"**The Metamorphoses of Caliban**"

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After nearly three hundred and fifty years of abuse, Caliban is beginning to be recognized as the true hero of *The Tempest*. In his play, Shakespeare introduced a monster, half-fish, half-human, whose coarse appetites and even coarser language brutally contrasted with the ethereal presence of Ariel, the noble features of Prospero, and Miranda's virginal charms. The prototypes created by Shakespeare around 1611 caught the European imagination. For centuries they were taken by other writers, enlarged, developed, but never essentially changed until the 1950's.(1)

It was the task of a French psychoanalyst, O. Mannoni, to save Caliban from his detractors and present him not as an object of scorn but as a pitiful victim of colonization. In a book originally entitled, *Psychologie de la colonisation* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1950], which was translated into English in a more dramatic way as *Prospero and Caliban*. *The Psychology of Colonization* [tr. Pamela Powesland (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1964)], Mannoni used Adler's concepts to show that the colonizer (Prospero) was the victim of an inferiority complex, that had forced him to leave his home country (where he was unable to cope with the challenges of a developed society) in order to become a slave-master in an underdeveloped society where he was able to vent his frustrations on the colonized people. The colonized (Caliban) in turn suffered from a paternalistic complex. Primitive societies had taught their people to obey and revere their ancients, that is, authority. Thus, they were more than ready to accept slavery and colonization. Mannoni was basing his theories on his own study of the Malgaches, the natives of Madagascar.

Incensed by Mannoni's theories, another French-educated psychoanalyst, the black writer Frantz Fanon, wrote a bitter rejoinder. In a book called *Peau noire, masques blanches* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1952], translated into English as *Black Skin, White Mask* [tr. Charles T. Markmann (New York: Grove Press, 1967)], he attacked in particular Mannoni's interpretation of the inherited submissiveness of the colonized people. He observed, correctly, that Mannoni had never had the chance to study the colonized before they were colonized, and that he had extrapolated from their condition as slaves, which he knew, to a condition previous to slavery, of which he knew nothing.

Fanon's teacher, the black poet Aimé Césaire, one of the forerunners of négritude, went even further in a French reinterpretation of Shakespeare's play. Altering the title slightly to *Une tempéte* [Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1969], he presented Caliban not just as a comic monster but as a rebellious slave who finally succeeds in becoming the king of his island, the island which was his by birthright. (His mother, the witch Sycorax, was the original owner of the island.) In a last *peripaetia*, Caliban challenges Prospero to remain on the island and to help him in the process of decolonization. In Aimé Césaire's play, Caliban represents the slave who fights for his freedom, while Ariel represents the slave who accepts tyranny and becomes his master's errand boy and busybody. Caliban is a revolutionary while Ariel is the intellectual who sells his rights for some crumbs from his master's table. Mannoni, Fanon and Césaire practiced a political reading of *The Tempest*: a reading which inverts the functions of the roles the major characters play and uses Shakespeare's prototypes to serve the needs of twentieth-century ideologies.

After Mannoni, Fanon and Césaire, the Cuban poet Roberto Fernández Retamar, who is better known as the editor of the important magazine *Casa de las Américas*, published a short book entitled *Calibán. Notas sobre la cultura de nuestra América* [México: Diógenes, 1971]. In that book he adapts the basic ideas of those French intellectuals to Latin American culture. Quoting extensively from them and other writers, Fernández Retamar attempts to give a Latin American context to the image of Caliban advanced by the French writers.

A quotation of Che Guevara, in which the Argentine guerrilla urges Cuban teachers to "*paint themselves black, [become] mulattoes, workers, peasants,"* and *"step down to the people*" concludes Fernández Retamar's plea to promote Caliban to the rank of an international symbol of Latin America, [p. 94].

This essay, written and published in 1971-the centennial year of the birth of the Uruguayan thinker José Enrique Rodó- was probably meant by Fernández Retamar to be read as a sort of updating of that essayist most famous pamphlet, *Ariel*, originally published in 1900. A few pages are devoted by Fernández Retamar to the examination of that book. Although he underlines its shortcomings, and agrees with Mario Benedetti that Rodó is basically a nineteenth-century writer (a discovery already made by other critics), he still believes Rodó was sincere in his mistakes and that, at least, he had the merit of having seen and identified very clearly Latin America's principal enemy at the time, the United States.

Fernández Retamar is right on that count. Rodó was one of the first Latin Americans to voice a mistrust of the United States and its dangerous influence on Latin American culture. *Ariel* was practically written to warn Latin America about the perils of an excessive *nordomanía*: that is, the too literal imitation of the materialistic civilization of the United States. At the time he was writing, Rodó had the example of Argentina before his very eyes. He felt that Buenos Aires was succeeding too well in aping the North American cities. Rodó had also in mind the ever present danger of North American interference in the political affairs of Latin America.

Ariel was initially motivated by the Spanish-American war. We know, by a confidence of Rodó's first biographer, Victor Pérez Petit, how affected the writer was by the outcome of the war. The son of a Catalan émigré, Rodó loved Spain deeply. But being a Latin American at heart, he wanted Cuba to be free from Spain. What he did not cherish seeing was Spain humiliated nor Cuba changing an old master for a new one. In spite of his political convictions, in writing *Ariel* he refused the temptation to write engaged literature, and did not reduce his book to the category of a political pamphlet. As Rodó explained later to Pérez Petit, he wanted to discuss it all, "*very truthfully, without any hatred, and with Tacitus' coldness*." He did it so well that one can find only two allusions to the United States' frightening power in the published text. As he himself pointed out in a short anonymous piece he wrote for an Uruguayan newspaper, the book was not to be read chiefly as an attack against the United States' influence on Latin America (*El Día*, January 23, 1900). His warning did not prevent his readers (to this day) from remembering *Ariel* only for its political stance against the mighty neighbor.

What Rodó wanted was to offer *Ariel* to Latin American youth as a model for the continuing education of its elite. Ariel became for him the symbol of everything that is superior and noble in man; Caliban was reduced to a representation of the base instincts of the brute. A sort of *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* dichotomy helped Rodó to distinguish and separate the two sides of man. But he did more than that: *Ariel* was to become also the symbol of the Latin America of the future, the Utopian model of its mature culture. In that vast blueprint, the United States had no place. Or, perhaps, it had only one: to serve as an example of what the Latin Americans had to avoid.

Only one of the six parts into which the pamphlet is divided was devoted to the evaluation of the cultural model offered by the United States. It placed its achievements in the balance and found them wanting. Rodó was then following a very important and profitable trend in French intellectual thought; the harsh criticism of everything North American. (It is still going on strongly, although now other nations compete successfully with France in that uplifting task.) From that point of view, the United States could easily be identified with Caliban. Rodó took the notion from a French source, one very close to him: Paul Groussac, a French émigré who had become Argentina's Dr. Johnson, who apparently adopted it in a speech he gave in Buenos Aires on May 2, 1898, condemning United States intervention in the affairs of Cuba. In that speech, Groussac spoke of the United States' "*unformed and calibanesque body*" [Rodó's *Obras Completas* ed. Emir Rodríguez Monegal (Madrid, Aguilar, 1967), p. 197]. The speech met with great success in Argentina and was commented on by none other than Rubén Dario in a newspaper article he wrote entitled "*The Triumph of Caliban*" [*El Tiempo*, May 20, 1898]. From both sources, Rodó borrowed the image of Caliban as a symbol of United States materialism. If Ariel represented in his pamphlet the genius of air, which Rodó wanted Latin American youth to emulate, Prospero became in turn not the harsh and tyrannical colonizer Mannoni would describe fifty years later, but the gentlest of teachers. In a way, his Prospero is closer to the reasonable ruler Césaire devised for the conclusion of his *Tempéte*, than to Shakespeare's rather bilious original. As a matter of fact, Rodó himself was to borrow the mask of Prospero for the title of a collection of his best essays, *El Mirador de Próspero* [Montevideo: José M. Serrano, 1913].

From the twenties and thirties on, the Latin American Marxists have attacked Rodó for his lack of foresight in predicting the shape of the new century. The fact that he died in May 1917 was not taken into account. Today we know that the twentieth century only began after World War I. But for the orthodox Marxist of the Stalinist variety Rodó was also guilty of not having paid enough attention to Karl Marx's theories. Rodó was, of course, aware of the existence of socialism, and even of its different branches. (A large group of Spanish and Italian immigrants who settled in the River Plate area were political émigrés; many were anarchists.) Although it is true that he does not mention socialism in *Ariel*, one can find enough references to it in his *Obras Completas* to ascertain Rodo's familiarity with the subject. Being a liberal, in the nineteenth-century sense of the word, he respected socialism but did not feel compelled to adopt it. He also knew more about North American interference in Latin American affairs than his two oblique references in *Ariel* may suggest. As a regular contributor to the political pages of several Uruguayan newspapers, he had the opportunity on more than one occasion to write about North American intervention in México (e.g., *El Telégrafo*, August 4, 1915) or to denounce its expanding imperialism in Cuba and Panama. His knowledge of the political situation in Latin America at the time was more complete than that which his critics have granted him. And to prove that he was not taken by his own lofty theories about Arielism, he even signed two of his political articles of 1912 with the pseudonym "Caliban" [*Obras Completas*, pp. 1973-1976]. In writing about the political miseries of Latin America he probably thought that pseudonym to be more suitable. Thus, in a way, it could be maintained that Rodó even anticipated the use of Caliban as a symbol of Our America.

Unfortunately, the majority of the critics who have written about Rodó's political ideas have only read *Ariel*; they have not looked at the many political articles and speeches he made between the publication of *Ariel* and his death in 1917. Fernández Retamar himself seems to have consulted only a few pages of the 1957 first edition of the *Obras Completas*, which he quotes as his main source for Rodó's text. (He seems unaware that there is a second, augmented edition, published in 1967.) Because of his faulty scholarship, Fernández Retamar's observations about Rodó are largely worthless.

One of the few critics to have placed the book in its correct context is Gordon Brotherston, in his excellent edition of *Ariel* for the Cambridge

University Press [1967]. Following the *Obras Completas* of 1957, but enlarging its sources, Brotherston has satisfactorily evaluated the mark left on Rodó's reading of *The Tempest* by two French authors of the nineteenth century. The first, Renan, is very well known, and often quoted by Rodó himself with praise. In his philosophical play *Caliban*, a continuation of *The Tempest* originally published in 1878, the French essayist attempts to foresee what would have happened if Caliban, instead of remaining on his island, had followed Prospero to Italy. (Césaire, now it seems clear, only reversed Renan's invention.) Renan had been a witness to the ravages of the Franco-Prussian War and had seen some of the consequences of the Commune uprising in Paris. He believed that if Caliban had gone to Europe, he would have become a demagogue and taken the power from Prospero. For the aristocratic Renan, it was obvious that Caliban was a symbol of the Parisian mob who attempted to transform France into a socialist republic.

The second French writer Rodó read in connection with this aspect of *Ariel*, was Fouillée. In his analysis of Renan's Caliban, Fouillée denounced his pessimism and aristocratism, and rescued political democracy from Renan's unfair caricature. Rodó borrowed Fouillée's arguments and also defended democracy. But in writing about Caliban from a cultural and utopian point of view, he could not resist the temptation to adapt some of Renan's images. He was also enormously helped by Groussac's identification of Caliban with the materialistic United States. From Rodó on, Caliban was condemned to represent in Latin American letters the worst aspects of democracy: materialism, utilitarianism.

All these aspects of Rodó's work seem to have escaped Fernández Retamar's attention. He does not take into account the real context of his texts and in his superficial and biased reading he goes as far as attributing to one of Rodó's critics some statements made by the Uruguayan essayist himself.(2) It is also very unfortunate that he borrowed the closing quotation of his book from one of the weakest of Che Guevara's speeches: to paint yourself black or mulatto, to disguise yourself as a proletarian, to step down to the people, these recommendations reveal the worst type of racism and aristocratism.

There is a third serious mistake in Fernández Retamar's approach. He quotes extensively from various Latin American and European sources but he fails to quote precisely from one that can afford some fresh insight on the matter.

More than twenty years before Mannoni began the rehabilitation of Caliban, the Brazilian poet and novelist, Oswald de Andrade, had published a "*Manifesto Antropófago*" (1928) [*Obras Completas*, VI (Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 1972), pp. 13-19], which dealt decisively with the delicate subject of cannibalism. Instead of pretending that cannibalism never existed among the natives of the Americas (as Fernández Retamar suggests rather coyly on page 16 of his pamphlet), de Andrade postulated cannibalism as a legitimate form of culture. In his funny and outrageous manifesto, he combined Freud's and Nietzsche's views on culture to produce a concept that was genuinely revolutionary. Taking as his starting point the notion of ritual cannibalism developed in *Totem and Taboo*, he maintained that culture is based on assimilation, and that the only true revolution is the one which produces a transformation of the world at all levels, not just the social or political. To liberate man it is necessary to free his eroticism as well as his view of science, his religion as well as his mind. A total revolution was the primary concern of Oswald de Andrade.

He was too advanced for his times, and perhaps, even for ours. Today, many specialists in Brazilian literature tend to minimize his truly poetic and revolutionary view of culture. However, in the last fifteen years or so, the best Brazilian critics have agreed on the importance of his work. Unfortunately for Fernández Retamar, his name has not reached Cuba. In daring to face the problem of cannibalism (and implicitly the image of Caliban) not with shame but with defiance, de Andrade succeeded in transposing the discussion of the true nature of Latin American culture from the rather solemn and Frenchified atmosphere of Rodó's *Ariel* (and Fernández Retamar's Caliban, *hélas*), to the lively context of a truly iconoclastic Latin American culture. Using a pun based on a famous line from Hamlet, in reference to the natives of Brazil, he proclaimed:

Tupi or not Tupi, that is the question.

Yes, the question is still: are we going to assume a Latin American identity just by aping the French intellectuals, or are we going to behave like the cannibals (cultural cannibals) we really are? By defending cannibalism and dating some of his texts from the day the Brazilian cannibals ate their first bishop (an effective if rash way of assimilating his religious virtues), by introducing the fruitful notion of carnival as a key to the transformation of society, Oswald de Andrade hit on the right note. And incidentally, as everyone who has read his text knows, he was writing long before Mikhail Bakhtin's theories on the carnavalization of literature had been imported into the Western world by Julia Kristeva, and into the Hispanic world by Severo Sarduy.(3) His manifesto and Bakhtin's book on Dostoevski came out in the same year, 1928. And the novel Oswald de Andrade was writing at the time, *Serafim Ponte Grande*, develops in fiction the same kind of carnivalesque vision his anthropophagic manifesto had advanced.

Published in 1933, the novel was so far ahead of its time that some thirty years had to pass before it was rediscovered by Brazilian criticism. At the same time Oswald de Andrade was writing and publishing his texts, a friend and namesake, Mario de Andrade, had completed another novel, *Macunaíma*, which came out in 1928 and dealt with the subject of cannibalism in the most comic way.

In both Mario and Oswald de Andrade, Latin America found the most eloquent defenders of that much maligned hero, the cannibal, or to call him by his proper name: Caliban. It was a defense that did not need any European theories to support it and was based on the comic spirit of Latin American culture. It is a pity that their true image of Caliban took so long to come in contact with the stiff, self-conscious and finally inauthentic one produced by these black-painted Spanish American followers of Europe.

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(1) For a different reading of this subject, see Marta E. Sánchez, "*Caliban: The New Latin-American Protagonist of The Tempest*," in *Diacritics*, 6, no. 1 (1976), pp. 54-61.

(2) Compare the truncated quotation Fernández Retamar offers of p. 192 of Rodó's *Obras Completas* with the complete text.

(3) The Cuban writer Severo Sarduy was the first to introduce Bakhtin's theories into Hispanic letters. Cf. "*El barroco y el neobarroco*" in *América Latina en su literatura*, ed. César Fernández Moreno [México: UNESCO & Siglo XXI, 1972]. In a paper presented at Brussels entitled "*La parodie, le grotesque et le carnavalesque: Quelques conceptions du personnage dans le roman latino-américain*" Jean Franco forgets to mention Sarduy's pionner article. Her forgetfulness also extends to Julia Kristeva and Mikhail Bakhtin. Cf. *Idéologies, littérature et société en Amérique Latine* [Bruxelles, Université de Bruxelles, 1975], pp. 57-66.