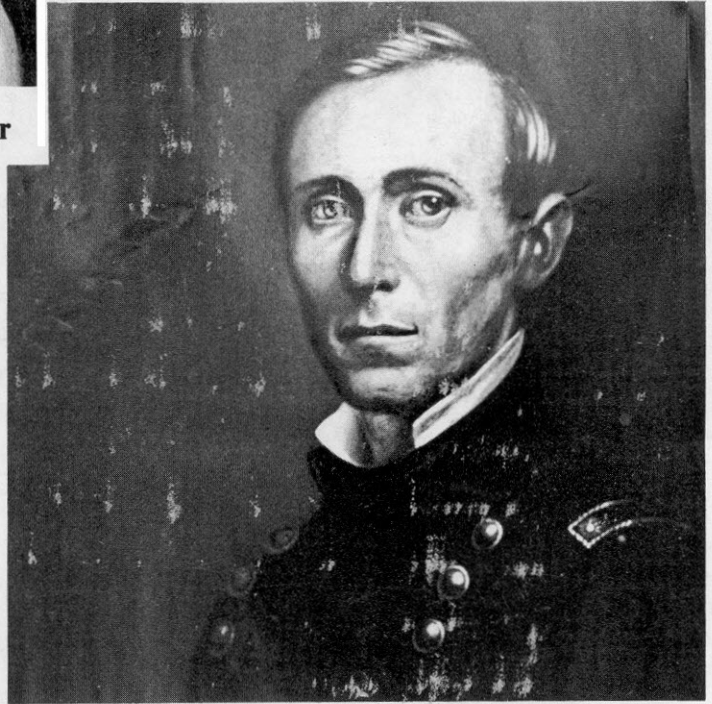


WILLIAM WALKER

The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny

by Alejandro Bolaños-Geyer



William Walker *The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny*

William Walker (1824-1860), the "Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny," is the indispensable root that anchors the Sandinista revolution and current U.S. involvement in Central America in true historical perspective.

Walker was the hottest news personality between the Mexican War and the Civil War—for a time the most talked of figure in the United States. Yet today probably not one U.S. citizen in ten thousand has ever heard of William Walker—a lost character in American history.

But although forgotten even in his home state of Tennessee, Walker is still vividly remembered in Central America as a devil with horns and a tail. Elementary school books proudly acclaim the *National War* of 1856-57, when the ruthless imperialistic invader William Walker and his Yankee mercenaries were driven out of Nicaragua by the *freedom fighters* of the five Central American republics.

William Walker was a "quiet, modest student" before he was suddenly transformed in 1849 into the "bold, daring, dauntless revolutionist and warrior." The great change in his character, which occurred on the death of his fiancée, has never been explained satisfactorily. His many shifts in occupation from doctor to lawyer to journalist and to soldier of fortune have never been explained either. Walker remains as much a mystery today as he was to his contemporaries, even to his closest friends.

These pages record the process of unraveling the mystery of the "Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny," unlocking the hidden springs of Walker's mind; and they bring into sharp focus the stormy scenes during the early stages of U.S. imperialism climaxing in the Mexican War.

Walker's forays into Mexico, Nicaragua, and Honduras, until his death by firing squad at Truxillo in 1860, will be the subject of succeeding volumes.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Alejandro Bolaños-Geyer is a native Nicaraguan. He was born in Masaya and educated at the *Colegio Centroamérica* in Granada and at St. Louis University, St. Louis, Missouri (M.D., 1948). He practiced Internal Medicine in Managua for twenty years before he retired in 1972 to do research on William Walker.

He is the author of *El Testimonio de Scott* (1974), *The War in Nicaragua as reported by Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (1976), *The War in Nicaragua as reported by Harper's Weekly* (1976), *El Filibustero Clinton Rollins* (1976), *James C. Jamison Con Walker en Nicaragua* (1977), and *1984 in Managua* (1988).

In 1982 he founded the Nicaraguan Information Center in St. Charles, Missouri and in 1985-86 he edited the *Voice of Nicaragua* newsletter.

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WILLIAM WALKER

THE GRAY-EYED MAN OF DESTINY

ALEJANDRO BOLANOS-GEYER

PRIVATELY PRINTED
Lake Saint Louis, Missouri
1988

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Cover design by Karen Thomson
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Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 88-092071
ISBN 0-9620858-2-0

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BOOK ONE:

THE CRESCENT CITY

To the memory and love of my parents

Nicolás Bolaños Cortés
and Amanda Geyer Abaunza.

IN GOD.

FOREWORD

I begin with a word of explanation. As a practicing physician in Managua, I read William Walker's *The War in Nicaragua* for the first time in 1971. Walker's extraordinary account of his War in my country led me to other books on the subject, looking in vain for a logical explanation of *The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny's* unusual career and bizarre behavior. When an earthquake destroyed Managua in 1972, I retired from medicine in order to research Walker full time. The Sandinista revolution and heightened U.S. involvement in Central America have made this study timely, for Walker is the indispensable root that anchors such signal current events in true historical perspective.

My debt is deepest to Professor Steven Blakemore, whose attentive, critical reading of my manuscript improved it immensely; to Jean Wells for her outstanding analysis of Walker's handwriting; to Miss Margaret Lindsley Warden, who generously gave me a copy of her Walker portrait and of his letters to John Berrien Lindsley; to Mario Cajina Vega for his invaluable collaboration since 1976, when the preliminary results of my research were published in Nicaragua; and to the late Nicaraguan historian Andres Vega Bolaños, whose sterling example and wise counsel have guided my steps from the beginning.

Walker has taken two decades of my life, and of my family's. To my wife and children I owe large debts of love and understanding for their warm support and personal sacrifices. Likewise to my brother Enrique. To my son Alex I am especially indebted for his insights as a professional historian, and to my son-in-law Julio Velázquez for his fine drawings.

A.B.G.

St. Charles, Missouri, May 1988.

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INTRODUCTION

*I sing this man who sought man's good,
Who fought for peace, unselfish fought,
Who silent fell and murmured not,
This man whom no man understood,
This great man so well-nigh forgot,
This man who led, who faltered not,
This student, soldier, president,
Who chose the weaker side and sent
Such spirit through his fearless few
As only Khartoum Gordon knew.*

Joaquin Miller. With Walker in Nicaragua.

The Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny

General William Walker met his fate facing a firing squad at Truxillo, Honduras, on Sept. 12, 1860, at eight o'clock a.m. He showed throughout the greatest coolness, not even changing color when walking from the prison to the plaza, where he was shot. Two soldiers, with drawn swords, advanced in front, and three, with fixed bayonets, followed him. In his right hand he carried a hat, and in his left a crucifix.

Before taking his seat on the fatal chair, he requested the priest in attendance, inasmuch as he could not speak loud enough to be heard, to tell the people that he asked the pardon of all whom he had injured. He then sat down, a file of ten soldiers advanced and fired. He died at once. The soldiers gave three cheers, and all was over.

Thus ended the career of "the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny" who was said to have gone South of the Border to deliver the natives from oppression. His military exploits, that had begun in Mexico, made banner headlines for a decade. He was the "king of the filibusters,"¹ the living embodiment of the southward overflow of Manifest Destiny impelled by the Mexican War. His intrusion in Hispanic America left an indelible mark; his injurious presence is still alive, forever handy to inflame passionate anti-Yankee sentiments throughout the region.

Walker earned a reputation as one of the most wrong-headed but bravest men of the age. He left behind an extended chain of lost battles in his self-appointed filibustering mission to "civilize" Sonora and "regenerate" Nicaragua — his cornerstone for building a "white American" empire over the "inferior race" inhabiting the central portions of the continent. In his own words:

¹Frederic Rosengarten, Jr., *freebooters must die!* (Wayne Pennsylvania: Haverford House, Publishers, 1976), p. ix.

They are but drivellers who speak of establishing fixed relations between the pure white American race, as it exists in the United States, and the mixed Hispano-Indian race, as it exists in Mexico and Central America, without the employment of force. The history of the world presents no such Utopian vision as that of an inferior race yielding meekly and peacefully to the controlling influence of a superior people. Whenever barbarism and civilization, or two distinct forms of civilization, meet face to face, the result must be war.²

War he made, and time and again he failed. But he persisted, confident of ultimate success:

Nor kings nor presidents can arrest a movement based on truth and conducted with justice; and the very obstacles they place in the way merely prepare those who are injured for the part they are to play in the world's history . . . In the very difficulties with which the Americans of Nicaragua have had to contend I see the presage of their triumph. Let me, therefore, say to my former comrades, be of good cheer : faint not, nor grow weary by the way, for . . . if we be but true to ourselves, all will yet end well.³

For everybody else, all ended well when Walker died. This is especially true for Nicaraguans who remember William Walker as "the worst offender of our nationality, the ominous man who left a trail of blood, destruction and death unparalleled in our painful history."⁴

His countrymen agreed that Walker had received the merited penalty for his repeated infractions of law and his

²William Walker, *The War in Nicaragua*, (Mobile: S H Goetzel & Co., 1860), p 429.

³Ibid.

⁴Joaquín Zavala Urtecho, ed., "Los Últimos Momentos de William Walker," *Revista Conservadora del Pensamiento Centroamericano*, XVII #84-85 (Sept.-Oct. 1967), p. 47.

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disregard of life and property: ". . . he lived by the sword, and by the sword he had perished -- as was fit. One may pity him, as one may pity any wrong-doer who is justly chastised; but no one can say that, in his case, the chastisement was undeserved or inappropriate, or that the world would have been a gainer had he escaped his doom. Mankind and civilization acquiesce in his death."⁵

Others pointed out that "whatever hard things may have been said of Gen. Walker --and much, we doubt not, would have been left unsaid had his fortune been more propitious --he was, at least, no vulgar adventurer, either by birth, habits or education, or the honorable purposes with which he set out in life."⁶

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, in May, 1824, he was well educated, attending the University of Nashville, where he acquitted himself with the highest honors, and afterwards attending the University of Pennsylvania Medical School in Philadelphia. Following a trip to Europe, he had turned to law and was admitted to the bar in New Orleans in 1847. Up to that time he was quiet and studious, giving no indication of the adventurous or restless career he would have in later life. The change came suddenly in 1849, transforming him "from the quiet, modest student to the bold, daring, dauntless revolutionist and warrior."⁷

⁵"The End of Walker," *Harper's Weekly*, IV (10/13/1860), p. 642.

⁶"The Late General Walker," *New Orleans Daily Crescent* 9/29/1860, p.5, c.6.

⁷"Whilst a law student in New Orleans, he [Walker] conceived a warm attachment for a very interesting young lady, who was born deaf and dumb. She had been well educated and was of very engaging manners. Her misfortune drew towards her the sympathies and regard of all tender-hearted persons. With his characteristic originality and peculiarity of feeling and sentiment, Walker became warmly enamored of this young lady. She reciprocated his regard, and for some time they were never happy unless together. He soon acquired a knowledge of her signs, and they conversed with great facility, the medium of their conversation no doubt adding zest to their enjoyment. At last some slight misunderstanding interrupted their intercourse, and before a reconciliation could be effected the young lady died. This event gave a tinge of melancholy to the thoughts and character of Walker. Perhaps, as many of his friends thought, it produced the great change in his character which ensued -- a change from the quiet, modest student to the bold, daring, dauntless revolutionist and warrior." "Interesting Biographical Notice of General Walker," *New York Herald* 1/30/1856, p.1, c.2.

The great change in Walker's character, which occurred at the death of his fiancée, has never been explained satisfactorily. His many shifts in occupation from doctor to lawyer to journalist and to soldier of fortune have not been explained either. Walker still remains a mystery today, as he was to his contemporaries, even to his closest friends. Fortunately, many of Walker's writings have been preserved, and they provide valuable clues that fit like pieces of a puzzle to form a plausible explanation of his behavior. That is the primary reason for this study: it records the process of unraveling the mystery of the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny, unlocking the hidden springs of Walker's mind.

WALKER'S PSYCHOLOGICAL PORTRAIT

The psychological portrait of Walker's unconscious drives and conflicts is presented and analyzed in Book One: "The Crescent City." The picture that emerges is that of a multiple personality structure arising from an unresolved Oedipus complex. Multiple personality is the unconscious adoption of two or more personalities which are separate and compartmentalized. In medical terms, it is a "Hysterical Neurosis, Dissociative Type," and in literature it is the theme of immortal works such as Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and Dostoevsky's great novels. It is discussed in Chapter 15: "Personality Parade."

The Oedipus complex is an emotional constellation of two components: (1) An intense conflict over erotic love for the parent of the opposite sex and (2) an intense conflict over jealous, rivalrous hatred for the parent of the same sex. It is examined in Chapter 10: "Manfred Betrays Oedipus." Since the complex is probably universal in Western civilization, in his abnormality Walker carried within himself the very heart of the universal.

In Germany Hitler, like Walker, had a multiple personality structure resulting from a severe Oedipus complex.⁸ In

⁸Walter C. Langer, *The Mind of Adolph Hitler*, (New York: Basic Books Inc., Publishers, 1972). See footnote 9, p. 183.

Mexico the Oedipus complex contributes to the Mexicans' identification with the Indian mother and rejection of the Spanish father to the extreme of erasing the name of Cortés from Mexico's geography.⁹ Oedipus in Nicaragua is a story yet to be told. It didn't begin nor end with Walker, but the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny clarifies the oedipal presence in Nicaraguan history. His example furnishes the key to uncover the Oedipus in Sandino and Fonseca, shedding light on the paramount role that oedipal forces have played in the Sandinista movement.¹⁰

The Oedipus complex is the dialectical interaction of opposites — love and hate —which Arnold Toynbee calls "a key for understanding the nature of creation and the process of growth" in "The Birth of Civilization."¹¹ Multiple personality is a "schism in the soul," which Toynbee considers crucial for "The Disintegrations of Civilizations."¹²

⁹"Throughout the length and breadth of Mexico one looks in vain for a town, village, hamlet, or even a street, named after her great conqueror. One of the few monuments allowed to suggest the magnificent adventurer who destroyed a nation and laid the foundations of a new one is the lonely hill called El Peñón del Marqués, which stands in solitary bleakness on the salt waste that was once Lake Texcoco. The reason for this bit of irony is not difficult to discover. Since independence, and especially since the Revolution of 1910, it has been the fashion among liberal elements to decry all things Spanish, a fashion which of late has been carried to the absurd extreme of denying Mexico's Spanish heritage altogether. . . ." Lesley Byrd Simpson, *King Mexico*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974), p.22.

¹⁰Augusto C. Sandino, Nicaraguan rebel leader who in 1927-1932 fought the U. S. Marines occupying the country, is Walker's counterpart as a symbol, personifying Spanish American resistance to Yankee "imperialism." Carlos Fonseca-Amador founded the communist "Sandinista" organization that rose to power in Nicaragua in 1979. Both Sandino and Fonseca displaced oedipal love onto the mother figure, Nicaragua, and oedipal hostility onto the father figure: Nicaraguan presidents Moncada and Somoza, and their United States backers. Sandinista propaganda has skillfully moved the Nicaraguan collective unconscious along those lines.

¹¹"THE BIRTH OF CIVILIZATION . . . The idea that the dialectical interaction of opposites culminates in progressive motion has served in many other ages and societies as a key for understanding the nature of creation and the process of growth: in Greece the forces were identified as love and hate, in China as Yin and Yang, in the modern West as thesis and antithesis." Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 74.

¹²"SCHISM IN THE SOUL . . . Beyond the social expressions of disintegration lie the personal crises of behavior and feeling and life which are the true essence and origin of the visible manifestations of social collapse." *Ibid.*, p. 241.

These salient features in Walker's psyche thus expose the main forces affecting "challenge and response" in *A Study of History*, the most important and most widely discussed work in the philosophy of history since Hegel.

WALKER'S CIRCUMSTANCES

Walker was a positivistic thinker and Jacksonian democrat — a champion of Manifest Destiny and of the Slavery system in the ante-bellum South. These ideologies inspired his Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire. He lived in the rapidly moving world of "Western Empire" and the "Irrepressible Conflict" that climaxed respectively in the Mexican and the Civil wars. Historical events and forces shaped Walker and influenced his behavior, for which reason in this study we frequently divert attention from his person to focus on his circumstances.

Book One describes the United States of America and its Southern Neighbors, as a prelude to the Mexican war that dominates the picture. Book Two examines the Conquest of California and the Gold Rush that set the stage for Walker's activities, ranging from his rousing of the San Francisco Vigilantes to his involvement in the Gadsden Purchase. Book Three (in three volumes) studies Nicaragua in detail before and during Walker's intervention until his death in Honduras. In summary, these pages contain the biography of William Walker and the history of an era that continues alive in the conflicts of the present. Together, the five volumes tell the story of the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny.

Next to the Civil War, the war with Mexico was the most important 19th century conflict for the United States. The territorial expansion it produced was crucial for the country's greatness. Moreover, it was the first war in history to be reported adequately and comprehensively in the daily press. Yet, it rapidly disappeared from the American people's consciousness and probably no one celebrates its victories today.

There was, of course, dissent during the war; for instance, a condemnatory resolution adopted by the Massachusetts legislature in April 1847 read: "Resolved that the

present war with Mexico . . . a war of conquest, so hateful in its objects, so wanton, unjust and unconstitutional in its origin and character, must be regarded as a war against freedom, against humanity, against justice, against the Union, . . . and against the free states."¹³

But fifty years later, the war had receded from American consciousness: the *Nineteenth Century Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature* lists only four articles on the Mexican War published in the United States in the entire decade from 1890 to 1899; in contrast, during the same period, thirty articles are listed on the War of 1812. During the centennial, two articles appeared in 1947 and none in 1946 and 1948. American historians explained that absence of historical memory on the national belief that the Mexican conflict "had been peculiarly un-American."¹⁴

This strange historical neglect persists today: the last two volumes of the *Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature*, published in 1985 and 1986, fail to list a single article on the war with Mexico. The late Robert Kennedy expressed the prevalent view when he referred to the Mexican war as "one of the most disgraceful episodes in the American past."¹⁵ On a national level, this treatment of the war with Mexico by the American people is the equivalent of what psychologists call repression: the involuntary, automatic banishment of unacceptable ideas or impulses into the unconscious.

The Manifest Destiny that in the past century filled a continent and transformed the United States into a super-

¹³Samuel Eliot Morison, Frederick Merk, and Frank Freidel, *Dissent in Three American Wars*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970), p. 49.

¹⁴"Americans are a people peculiarly addicted to celebrating anniversaries, especially centennials However, one outstanding exception to such observances was the failure in 1946-1948 to note the centennial of the war with Mexico. No other such notable event in American history has been allowed to pass so unnoticed, so disregarded, so uncelebrated. . . . The reason for this failure doubtless stemmed from a national belief that the Mexican conflict somehow was wrong, that the United States had been the instigator of the conflict with its southern neighbor, that, in fact, the war had been peculiarly un-American." Seymour V. Connor & Odie B. Faulk, *North America Divided*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. v.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 3.

power, generated feelings of guilt and shame, and is now rejected as alien to the national spirit and hence repressed. Frederick Merk, professor emeritus at Harvard University, explained it well in 1963:

It may be safe now to venture an opinion that continentalist and imperialist doctrines were never true expressions of the national spirit. They were the very opposite. . . . They fooled a small part of the American people much of the time, another part some of the time, but never the mass all the time. . . . Manifest Destiny and imperialism were traps into which the nation was led in 1846 and in 1899, and from which it extricated itself as well as it could afterwards. . . . Republicans . . . imperialists . . . Theodore Roosevelt . . .

A truer expression of the national spirit was Mission, . . . idealistic, self-denying, hopeful of divine favor for national aspirations, though not sure of it. . . . Its language was that of dedication — dedication to the enduring values of American civilization. It was the language of Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War . . . It inspired Woodrow Wilson . . . Franklin D. Roosevelt . . . Manifest Destiny, by contrast, seemed, despite its exaltation of language, somehow touched by a taint of selfishness, both national and individual.¹⁶

In other words, after Walker died, his circumstances have been repudiated and repressed by his people. Manifest Destiny has been banished into the shadow of the collective American unconscious. And together with repression, goes projection: the attributing to another person or object, thoughts, feelings, motives, or desires which are really one's own disavowed and unacceptable traits. (Walker used repression and projection constantly; see, for instance, Chapters 10 and 14). Jung points out the harm done by pro-

¹⁶Frederick Merk, *Manifest Destiny and Mission in American History*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1963), p. 261.

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jection in politics:

The individual man . . . harbors within himself a dangerous shadow and opponent who is involved as an invisible helper in the dark machinations of the political monster. It is in the nature of political bodies always to see the evil in the opposite group, just as the individual has an ineradicable tendency to get rid of everything he does not know and does not want to know about himself by foisting it off on somebody else.

Nothing has a more divisive and alienating effect upon society than this moral complacency and lack of responsibility, and nothing promotes understanding and *rapprochement* more than the mutual withdrawal of projection.¹⁷

Jung stresses that recognition of the shadow leads to the modesty we need in order to acknowledge imperfection. And it is just this conscious recognition and consideration that are needed wherever a human relationship is to be established.

WALKER'S DESTINY

Walker died in 1860. The Southern dream of a Caribbean empire (his Sectional Destiny), expired immediately afterwards, with the defeat of the South in the Civil War. The subsequent banishment of Manifest Destiny from the American consciousness, sealed the process of alienating Walker from his countrymen, who disown him. For twentieth century Americans, Walker's epitaph was written by Henry Clinton Parkhurst in the "Songs of A Man Who Failed," in 1921:

¹⁷C. G. Jung, *The Undiscovered Self*, (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1957), p. 114.

The fellow's dead -- it's just as well.
 They've planted him in yonder dell.
 A crown on high he failed to earn.
 His future lot they fain would learn.
 They wonder if he's gone to Hell
 To roast and toast and always burn.
 One fact the books of Nature tell.
 He's found a place of long sojourn --
 Gone to the Land Of No Return.¹⁸

But the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny is not really dead. He has merely gone to the land of the unconscious, there to embody our collective shadow. The common human shadow that the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny personifies, is described by Jung in *The Undiscovered Self*:

The horror which the dictator States have of late brought upon mankind is nothing less than the culmination of all those atrocities of which our ancestors made themselves guilty in the not so distant past. Quite apart from the barbarities and blood baths perpetrated by the Christian nations among themselves throughout European history, the European has also to answer for all the crimes he has committed against the dark-skinned peoples during the process of colonization. In this respect the white man carries a very heavy burden indeed. It shows us a picture of the common human shadow that could hardly be painted in darker colors. The evil that comes to light in man and that undoubtedly dwells within him is of gigantic proportion . . .¹⁹

The shadow, like the Oedipus complex, is not European or American, but human. Walker's psychological portrait thus opens a window into the soul of his counterpart, Sandino,

¹⁸Henry Clinton Parkhurst, *Songs of A Man Who Failed*. (Lincoln, NE: The Woodruff Press, 1921), p. 238.

¹⁹C. G. Jung, *Op. Cit.*, p. 107.

and into every human soul. And Walker's circumstances bring into sharp focus the stormy Mexican and Nicaraguan scenes in the early stages of U. S. "imperialism." They expose the roots of the North/South (Anglo/Latin) conflict that yet rages unabated in the New World — which most Hispanic intellectuals view as the Caliban/Ariel dichotomy popularized by Rodó.

In Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Caliban is a savage and deformed slave and Ariel is an airy spirit. French philosopher Ernest Renan (1823-1892) used Caliban as a symbol of democracy ("the exclusive pursuit of material well-being") and Ariel as the religious principle ("the ideal interests of mankind"). In the wake of the Spanish-American War, Uruguayan writer José Enrique Rodó applied the symbolism to the United States (Caliban) and to the Latin American ideal (Ariel). His book *Ariel* (1900) was an immediate success throughout the Spanish-speaking world.²⁰

Rodó and Merk illustrate two prevalent divergent views of the Colossus of the North from opposite sides of the fence. Both record a partial truth, colored and distorted by the same psychological mechanisms which Walker used, exposed and analyzed in these pages. Both need to be corrected for a harmonious relationship to be established between the United States and its southern neighbors. An accurate vision of the Walker tragedy and era may then contribute valuable insights to our understanding of the present problems, which would fulfill for the Gray-Eyed Man of Destiny a belated and unexpected, beneficial role in history.

²⁰ José Enrique Rodó, *Obras Completas*. (Madrid: Aguilar, 1967), pp. 193-249.