

Caliban Friday: Sublimating Labour in Colonial Books and Bodies

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Abstract

The stories of Prospero and Crusoe bear many resemblances, yet Caliban and Friday appear to embody distinct imaginative strategies for representing the colonised subject. For one, Caliban praises language only because it allows him to curse. For Prospero, Caliban is a ‘dull thing’, which suggests that Prospero does not qualify Caliban’s cursing as proper speech. If cursing ties language to bodily energies and drives, it desublimates language, provided that cursing is recognised as articulate. This invites the question of the articulation of the bodily in colonial writing, as when the bodily expression is censored or misinterpreted (as in the case of Caliban’s deformed body). Friday, a Black Carib and a cannibal, on the other hand, is according to Crusoe a ‘handsome Fellow, perfectly well-made’ and a ‘faithful, loving, sincere Servant’ who ‘worked very willingly’ without any cursing. If there are some signs of aggression in Friday, Crusoe helps him to sublimate his aggressive instincts (and his cannibalism) into activities more useful than idle cursing. Nevertheless, it is actually Friday who is ‘dull’ in J. M. Coetzee’s retelling of the story, which raises a number of questions with respect to Caliban/Friday, including those concerning muteness and mutilation, labour and discipline, as well as censorship and sublimation.

Keywords: Caliban; Friday; the body; colonial discourse; sublimation; labour; discipline

Applying a Marxist perspective to Michel Foucault’s analysis of the (early) modern techniques of power and discipline, Silvia Federici, in *Caliban and the Witch* (2009), argues that the process of the ‘disciplining of the body’ was one of the main preconditions for the ‘capitalist development’ that ‘consisted of an attempt by state and church to transform the individual’s powers into labor-power’ (133). The body,

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increasingly seen by the emerging bourgeois ideologies as a seat for unruly passions and lewd desires contributing to the wasteful ‘dissipation of one’s vital energies’, becomes an object of disciplinary techniques supported by a theology that sought to eliminate those dangerously carnal tendencies and thus ‘to remold the subordinate classes in conformity with the needs of the developing capitalist economy’ (Federici 2009: 135). Hence, the early modern battle against the rule of the flesh proves fundamental in producing ‘the worker’ or ‘the labourer’ as well-disciplined subjects that are formally free (i.e. formally not enslaved), but who otherwise have no control over the sphere of work: ‘By transforming labor into commodity, capitalism causes workers to submit their activity to an external order, over which they have no control and with which they cannot identify’ (Federici 2009: 135). In the period of ‘primitive accumulation’ (the term applied by Marx to the creation, in the early modern period, of the conditions necessary for the emergence of capitalism), slavery and diverse forms of enforced/unfree labour, together with wide-ranging disciplining efforts, including the intensification of penalties for vagabonds, the formation of modern prison system and the multiplication of executions for theft and other crimes against property, sought to ‘eradicate in the proletariat any form of behavior not conducive to the imposition of a stricter work-discipline’ (Federici 2009: 136). For Federici, Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* (1612) speaks allegorically of that intense class struggle over the powers of the human body as the play ‘combines the celestial spirituality of Ariel and the brutish materiality of the Caliban’ (2009: 134). Caliban, that ‘thing of darkness’ (Shakespeare 1984: V:1, 130), illustrates the rebellious body which, as Francis Barker puts it, will be claimed by the productive powers of modern, instrumental reason: ‘Disinherited and separated, the body is traduced as a rootless thing of madness and scandal; and then finally, in its object-aspect, it is pressed into service’ (1984: 67). Comparing the figures of Caliban and Friday as colonised bodies/subjects, I focus on how those figures are (un)able to interact with their Masters and articulate their protest, thus pointing to some wider cultural shifts in the history of colonial domination and slavery.

Important for Federici is also the figure of the witch, Sycorax, Caliban’s mother in *The Tempest*, for she argues that the early modern witch-hunts formed a systematic campaign to subdue women and exert control over reproduction and female sexuality (a process parallel to the disciplining of the [male] worker’s body), and as such were transplanted

to the colonies, with women in Andes, Mexico, and Peru often standing accused of witchcraft:

the Andean women arrested, mostly old and poor, were accused of the same crimes with which women were being charged in the European witch trials: pacts and copulation with the devil, prescribing herbal remedies, using ointments, flying through the air, making wax images [...] From then on, the preoccupation with devil-worshipping would migrate to the developing slave plantations of Brazil, the Caribbean, and North America where (starting with King Philip's Wars), the English settlers justified their massacres of the native American Indians by labelling them as servants of the devil. (Federici 2009: 231–235)

Indigenous women were among the last victims of the intense misogyny brought by what Federici calls 'the Great Witch-Hunt': 'It is significant, in this context, that the Salem trials were sparked by the divinations of a West Indian slave, Tituba, who was among the first to be arrested, and that the last execution of a witch, in an English-speaking territory, was that of a black slave, Sarah Bassett, killed in Bermuda in 1730' (2009: 237). The supposedly darkly magical powers of the female witch constitute, in Shakespeare's play, the reverse of 'the special powers and the learning of the mage Prospero': 'his Art, being the art of supernatural virtue which belongs to the redeemed world of civility and learning, is the antithesis of the black magic of Sycorax' (Kermode 1984: xli). Consequently, as Kermode notes in his introduction to the Arden edition of the play,

Caliban's birth, as Prospero insists, was inhuman; he was 'a born devil' [...] the product of sexual union between a witch and an incubus, and this would account for his deformity, whether the devil-lover was Setebos (all pagan gods were classified as devils) or, as W. C. Curry infers, some aquatic demon. (1984: xl)¹

¹ Kermode discusses the sources of colonial imagery in *The Tempest*, noting that Shakespeare 'had read widely in the voyagers' but highlighting three documents as particularly relevant: Sylvester Jourdain's *Discovery of Bermudas* (1610), the Council of Virginia's *True Declaration of the state of the Colonie in Virginia* (1610), and 'a letter by William Strachey, known as the *True Reportory of the Wreck*, dated 15 July 1610', a text that offers an account of 'the shipwreck of the *Sea-Venture* in the Bermudas in 1609' (Kermode 1984: xxvi, Hulme 1986: 89–90). The prominent early modern texts about cannibals are also discussed by Iwona Krupecka in her recent study (2021: 41–89). I want to thank Professor

Caliban's body: Eloquence and enslavement

Caliban's body is constructed as deformed because his mother is perceived as a witch, so that Caliban's enslavement is justified partly on the grounds of the missionary zeal to abolish the worship of the devil. In his essay 'Learning to Curse' (1992), Stephen Greenblatt cites Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo* (1511–1530), which speaks of Indigenous peoples as 'naked and simple people' who might be reformed provided they abandon their native tongue and learn the language of the colonists: 'these naked and simple people, doo soone recuae the customes of owre Religion, and by conuersation with owre men, shake of theyr fierce and natiue barbarousnes' (quoted after Greenblatt 1992: 17). Importantly, however, though the Indigenous peoples and their bodies were often described as primitive and naked, such 'nakedness' was an ideological costume, formed discursively to facilitate the efforts aimed at instructing these people conceived as *tabula rasa* and thus seen as 'ready to take the imprint of European civilization' (Greenblatt 1992: 17). Caliban's body, in other words, is deformed not by his purportedly 'inhuman' birth, but by the very language of colonists that disparages the humanity of the colonised peoples as well as their languages; some seventeenth-century writers argued that 'Satan had helped the Indians to invent new tongues, thus impeding the labor of Christian missionaries' (Greenblatt 1992: 18). Native bodies, much like native languages, are seen as the work of the devil, so that proper linguistic education provides an essential means for their effective conversion to civilisation; indeed, it was a 'test' for their humanity to see whether 'they had been able to master a language that "men" could understand' (Greenblatt 1992: 18).

For the Renaissance world, what lifts man from the degradation of the 'savage, bestial existence' is *eloquence*, as Greenblatt argues following the writings of Andrea Ugo of Sienna, Andrea Brenta of Padua, and George Puttenham, among others, who often followed the earlier authorities on the subject, including Cicero, Isocrates, and Quintilian. Even if the Indigenous *tongues* (in both senses of the word) were acknowledged to serve the Native peoples for effective communication, they apparently lacked the capacity for eloquence, as the missionaries often complained of the 'enormous cultural gap' and the resulting 'near impossibility of

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translating concepts like conversion, Incarnation, or the Trinity into native speech' (Greenblatt 1992: 23). Hence, if language separates men from beasts as well as from the brutish materiality of their own bodies, it is apparently not any language, or any use of language, that secures such a distinction, for only eloquence—a spirited, learned and artful use of language—allows for a claim to humanity. *The Tempest* forcefully reflects such concerns by orchestrating an encounter between 'a European whose entire source of power is his library and a savage who had no speech at all before the European's arrival' (Greenblatt 1992: 23). This explains the highly ambivalent status of Caliban's humanity within the sustained evasiveness of Shakespearean discourse, documented concisely by Peter Hulme in his study *Colonial Encounters* (1986):

Caliban is, to give a sample of these descriptions, 'a strange fish!' (II. ii); 'Legg'd like a man! and his fins like arms!' (II. ii); 'no fish' (II. ii); 'some monster of the isle with four legs' (II. ii); 'a plain fish' (V. i.); and a 'mis-shapen knave' (V. i). He is also, at different times, a man and not a man according to Miranda's calculations. (107)

Caliban's beast-like body seems to account for his limited linguistic abilities, though perhaps it should be seen more accurately as a device reflecting Shakespeare's unwillingness to grant such abilities to Indigenous peoples. As Hulme speculates, Caliban's curiously anomalous body testifies to the shortcomings of Shakespeare's language: 'The difficulty in visualizing Caliban cannot be put down to a failure of clarity in the text. Caliban, as a compromise formation, can exist only within discourse' (1986: 108). There is no Caliban outside discourse, or outside the text of European imagination baffled by the cultural and linguistic difference, remaining at a loss in how to tackle the challenges of untranslatability except by resorting to the images of troubling bodily monstrosity. Somewhat paradoxically, what Shakespeare successfully and eloquently dramatises in his language is the very failure of that language to translate and to communicate eloquently with the Other. Perhaps today we would need to see, on stage or on screen, a rather handsome, undeformed Caliban, to notice better the deformities of Shakespeare's eloquence?

In a much-discussed retort to Miranda's accusation (but attributed to Prospero by some editors) that without her (his) aid Caliban 'wouldst gabble like / A thing most brutish' (Shakespeare 1984: I:2, 32), the slave exclaims: 'You taught me language; and my profit on't / Is, I know how

to curse. The red plague rid you / For learning me your language' (Shakespeare 1984: I:2, 33). Though Caliban manages to learn Prospero's and Miranda's language, the only profit he is able to find in such instruction is the ability to curse. While his blunt reply may be taken as 'self-indictment' whereby Caliban admits to his failure to make good use of 'the gift of language', Greenblatt notes that the words strike us with their 'devastating justness. Ugly, rude, savage, Caliban nevertheless achieves for an instant an absolute if intolerably bitter moral victory' (1992: 25). Unlike eloquence, cursing may appear crude and infantile, yet Caliban's 'moral victory' eschews the concerns of merely proper articulation, so that the 'justness' of his reaction defends itself without eloquence, so to speak, since eloquence belongs to Prospero—the master—and serves him to manipulate others and justify his own actions. What Octavio Mannoni identifies as the 'Prospero complex' can briefly be described as an infantile regression of the father figure in the colonial context: it

draws from the inside, as it were, a picture of the paternalist colonial, with his pride, his neurotic impatience, and his desire to dominate, at the same time portrays the racist whose daughter has suffered an attempted rape at the hands of an inferior being. (1956:110)

Mannoni adds that in the play itself 'the attempt is imaginary' but 'the sexual aspect of racialism plays a large part in the unconscious' (1956: 110). Prospero imprisons and enslaves Caliban as a punishment for an attempted (but perhaps merely imagined) rape of his daughter, Miranda, though, as Mannoni notes, there is more than a tint of irrationality in such a justification for enslavement:

the argument: you tried to violate Miranda, therefore you shall chop wood, belongs to a nonrational mode of thinking [...] it is primarily a justification of hatred on grounds of sexual guilt, and it is at the root of colonial racialism [...] The 'inferior being' always serves as scapegoat; our own evil intentions can be projected on to him. This applies especially to incestuous intentions; Miranda is the only woman on the island, and Prospero and Caliban the only men. (1956: 106)

Applying psychoanalytic concepts to colonial relations, Mannoni is able to read the infantilisation of Caliban as a projection of the colonialist's guilt and hence as a revenge on the Other for the failure to secure

domination or obtain sexual satisfaction.² The humiliation of Caliban allows Prospero, a former Duke of Milan, to recuperate his position as a paternal figure, a position that requires, for its moral validation, the figure of an unruly child. Prospero's books, the source of his power and the object of his utmost care, cost him his dukedom, as he neglected the 'worldly ends' and dedicated himself entirely to his secret studies. Though betrayed and overthrown by his own brother, Prospero describes their brotherly relations, interestingly, through a comparison to father-son relations: 'my trust, / Like a good parent, did beget of him / A falsehood in its contrary' (Shakespeare 1984: I:2, 15). A father who is too kind or excessively permissive risks being deposed by a vicious son; hence, with respect to Caliban, Prospero is determined to replace kindness with threats of harm and cruelty: 'Thou most lying slave, / Whom stripes may move, not kindness!' (Shakespeare 1984: I:2, 32). As Federici notes, 'Prospero's exploitative management of Caliban prefigures the role of the future plantation master, who will spare no torture nor torment to force his subjects to work' (2009: 155). For Mannoni, while the economic exploitation was the basis for colonialism, the process demanded also a certain abusive psychic economy of subordination and inferiority, thus producing an ideological as well as libidinal displacement through which the cruelty could be justified and the guilt erased.

For Prospero, and perhaps for Shakespeare as well, language fails to elevate Caliban above his beastly nature. For Greenblatt, this failure actually speaks volumes of a certain bitter moral victory on the part of Caliban, who continues to curse his doleful fate and his master. As Federici reminds us, Caliban has become a symbolic figure of the colonised/oppressed subject for many Latin American social and revolutionary movements (2009: 239). Though presented by Shakespeare as seemingly inarticulate, Caliban actually proves to be something of a polyglot. Edward Said notes that it is Caliban rather than Ariel that has become 'the main symbol of hybridity,' as in Aimé Césaire's influential play *Une Tempête, d'Après La Tempête de Shakespeare* (1969), or as a *mestizo* figure praised by the Cuban writer Roberto Fernández Retamar (Said 1994: 212–213). According to Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker,

² Mannoni's arguments and Frantz Fanon's engagement and polemic with Mannoni are briefly discussed by Jonathan Goldberg (2004: 17–20), who underscores the critique of the colonialist fantasy of interracial rape in both Mannoni and Fanon (Goldberg 2004: 20).

‘Caliban himself embodies African, Native American, Irish, and English cultural elements’ (2002: 27) and stands as a symbol for the multilingual ‘motley crowd’ or the undisciplined “*lumpen*” proletariat (from the German word for “rags”) of the early modern period—that is, for all the rugged peoples, on both sides of the Atlantic, resenting exploitation, cursing their masters and speaking in ‘slang, cant, jargon, and pidgin’ (Linebaugh and Rediker 2002: 333).³

Friday’s docile body

Mannoni links the figure of Prospero with the figure of Crusoe inasmuch as they both testify to the colonialist’s infantile dream of a land without men, but one populated with inferior ‘semi-human’ creatures on whom the colonialist may project his own transgressive desires, thus becoming both repulsed by and fascinated with their ‘exotic’, disturbing presence. Friday, however, resembles in Mannoni’s view not the defiant Caliban but the more yielding and ‘spiritual’ Ariel: ‘The figure of Friday is no more fully portrayed than that of Ariel, nor, on the whole, is he more fully sexed. This repression of sexuality brings us back again to the world of childhood fantasies’ (1956: 102). In a telling contrast with Caliban, whose sexuality and sexual appetite are at least alluded to by Shakespeare, Defoe’s Friday remains innocent, at least in terms of sexuality. As Hulme observes, perhaps corroborating Mannoni’s observation that the characters of Miranda, Ariel, and Friday have no personalities ‘so long as they remain submissive’ (Mannoni 1956: 108), Defoe’s novel is rarely read as being primarily about Caribs/Caribbeans or cannibals, for the figure of Friday tends to somehow recede into the background:

³ In Federici’s view, Shakespeare’s play testifies to the perceived threat of the alliance between the rebel bodies: ‘the alliances between whites, blacks, and aboriginal peoples, and the fear of such unity in the European ruling class’ imagination, at home and on the plantations, [was] constantly present. Shakespeare gave voice to it [...] where he pictured the conspiracy organised by Caliban, the native rebel, son of a witch, and by Trinculo and Stephano, the ocean-going European proletarians, suggesting the possibility of a fatal alliance of the oppressed [...]. In *The Tempest* the conspiracy ends ignominiously, with the European proletarians demonstrating to be nothing better than petty thieves and drunkards, and with Caliban begging forgiveness from his colonial master’ (2009: 106).

52 Przemysław Uściński

Crusoe's island is situated by the text in the estuary of the Orinoco, within sight of Trinidad; and the Amerindians that feature in the book, including Friday, are all referred to as Caribs. Yet, oddly, despite this degree of geographical specificity, *Robinson Crusoe* is not usually seen as in any significant sense 'a Caribbean book'. (Hulme 1986: 176)

Both Federici and Hulme underscore the South American contexts of *The Tempest*, while Hulme attempts to focus on the Caribbean elements in Defoe's novel. Unlike Caliban, however, Friday cannot become a figure of resistance, his body being discursively shaped by Defoe, under the shifting disciplinary patterns, into what Foucault would identify as a 'docile body', which was to replace the more unruly bodies of the early modern slaves and proletarians:

in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the disciplines became general formulas of domination. They were different from slavery because they were not based on a relation of appropriation of bodies; indeed, the elegance of the discipline lay in the fact that it could dispense with this costly and violent relation by obtaining effects of utility at least as great. (Foucault 1984: 181)

Friday, a Carib and a cannibal, is according to Crusoe 'a comely handsome Fellow, perfectly well-made' and a 'faithful, loving, sincere Servant' who 'worked very willingly' without any cursing (Defoe 1994: 148–151). Crusoe is also careful to insist on the racial features of Friday's body:

He had a very good Countenance, not a fierce and surly Aspect, but seemed to have something very manly in his Face; and yet he had all the sweetness and softness of a *European* in his Countenance, too, especially when he smil'd. His Hair was long and black, not curl'd like Wool; his Forehead very high and large; and a great Vivacity and sparkling Sharpness in his Eyes. The Colour of his Skin was not quite black, but very tawny; and yet not an ugly, yellow, nauseous tawny, as the *Brazilians* and *Virginians*, and other Natives of *America* are, but of a bright kind of a dun olive Colour, that had in it something very agreeable, tho' not very easy to describe. His Face was round and plump; his Nose small, not flat, like the Negroes; a very good Mouth, thin Lips, and his fine Teeth well set, and as white as Ivory. (Defoe 1994: 148–149)

Interestingly, the description closely parallels the portrayal of Prince Oroonoko in Aphra Behn's novel *Oroonoko, or The Royal Slave: A True History* (1688), including the remarks on prince's nose ('rising and *Roman*, instead of *African* and flat'), his lips ('finest shap'd'—'far from those great turn'd Lips, which are so natural to the rest of the *Negroes*') and his other 'agreeable and handsome' features (Behn 1997: 13–14). As

Edna L. Steevens observes: ‘Though in some respects Oroonoko was a kind of Negro *précieux*, he and his beloved Imoinda represent what the sentimentalists and the primitivists conceived as the perfect model of the noble aborigine’ (1973: 93). Clearly, however, the narrator’s intention to represent the Prince not as a savage but as a noble aristocrat required a somewhat ‘Europeanised’ construction of his body (Uściński 2017: 47). The shift in representation from the avowed brutality of Caliban to the figure of a ‘noble aborigine’ (perhaps even a ‘noble savage’) as textually embodied by Oroonoko and Friday corresponds with what Lennard J. Davis sees as the gradual shift towards the ‘reliance on covert rather than overt compulsion’ within colonial expansionism: while ‘early explorers talk overtly of brute force’, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries ‘colonizing was seen not strictly as a business venture but more as a humanizing of the world’ so that ‘the primacy of ideology and language in changing and refashioning terrains into locations became more central’ (Davis 2014: 73).

Obliterating violence: Solitude and sublimation

What Peter Hulme and Francis Barker have identified in their important essay on Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* as ‘Prospero’s disavowal’ points to an ideological erasure of his act of colonial usurpation through the ‘denial of dispossession with retrospective justification for it [...] [which] is the characteristic trope by which European colonial regimes articulated their authority over land to which they could have no conceivable legitimate claim’ (2002: 203). Such *disavowal* of violence and usurpation functions mostly through the avowedly rational, economic, but also missionary and ‘humanistic’, motivations. The powers of reason, civilisation, and technology, much like Prospero’s learning and his magic, become a form of sublimation of violence, its reduction and redirection into the mere efficiency of the colonial *machine*, whereas *animalistic* brutality becomes ascribed to Caliban—that is, to the colonised. If sublimation is identified by Sigmund Freud early on as a ‘process [which] plays a part in the development of the individual and we would place its beginning in the period of sexual latency of childhood’ (1995: 262), then sublimation is linked with both the juvenile deferral of sexual activity and the accomplishment of adulthood through a redirection of instinctual energies to avoid their repression: ‘sublimation is a way out, a way by which those demands [of the super-ego] can be met *without* involving repression’

(1995: 557). Sublimation as a mechanism for managing psychic energy and dispensing with excessive tensions correlates with narcissism and with the avoidance of shame and disgust: ‘the ego, by sublimating some of the libido for itself and its purposes, assists the id in its work of mastering the tensions’ (Freud 1995: 650).⁴ For Crusoe, it seems, such redirection is necessary in the case of Friday, though not in the sphere of sexuality as much as in the way Friday used to feed himself:

I thought that, in order to bring *Friday* off from his horrid way of feeding, and from the Relish of a Cannibal’s Stomach, I ought to let him taste other Flesh; so I took him out with me one Morning to the Woods. I went, indeed, intending to kill a Kid out of my own Flock; and bring it home and dress it; but as I was going I saw a She Goat lying down in the Shade, and two young Kids sitting by her. I catch’d hold of *Friday*. Hold, says I, stand still; and made Signs to him not to stir: immediately I presented my Piece, shot, and kill’d one of the Kids. The poor Creature, who had at a Distance, indeed, seen me kill the Savage, his Enemy, but did not know, nor could imagine how it was done, was sensibly surpris’d, trembled, and shook, and look’d so amaz’d that I thought he would have sunk down [...] he came and kneel’d down to me, and embracing my Knees, said a great many Things I did not understand; but I could easily see the meaning was to pray me not to kill him. (Defoe 1994: 152)

Christopher F. Loar argues that it was ‘Crusoe’s power to dispense violence, rather than cultural authority or friendship, [that] has started Friday down the path towards civility and virtue’ (2006–7: 1). Though a moment later Crusoe prepares ‘some very good Broth’ and a roasted kid, which Friday is said to like so much that he decides he ‘would never eat Man’s flesh any more’ (Defoe 1994: 154), several paragraphs earlier the readers learn that Crusoe displayed ‘much Abhorrence’ at the idea of cannibalism and ‘by some Means’ he threatened Friday should he ever attempt it: ‘I had by some Means let him know, that I would kill him if he offer’d it’ (Defoe 1994: 150). While Crusoe aims to tempt Friday with the exquisite taste of ‘other Flesh’ by preparing broth and roasted kid, it cannot

⁴ In the 1923 essay ‘The Ego and the Id’ Freud would actually speculate ‘whether all sublimation does not take place through the mediation of the ego, which begins by changing sexual object-libido into narcissistic libido and then, perhaps, goes on to give it another aim’ (1995: 639). Freud sees narcissism as a way to confine and manage libido—libido being ‘the force that introduces disturbances into the process of life’ (1995: 650)—so that for him narcissism stands closer to ‘death instincts’ and to the ‘pleasure principle’, which both, at this stage of Freud’s work, are seen as forces of control and stability that oppose libidinal disturbances. Through narcissistic sublimation, in short, Eros uncannily changes into Thánatos.

be made clear to what extent it was actually the awe-inspiring power (and eloquence) of Crusoe's gun that induced Friday to forsake his cannibalism and comply with Crusoe's culinary ways.

While Barker and Hulme speak of 'Prospero's disavowal', Loar talks of 'Crusoe's disavowal of his own violence'—adding that Crusoe's narrative is markedly 'unwilling to acknowledge or affirm that violence, instead proffering fantasies about voluntary association and friendship' (2002: 4). Freud distinguishes between repression and sublimation, seeing in the latter the way to minimise tension and avoid conflict, much in a way that Foucault sees in modern disciplinary techniques a way to avoid direct confrontation and secure consent and compliance. The myth of Crusoe as a non-violent 'Master' and Friday as a 'sincere Servant' obliterates colonial violence, suggesting that peaceful education might suffice in fostering cultural hierarchies and in reforming/sublimating the uncivilised ways of the cannibal/savage. As Davis describes the process, it is the reverence for Crusoe's gun stemming from the 'incomprehension of the cannibals' which makes Friday into a willing servant, so that, though the narrative downplays the fact, it is the constant threat of violence that 'sets the stage for Crusoe's assertion of the superiority of English—both as a language and as a culture' (2014: 82).

For Mannoni, sublimation is crucial to the colonialist endeavour and to the colonialist's mind precisely as a narcissistic mechanism of excluding otherness and asserting dominance: 'What the colonial in common with Prospero lacks, is awareness of the world of Others, a world in which Others have to be respected' (1956: 108). This rejection of the Other, Mannoni adds, 'is combined with an urge to dominate, an urge which is infantile in origin and which social adaptation has failed to discipline' (1956: 108). Such a colonialist sublimation thus amounts to, for Mannoni, also a certain failure of sublimation, or at least certain hypocrisy of the avowed idealisation of the urges that prove 'infantile' and which actually defy 'social adaptation'. Leopold Damrosch has suggested that, since in the later seventeenth century Puritans tended to be perceived as social outsiders represented either as 'religious pilgrims' or 'picaresque wayfarers'—as either 'saints or rogues'—the island in Defoe's narrative may be read as 'a debtor's prison' that 'allegorizes the solitude of the soul needed for repentance and conversion' (1994: 375–376). Solitude is the Puritan antidote for the sinful ways of society, and the appearance of Friday in Defoe's narrative suggests that Crusoe's isolation has rendered

him finally ready for a gradual reintroduction into society. While the need for solitude may have suggested the very opposite of a narcissistic tendency for the Puritans, Crusoe underscores that it was his isolation that allowed him to see himself and the island in a new way and to actually reverse the relationship between the two: from a hostile environment populated with cannibals and threatening Crusoe's very existence, the island gradually becomes a space for the exercise of Crusoe's masterly powers and for his self-disciplined labour that is needed to transform the wild terrain into a cultivated location. The same reversal occurs with Friday, whom Crusoe undertakes to transform from a cannibal into 'a good Christian':

in this solitary Life which I had been confin'd to, I had not only been moved my self to look up to Heaven... but was now to be made an Instrument under Providence to save the life; and *for ought I knew*, the Soul of a poor Savage, and bring him to the true Knowledge of Religion. (Defoe 1994: 159)

Though Crusoe stresses his humility, he never questions the hierarchy he imposes between himself and 'the poor wild Wretch', and he does admit to 'a secret Joy' that he felt when considering his mission (Defoe 1994: 159). Since the colonialist never actually sees the Other as such, as Mannoni argues, the Other becomes for him merely an instrument for his own mission, guided by what Mannoni terms 'the Prospero complex' and by which he means the assertion of dominance in fear of dependence, relationality and vulnerability, as it is those that Crusoe's Puritan individualism seeks to repress by investing in a myth of self-reliance and self-mastery. As Rebecca Reaver-Hightower sees it, 'cannibal encounters symbolize the imperial anxiety of loss of control of the colonies to indigenous inhabitants, and pirate encounters symbolize loss of control of colonies to a competing colonizer', so that by repelling both cannibal and pirate, Crusoe reenacts 'a comforting myth' of colonial control (94). Such a myth seems to obliterate the possibility that Crusoe-the-master actually depends on Friday, much like the capitalist depends on the workers, as he is not a self-made, solitary hero. Such occlusion of dependence through usurpation of superiority is likewise crucial to 'Prospero's self-installation as ruler and his acquisition, through Caliban's enslavement, of the means of supplying the food and labour on which he and Miranda are completely dependent' (Barker and Hulme 2002: 203).

Solitude and sublimation seem to go hand in hand, so that imprisonment, or solitary confinement, can thus be actually defined as work, or perhaps even as a prototype of the modern conception of self-disciplined work, as Dario Melossi and Massimo Pavarini argue in their important book, *The Prison and the Factory* (first published in 1981):

The performance of subordinated work (*labour, travail*, etc.) is painful effort—suffering, ‘punishment’—for the worker. The prison sentence, as the content of retribution modelled on the factory, is essentially work. If subordinated work is thus compulsion, prison punishment is the ‘highest level’ (the terminal and ideal point) of compulsion. Here we have the main ideological function of the penitentiary: the emerging hypothesis of prison as a world in which the material situation of the subjected (prisoner) is always and in every way ‘inferior’ to that of the lowest worker. (2018: 253)

If the factory has been historically related to prison (at least from the Elizabethan workhouse onwards), it was ideologically necessary that *work* provided, at least in theory, a minimally better lot than imprisonment or death. As I have already signalled, Friday is constructed in Defoe’s text as an obedient worker rather than a defiant slave, so that Defoe’s narrative may be said to advertise the benefits of a laborious existence as well as offering what Tadeusz Rachwał terms a ‘naturalisation of labour’:

Friday, unlike the cannibals left behind, works for Crusoe [...] Friday’s work is quite evidently a matter of survival in Defoe’s story, a way of ‘making a living’ through the display of his ability to accept and embrace the idea of alienated labour as if it was natural. (Rachwał 2010: 401)

It is only natural that a ‘savage’ should work for his Christian master, and that he should perform his work the more willingly the more he is enlightened by the Christian doctrine and the wisdom inherent to the English language, in which Crusoe’s name, as he introduces himself to Friday, is actually ‘Master’. The sublimation of the lower instincts (symbolised in the novel by cannibalism) takes place through Friday’s compliance with Crusoe’s mastery, who first needs to master himself and this self-restraint allows him to refrain from killing Friday and to instead transform him, patiently and systematically, into a worker: ‘Crusoe’s passionate urge to massacre Caribs is sublimated into a desire to convert and civilize the savage; this desire eventually finds its object in Friday’ but ‘Friday’s status as a slave, albeit a “voluntary” one, clouds the relationship’ (Loar 2006–7: 15). If their work is done together, it is never

cooperatively but only under a master-servant relation (Crusoe typically simply ‘orders’ or ‘bids’ Friday to perform tasks), a relation ‘in which alienated labour [...] is naturalised as the condition of being human’ (Rachwał 2010: 401).

While working for another is still perceived primarily as a punishment imposed on the defeated in *The Tempest*, it becomes a matter of survival and a matter of civilised and civilising relations in *Robinson Crusoe*. It still is a relation of mastery, though the relation between the master and the man now connotes mutual benefit and perhaps even friendship (though Crusoe never changes his name from ‘Master’ to ‘Friend’). The relation of mastery is, in other words, the relation of instruction, education and cultivation; a relation that reproduces order and cultivates tradition, even if it requires a certain cultivation of ignorance as well, as Hulme notices, not without certain irony: though ‘Defoe was a novelist and not an ethnographer’, it is still surprising that he

centred the two key episodes in Friday’s education on precisely the two aspects of Carib technology, the barbecue and the canoe, that Europe learned from the Caribbean [...]. The ‘ignorance’ of the savage Caribs is produced by the text of *Robinson Crusoe*. (1986: 210)

If working for another is to be no longer perceived as a degradation or punishment, it must be discursively reshaped into an edifying, rewarding kind of activity, though the idea that rewards motivate better than punishments may prove actually quite manipulative, for instance in the way it has been implemented in the modern penal system, including by combining solitary confinement with ‘communal work’ (to make prisoners work more willingly) and by commuting harsher prison sentences that could be ‘reduced by up to one quarter for good behaviour’ (Melossi and Pavarini 2018: 179).

Hence, Friday’s ‘docile’ body is produced discursively through the reference to the somewhat narcissistic use of polite instruction behind which, however, there stands an ominous and perennial threat of violence. Friday willingly, as if naturally, accepts Crusoe’s mastery, but this act of volition is rendered possible as well as immediately problematic—much like the conditions of liberty in the British liberal philosophy of the Enlightenment period—by the appeal to force:

if the shadow of violence hangs over voluntary associations of commerce, contract, and gratitude, it is no longer clear that Great Britain itself is ‘free.’ The Revolution of

1688—officially anything but a conquest, but visibly maintaining itself by violently suppressing dissent—may not be so readily distinguished from Crusoe’s ambiguous absolutism. (Loar 2006–7: 20)

Though such political parallels are worth examining, Crusoe’s narrative may also be read as the attempt to reconfigure the representation of work through Friday’s body, whom Loar identifies as the figure of a “voluntary” slave’ (2006–7: 15), hence a somewhat paradoxical figure that may be said to encapsulate the contemporaneous ideological shifts and tensions around the issue of work, or specifically ‘alienated labour’ (waged, hired labour) seen as distinct from slavery. As a ‘voluntary’ slave, Friday understands the necessity of labour, thus making the use of terror superfluous, which corresponds to a broad political shift towards what Federici identifies as a Cartesian model of self-governance, as opposed to the Hobbesian model of state control:

the Cartesian model expressed already active tendency to democratize the mechanisms of social discipline by attributing to the individual will that function of command which, in the Hobbesian model, is solely in the hands of the state. As many critics of Hobbes maintained, the foundation of public discipline must be rooted in the hearts of men. (Federici 2009: 150)

The sense of duty and self-discipline should not be *imposed* by the state, or the absolutist ruler like Crusoe, but, in order to be effective, must be produced as if ‘freely’ within the very body and mind of the social subject. Friday, coming to tears, spontaneously praises Crusoe’s powers of gentle instruction:

You do great deal much good, says he, you teach wild Mans be good sober tame Mans; you tell them know God, pray God, and live new Life [...]. This he spoke so earnestly, that I saw Tears stand in his Eyes. (Defoe 1994: 163–164)

Though Friday is not paid wages for his work by Crusoe, so that he is not formally a waged labourer, neither is he exactly a slave, for he appreciates the rewards and the instruction that come with willing, self-disciplined work. Hence, though it may be said that ‘Friday’s voluntary subjection ideologically naturalises colonial slavery’ (Gregg 2016: 152), and that it manifests the cultural trope of the ‘grateful slave’ as examined by George Bouloukos (2008: 75–94), his willingness to work under Crusoe’s supervision may also be read as signalling ‘a triumph of *homo economicus* over wildness and savagery’ (Rachwał 2010: 400–401). Appreciating

Crusoe's teaching, Friday wants to become a 'good sober tame' subject of Crusoe's island, which he (Crusoe) actually defines as *his* land, his *property*: 'the whole Country was my own meer Property; so that I had an undoubted Right of Dominion' (Defoe 1994: 174). Denied the luxury of owning property, the propertyless Friday cannot call the island as Crusoe does—'My island' (Defoe 1994: 174)—and instead accepts Crusoe as a master who asserts his dominion over the island not with magic, as Prospero did, but with his gun and his Christianity. Thus, if Caliban remains a prisoner and recognises his deprivation ('This island's mine, by Sycorax my mother, Which thou tak'st from me... and here you sty me / In this hard rock, whiles you do keep from me / The rest o' th'island'—Shakespeare 1984: I:2, 31), Friday never curses his 'master' and accompanies Crusoe voluntarily: 'I plainly discover'd the utmost Affection in him to me, and a firm Resolution in him, that I told then, and often after, that I would never send him away from me, if he was willing to stay with me' (Defoe 1994: 164). As I noted earlier, Friday's freedom remains largely an illusion fostered by Defoe's narrative, much like the freedom of a propertyless worker who 'decides' to sell his work in order to make a living. What is more, Crusoe's island prefigures the prison-factory analogy inasmuch as it posits a hierarchy and a subordination that circumvent any egalitarianism within otherwise 'friendly' cooperation between the characters:

If the contract of labour formally presupposes employer and employee, as free subjects on equal terms, the actual work relationship necessitates the sub-ordination of the worker to the employer. Similarly with the punitive relationship: 'punishment as retribution' presupposes a free man; prison commands a 'slave'. (Melossi and Pavarini 2018: 252)⁵

⁵ Melossi and Pavarini thus question Foucault's assumption that work discipline, unlike slavery, is not based on the appropriation of the bodies (Foucault 181, quoted above) insofar as they trace the analogies between the factory and the prison, arguing that the subordination of the prisoner is 'expropriation (also) from/of his own body' (252). There is no equation here, but there is a telling insistence on the continuity between the two modes of subordination. It is this continuity, I suggest, that haunts Defoe's portrayal of Friday's willing obedience.

Coetzee's Friday

In J. M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Friday's situation on the island is contrasted favourably with that of the slaves by Cruso (a name palpably echoing Defoe's Crusoe):

perhaps it is the doing of Providence that Friday finds himself on an island under a lenient master, rather than in Brazil, under the planter's lash, or in Africa, where the forests teem with cannibals. Perhaps it is for the best, though we do not see it so, that he should be here, and that I should be here, and now that you should be here. (Coetzee 2010: 23–24)

In Coetzee's novel, Friday is unable to either confirm or challenge his master on that point, for his tongue had been removed, the mutilation taking place presumably long before his arrival on the island, though Susan Barton, who joins Cruso and Friday, becomes obsessed with the true story of that mysterious occurrence: 'the only tongue that can tell Friday's secret is the tongue he has lost!' (Coetzee 2010: 67). Barton strongly suspects it was Cruso who cut out Friday's tongue; mediating on the function of the tongue in the human body, which she identifies as belonging to the 'members of play', she promptly moves on to the subject of Friday's submission:

I could not put out of mind the softness of the tongue, its softness and wetness, and the fact that it does not live in the light; also how helpless it is before the knife, once the barrier of the teeth has been passed. The tongue is like the heart, in that way, is it not? Save that we do not die when a knife pierces the tongue. To that degree we may say the tongue belongs to the world of play, whereas the heart belongs to the world of earnest. Yet it is not the heart but the members of play that elevate us above the beasts: the fingers with which we touch the clavichord or the flute, the tongue with which we jest and lie and seduce. Lacking members of play, what is there left for beasts to do when they are bored but sleep? And then there is the mystery of your submission. Why, during all those years alone with Cruso, did you submit to his rule, when you might easily have slain him, or blinded him and made him into your slave in turn? (Coetzee 2010: 85)

The passage thus shifts from physical mutilation to psychic damage: 'Is there something in the condition of slavehood that invades the heart and makes a slave a slave for life, as the whiff of ink clings forever to a schoolmaster?' (Coetzee 2010: 85). While it remains unclear whether 'Master Cruso' did in fact cut out Friday's tongue, the narrative appears to suggest that this mutilation is crucial to Friday's submission, for whom it is now impossible to 'jest and lie and seduce'—tongueless, Friday is

thereafter unable to curse his masters. Reduced to a somewhat beast-like existence ('the unnatural years Friday had spent with Cruso had deadened his bean, making him cold, incurious, like an animal wrapt entirely in itself', Coetzee 2010: 70), the figure of Friday is rendered more problematic in Coetzee's retelling, which retelling actually denies the possibility of giving Friday a voice, or allowing him to (re)tell anything, thus corroborating the argument elaborated upon by Gayatri Spivak as to the double bind of simultaneous necessity and impossibility of faithful (political/artistic) re-presentation of the marginalised/subaltern groups (Spivak 2003: 24–28). As Patrick Gill puts it, Friday is 'paradoxically foregrounded throughout the novel through his silence' (2020: 33). The only version of his story available in the narrative is that provided by Cruso (Burton's attempted interrogations of Friday prove fruitless), whom Friday is unable to oppose or submit to using his own voice or, given the word-play in Coetzee's text, his own language. The word *tongue* in Coetzee's text, to offer only a brief comment on this complex matter, appears to tie language to the body and bodily freedom, the phrase signifying a bodily member which enables playfulness, which in turn distinguishes humans from 'the beasts'. Making the release of bodily energies possible and de-sublimating the language of subordination and discipline, such playfulness of the tongue is denied to Friday, who is thus symbolically castrated, cut from both articulation and sexuality. It may be that a second language, even the language imposed by the coloniser (as in the case of Caliban), may become one's own, not through the powers of eloquence but precisely only when it allows one to jest, lie, seduce, and curse.

Coetzee's tongueless Friday, on the other hand, may perhaps only tell us, to borrow Greenblatt's phrasing, that 'most of the people of the New World will never speak to us. That communication, with all that we might have learned, is lost to us forever' (1992: 32). Cruso, for one, appears disinterested in hearing Friday's story, which he actually prefers to tell himself when confidently answering Burton's questions about Friday's past. Hearing or telling stories is for Cruso a matter of play and idleness, that is, clearly not 'a matter of the island', as he explains to Burton: "I do not wish to hear of your desire", said Cruso. "It concerns other things, it does not concern the island, it is not a matter of the island. On the island there is no law except the law that we shall work for our bread, which is a commandment" (Coetzee 2010: 36). The island is the place to work in

order to survive, a place where different kinds of playfulness, as they contradict this injunction to work, must appear dangerous and disruptive. Hence, Crusoe's island is a place where, Coetzee suggests, one language (one tongue) only—that of the master—must be sufficient to give all commands and to tell all the stories.

Commenting on 'the glaring absence of women' in *Robinson Crusoe*, Betty Joseph notes how 'contemporary rewritings of the novel, like Coetzee's *Foe*, have tried to address this exclusion by recasting both Defoe and his protagonist, Crusoe, as minor characters within a woman-centered narrative' (Joseph 2007: 317). For Mannoni, 'colonial life is simply a substitute to those who are still obscurely drawn to a world without men—to those, that is, who have failed to make the effort necessary to adapt infantile images to adult reality' (1956: 105). While Mannoni speaks of the colonialist fantasy of a land without men, what colonial discourse frequently produces is the vision of a world without female presence. *Robinson Crusoe* is followed in this respect by such later Robinsonades as R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island: A Tale of the Pacific Ocean* (1857) and William Golding's *The Lord of the Flies* (1954), where the island provides a space for the undisturbed exercise of masculinity within a homosocial group of men or young boys, but a masculinity seemingly devoid of traces of sexuality. This erasure of sexuality and femaleness in such texts should perhaps be thought of as the laborious erasure of playfulness, including the erasure of linguistic playfulness—or the playfulness of the tongue, which, Coetzee's text reminds us, has much to do with seduction. The fantasy of masters and men working together in an orderly fashion and without any unnecessary disruptions or temptations is present not only in the myth of Crusoe and Friday efficiently transforming the desert island into a *prosperous* (Prospero's?) land, but also in the fantasy of the factory/prison as the perfectly ordered homosocial space for disciplined labour. Such a fantasy appears in many ways to be the direct opposite of Gonzalo's vision of the 'commonwealth' in *The Tempest*. Since in Gonzalo's speech, inspired probably by Michel de Montaigne's essay *Of Cannibals* (*Des Cannibales*, 1579, translated into English in 1603), nature should be seen as a common good, not as a property to be possessed by some usurpers, a true commonwealth would not demand the subordination of work: 'No occupation. All men idle, all; / And women

too, but innocent and pure: / No sovereignty' (II:1, 51).⁶ Such a vision contradicts the fantasy whereby idleness and playfulness are deemed harmful to men, who are destined to work and to possess. Hence, they cannot simply share nature, or share too much *with* nature (and *with* women), insofar as such voluptuous sharing, imagined by Gonzalo, contradicts the commandment to work, so important for Crusoe, which is simultaneously the commandment *to command* (pleonasm intended)—the commandment to be a master, and to divide and rule, rather than share.

It is perhaps a certain playfulness with the idea of 'commonwealth' that informs Salman Rushdie's provocative essay "'Commonwealth Literature" Does Not Exist' (1983). Disgruntled about the notion of 'commonwealth literature', Rushdie notices that the term produces a sort of ghetto, 'actually an exclusive ghetto' (63). This ghettoisation of commonwealth literature somewhat separates it from English literature proper, as if putting the entire globe on an island, away from England, a gesture that actually allows one to construct the notion of 'English literature' as 'something far narrower, something topographical, nationalistic, possibly even racially segregationist' (Rushdie 1983: 63). In this sense, Friday's tongue, which learns English but without ever possessing it, ceases to be Friday's tongue, and becomes a foreign tongue in a double sense—it becomes a non-English English, spoken by a Carib and a cannibal. In contrast to such a mutilation of Friday's body, Rushdie declares that '[the] English language ceased to be the sole possession of the English some time ago' (1983: 70). Consequently, suggesting that we share rather than divide our labours, Rushdie rejects the label of commonwealth literature as a misnomer, proposing instead that 'if *all* English literatures could be studied together, a shape would emerge which would truly reflect the new shape of the language in the world' (1983: 70). Ironically, the label 'commonwealth literature' obscures the

⁶ Shakespeare's attitude to Montaigne's essay is discussed by Kermode (1984: xxxiv–xxxv). As Rediker and Linebaugh point out: 'In composing Gonzalo's speech, Shakespeare drew heavily on Michel de Montaigne's essay "Of Cannibals" [...] The word *cannibal*, many believe, is a corruption of "Carib", the name of the Indians who fiercely resisted European encroachment in the Americas and who were rewarded for their efforts with a lasting image of flesh-eating monstrosity. Montaigne, however, turned the image on its head, praising the courage, simplicity, and virtue of those routinely called "savage" by many Europeans' (2002: 357–358).

commonalities between the literatures across the globe, imposing a barrier to ‘transnational, cross-lingual process of pollination’ (Rushdie 1983: 69). Such pollination, whether linguistic or otherwise, would appear too daring and too disruptive a thing on the islands imagined by the two Englishmen, Shakespeare and Defoe.

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