to Christian stories which have been assimilated and rendered acceptable. Thus the missionary is welcome, even desired, and accounts for one of several moments in the poem where it is hard to decide whether Southey's narrator is a committed Christian or a dramatic ironist:

At length the hour approach'd that should fulfill  
 His harmless heart's desire, when they shall see  
 Their fellow-kind, and take for good or ill  
 The fearful chance, for such it needs must be,  
 Of change from that entire simplicity,  
 Yet wherefore should the thought of change appal?  
 Grief it perhaps might bring, and injury,  
 And death; . . . but evil never can befall  
 The virtuous, for the Eye of Heaven is over all  
 (2: 58)

Given that all three will die, and die soon, Southey deserves credit for a very basic sense of irony, one that here has Yeruti engaging in some interior monologue based on doctrines that he has not yet fully learned, doctrines that will make grief, injury and death lesser things than personal corruption or exposure to "evil". How could this be better than a life in which there is no evil at all, in which one does not need the eye of heaven to remain pure and happy? Social life is at best a fifty-fifty gamble, as Monemma's stories convey. Southey does not thump the Protestant drum by insisting that a life of risk is better than one of passive contentment, as he might have been expected to do. Indeed, he almost does the opposite in beginning Canto III of the poem with a searing indictment of the world they are about to enter, a world governed by greed and a "commercial slavery" that is not at all limited to the Spanish colonies (3: 9). He also plays down the inconveniences of their solitary existence, dwelling instead on its utopian satisfactions. Southey also depicts the missionaries, whose human virtues he clearly admires, as unwitting agents of genocide; he explains that South America could never have been conquered by military effort alone. Everywhere the conquistadors went, they were confronted by superior numbers of brave Indians

before whose face their courage quail'd,  
 But for the virtuous agency of those  
 Who with the Cross alone, when arms had fail'd,  
 Achieved a peaceful triumph o'er the foes  
 And gave that weary land the blessings of repose.  
 (3: 12)

Wherever the Spaniards "felt or fear'd" an Indian enemy they would call for aid "upon Loyola's sons" to risk their own lives first. Without the Jesuits, in other words, no conquest of South America. Dobrizhoffer himself, the best of them, lived to see (told in a moment of fast forwarding) his own best efforts in Paraguay destroyed "by blind and suicidal Power"

(3: 17). The same saintly figure who brings Monemma and her children out of the forest is engaged, in other words, in an historically failing enterprise; his painfully established Christian community would not survive the violence generated by the same imperialism that it contingently makes possible.

These are the circumstances within which Southey's narrative situates the 'return' of his innocent natives to social life. Their innocence was won precisely as the result of their exile from culture, and so the question must arise as to whether culture has changed for the better during their absence and in the transition to a missionary society. Dobrizhoffer's utopian village is a unique exception to what is depicted on "history's mournful map"; such ideal cohabitation is to be found "there, and there only" (4: 5). But it will not last and it is doggedly paternalistic:

Food, raiment, shelter, safety, he provides;  
No forecast, no anxieties have they;  
The Jesuit governs, and instructs and guides;  
Their part it is to honour and obey,  
Like children under wise parental sway.  
(4: 8).

This world is the exact opposite of the subsistence hunter-gatherer life the family had been living in the forest, where they did everything for themselves and where they had been perfectly happy, experiencing only a curiosity about rather than a longing for something different. The stakes are then very high, and Dobrizhoffer does as much as anyone could do to mitigate the potentially negative consequences of the family's return to what Southey calls "a land of priestcraft" (4: 10).<sup>6</sup> There is leisure and pleasure as well as work and obedience in this community of "two thousand souls"; Southey justifies it not as a simple ideal in itself but because it seems to be the best that human beings in society can manage: "wherewith canst thou be blest, if not with these content?" (4: 15). Moreover, Dobrizhoffer's despotism is complicated even in its benevolence: he is determined to withhold baptism from the natives until he is sure that they have demonstrated a clear faith-based commitment achieved by a fully conscious decision. They are thus between faiths and cultures during the period of incorporation into the Christian life, experiencing a middle-ground insecurity that Southey plays up by detailing the uncertainties and instabilities that already accompany such transitions between life worlds. The poet spends no fewer than nine stanzas (4: 20-28) detailing all the psychological troubles that beset persons transposed (or translated) from one habitus to another; the Jesuit's commitment to "due instruction day by day" (4: 22) produces not a self-monitored rational progress toward a truth but sleep-disorders and phobic hallucinations of devils and souls in purgatory or hell itself only partly offset by images of intervening angels:

Such visions overheated fancy traced,  
Peopling the night with a confused array  
That made its hours of rest more restless than the day.  
(4: 26).

This change, Southey interjects, was "perilous", because the entire structure of "habit" is being assailed. The combination of "their air, their water, and their food" with their "old habits" makes up a complex and self-sustaining ecosystem governing the functions of human "vital powers." Both the physiological and the psychological components of these lives are being transformed:

such mutation is too rude  
For man's fine frame unshaken to sustain.  
And these poor children of the solitude  
Began ere long to pay the bitter pain  
That their new way of life brought with it in its train.<sup>7</sup>  
(4:28)

Monemma herself succumbs to a "strong malady" (4: 29) that is not defined as either fully viral or fully psychological: some combination of the smallpox and the trauma of transition drives her more quickly and irrevocably to death than either agency could have done alone and of itself. (Dobrizhoffer says that she goes deaf, loses her appetite, and dies of a consumption). The infection of radical grief and rapid decline is repeated in the case of Mooma, who is also suffering from an apparent combination of physical infection and psychological stress intensified by the loss of a parent. Both of them die after baptism and hopeful of an afterlife of "infinite beatitude." Yeruti too then promptly falls sick, and after considerable inner debate (and the lobbying of others) the priest consents to his baptism just before he dies. If the mother and her children had gone far enough with their religious education, they would have known that the reunion after death of the baptized and un-baptized presented a host of theological problems for devout Catholics. That Dobrizhoffer departs at the last moment from his strict policy of baptism only after rigorous testing conveys that his loyalty to doctrine potentially overpowers any compassion toward the integrity of secular but natural human family feeling.

Southey leaves this unexplored. But he does represent Dobrizhoffer as having at least a moment of doubt: "And was it then for this that he had brought/ That harmless household from their native shade?" (511). The doubts are apparently dispelled: "Yet he had no misgiving at the sight;/ And wherefore should he? He had acted well/And deeming of the ways of God aright" (512). Here the poem leaves one with a decision resembling Wordsworth's in *The Ruined Cottage*, in which the pious pedlar conjures happiness out of the tragic lives of others. In what tone and with what feeling does one read over this denial of misgivings? Is this admirable piety or an instance of the massively protective influence of a culture— Christian culture— that glosses over and makes virtue of the sufferings of those whose miseries it has itself ar-

guably helped to bring about? How does one here distinguish between the friend and the enemy? Is the friend always also the enemy in these instances of radical cultural contact where the fabric of the less powerful or intact alternative is always, even with the least violent intentions, hopelessly and irrevocably torn apart? Dobrizhoffer's role is that of the *pharmakon*; what he holds forth as a cure turns out to be a poison because he cannot get the dose right. No one can, for there is no correct dose. Just as the integrity of the Jesuit effort is outflanked by being embedded in a larger military and commercial enterprise of empire which it cannot hope to control and which indeed makes use of it for its own ends, so too Dobrizhoffer's gesture of self-exoneration, principled enough in itself and even supported by the narration's apparent insistence that Yeruti dies happy, is negatively qualified by the memory of their lives in the forest. Southey's decision to obfuscate the distinction between biological and psychological determinations in the decline and death of the three Indians renders the contact and conversion narration an inevitably tragic one (in which, remember, even Dobrizhoffer will be doomed to failure and disappointment).

The artful rendering of Yeruti's last days also bears scrutiny because it has supported the position of the few modern critics that the Christian enterprise is largely vindicated in the poem.<sup>8</sup> Notwithstanding the avowed support of Southey, the public figure, for the missionary effort in India and elsewhere, Southey, the poet, is not so simple to decipher. Yeruti is indeed described as thinking of death "Not as an ill, but as the last great good" (4: 54), but there is enough dramatic ambiguity around this avowal to occasion considerable interpretive disturbance. Of Mooma's death the poem asks:

Judged they aright,  
Or suffer'd they their fancy to beguile  
The reason, who believ'd that she had sight  
Of Heaven before her spirit took its flight?  
(4: 49)

The Jesuits clearly had much at stake in believing this to be the case, but the poem leaves open other options, including the purely delusional on all sides:

This was, indeed, a chosen family,  
For Heaven's especial favour mark'd, they said;  
Shut out from all mankind they seem'd to be,  
Yet mercifully there were visited,  
That so within the fold they might be led,  
Then call'd away to bliss.  
(4: 51)

So *they said*, as of course they would. Otherwise the relocation of the forest-dwellers to society would be without any justification, merely tragic, without point or purpose. The first two deaths are said to have occurred to those in a state of "baptismal innocence" (4: 51), but Southey has not mentioned

Mooma's baptism, and only at best implied it in the "Christian rites" that marked Monemma's "passing hour" and gave her "hope" (4: 29). To blur this question is to open up a number of others. Prolonging the period before baptism was Dobrizhoffer's policy, and this convicts him of a certain doggedness, and his doctrine of a certain cruelty, taking away one set of beliefs but replacing them only with a period of anxious probation which could only have added to the distresses of the process of translation I have already described.

Then there is the matter of the visions Yeruti sees before he dies. These are perfectly consonant with the earlier disturbances of mind associated with his trans-culturation, and they accord also with the belief in a spirit world he absorbed from his mother in her pre-Christian or proto-Christian phase. He sees his mother and sister walking in "radiant robes" and surrounded by "effluent light" (4: 64). There is no sense of purgatorial suffering, which means either that they have been already selected for salvation or that Yeruti is hallucinating. Southey does not resolve this. If he had, one could be sure that the Jesuit friends are not also enemies, that Yeruti's declared salvation is not also his tragedy, his discovered meanings actually meaningless.

*They said* this was "a chosen family" (4: 51), but the reader is not obliged to agree. As long as this remains an open question, so too does the question of one's relation and responsibility to the other in the contact experience. There are no clear winners in this poem; all winners can be seen as losers, including Dobrizhoffer himself. Three innocents die and the Jesuit mission is destroyed by Spain. Robert Southey, of all the great Romantics, may be the one who would most closely have attended to Karl Kroeber's admonitory reminder that common conceptions of Native American myths and of how they function are probably all wrong, and he is also uncommonly attentive to the consequences of such limited understandings.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup>Herbert F. Tucker, "Southey the Epic-Headed," *Romanticism on the Net*, 32-33 (Nov. 2003-Feb. 2004); Tim Fulford, "Blessed Bane: Christianity and Colonial Disease in Southey's *Tale of Paraguay*," *Romanticism on the Net* 24 (Nov. 2001), 12. Fulford's later essay argues for the place of this poem in a public, political and poetic conflict between Southey and Byron: "Poetic Hells and Pacific Edens," *Romanticism on the Net* 32-33 (Nov. 2003-Feb. 2004). Another important essay is Alan Bewell, "A 'True Story . . . of Evils Overcome': Sacred Biography, Prophecy, and Colonial Disease in Southey's *Tale of Paraguay*," *Nineteenth-Century Contexts* 26.2 (June 2004): 97-124.

<sup>2</sup>Ernest Bernhardt-Kabisch, one of the few others to read the poem attentively, also allows for a "certain tension" resulting from the attempt to conflate Catholic, Protestant and state of nature ideals, though his premise is that the poem is interesting only for its failures: see his "Southey in the Tropics: A *Tale of Paraguay* and the Problem of Romantic Faith," *The Wordsworth Circle* V (1974): 97-104.

<sup>3</sup>Bewell gives a good account of Dobrizhoffer's text, and of Southey's parallel discussions in his own *History of Brazil*. Southey generally follows the Latin rather than the translation, which omits some passages in producing the English text.

<sup>4</sup>*The Poetical Works of Robert Southey, Complete in One Volume*, new edition (1847), 480. Citations of the poem will be from this text. I will refer to the poetic sections by canto and stanza number; there is no modern edition.

<sup>5</sup>Bewell (104-05) notes that Dobrizhoffer remarked on the "corrupted" nature of his heroine's Guarani language resulting from the isolation in which she dwelt; Southey's poem reports that Dobrizhoffer himself had to write in Latin because his time abroad left him "forgetful" of his "native speech" (3:19). Birds of a feather, perhaps.

<sup>6</sup>In his *History of Brazil*, 2nd ed., 3 vols. (1822), Southey is explicit in his dislike of the downside of "this extraordinary commonwealth" (2: 333): that the Jesuits "kept their converts always like little children in a state of pupillage" (2: 334) and thus in a state of "moral inferiority" (362). They thus "involved themselves in perpetual contradictions" (334), insisting that the Indians were rational humans

upon whom slavery should not be imposed while themselves maintaining strict paternalism and, indeed, a *matte* collection industry that produced very high mortality rates

<sup>7</sup>Here Southey invents a psychological drama of contact and conversion that is not to be found in Dobrizhoffer, whose remarks on the *pisces extra aquam* (fish out of water) syndrome are sympathetic but much less detailed than Southey's. See Dobrizhoffer's Latin in Southey, *Poetical Works*, 481; and the translation in *An Account of the Abipones, An Equestrian People of Paraguay, From the Latin of Martin Dobrizhoffer*, 3 vols. (1822), 1: 93. Dobrizhoffer's concerns about the transition are purely physiological, all about the body. The interest in the mind and spirit is Southey's. His curiosity is in the spirit of Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan)'s *The Missionary* (1811), which explicitly challenges Christian self-esteem and even more fully explores the traumas of conversion and nonreversible contact between cultures (Hindu and Christian).

<sup>8</sup>Thus Bewell, who seems not to notice the mix of the psychological and the medical in the natives' declining condition, describes the poem as a tale of how "God intervened" (99), reports Southey as writing a "full-fledged hagiography" (106), and sees the ending as a "set-piece of hagiographic spectacle" (107).