



A historical and iconographic analysis of Charles Landseer's Brazilian paintings

Robert Wilkes

How to Cite:

WILKES, R. A historical and iconographic analysis of Charles Landseer's Brazilian paintings. *MODOS: Revista de História da Arte*, Campinas, SP, v. 7, n. 3, 22-52, set.2023. DOI: 10.20396/modos.v7i3.8673148. Disponível em: <https://periodicos.sbu.unicamp.br/ojs/index.php/mod/article/view/8673148>.

Image [modified]: Charles Landseer, *Jangada of Pernambuco* [detail], ca. 1825–1826. Pen and ink on paper, 18.1 x 28.2 cm. IMS. Source: *Brasiliana Iconográfica*.

A historical and iconographic analysis of Charles Landseer's Brazilian paintings

Uma análise histórica e iconográfica das pinturas brasileiras de Charles Landseer

Robert Wilkes*

ABSTRACT

This article presents a detailed examination of the two surviving Brazilian-themed paintings of Charles Landseer, the British artist who travelled to Brazil in 1825–26 as part of a diplomatic mission. His drawings in the Highcliffe Album are well-known, but the paintings are less familiar, and there has been a lack of art historical analyses of them within the broader context of the artist's career. Furthermore, they have not been considered together before. Primary sources are used to present a new account of the paintings' production and exhibition histories, uncovering previously overlooked information about how Landseer created the works and where he showed them in England in 1827. The article also incorporates lesser-known or previously unrecorded artworks by Landseer which relate to his Brazilian travels, including a third painting (depicting Madeira, not Brazil) which he exhibited in London in 1828, but which was only recently rediscovered. The only two known letters relating to Landseer's involvement with the mission are transcribed in full in an appendix.

KEYWORDS

Charles Landseer. Travelling artist. British art. Brazil. Landscape.

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma análise detalhada das duas pinturas sobreviventes com temas brasileiros de Charles Landseer, o artista britânico que viajou para o Brasil de 1825 a 1826 como parte de uma missão diplomática. Seus desenhos no *Highcliffe Album* são bem conhecidos, mas as pinturas são menos familiares, e tem havido uma falta de análises da história da arte deles dentro do contexto mais amplo da carreira do artista. Além disso, eles não foram considerados juntos antes. Fontes primárias são usadas para apresentar um novo relato das histórias de produção e exibição das pinturas, revelando informações anteriormente negligenciadas sobre como Landseer criou as obras e onde

as exibiu na Inglaterra em 1827. O artigo também incorpora obras de arte menos conhecidas ou inéditas de Landseer que se relacionam com suas viagens brasileiras, incluindo uma terceira pintura (retratando a Madeira, não o Brasil) que ele exibiu em Londres em 1828, mas que só recentemente foi redescoberta. As duas únicas cartas conhecidas relacionadas ao envolvimento de Landseer com a missão estão transcritas na íntegra, em um apêndice.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Charles Landseer. Artista viajante. Arte britânica. Brasil. Paisagem.



FIG. 1. Charles Landseer, *View of the Sugarloaf Mountain from the Silvestre Road*, ca. 1825–7. Oil on canvas, 61.5 x 93 cm. Pinacoteca de São Paulo. Source: Brasiliana Iconografica.

The British painter Charles Landseer (1799–1879) visited Brazil in 1825–6, early in his career. His surviving Brazilian works include his sketchbook containing some 300 observational drawings and watercolours (the Highcliffe Album) and two oil paintings: a landscape, *View of the Sugarloaf Mountain from the Silvestre Road* [Fig. 1], and a genre scene, *The Interior of a Brazilian Rancho* [Fig. 2]. These are all now in Brazilian collections. The Highcliffe Album was the subject of a catalogue by Leslie Bethell in 2010, but the paintings have not been sufficiently analysed, even by Brazilian scholars. They are rare examples of British exhibition paintings with Brazilian subjects from the early nineteenth century.



FIG. 2. Charles Landseer, *The Interior of a Brazilian Rancho in the Province of Santo Paulo, with a Travelling Merchant, his Slaves, Merchandise, etc.*, ca. 1826–7. Oil on millboard, 45 x 60 cm. Private collection, Rio de Janeiro.

Source: image reproduced by kind permission of the owner.

This article provides a detailed examination of the paintings' production and exhibition histories. Newly uncovered primary sources have given insights about them and Landseer's Brazilian artworks more generally, including overlooked paintings, prints and drawings. Newspaper reviews from the period demonstrate the critical reception of the paintings when they were first exhibited and, in some cases, reveal previously unknown exhibition venues to which Landseer sent them. Furthermore, this article challenges the idea that Landseer's use of Brazilian imagery ceased after he exhibited the paintings in 1827 and considers the impact of his Brazilian travels on his later works, particularly his depictions of Black men and women.

Landseer's trip to Brazil

In February 1825, a London newspaper announced that "Mr Charles Landseer, son of the celebrated artist [John], and brother to Edward [sic] Landseer, (...) goes out in the suite of Sir Charles Stewart [sic], to the Brazils" (*Johnson's Sunday Monitor*, 1825: 3). Charles Landseer had entered the Royal Academy Schools in 1816, but he was yet to establish himself as an exhibiting painter. His trip to Brazil was of political significance. Dom Pedro I had declared Brazil's independence from Portugal in September 1822, and Britain was to mediate the official treaty whereby Portugal would formally recognise this (Bethell, 2010: 228). In return for their assistance, Britain would be granted exclusive trading rights with South America's largest nation. The diplomatic mission would be led by Sir Charles Stuart.

It is not known exactly how Landseer came to be employed by Stuart as the mission's official artist. He may have been encouraged by his uncle, Henry Landseer, who had travelled to Spain and Portugal and exhibited landscapes of Andalusia, Estremadura and Cintra at the British Institution and the Northern Institution in Newcastle between 1821 and 1824 (Graves,

1908: 333)¹. Charles was joined in Stuart's suite by another artist, William John Burchell, who stayed on in Brazil until 1830. The Stuart mission arrived in Lisbon for the first negotiations in March 1825; while there, Landseer made around one hundred observational sketches. The *London Packet* (1825: 4) reported in May that "the object of [...] Stuart's mission had been completely fulfilled" and that Stuart was "ready to sail for Rio de Janeiro". After passing Madeira and Tenerife (also recorded in Landseer's sketchbook), the HMS *Wellesley* reached Rio de Janeiro on 17 July. The treaty was signed there the following month, before being ratified by Dom João VI at Lisbon in November. Between November and April 1826, Stuart's suite made several excursions aboard the HMS *Diamond* up and down the Brazilian coast, during which Landseer made more drawings. Stuart and Landseer eventually departed Rio for England aboard the *Diamond* on 11 May 1826. They returned circuitously via Lisbon and the Azores, reaching Portsmouth on 3 October (Bethell, 2010: 35–36).



FIG. 3. Charles Landseer, *Paulista passing river*, 1827. Etching, 18.8 x 24 cm. British Museum, London.

Source: British Museum;

FIG. 4. Charles Landseer, *Paulista passing river*, ca. 1825–26. Ink on paper, 16.8 x 22.9 cm.

Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS). Source: IMS.



Landseer did not keep a written diary of his travels and there are only two letters relating to his involvement with the Stuart mission (see Appendix): a note from him to Stuart in Lisbon in May 1825, and a letter from his father John to Stuart on 18 October 1826, shortly after Stuart's suite returned to England². In the latter, John Landseer expressed his dismay that Stuart was "desirous of possessing everything he [Charles] has done, even down to those memoranda which are in fact but the note-book of an artist". This letter has commonly been thought to refer solely to the Highcliffe Album. Indeed, Landseer did eventually give his sketchbook to Stuart, although exactly when is not known (Bethell, 2010: 239, 241–43). It may not have been as soon as has been supposed: an etching by Landseer [Fig. 3] copying a drawing from his sketchbook of a man on horseback in the state of São Paulo [Fig. 4] is dated 1827, presumably some months after his father's letter of October 1826³.

Furthermore, it has been assumed that Charles only began work on his exhibition paintings after returning to England – the implication being that he would have painted more pictures if he had not given away his sketchbook. However, John Landseer's letter states that, besides the "note-book", Charles brought home "numerous unfinished works" from Brazil. Were some of these the oils which he exhibited in 1827–28? John emphasised that his son had been "provided in an unusual manner with implements & materials for Painting as well as Drawing", distinguishing between the two categories. Charles himself wrote a "List of Drawings, Sketches, Paintings &c" for his sketchbook, although it is of little use as it records fewer works than appear in the album today and the ordering of the sheets has changed since Landseer's ownership⁴. Nevertheless, it lists eleven "large" works in oil. Two are entitled *Sugar loaf* and *Sugar loaf from aqueduct*, either of which could refer to the exhibited Sugarloaf painting [Fig. 1]. Today, the album contains only one work in oil, a small sketch on paper entitled *View from the aqueduct, Rio*, which depicts a similar view to the Sugarloaf painting, although without the titular mountain⁵. The other large oils in the list, such

as *Corcovado from consul's* and *Woman of Rio Janeiro*, must have been detached from the sketchbook at some point and are now untraced.

That Landseer could have begun at least some of his exhibition paintings in Brazil is not unfeasible. He would have seen Augustus Earle's painting *Gate and Slave Market at Pernambuco*, which was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1824⁶. Earle emphasised in the exhibition catalogue that the canvas had been "Painted in Brazil" (Thomas, 2019: 188–90). Like Earle's picture, Landseer's works are relatively small and therefore portable. The *Sugarloaf Mountain* has a canvas support, while the *Interior of a Brazilian Rancho* was painted on a commercially prepared millboard from the colourman Robert Davy in Newman Street⁷. Boards of this kind were well suited to travel because of their small size. The rancho picture is signed and dated 1827, but the *Sugarloaf* landscape has no inscriptions.



FIG. 5. Charles Landseer, *Jemmy Ducks – Fiddler to the H.M.S. Diamond*, 1826. Pencil on paper, 29 x 22.5 cm. Private collection. Source: Bonhams.

It is worth mentioning here another Landseer drawing related to the Stuart mission which only came to public knowledge in 2009 and has not previously been discussed [Fig. 5]⁸. It is a full-length portrait of a fiddler aboard the HMS *Diamond* – this, and the inscribed date of 1826, suggest that it was done during the voyage back to England. The playful monkey juxtaposed with the cougar subdued with a chain around its neck recall the paintings of Landseer’s brother Edwin, who frequently used animals to represent human characteristics. The animals also signify the British acquisition of tropical wildlife. The drawing anticipates Augustus Earle’s pair of oil paintings representing aspects of British ship life, which were derived from sketches which he made during his first voyage to Rio de Janeiro in 1820 and later exhibited (Hackforth-Jones, 1980: 57–58)⁹. One of the paintings includes the ship’s fiddler, who has abandoned his instrument to play with a monkey. Whether there was a direct connection between Landseer’s drawing and Earle’s paintings is difficult to ascertain.

Brazil on display: exhibition, reproduction

Beginning in 1827, Landseer exhibited the oil paintings derived from his Brazilian and Portuguese sketches in London and elsewhere. Some of these instances have been recorded by Bethell (2010: 239–40), but others are presented here for the first time. The first work was shown at the British Institution’s winter exhibition, which opened on 24 January, with the full title: *The Interior of a Brazilian Rancho in the Province of Santo Paulo, with a Travelling Merchant, his Slaves, Merchandise, etc.* [Fig. 2] (Graves, 1908: 330)¹⁰. One reviewer in the *Examiner* (1827: 85) remarked that there was “much good colour and nature” in it, also acknowledging that the artist “has recently paid a trip to South America”. Similar comments were made by the *London Morning Herald* (1827: 3): “[the painting] is remarkable for distinctness of character and delicacy of colouring. The grouping is admirably arranged, so

as to produce the best effect". The *Times* (1827: 3) also praised it as "the best picture we have hitherto seen from this artist. The working of the flesh (...) is very good, and the drawing excellent. This picture deserves a better place than has been assigned it".

After the British Institution, Landseer sent the *Brazilian Rancho* to the newly established Hobday's Gallery of Modern Art in Pall Mall, a fact which has not been recorded. The painting is mentioned in a review of Hobday's in the *London Courier and Gazette* (1827: 7):

We are happy to notice a very pleasing picture by Mr Charles Landseer (...) who accompanied Sir Charles Stuart's embassy to Portugal and the Brazils as a drafts man; it is No. 8, *Interior of a Brazilian Rancho* (...) This is cleverly painted, and very interesting, from the novel view it affords of society and scenery with which we are so little acquainted.¹¹

This and the above critics' comments about the work's novelty demonstrate that paintings of Brazil presented British audiences with scenes of a distant tropical land that they were unlikely to ever visit, albeit mediated by the artist's subjective viewpoint. The tone of the Hobday's Gallery review even suggests that there was a desire among the public to see more scenes of this type. In the 1820s, exhibition paintings with South American themes were scarce; the *Brazilian Rancho* is one of the few works from the period to focus on a Brazilian character.

Meanwhile, Landseer showed three landscapes at the fourth annual exhibition of the Society of British Artists, which opened on 2 April 1827: *Chapel of the Conceição with the Corcovado Mountain in the Distance*, *Sugar-loaf Mountain, Rio de Janeiro* [Fig. 1] and *Distant View of the Mountain of Cintra, with the Convent of Nossa Senhora da Pena, from Monte Serra* – the latter was a Portuguese scene¹². Unlike the *Brazilian Rancho*, these works did not attract any reviews on this occasion. As Bethell (2010: 240) has suggested, the *Chapel of the Conceição* painting may have been based on a highly finished watercolour in the Highcliffe Album, entitled *Back of Corcovado from the Chapel of the Conceição*¹³. Following this, Landseer sent the *Mountain of Cintra*

and *Chapel of the Conceição* to the autumn exhibition of the newly founded Hants Picture Gallery in Southampton, which has also not previously been recognised. The landscapes were praised by the *Hampshire Advertiser* as “both good, and prove Mr. Landseer to be a true student of nature”; the Cintra painting “may be looked at with advantage by a student” (Southampton and Hants Picture Gallery, 1827: 3). Although generic, this review shows that Landseer actively exhibited his Brazilian paintings outside the London art scene, taking advantage of the burgeoning regional art institutions of the 1820s. The two landscapes are now untraced. That the *Sugar-loaf Mountain* was not sent to Southampton suggests that it had found a buyer at the Society of British Artists.



FIG. 6. Charles Landseer, *Peasants in Madeira (Group of Portuguese Peasants)*, ca. 1828. Oil on canvas, 60 x 49 cm. Private collection. Source: Big Sky Fine Art.

FIG. 7. James Giles after Charles Landseer, *Peasants in Madeira*, published 1830. Lithograph, 17 x 14 cm. Source: British Museum.

In early 1828, Landseer exhibited a fifth work, *Group of Portuguese Peasants*, at the British Institution (Graves, 1908: 330), where it was bought by Lord Charles Townshend (British Institution, 1828: 186)¹⁴. It is probably the painting signed by Landseer which was sold at an English auction in 2007 [Fig. 6]¹⁵. This picture was published as a lithograph in 1830 [Fig. 7], its title revealing it to be a scene in Madeira, where the Stuart mission stopped on the way to Brazil (Rangel, 1942: 96). The male figure resembles a sketch of an inhabitant of Madeira with a donkey in the Highcliffe Album, again questioning the idea that Landseer was forced to give his sketchbook to Stuart immediately in 1826¹⁶. In representing a romantic encounter, the Madeira painting is more conventional than the slavery-themed works which Landseer had exhibited the previous year – a point to which I will return.

Landseer's sketches from the Stuart mission continued to circulate in British art circles. In July 1832, his drawing of the Palace of Mafra near Lisbon was published as an engraving in the fourth part of *Finden's Landscape Illustrations to Mr. Murray's (...) Life and Works of Lord Byron*. D. Roberts copied Landseer's drawing, embellishing it into a more grandiose, romantic vision. Landseer's original drawing of the palace is part of the Highcliffe Album, which once again challenges the theory that he handed over all his sketches to Charles Stuart immediately in 1826 – unless Stuart was involved with the publication¹⁷.

A little-known example of Landseer's later *brasilliana* is in the British Museum: three impressions of a set of eleven small lithographs printed on the same sheet [Fig. 8]. Evidently, the lithographs were produced by a group of artists, including Landseer, John Constable and William Daniell, in the museum's print room in 1833¹⁸. This was done at the suggestion of Sir Augustus Wall Callcott to decorate an album belonging to his wife, Lady Callcott – also known as Maria Graham, author of the well-known *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil* (1824). Landseer contributed a sketch of a Black woman

washing clothes in a river, with a Black baby and palm trees beside her [Fig. 9]. The scene is more a recollection of Brazil than a copy of a specific drawing in the Highcliffe Album¹⁹. The juxtaposition of the Black woman and child with English pastoral motifs – Constable’s thatched cottage, Fielding’s herd of cows, Atkinson’s women and children under an umbrella – emphasises their “otherness”.



FIG.8. Sheet of lithographs by John Constable, Sir Augustus Wall Callcott, Charles Landseer, William Daniell, Richard James Lane, Thomas Webster, John Wood and Thales Fielding, ca. 1833. Lithograph, 26.5 x 20 cm. Source: British Museum.

FIG. 9. Detail of Fig. 8.

Given that Maria Graham was the recipient of these lithographs, Landseer probably sketched a Brazilian scene to remind her of the country where she had spent much of her time in the early 1820s, and to reference their shared experience of it. Indeed, his drawing recalls a passage from

Graham's *Journal* of 1824, describing washerwomen in Laranjeiras in Rio:

Just at the entrance to that valley, a little green plain stretches itself on either hand, through which the rivulet runs over its stony bed, and affords a tempting spot to groups of washerwomen of all hues, though the greater number are black; and they add not a little to the picturesque effect of the scene: they generally wear a red or white handkerchief round the head; (...) Some wrap a long cloth round them, like the Hindoos; (...) Round the washerwoman's plain, hedges of acacia and mimosa fence the gardens of plantains, oranges, and other fruits which surround every villa; and beyond these, the coffee plantations extend far up the mountain, whose picturesque head closes the scene.²⁰ (Graham, 1824: 161-62)

How familiar Landseer was with Graham's text is not known, but the drawing and description are compatible in recording the activities of Brazilian Black women, filtered through the language and aesthetics of the English picturesque. In both cases, the women are represented in harmony with their tropical surroundings.

Even before Landseer's death in 1879, his involvement with the Stuart mission and his travel sketches were common knowledge. For example, F. G. Stephens's biography of Edwin Landseer published in 1874 mentions Charles's trip to Portugal and Brazil and the "large number of studies and sketches, which have been described in high terms of admiration" (Stephens, 1874: 18). The entry for Landseer in the 1892 *Dictionary of National Biography* also references the drawings, although it mistakenly states that they (not the oil paintings) "were exhibited at the British Institution in 1828" (Lee, 1892: 63-64). Landseer's Brazilian works were therefore publicly associated with him during and after his lifetime, even if they would not be seen in public until the mid-twentieth century. A posthumous sale of his remaining paintings, drawings, watercolours and sketchbooks was held by Christie, Manson and Woods on 16 April 1880 (*Catalogue*, 1880). No Brazil works were among the lots, although there were many unspecified landscape and figure studies.

In 1986, *The Interior of a Brazilian Rancho* [Fig. 2], having been owned for many years by Rex Nan Kivell, was purchased through Thos. Agnew and Sons by Cândido Guinle de Paula Machado, a banker and art collector in Rio de Janeiro (Bethell, 2010: 240). The painting has not been seen publicly since an exhibition in São Paulo in 2000 (Galard and Lago, 2000: 165). The *Sugar-loaf Mountain*, last seen at the Society of British Artists in 1827, was bought at auction in 1997 by the Fundação Estudar, São Paulo²¹. The canvas was in poor condition, unstretched and unframed with numerous paint losses, and it was erroneously described as “style of” William Havell, who visited Brazil in 1816. It was exhibited alongside the *Brazilian Rancho* in São Paulo in 2000 (Galard and Lago, 2000: 166) – the first time that the two works were shown together – and is now on display in the Pinacoteca de São Paulo, with a different title: *View of the Sugarloaf Mountain from the Silvestre Road*. Meanwhile, Landseer’s sketchbook, having been rediscovered in 1924 by Alberto Rangel at the Stuart family home, Highcliffe Castle (hence the album’s nickname), was sold at Christie’s in 1999 and is now in the Instituto Moreira Salles, Rio de Janeiro. The original album no longer survives, and the drawings are conserved in individual mounts.

Butterfly catchers and tropeiros: the iconography of the Brazil paintings

Landseer’s view of the Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain) in Rio de Janeiro, as seen from the Silvestre Road (today Rua Almirante Alexandrino) in the neighbourhood of Santa Teresa, was directly based on sketches in the Highcliffe Album. As Brazilian scholars noticed in the late 1990s, Landseer’s drawing of three butterfly catchers [Fig. 10] provided the basis for the figures in the bottom-left corner of the painting. This means that he began the work while he still had access to his sketchbook. None of the extant Highcliffe sketches correspond exactly to the view depicted, although there

are drawings of the Sugarloaf from other viewpoints, and three pencil and watercolour studies of banana trees which would have aided the artist in painting the same trees in the foreground. The tall, slender tree used as a framing device on the left is a cecropia or embaúba, a common sight in the Brazilian landscape.



FIG. 10. Charles Landseer, *Butterfly catchers*, ca. 1825–6. Pencil and sepia on paper, 16 x 11.1 cm. IMS. Source: IMS.

The painting's narrative element becomes clear when it is compared with contemporaneous watercolours by Jean-Baptiste Debret, the French painter who moved to Rio de Janeiro in 1816 (Pincacoteca do Estado, 2011: 38). Debret was well-known for his watercolours documenting the working conditions and social customs of enslaved and indigenous people. After

returning to France in 1831, he published the watercolours in a three-volume book, *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil* (1834–9). The Highcliffe Album contains thirteen copies of Debret's watercolours, which were originally thought to be by Debret but have since been reattributed to Landseer himself (Bandeira and Lago, 2020: 682–85). Landseer also made a pencil drawing derived from one of these watercolours, depicting a priest admonishing an enslaved woman (private collection, São Paulo; Bandeira and Lago, 2020: 48)²². These copies are concrete proof that Landseer and Debret met, but the details of their acquaintance are unknown.



FIG. 11. Jean-Baptiste Debret, *Retours des nègres d'un naturaliste*, 1826. Watercolour on paper, 18 x 22 cm. Private collection, Rio de Janeiro. Author' archive.

A watercolour by Debret from 1826 shows an enslaved man and boy carrying plant, insect and reptile specimens which they have collected for their European naturalist master [Fig. 11]. Debret later combined this scene with another watercolour into a lithograph for the second volume of his

Voyage pittoresque (Bandeira and Lago, 2020: 568). His commentary for the print explains the duties that these slaves undertook. Sometimes, the more “generous” naturalists would grant the men their freedom as a reward for their “painful” services. The freed men would then use the skills learnt during their enslavement to continue catching specimens which they could sell to foreign visitors to Rio. Debret (1834–9: v. 2, 67–68) also wrote that these men typically wore “an enormous straw hat bristling with butterflies and insects skewered on long pins. He always walks (...) carrying his box of insects”.

The close thematic parallels between Debret’s watercolour of 1826 and Landseer’s *View of the Sugarloaf* suggest that the two works were executed almost in tandem – the latter even while Landseer was in contact with Debret in Rio de Janeiro. When viewed alongside Debret’s works, the actions of the men in Landseer’s scene become clear: they are catching insects for European visitors. The man on the far left is poised to swipe his net at a tiny red butterfly hovering beside a nearby bush. As in Debret’s images, the man in red has pinned the captured butterflies to his hat, and he and the white-shirted man carry the specimen boxes. The man in the centre foreground bears a bundle of sticks wrapped in a cloth, which he has collected for the same purpose.

Landseer’s *Sugarloaf* painting highlights the fact that European biologists and naturalists freely exploited Brazil’s slavery practises to gather their tropical specimens. However, the artist’s critique of the slave trade is less direct than in Augustus Earle’s *Gate and Slave Market at Pernambuco*, in that it is unclear whether the insect catchers are enslaved or have been manumitted. This lack of clarity may work against the painting – as it is less polemical, the Black men risk being seen merely as “exotic” variants of the foreground figures common in European landscape painting

The central figure in Landseer’s other exhibited work [Fig. 2] is a *tropeiro* (muleteer), a common sight in nineteenth-century Brazilian society. *Tropeiros* typically wore spurred boots, a poncho over a white shirt and a

large hat. As Bandeira and Lago (2020: 438) have noted, *tropeiros* were of “extraordinary economic importance” for transporting goods in the states of São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Paraná. They were not always wealthy, but Landseer’s *tropeiro* is presented as an affluent merchant with a troop of mules driven by his enslaved workers. He reclines casually in a *rancho* (a roadside shelter for travellers) with a discarded cigarette at his feet. Landseer made several drawings focusing on *tropeiros* [Fig. 12], probably during a visit to the state of São Paulo in January 1826.



FIG. 12. Charles Landseer, *Figure of St. Pauls*, ca. 1825–26. Pencil on paper, 11.5 x 5.2 cm. Source: IMS.

FIG. 13. Charles Landseer, *Mineiro travelling*, ca. 1825–6. Pencil and sepia on paper, 23 x 28.9 cm. IMS. Source: IMS.

Landseer also made a highly finished sepia drawing depicting a *tropeiro* from Minas Gerais arriving at an inn [Fig. 13], which could be a study for a projected painting. Here, Landseer established the motif of a mountainous landscape background with palm and banana trees contrasted with human figures in the foreground. This drawing was not developed further, but Landseer made two preparatory studies for the *Interior of a Brazilian Rancho*:

a pen and ink drawing that was originally part of the Highcliffe Album [Fig. 14], and an oil sketch [Fig. 15]²³. Although neither are recorded in Landseer's list, Nicholas Lambourn has convincingly suggested that they were executed in Brazil; as mentioned earlier, the exhibited painting could also have been begun in Brazil and brought back to England unfinished. Another clear basis for the design was the drawing in the Highcliffe Album entitled *Jangada of Pernambuco* [Fig. 16]: the upper half of the central figure closely resembles the *tropeiro*, and he is similarly accompanied by two Black men. The woven basket on the raft reappears in the foreground of the rancho painting²⁴.



FIG. 14. Charles Landseer, *Merchant of St Pauls and Minas resting in rancho*, ca. 1825–6. Pencil and red chalk on paper, 21 x 25 cm. Private collection, Rio de Janeiro. Author's archive.

FIG. 15. Charles Landseer, *Study for 'The Interior of a Brazilian Rancho'*, ca. 1826–7. Oil on board, 27.8 x 34.9 cm. Private collection. Source: Christie's Images.



FIG. 16. Charles Landseer, *Jangada of Pernambuco*, ca. 1825–6. Pen and ink on paper, 18.1 x 28.2 cm. IMS. Source: Brasiliana Iconografica.



FIGS. 17-19. Detail of Fig 15, Fig. 14, and Fig 2.

Debret also depicted *tropeiros* in observational sketches and genre scenes (Bandeira and Lago, 2020: 438–41). One of these, *Pauvres tropeiros de Minas* (1823), was copied by Landseer for his sketchbook²⁵. The composition of the *Brazilian Rancho* resembles a watercolour by Debret from 1823, depicting *tropeiros* with their goods inside a rancho, although they are poorer than Landseer’s merchant (Bandeira and Lago, 2020: 248). Other British artists had included *tropeiros* in their works. James Henderson, who stayed in Brazil in 1819, published his drawing of a *tropeiro* in his *History of the Brazil* (1821). Henry Chamberlain, who visited Brazil in 1819–20,

included a print, *Troperos* [sic] or *Muleteers*, in his series of aquatints, *Views and Costumes of the City and Neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro*, first published in 1821 – although he had copied the figures from earlier watercolours by the Portuguese-born artist Joaquim Cândido Guillobel. Two *tropeiros* appear in a watercolour of the slave market at Rio de Janeiro by Earle, published as the frontispiece to Graham's *Journal* in 1824²⁶. They are standing on the far right, purchasing enslaved children, just as Landseer's *tropeiro* also makes use of slave labour.

Another distinctive feature of Landseer's painting is the enslaved man leaning on one leg against a post on the right, wearing a red cap and smoking a pipe. This may be a reference to the *saci-pererê*, a trickster figure in Brazilian folklore who takes the form of a one-legged Black man smoking a pipe and wearing a red Phrygian cap. Tales of the *saci* originated in the late eighteenth century, and a similar figure was also present in Portuguese folklore, so it is not unfeasible that Landseer became aware of the idea (Cascardo, 2000: 794). The visual development of the leaning man from the drawing [Fig. 17], through the oil sketch [Fig. 18] to the finished painting [Fig. 19] shows Landseer adding the pipe and hat, in accordance with the characteristics of the *saci*. If so, it would make his painting one of the earliest depictions of this folkloric character, which is well-known in Brazil but unknown to British audiences.

Landseer after Brazil: depicting other racial subjects

Even if Landseer did not depict Brazilian themes in his paintings after 1827, he would approach other non-European subjects in a similar manner. In the Victoria and Albert Museum is his portrait of Samuldas Desai, painted in 1834 while the sitter was visiting London from Gujarat in India [Fig. 20]. The Hindu temple in the background was done by another artist, Robert Melville Grindlay, who had lived in India from 1803–20 (Rohatgi and Parlett,

2008: 213–16, 257). The desire to represent the sitter within the environment of his home country recalls Landseer's *tropeiro* painting, with its tropical trappings surrounding the central figure. Additionally, there is a small panel painting by Landseer depicting an Indian man which was recently sold in Guernsey [Fig. 21]²⁷. A label on the back of the panel states that it was in the posthumous sale of the artist's works in 1880²⁸. An oil entitled *An Indian Attendant* was sold in that auction, which is probably this picture²⁹. It has also been titled *An Indian Snake Charmer*, but a pencil study for the painting sold in 2011 shows that the man is holding a hookah and there is no snake in the scene³⁰. His seated, frontal pose, allowing a full view of his face, evokes Landseer's *tropeiro*. The subject matter may have been influenced by Landseer's friendship with Grindlay, who published *Scenery, Costume and Architecture, Chiefly on the Western Side of India*, in collaboration with other artists, from 1826–30. Yet it also reflects Landseer's gained experience of closely observing other world cultures while he was in Brazil, with both paintings displaying a careful attention to the sitters' traditional clothing.



FIG. 20. Charles Landseer and Robert Melville Grindlay, *Samaldas Desai*, 1834. Oil on board, 63.5 x 48 cm. Victoria & Albert Museum, London. Source: V&A.

FIG. 21. Charles Landseer, *An Indian Attendant*, 1830s? Oil on panel, 37.5 x 27.3 cm. Private collection. Source: Martel Maides Auctions.



FIG. 22. Charles Landseer, *The Pillaging of a Jew's House in the Reign of Richard I*, 1839. Oil on canvas, 153.7 x 196.5 cm. Tate, London. Source: Tate.

As in his Sugarloaf and *tropeiro* pictures of the 1820s, Landseer occasionally included Black figures in his later works. In 1839, he exhibited at the Royal Academy a large history painting, *The Pillaging of a Jew's House in the Reign of Richard I* [Fig. 22]³¹. He was inspired by a passage from David Hume's *The History of England*, quoted in the Academy exhibition catalogue, describing the massacre of English Jews at the orders of King Richard after his coronation in 1189 (Hume, 1825: 110). While the Brazilian paintings garnered unanimous praise from critics, Landseer's history painting was criticised by William Makepeace Thackeray (1839: 747) for its lack of "vigour (...) as if [the figures] were in a tableau and paid for standing there". A closer look at the scene shows a Black man standing on the left, clutching a flaming torch and some hay with which he will set fire to the house. Black people did not frequently appear in exhibition pictures from this period; it was

a deliberate choice on Landseer's part, as Hume's text does not specify the races of the assailants. Landseer probably used a real model for the man, as John Simpson had done for his *The Captive Slave* exhibited at the Academy in 1827, modelled by the stage actor Ira Aldridge (Thomas, 2019: 53–56)³². A related study of Aldridge by Simpson appeared in the same British Institution exhibition as Landseer's *Interior of a Brazilian Rancho*³³. Yet *The Pillaging of a Jew's House* represents a Black man engaged in a violent act; the reasons for his presence in the scene require additional research.



FIG. 23. Charles Landseer, *The Assassination of Alboin, King of the Lombards*, 1856. Oil on canvas, 127 x 1142.2 cm. Private collection. Source: Christie's.

FIG. 24. Detail of Fig. 23.

A second compelling example is Landseer's *The Assassination of Alboin, King of the Lombards*, exhibited nearly twenty years later at the Academy in 1856 [Fig. 23]. An otherwise conventional mid-Victorian history painting is made unusual by the presence of the Black man on the left, who has the appearance of an individualised portrait [Fig. 24]. This racialised figure

is unusual in a Victorian exhibition picture, although the reviews of the painting in the *Athenaeum* (1856: 622) and the *Art-Journal* (1856: 166) do not mention it. Landseer's textual source, Edward Gibbon's history of the Roman Empire, does not describe the assassins in any detail, meaning that, as in *The Pillaging of a Jew's House*, the Black man was deliberately included.



FIG. 25. Charles Landseer, *Mr Samuels three slaves*, ca. 1825–26. Pencil on paper, 13 x 11.1 cm. IMS. Source: IMS.

While it cannot be known if Landseer was thinking of Brazil when he painted these works, it is true that he became accustomed to making portraits of Black individuals there. Besides the more general street scenes which include enslaved men and women, the Highcliffe Album includes close-up portraits that are more specific, such as the sketch entitled *Mr Samuels* [sic] *three slaves* [Fig. 25]. The closely cropped heads and emphasis on domestic service recall William Hogarth's group portrait

of six of his servants from the 1750s, which Landseer may have seen when it was exhibited at the British Institution in 1817³⁴. Even if the three slaves' identities are not recorded, the time that Landseer took to trace their facial features demonstrates his interest in representing Black people with the same visual scrutiny as in the likenesses of Portuguese royalty which also fill the album. It was a rehearsal for the two paintings discussed above, whose Black figures exhibit the individuality of portraiture.

As some of the few examples of nineteenth-century British exhibition paintings with Brazilian themes, Landseer's *Sugarloaf* and *Interior of a Brazilian Rancho* deserve to be integrated into the wider narratives of nineteenth-century British art. They are the direct result of Britain's desire to maintain close political and economic ties first with Portugal and then with Brazil following its independence in 1822. Although images of Brazil were widely circulated as prints in the nineteenth century, it was not until Marianne North in the 1880s that a British painter again presented such vivid scenes of the distant South American country to the public.

References

Art-Journal (1 June 1856).

Athenaeum (17 May 1856).

BANDEIRA, J.; LAGO, P. C. do. *Debret e o Brasil: obra completa, 1816–1831*. 5ed. Rio de Janeiro: Capivara, 2020.

BTHELL, L. *Charles Landseer: desenhos e aquarelas de Portugal e do Brasil, 1825–1826*. São Paulo: IMS, 2010.

BOOTH, T. The Massacres of the Jews under Richard I (A.D. 1189–1190). *Religions*, v. 12, n. 10. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12100821>.

British Institution. *The Literary Gazette and Journal of Belles Lettres* (22 March 1828), p. 186.

CASCUDO, L. da C. *Dicionário do folclore brasileiro*. Rio de Janeiro: 2000.

Catalogue of the Valuable Engravings of the Late Thomas Landseer, A.R.A.; also, the Remaining Works of the Late Charles Landseer, R.A. [14–16 April 1880]. London: Christie, Manson and Woods, 1880.

DEBRET, J. *Voyage pittoresque et historique au Brésil*. 3 vols. Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, 1834-39.

Examiner (11 February 1827).

GALARD, J.; LAGO, P. C. do. *Mostra do Redescobrimento: o olhar distante* (the distant view). São Paulo: Associação Brasil 500 Anos Artes Visuais, 2000.

GRAHAM, M. *Journal of a Voyage to Brazil, and Residence There, During Part of the Years 1821, 1822, 1823*. London: Longman, Hurst, Rees, Orme, Brown and Green, 1824.

GRAVES, A. *The British Institution, 1806-1867: A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from the Foundation of the Institution*. London: 1908.

HACKFORTH-JONES, J. *Augustus Earle: Travel Artist*. London: Scholar Press, 1980.

HUME, D. *The History of England, from the Invasion of Julius Caesar, to the Revolution in 1688*. London: Jones & Company, 1825.

Johnson's Sunday Monitor (20 February 1825).

London Courier and Evening Gazette (21 May 1827).

LEE, Sidney (ed.). *Dictionary of National Biography*, v. 32. London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1892.

London Packet and New Lloyd's Evening Post (4 May 1825).

Morning Herald (London) (24th January 1827).

PINACOTECA DO ESTADO. *Arte no Brasil: uma história na Pinacoteca de São Paulo*. São Paulo: Pinacoteca do Estado, 2011.

RANGEL, A. O álbum de Highcliffe (The Landseer Sketchbook). *Revista do serviço do patrimônio histórico e artístico nacional*, n. 6 (1942), p. 87-116.

ROHATGI, P.; PARLETT, G. *Indian Life and Landscape by Western Artists: Paintings and Drawings from the Victorian and Albert Museum, 17th to the early 20th century*. London: Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj Vastu Sangrahalaya, 2008.

Southampton and Hants Picture Gallery. *Hampshire Advertiser and Royal Yacht Club Gazette* (13 October 1827), p. 3.

STEPHENS, F. G. *Memoirs of Sir E. Landseer*. London: George Bell and Sons, 1874.

THACKERAY, William Makepeace. A Second Lecture on the Fine Arts, by Michael Angelo Titmarsh, Esq. *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, v. 19 (June 1839), p. 743-50.

Times (24 January 1827).

Appendix

Lisbon 24 May 1825

Sir,

Having left England unprovided with a servant I have engaged in that capacity Joseph Percever of Lisbon, and shall be obliged by your permission to take him to Rio de Janeiro.

I have the Honor to be Sir

Your Most Obedient

Servant, Charles Landseer³⁵.

No 9 Upper Conway Street 18 Octr 1826

May it please your Excellency,

When I consented that my son Charles should accompany you to the Brazils, and when the terms were agreed upon, the impression left on my mind, was, that he was to be allowed to employ part of his time in studying colour or Form as occasion might offer, for his own future use – engaging to delineate for you such scenes of a popular character, connected with your mission as you might be pleased to point out. This I distinctly mentioned at the time; and it was with the view of his being enabled thus to assail himself, that he was provided in an unusual manner with implements & materials for Painting as well as Drawing from nature, in every sort of way that was likely to contribute to his professional improvement and future advantages. I learn therefore – permit me to say with surprise & disappointment – that you have expressed yourself desirous of possessing everything he has done, even down to those memoranda which are in fact but the note-book of an Artist. These, and numerous unfinished works (collected with a degree of talent & industry that afford me great pleasure) which he has brought home, would be of high value to himself as an Artist, though in their present state, scarcely fit ornaments of a nobleman's collections.

May I hope, Sir, that you will take this matter into your liberal consideration? – When you reflect on the low rate of remuneration at which he agreed to accompany you, you will readily conceive – If I may be allowed to say so – that our chief inducement, was not mere occupation for my son at any rate, but the opportunities which being in your suite would afford him, of collecting such materials from nature as might be of use to him in his future professional life. – I have the honour to be

Sir Your Respectful

& very Obedient Servant

John Landseer.³⁶

Notes

- * IFCH/UNICAMP. This research is supported by the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP). Part of this article was presented virtually at the ECRN and DRN Summer Symposium at the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 10 June 2022. I am grateful to the owners of Figs. 2 and 15 for their permission to reproduce the works; to the Lilly Library, Indiana University for permission to publish the letters in the Appendix; and to Erin Chiparo (Lilly Library), Daniel Goddard (Bearne's Hampton & Littlewood), Nicholas Lambourn, Jovita Santos (Instituto Moreira Salles), John Stainton (Christie's) and Sarah Thomas for their help during my research. E-mail: rjwilkes@unicamp.br. ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9207-508X>.
- 1 See also: Extracts from the Culley Papers–II. *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne*, 5th series, v. 1, n. 6 (1953), p. 220–36; Henry Landseer's letters (1824–8) to Matthew Culley of Coupland Castle, who bought one of Henry's Cintra paintings exhibited in Newcastle.
 - 2 Neither the 19 letters by the artist in the Getty Research Institute, Los Angeles (part of the "Papers of Sir Edwin Landseer and family, ca. 1809–1885" series; 870103), nor the papers of Edwin Landseer in the National Art Library, London (86.RR.1–86.RR.9), contain any references to Charles's Brazilian travels.
 - 3 The etching, of which Fig. 3 is the only known copy, is inscribed "C. Landseer Delt. et fecit 1827".
 - 4 The original list can be seen on the Instituto Moreira Salles's website: <https://acervos.ims.com.br/portals/#/detailpage/4294982872> (accessed 9 March 2023).
 - 5 Instituto Moreira Salles (IMS), Rio de Janeiro, 002HA01762. All identification numbers for the Highcliffe Album drawings are taken from the IMS database.
 - 6 Now in the Casa Geyer (Museu Imperial), Rio de Janeiro.
 - 7 A label on the back of the painting reads: "The only Manufactory for / Genuine Flemish Grounds / on panel & mill board, / patronized by / Sir Thos. Lawrence, / President of the Royal Academy, / Established 1795, by / R. Davy, Colourman to Artists, / 83, Newman Street, London".
 - 8 Bonhams, "Pictures, including Maps, Furniture & Works of Art" sale, 15 September 2009, lot 18.
 - 9 The two paintings were exhibited at the Royal Academy of Arts in London in 1837, nos. 102 and 323. 10 No. 46 in the exhibition.
 - 11 See also: Mr Hobday's Gallery. *The Table Book, of Daily Recreation and Information* (1827), p. 344.
 - 12 Nos. 64, 423 and 512 in the exhibition.
 - 13 IMS, 002HA01771.
 - 14 No. 154 in the exhibition. The buyer may have been Lord Charles Vere Ferrers Townshend (1785–1853).
 - 15 Gildings Auctioneers, 2 October 2007 sale, lot 368, as *Returning from Market*; sold for £950 (about £1,120 with premiums). My thanks to Will Gilding of Gildings Auctioneers for providing this information and an image of the painting (email to the author, 14 March 2023). It was resold by Big Sky Fine Art at an unknown date: <https://www.bigskyfineart.com/a-promise-of-romance~173> (accessed 14 March 2023).
 - 16 IMS, 002HA01714.
 - 17 *Front of Palace at Mafra*, IMS, 002HA01702.
 - 18 British Museum, London, catalogue notes: https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/object/P_1871-0610-609 (accessed 15 March 2023). Constable's drawing of a cottage is dated 1833.

- 19 A close approximation is the drawing entitled Washerwomen, IMS, 002HA01832.
- 20 Graham's description also recalls a landscape watercolour by Augustus Earle in the Rex Nan Kivell Collection, National Library of Australia (no. NK12/96), depicting washerwomen in a valley 'near Rio de Janeiro' (possibly even in Laranjeiras, as in Graham's text).
- 21 Bearne's, Exeter, 'Autumn Sale', 21–22 October 1997, lot 480.
- 22 This drawing was sold at Sotheby's, New York, 15 February 1990, lot 51.
- 23 Fig. 15 was sold at Christie's, London, 'Exploration and Travel' sale, 26 September 2001, lot 19.
- 24 IMS, 002HA01883.
- 25 *Mineiros halting*, IMS, 002HA01914. The original by Debret is in the Museu Castro Maya, Rio de Janeiro.
- 26 Earle's original watercolour is in the British Museum (no. 1845,0405.14.144).
- 27 Martel Maides, Guernsey, 7 July 2022 sale, lot 1413.
- 28 The label incorrectly gives the date of this sale as 1879, but it took place in April 1880.
- 29 Artist's posthumous sale, Christie's, London, 16 April 1880, lot 515. Bought by Nelthropp for 14 shillings; see the annotated copy of the catalogue in the National Art Library, London.
- 30 Sold at Bonhams, London, 19 January 2011, lot 369.
- 31 Bequeathed to the National Gallery of British Art in 1859 by Jacob Bell; now part of the Tate collection.
- 32 Now in the Art Institute of Chicago.
- 33 No. 99 in the exhibition. It is now in the Tate collection, as *Head of a Man, probably Ira Frederick Aldridge* (N00382).
- 34 See the catalogue entry for Hogarth's painting on the Tate website: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/hogarth-heads-of-six-of-hogarths-servants-no1374> (accessed 12 April 2023).
- 35 Stuart mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.
- 36 Stuart mss., Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Article received in April 2023. Accepted in July 2023.

[Artigo recebido em abril de 2023. Aprovado em julho de 2023.]