Woman, Foundling, Hyphen : the Figure of Ariel in Marina Warner's Indigo

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I-

"Remember/First to possess his books"—Caliban's advice to the ship-wrecked insurgents in *The Tempest* (3. 2. 89-90) has long served as a powerful reminder of the use of books in defining and maintaining colonial authority. If Prospero's rule over the foreign island, as his slave explains, is based on his command of certain texts, then any move to question, undermine or overthrow his power must indeed begin by taking from him these treasured instruments of power: "for without them/He's but a sot, as I am, nor hath not/One spirit to command."

This strategy may help to illustrate the ways in which Postcolonialism has made its career in academia and across Humanities departments: as a strategy to question the authority of Western cultural domination, to undermine traditional readings of the treasured texts from the familiar canon and overthrow the whole construct of English Literature as a national fiction (see Childs 1999). If certain works and writers have been instrumental in defining and maintaining notions of colonial authority, as many critics since Said (1978, 1993) have argued, then any contemporary engagement with them must reveal this complicity and focus on the textual and/or historical ruptures by which their wordly power can be used for alternative projects. For example, few Shakespeare classes can nowaways afford to teach *The Tempest* without acknowledging the pressures of its many postcolonial rereadings

and rewritings. In this way, both closely allied and at the same time critically opposed, postcolonial theory and English Literature have long worked together and provided common ground for contestation.

Since its publication in 1992, Marina Warner's novel *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters* has been noted as one of the most significant contributions to this project. Several reviews, studies, appreciations and critical readings have explored Warner's complex narrative (see, for example, Williams-Wanquet 2000), shuttling between England and the Caribbean, between a seventeenth- and a twentieth-century setting, and interweaving many figural strands from both the postcolonial and the feminist tradition of critical rewriting. As a recent volume on *"The Tempest" and Its Travels* makes abundantly clear, Shakespeare's much-debated play, more perhaps than any other in the Western canon, has itself become a trope of continual re-inscriptions and radical transformations (Hulme & Sherman: 2000 3). The cultural scope and relevance of this interpretative history can be gauged in comparing the two Arden editions of the text: Frank Kermode's classic 1954 edition offered a reading of the entire play as a harmonious pastoral, famously arguing "that there is nothing in *The Tempest* fundamental to its structure of ideas which could not have existed had America remained undiscovered" (Kermode: 1987 xxv); as opposed to the 1999 Arden edition in the Third Series, by Virginia Mason Vaughan and Alden T. Vaughan, which carefully but clearly situates the drama within the arena of English and European colonialism and its ongoing afterlife.

However, in all the twentieth-century rereadings and rewritings of the play, the figure of Ariel has rarely received much attention. Except for José Enrique Rodó's 1900 essay, which celebrates the figure as "the sublime instinct for perfectibility" (Rodo in Vaughan & Vaughan: 1999 329) and which influenced a whole generation of Latin American intellectuals (see Brotherston 2000), Ariel has rarely been employed in twentieth-century rewritings. Postcolonial versions of *The Tempest* have usually focussed on Caliban, the figure of the colonized and rebellious slave, as suggested in my introductory quotation. Feminist revisions have mainly been concerned with Miranda as the figure

of a disempowered female. While a large number of new figurations for Caliban as well as for Miranda may therefore be cited and explored in contemporary literature, Ariel simply does not feature prominently here. Even Rodó's idealistic appropriation was rejected in the 1970s by Retamar's more politically minded championship of Caliban as a Latin America icon (see Hulme: 2000 220). In this way, for all the wealth of innovative *Tempest*-versions, Ariel somehow is neglected.

To some extent, this holds true even for *Indigo*. As in many previous *Tempest*-versions, Ariel does not seem to be a central figure in this novel. She appears in chapters eight to sixteen, *i.e.* in only nine out of the thirty-three chapters altogether. What is more, Warner's Ariel remains confined to the seventeenth-century level of the narrative; apart from one brief reported re-appearance, she does not enter into the twentieth-century setting. This sets her apart, because otherwise all principal characters in the novel form a pattern of clear correspondences: the modern Kit Everard is linked to the New World pioneer and ancestor of the same name; Sycorax corresponds to Serafine, Dulé to George/Shaka, and Miranda is doubled through her younger aunt Xanthe. In this intricate network of doublings and interrelations, Ariel stands alone—what might be her place?

The most prominent and significant figure in *Indigo* is Sycorax, Warner's wonderful revision of the demonized female, absent from the cast of Shakespeare's *Tempest*, but nevertheless referred to by Prospero and Caliban at crucial points in their altercations and thus present in the play's discursive structure. In her non-fictional writings, too, Warner has focussed on Sycorax as the central character, whose voice is silenced in traditional versions but whose powers are still felt; she "occupies the drama like a prompter who accompanies the action throughout, hidden and unheard, beneath the stage" (Warner: 2000 97). Warner's novel puts her back in place, making Sycorax a vehicle of living memory and story-telling powers—a move which must surely be regarded as *Indigo*'s most innovative and important contribution to the tradition of rewritings. Otherwise, the narrative is predominantly concerned with Miranda and her story. Warner's Ariel, by contrast, does not occupy an equally important place and she receives much

less attention. And yet, as I shall argue, Ariel is a crucial figure who performs a key function in the story that *Indigo* relates. This is what I would like to establish in this essay.

Ariel's importance does not lie in innovation. In a very real sense, Warner's character is nothing new but, on the contrary, stands for something functionally old. The figure has long played her role in cross-cultural encounters, but has seldom received credit for it, often neglected or ignored. This is why I suggest to look at Ariel in *Indigo* and explore her function and position both in the narrative and in the tradition of historical engagements that it reworks. The three concepts mentioned in the title—woman, foundling, hyphen—serve as my guideline and I shall comment on each one of them in turn. But before I take up this discussion, a few more general comments about Warner's work should provide the necessary framework.

Marina Warner can best be understood as a cultural historian with a contemporary agenda. Throughout her impressively prolific and wide-ranging work in fiction, art criticism, cultural history, mythography and story telling, we can find one recurring question and a shared concern: how is our present shaped by the past while the past is, in turn, continuously reshaped through present re-interpretations? This dialectical relationship between then and now seems to be the central question which many of her interventions have addressed. Generally speaking, they show us how we are determined by what happened in the past; but how, at the same time, we must ourselves determine past representations through images, stories, myths and rituals. On the one hand, the past is nothing given, but something actively remembered, revised, reversed and reconstructed; on the other hand, the present must own up to this inheritance and cannot simply consign it to oblivion.

This general and, I would argue, central point in all of Warner's work can best be illustrated through her engagement with *The Tempest*. The *Indigo* project, as a late version in the long line of politicized Caribbean and postcolonial rewritings, involves a serious and problematic challenge. However critical it may be of the colonialist tradition, Warner cannot deny her own position in this history. How can she, as a white British writer, contribute to the debate about the Empire and its cultural consequences, when

her own family was so closely involved in establishing British power in the Caribbean? As a latter-day descendant of Sir Thomas Warner, the seventeenth-century colonial pioneer and governor of St Christopher, Marina Warner has owned up to the burden of this inheritance in an important article about the autobiographical background of her novel: "Indeed, I sometimes felt that by writing *Indigo*, the novel I partly set in the Caribbean, I was interloping on territory from which accidents of history had morally barred me" (Warner: 1993 199*ff*). This acknowledges the problem mentioned. However, she goes on to say, "but then I also argued to myself that it is important, too, for anyone and everyone to challenge received ideas"—that is to say, not to accept historical determinations, but to realize that these have been constructed and must therefore be questioned and changed. This is what happens in *Indigo* and this is where Ariel plays a crucial role.

II-

I would like to begin my discussion with a closer look at one particular and haunting scene, the first direct encounter between Ariel and Kit Everard, on the evening of his landfall when he has won the violent and bloody confrontation with the islanders. At the end of this fateful day, the European conqueror suddenly approaches Ariel, one of the females he finds on the island:

> In spite of her bone-weariness, all of a sudden she was facing him squarely, for she was the same height and if anything, more strongly built. He caught hold of her hand and pushed it between his legs and ground his mouth against hers. The dullness she had felt in her exhaustion became a kind of sickness now, as for the second time that day she once again flew from her own body and split in two. Two Ariels, one outside the other, each watching the other, curious, inert, from the other side of consciousness, in the country where the souls wander. She was curious, about the whey in his mouth and the shaft of his cock under her palm and the paired kernels of his balls; about the possibility of pleasure her mother Sycorax who was dying now beside her had talked of so often. She would kill him later, but for the present, she was thinking of Sycorax, who had instructed her in love, and wondering if it would please her that here she was, filling a man with desire just as Sycorax had always said she should. (*Indigo* 148*ff*)

This is a difficult and crucial passage, not easy to account for in the framework of the narrative. A scene of violence and strong desire, in which Kit attempts to rape Ariel, it is nevertheless told in such a way that we do not see her as a victim. On the contrary, she rather seems to enjoy the new sensation of arousing a man's lust and to hold control over him. The final remark that she would not kill him yet, implies even that he, the colonizer and rapist, is the potential victim here.

In this way, the scene constructs an ambivalence, which corresponds to the strange construction of Ariel as "split in two": the figure appears doubled, in two places at once. This raises a question about narrative perspective: what is the appropriate point to view and relate what happens here? How might Kit interpret this? Are there alternative versions of this encounter?

At the same time, the scene points both backwards and ahead. It refers to the previous chapter, where Ariel is taken hostage and, to escape the conquerors' atrocities, for the first time flees from her own body. It also foreshadows the subsequent development of her relationship to Kit: as a hostage, she becomes his lover, and their love-making is said to give her power over him (see *Indigo* 167). She never gives up the plan to murder him, but she continues to postpone the decisive step into action. Meanwhile, Ariel becomes an interpreter for the Europeans. As a result of her constant and close contact, she is the first islander to learn the language and the ways of the English—just as readily as she previously learned to use the crafts and healing powers of her foster mother Sycorax. Thus, Ariel stands in between the lines of confrontation, having gained from both sides in the conflict. Even while Sycorax is dying, she continues to instruct Ariel in the secret arts, although she no longer seems to trust her loyalties: "You'll betray me, I know," Sycorax declares. She then adds: "You let me die. You'll take my dyes, my remedies, my secrets away from me and use them for others. My skill! There is no faithfulness in anyone" (*Indigo* 165).

This raises a recurring question: whose side is Ariel on? Whose aims and interests does she serve? And where does her allegiance lie? In the frontlines of violent colonial confrontations, her place remains unclear. She does not seem to occupy a clear and

unambiguous position. This point deserves emphasis, for I would like to argue in my reading that it is precisely this ambiguity in Ariel's placing that makes the figure so important and, indeed, so functional in the history of cross-cultural developments. Ariel, in short, should be seen as a figure of the third, moving between opposing sides.

To explain and justify this reading, I shall briefly look at the history that Ariel is given in Warner's novel and then discuss the material from which her figure is constructed: Shakespeare's play, the tradition of its postcolonial rewritings and the discourse of early modern New World travels. In the final part I shall offer some concluding comments on what Ariel's significance might be for contemporary debates.

III-

Ariel's essential placelessness in *Indigo* is dramatized through her position as a foundling. A stranger among the native islanders, according to the story given in the narrative, she is the child of Arawak parents from the South American mainland, who were enslaved by early British settlers, brought to Liamuiga and left behind when their settlement failed and was given up. Eventually given to Sycorax's care, Ariel joins her adopted family and, like Dulé, is brought up in a state of exile. But the juxtaposition to Dulé, Warner's Caliban figure, is telling. He, too, is an adopted child and he also lives as a stranger on the Caribbean island. But he clearly knows his real place: he intimates his African background and actively goes in search of his transatlantic origins. Ariel, by contrast, does not seem to be aware of her own story, yet this is difficult to tell. The narrative gives little insight into her consciousness, just as her point of view at times is split in two. In this way, we can never be quite sure what her attitude may be. Her perspective largely remains occluded and her precise position obscure. Ariel is a foundling: without established ancestry, she has no fixed place on the social map.

This follows closely from the way the figure is presented in the Shakespearean text. Introduced in the *dramatis personae* as "an airy spirit," Ariel is not tied to a specific mythological framework,

but seems to be as flexible and elusive as this name implies. Traditional sources are scant and not very conclusive. *Tempest* editors usually explain that the name derives from the hermetic tradition, associated for example with the magical practice of John Dee, where a certain Ariel or Uriel is said to act as servant to the Elizabethan magus (see Vaughan & Vaughan: 1999 27). In *The Tempest*, too, Ariel takes on the role of servant, a subaltern in Prospero's magic, and thus a rather different functional type than the earthy Caliban, who only performs house tasks and other menial jobs. According to the playscript, Ariel is of another class and performs his master's orders with great eagerness. Indeed, he is so instrumental for all Prospero's conjuring that he emerges as a crucial agent for the magus and his power.

In the framework of Shakespeare's drama, we only learn one thing about Ariel's previous history. Allegedly held captive by Sycorax in a cloven pine, he was liberated by Prospero from this imprisonment and so has promised him perpetual gratitude and affection. This is, at any rate, the story Prospero repeats in response to Ariel's demand to be set free from service. As critical readers of Prospero's version, we may entertain some doubts as to the truthfulness of this account. But as an audience to the play, we certainly see Ariel anxious to prove his devotion to service and his love to the great master.

It is precisely this sense of subservience associated with the figure that has made postcolonial readers and writers extremely suspicious of Ariel. The strongest verdict on him was passed by George Lamming, the Barbadian novelist, whose 1960 essay *The Pleasures of Exile* contains an incisive and politicized rereading of Shakespeare's play. This is how he describes the figure and its function:

> For Ariel, like Caliban, serves Prospero; but Ariel is not a slave. Ariel has been emancipated to the status of a privileged servant. In other words: a lackey. Ariel is Prospero's source of information; the archetypal spy, the embodiment . . . of the perfect and unspeakable secret police. It is Ariel who tunes in on every conversation which the degradation of his duty demands that he report back to Prospero. Of course, he knows what's going on from the very beginning. Ariel is on the inside. He knows and serves his master's intention, and his methods are free from any scruples. (Lamming: 1984 99)

This is a serious, but plausible charge against the figure. Lamming goes on to quote Ariel's enthusiastic greeting of Prospero, "All hail, great master! grave sir, hail! I come/To answer thy best pleasure" (*The Tempest*, 1. 2. 189*ff*), as evidence for his indictment. For him, Ariel is altogether too close to authority to be of any critical power. Lamming's sympathies lie with Caliban, whose voice and revolutionary agency he seeks to celebrate throughout Caribbean history. But even Miranda is more sympathetically viewed, while Ariel remains the archetypal spy, a traitor and informer.

In fact, Lamming's accusations are so interesting because they concern crucial methods of establishing and maintaining political power and control. They all pertain to functions of communication and intelligence, on which the Duke's government, for all practical purposes, must rely. Without Caliban, Prospero might have no food and fire-wood, but without Ariel his very magic, the basis of his powerful position, would not be effective. Ariel's role in *The Tempest*, therefore, may also be seen in a more positive perspective: he emerges as the figure of a go-between, a Hermes or Mercury figure, an airy spirit of communication.

If Caliban has learned the colonizer's language as a means to curse him, Ariel has learned to imitate different languages and voices. In the play, he leads the shipwrecked noblemen astray by simulating other sounds. In this way, he is presented as a character of many voices and, hence, provokes a sceptical attitude. How can we ever know for sure what his own true voice may be? But perhaps even the fervent declarations of love towards his master are just strategic simulations, possibly he simply mimicks the pose and words of the obedient servant.

Such a reading, however, did not occur to Lamming nor to any other of the politically committed writers in the period of decolonization. Unanimously, they rejected Shakespeare's Ariel and elected Caliban to be their model. Just to cite one more example of a powerful and famous *Tempest* rewriting from this time: Aimé Césaire's stage play *Une Tempête*, first performed in 1969, offers a summary and articulation of two decades of anti-colonial resistance, suggesting that a revolution takes place on the island. For his continuation and reversal of Shakespeare's plot,

Césaire drew inspiration from West African masks and rituals no less than from contemporary debates in African American movements. His Caliban is modelled on Malcolm X, his Ariel on Martin Luther King—a critical juxtaposition of the true revolutionary with the mere reformist, arguing for fundamental opposition rather than compromise and reconciliation.

Against this background of the politicized *Tempest* versions of the 1960s, we can understand why Ariel has generally been ill-regarded: the figure of the communicator, the go-between, can neither be clearly placed nor trusted. In *Indigo*, Warner indeed emphasizes this point. Placed between the frontlines of early colonial encounters, her Ariel is viewed with suspicion from either side: the islanders question her allegiance (see *Indigo* 178), and when she becomes pregnant with Kit's child, Sycorax curses her, threatening to transform the baby into a beast (see *Indigo* 170). On the other hand, Kit can never be sure of her either. He does not acknowledge and accept her as his wife; he has an intended in England, named Rebecca, so that he must deny his cross-ethnic island affair. And, as the narrative suggests, there are good reasons for him to be on his guard. For despite their continued sexual and social relationship, the power struggle between Ariel and Kit continues. As in the scene of their first meeting (quoted above), violence is always part of their encounters. At the climactic turning point, Ariel in fact sets out to poison him so as to contribute to the islanders' insurrection against the invaders which Dulé has organized.

This feature of a rebellious spirit is not apparent in the Ariel figure familiar from Shakespeare's play. In many other ways, however, Warner's version closely follows the clues given in *The Tempest*: Shakespeare's airy spirit reappears as a foundling; Ariel's many songs and voices are clearly echoed; and Ariel's association with life in the trees, which Prospero defines as captivity, is taken up in *Indigo* by the tree cabin where she goes to live so as to have a room of her own.

IV-

The most prominent difference between Shakespeare's and Warner's Ariel figure seems to concern gender. In *Indigo*, Ariel is represented as a woman. However, on reflection, this does not appear to be a fundamental redefinition of the figure, but follows from direct precedence. If we look for instance at visual representations of the *Tempest* characters in eighteenth- to twentieth-century art and theatre (such as the pictures reproduced in Vaughan & Vaughan's 1991 study of Caliban), we can see that Ariel is often rendered as a female figure. This derives from the long-established stage practice that the part is given to an actress and singer. Whereas Caliban is often placed in an ambiguous position between man and beast, Ariel is either shown as female or as androgynous, transgressing the clear boundaries of sex. Even in Peter Greenaway's 1990 film version *Prospero's Books*, where Ariel appears as a naked Cupid boy, his figure is invariably placed in close connection to Botticellian icons of the female.

The images of femininity associated with this figure are relevant because they also play a prominent role in the discourse of discovery and early modern explorations. It has often been noted that the colonial process by which new territories were brought under European control was represented in terms of male conquest and penetration of the female body. The famous sixteenth-century image of Amerigo Vespucci "discovering" America in the shape of a naked woman lying in a hammock (reproduced, for instance, in Hulme & Sherman: 2000 171) provides a case in point. The whole encounter between the European and his other is framed in terms of an erotic adventure: the female allegory of the new continent reaches out to greet him with her right hand; the traveller, in turn, will use a feminized version of his own name to make the New World known. But the image is most remarkable in that it also contains clear indications of the other side of colonial fantasies. In the background, we see a scene of cannibalistic feasting, suggesting that the European traveller must constantly be on his guard, lest he become the next victim of such savage practices.

The image thus establishes a functional connection between desire and anxiety, fear and attraction in European representations

of colonial projects, which have had a wide appeal and a long subsequent history. In order therefore to find his bearings in the dangerous and unknown country, the colonizer needs an ally, a native guide and go-between to guard himself against the terrors of savagery and cannibalism. These mediators and communicators have always been the most interesting and perhaps most powerful figures in cross-cultural encounters, but as a result of their precarious placing they have often been ignored or dismissed. Interestingly enough, the best known figures of this kind who have entered the historical records are invariably women, with Doña Marina or Malinche, from the early Spanish conquests, as their most prominent ancestor (see Greenblatt 1991). Reported to have been prisoner and mistress to Cortez, she stood between the Spanish and the Aztecs and acted as interpreter. She lived two centuries before *The Tempest*, but her figure has lived on in many myths and other forms of cultural representation.

Others like her followed, and one prominent example does indeed come close to the time and setting of Shakespeare's play. The oft repeated seventeenth-century story of the Algonquian princess Pocahontas, later baptized Rebecca, bears so many parallels to Warner's Ariel figure that she must certainly be seen as a historical model reworked in *Indigo*. A native hostage to the English governor of the Virginia colony, Pocahontas seems to have changed sides, learned the English language and was eventually married to an English settler whom she bore a child. An American founding mother and intermediary in the romance of the New World (see Linton 1998), Pocahontas played a crucial part in early modern colonial myths, analysed in a study by Peter Hulme (1986), to which Warner herself gives credit in the acknowledgements for *Indigo*. The point about this female figure is her precarious mediating function making her, like Doña Marina, the first embodiment of creole culture.

In this way, female go-betweens are often used to mark the thresholds between new eras in history. Warner writes about this in another context:

> Women cannot be smoothly allocated their place in the same division of roles; the historical—and mythical—part they play in the inauguration of new histories, new societies, new families demands a

> fresh taxonomy. Women, through their bodies, become the hyphen between the forest/morne and the habitation/house/plantation, either by force or by choice (Warner, "Siren, Hyphen," 5).

Here she speaks of women such as Pocahontas or her Ariel version in the figure of a hyphen—which provides the third key term in my title. A hyphen is a figure of connection and division; it marks a space that lies between and, at the same time, a bridge that leads across. A hyphen signals belonging as well as separation. Just as in hyphenated names, it signifies a doubleness of meaning and a duality of identification that cannot be placed in a single category. The "fresh taxonomy" Warner calls for is needed because such hyphenated figures generally transgress the old dichotomies.

The figure of hyphenation as it emerges here for Warner's novel should not be seen just as a literary idea. It has many counterparts in actual, historical contexts and especially in the colonial contact zones where the strict boundaries between opposing sides cannot be maintained. The frontispiece of *Indigo* shows a map of Liamuiga, on which the early settlement is fenced by a stockade, the border between "barbarity" and European "civilization." The female hyphenated figure moves across this borderland; she mediates between the spaces on either side of the boundary and so works towards historical and cultural transformations.

Such moves may also help us to explain the difficulties and ambiguities, noted earlier, in trying to place this figure. Belonging to both sides at once, she belongs to no side fully. In this way, Ariel emerges as a figure of the third, and this is why her own story is so difficult to trace and narrate. In Warner's novel we are clearly faced with this problem. As we know, her plot to poison the conqueror and support Dulé's rebellion fails. But ironically, Kit does not only manage to escape the threat to his life, but also interprets her behaviour as a warning against the uprising. Thus, Ariel's attempted act of resistance against the foreign powers becomes appropriated by them as a means to stabilize and defend their position. In her attempt to reposition herself at the forefront of anti-colonial struggles, she is instrumentalized and inadvertently helps to perpetuate colonial rule.

In later chapters, though, the novel shows how even the traces of her failed coup are being erased from memory. As noted at the outset, Ariel makes one brief re-appearance on the contemporary narrative level of *Indigo*. In one of Serafine's stories to Miranda we hear a later version of Liamuiga's early history, as it has been perpetuated in colonial myth-making. Serafine here speaks of

> a famous character: the concubine of Kit Everard, she had redeemed the savagery of her people. . . . [She] had heard among her people that they planned to fall upon the settlers and massacre them in their beds one moonlit night. And hearing this, out of the great love she bore the founder of the island, Sir Christopher Everard, and on behalf of the lovechild she had borne him, she raised the alarm (*Indigo* 225ff).

This is how Ariel's act of resistance is rewritten and remembered, not as an active agent of cross-cultural negotiations, but as a figure in colonial romance. In her article "Siren, Hyphen" quoted above, Warner says that this moment in her novel is intended to create one of the sharpest ironies in the book:

> When Serafine passes on this interpretation of Ariel/Barbe's action, she becomes the conduit of a false narrative, her own storytelling voice taken over, overwritten . . . . Serafine could not be otherwise than an unreliable narrator, because traditions change stories (Warner, "Siren, Hyphen" 18).

That is to say, the past does not always remain the same, but is continually remade and rewritten.

V-

What, then, remains as the contemporary significance of Warner's Ariel, the woman, foundling, hyphenated figure, whose story is retaken by the dominant tradition? It seems to me that *Indigo* suggests a precise answer to this question. The powerful appropriation of Ariel's story is not the last word; precisely because narratives are often unreliable and traditions change, we can continue to remake them.

This is what Warner does to the tradition of *The Tempest* with its plots of power and dispossession. But this is especially what she does with the figure of Ariel, whose story, after all, reads rather differently once we have read *Indigo*. From the implications and suggestions Warner weaves into her novel, we may even have to reconsider female figures like Pocahontas: outside the story of devoted lover and mistress to colonial pioneers, she may also have played other roles and perhaps have been involved in acts of anti-colonial resistance. To use Lamming's terms from his critique of Shakespeare's Ariel: with the background of the cultural history that Warner unfolds in her novel, we should perhaps see this figure of a "spy" more appropriately as a kind of double agent, not clearly placed on either side, but working in a third space in-between.

In some ways, this seems to be an apt description also of Marina Warner's own position. As a British writer and daughter of a long line of English colonial pioneers, she reconnects herself through storytelling powers to her Caribbean family heritage. In fact, this applies in a very real sense. Not unlike the fictional Kit Everard, the historical Sir Thomas Warner had a Caribbean mistress, who bore him a child, a Creole son. Through this branch of their family, the Warners have become a well established and important Creole family, until this day well known in several Caribbean islands, such as Trinidad or St Kitt's. In her article quoted at the outset, Warner explores this unacknowledged part of her family connections and reveals that this has motivated her to take up the whole project of yet another rewriting of *The Tempest*. The article is entitled "Between the colonist and the Creole: Family bonds, family boundaries" (Warner 1993), and it suggests that Ariel functions as an identificatory figure for Warner herself.

I would like to conclude, though, not on this biographical note, but with a point about the wider implications which *Indigo*, as a novel and cultural project, might have in the present postcolonial and postimperial period. In 1996, Marina Warner gave a talk at the Free University of Berlin, in which she addressed this issue. Here she interpreted the colour symbolism of the novel; beginning with the title, the chapters take us through the whole spectrum, offering colour terms as interpretative challenges.

Part VI is entitled "Maroon/Black," and this is how Warner comments on this choice:

> The idea of the maroon with which the book ends, is again a kind of play on words that actually have no etymological connection, but the idea that maroon, the colour (a deep, sort of purply brown), might be linked to maroon, the figure of the runaway. It seemed to me that this figure of the maroon—in Jamaica it's the runaways who fought against the settlements on the island and the colonial powers there—is a figure that haunts Caribbean history. It comes from a French term meaning 'to run away.' And the figure of the maroon seems to me to be the imaginative figure of our time, because he runs away to an imaginary homeland, a person who crosses borders and boundaries to inhabit a place of elective affinities. (Warner: 1996 3)

In this final sentence, Warner cites a famous phrase by Salman Rushdie, from the title essay of his prose collection *Imaginary Homelands* (1991), where he argues for a place in which fixed patterns of belonging are no longer primary and binding. An imaginary homeland is a space where, in Warner's terms, elective affinities emerge as more important.

Such elective affinities, I suggest, are what the Ariel figure shows as a foundling and a hyphen. Her lack of a fixed social place, defined by hereditary lines of origin, may also be seen as liberating and pointing us towards new forms of social organization. In this way, I think that the Sycorax's extended family, as presented in the novel with Dulé and Ariel as her two adopted children, can be seen as an important model for contemporary social formations. Such a model is no longer based on blood relations and ties of family descent, but on social interaction, on adopted familiarity and acquired neighbourhood. As many European societies are presently struggling to come to terms with their multicultural future, such a model may indeed have far-reaching political and legal implications. Ariel therefore emerges as a figure of the new transcultural affinities.

As I argued at the outset, the project of postcolonial rewriting of the classics has traditionally been framed in revolutionary terms, with Caliban as central spokesman and protagonist. Meanwhile, however, we seem to have reached a point where Ariel's role, though less articulate and prominent, might gain

more critical significance. We learn from Shakespeare's Caliban that the island of *The Tempest* is full of noises. In the many things which Warner's novel *Indigo* has added to the sound archive, this message seems to me, if not the strongest, then certainly one of the most important.

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