

**The Colours of Fiction:
From Indigo/Blue to Maroon/Black
(A Study of Miranda's Story in *Indigo*)**

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“The isle is full of noises, so they say, and Sycorax is the source
of many.”

(Indigo 77)

Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) has become one of the most widely rewritten literary texts in the wake of postcolonial concerns.¹ Some of these rewritings are based on rereadings of the canonical text from the perspective of the colonial subject. One of the early influential Anglophone rereadings of the play was George Lamming's *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960), which uses the Prospero/Caliban relationship as a metaphor for the encounter between colonizer and colonized, and stresses Caliban's (mis)appropriation of the master's language as an act of revenge for being dispossessed of the island. Lamming is not the first to read *The Tempest* as a colonial allegory, but his reading has a pioneering significance, since it suggests an alternative to Shakespeare's representation of the colonizer/colonized relationship.² Since then, a number of rewritings have appeared centring on the Prospero/Caliban relationship. Superficially, *The Tempest* is a play about Prospero's "civilizing" of Caliban, as well as about his revenge through magic, his recovery of his Milan dukedom from the usurpers, and the marriage of his daughter Miranda to Ferdinand, making her queen of Naples. On a deeper level, *The Tempest* can be read as the father's plot—Prospero's plot for his virtuous and dutiful daughter Miranda of whom he says, "I have done nothing but in care of thee" (1.2:16). It is the father's plot for his daughter, along with Prospero's colonial story of the island that intrigued Marina Warner and propelled her to write *Indigo, or Mapping the Waters* (1992). What Warner contests in *Indigo*, therefore, is not so much the brutal-

ization of Caliban, as the silencing of the female characters Sycorax and Miranda. Displacing the usual Prospero/Caliban opposition through a revisioning of the character of Miranda, and recasting her as a Creole in a lavish evocation of a Caribbean consciousness—a strategy reminiscent of *Wide Sargasso Sea*—*Indigo* becomes another important text for the discussion of race and miscegenation as elements in the construction of Caribbean colonial history.

To make the rewriting historically meaningful so as to suggest “history is sea,” that is a constantly changing surface with capacity for interrogation, supplement and resounding of many voices,³ Warner structures *Indigo* along a colour-spectrum drawn from indigenous flora and fauna of the island, corresponding to the various stages of the story. The first, entitled “Lilac/Pink,” tells the story of the modern Everards family in post-war London; the second section, “Indigo/Blue,” reconstructs Sycorax and her matriarchy, and so on until the last stage, “Maroon/Black,” is reached where the story of Miranda (maroon) and Caliban (black Felix) is retold. The novel therefore comprises, as Patrick Parrinder puts it, “a narrative continuum and a changing spectrum,” shedding light of different colours on history (12). By naming the novel *Indigo*, Warner wants “to introduce a pattern of many colours, and suggest their mingling” (*Signs* 265). Since indigo is the original colour used in blueprints, it invites the reader to “look for the story and scheme that lay beneath the visible layers,” and suggests that “there is always another story beyond the story,” and that “there is always as it were another deep blueprint” (265).

Indeed, *Indigo* does more than portray the imaginary Caribbean island at the time of the first colonial contact with the British in the early seventeenth century. It attempts to redeem the violence of colonial history through presenting a reparatory picture of the post-independence landscape since the early 1970s. History, as it has appeared to the islanders, is like “a churn or a bowl, in which substances and essences were tumbled and mixed, always returning, now emerging into personal form, now submerged into the mass in the continuous present tense of existence, as in one of the vats in which Sycorax brewed the indigo” (122). History continues and repeats itself like Caribbean

waters that change and return all the time. Since the “past abided, rolling into the present, and ocean swelling and falling back, then returning again” (95), what happens in the past has its effects on the present. Whereas the colonial plotline deals with the female line of stories in terms of Sycorax’s matriarchy and the Kit-Ariel relationship, in the twentieth-century line of the plot, women’s subjectivity and sexuality are epitomized in Miranda, a descendant of Kit Everard who leads the seventeenth-century English expedition on Liamuiga. Miranda’s ‘her-story’ becomes not only the necessary sequel engendered by the seventeenth-century tale of miscegenation, but also a reparation of the injustices of the past.

Since *The Tempest* Miranda and Caliban have been connected through the threat of rape, a theme discussed and treated in many post-colonial studies and appropriations of Shakespeare’s play. One of the most radical rewritings of their relationship is to be found in *Toufann*, a “Mauritian fantasy” by Dev Virahsawmy, where Kalibann is not only the agent of Prospero’s computer magic but also Kordelia (Miranda)’s lover, in a relationship of mutual affection. In Shakespeare’s play Miranda’s role is first as an obedient daughter, and then as Ferdinand’s queen—a position that helps to secure the expansion of her father’s dukedom. Her virginity, as Peter Hulme points out, is “an important political card for Prospero” (126). But even though she conveniently (or magically) falls in love with the man of her father’s choice, Miranda is not as meek and submissive as she appears to be. She meets Ferdinand without permission and then disobeys her father’s command that she should not reveal her name or help Ferdinand with the physical labour assigned by Prospero as a test. Earlier, her stinging rebuke of Caliban, in which she refers to him as an uneducable savage (1. 2. 352–63), reveals an assertive young woman. Still, despite occasional disobedience and outspokenness, Miranda remains the chaste ideal of early modern womanhood.⁴ Her assertiveness is resurrected to challenge her perceived chastity in *Toufann* when Kordelia announces that she is pregnant with Kalibann’s child. At the play’s end, Kalibann and Kordelia are proclaimed King and Queen and their child will probably rule both Naples and the “bare island” (8). In *Indigo*, Miranda’s attraction to the

radical black actor George Felix, who plays Caliban on stage, and later on discards his “Whitey’s name” and called himself Shaka after the great Zulu leader (394), resembles Kordelia’s affinity with Kalibann in *Toufann*. Both narratives substitute the threat of rape or miscegenation with a union based on mutual affection and “an acceptance of both the necessary changeability of history, and the ineliminable otherness of the other” (Connor 196). However, the threat of rape is transposed in *Indigo* to an outrageous assault when Miranda first meets Felix in an interview and photographs him without asking for permission. He exclaims:

Aha, Whitey just didn’t get a chance to ask. And isn’t that just the case with everything you gone and done over the centuries of black oppression? You never had the chance to ask—the slaves, the chain gang, the artists who got burned out making entertainment for you and looking real pretty for you, taking Whitey’s junk, the white pigs’ white junk. (264–65)

Felix’s rage is actually an indirect reflection of Warner’s sense of “Whitey guilt,” which is also revealed on several other occasions. Discussing her family’s involvement in the early British colonial enterprise that “so resembles Prospero’s theft,” she writes the following:

No evidence exists which suggests that the Warners were any different from the rest of the plantocracy, who on the whole were the sorriest crew of ugly, greedy and often vicious self-interested parties ever to lobby parliament, as they did in strength against the abolitionists, and even against the “ameliorists,” who merely wanted to improve the conditions of the slaves. (“Between” 201–02)

This sense of guilt and justice that compels Warner “to sit in judgment on oneself, perhaps, not only on others” is shared by her character Miranda. It is clearly suggested that it is the family’s Creole past that compels Miranda to identify herself with the coloured and diasporic quality of her Creole ancestry and pushes her to embark on a relationship with the black actor:

Indeed, she would have liked to tell him about her father who was called Nigger Everard at school and spurned in his own family because his mother had been Creole; she wanted to tell him about Feeny whom she loved; how she herself was a musty, couldn't he see it? (266)

The attraction that Miranda feels towards George Felix is grounded in a perception that they share the hybrid nature of a colonial as well as postcolonial identity and the common fate of Creolization. At the novel's end, Miranda and Shaka have a child called Feeny, after the family's Caribbean nanny whose stories and riddles have survived three generations and will continuously be passed on. Both a parody of the romantic relationship between Ferdinand and Miranda that promises Milan's prosperous future in *The Tempest*, and written with an echo of the story "Beauty and the Beast" and of Cupid and Psyche as recounted by the Roman poet Lucius Apuleius in *The Golden Ass*, this utopian, slightly dramatic arrangement, in the convention of fairy tale, is meant to correct the wrong of the past. It is also meant to imbue the dark colour of Maroon/Black (also the title of this part of the story) with a promise of greater life potential and family lineage, as the brownish Miranda and the black Felix are blessed with a daughter who is going to populate the isle with Feenies rather than Calibans.⁵ Warner's unique perception and use her of colours that run through the novel are culturally in line with her conviction that myth and legends have a powerful shaping power on history and people's perception of the world. By adopting the tradition of the fairy tale, Warner wants her novel to "speak in the way fairy tales do, for hope, against despair" (*Signs* 265). Hence, on the one hand, the fairy tales with the theme of metamorphosis are invoked in Serafine's tales in order to convey the wish for transformation and reconciliation. On the other hand, the idea of maroon, as Warner admits, "again plays on words":

The name of the colour echoes the word maroon, or escaped slave, which comes from French *marroner*, to run away. The maroons, in Jamaica and elsewhere, struggled bitterly against the colonial powers and established their own enclaves and

economy. The image of these rebels haunts Caribbean history as the lost hope of the past, and by analogy has become the imaginative symbol of the fugitive in our time, because the maroon can also run away to an imaginary homeland; he crosses borders and breaks out of boundaries and inhabits a place of elective affinities. (*Signs* 265)

By endorsing the colour maroon, Warner re-vision and rearticulates the other side of the colonial history. Her privileging of dark colours, as well as Miranda's identification with Maroon/Black, draws a parallel to the Creole Antoinette's desire to be like Tia in Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Like Antoinette, Miranda is neglected by her own mother and taken care of by a black nanny, who teaches her to "resist, even though the surface messages of the stories she tells her are conformist" (Warner *Signs* 267). Her union with the black Felix is a revealing example of her non-conformity and resistance. Miranda's counterpart is her younger sister-aunt Xanthe, daughter of her grandfather Anthony Everard, whose first Creole wife Estelle drowned in Caribbean waters in 1934. Xanthe is his daughter by his second wife, the English society belle, Gillian. Xanthe's story and the story of her family, which occupy the first and fourth parts of the novel, are entitled Lilac/White and Gold/White respectively, implying coldness, lifelessness, guilt, and death, as opposed to the warmth, radiance and vitality of Maroon/Black. Xanthe's name, which means the gilded one in Greek, is not without relevance: her husband Sy Nybris calls her "Goldie," for "everything you touch turns to gold" (362).⁶ The implication of the whiteness, gildedness, and hardness implied by her name becomes more explicit when Xanthe drowns:

In the soft, walled chamber of her marine host, she was mantled in pearl, layer upon layer spun about her foreign body until, mummified at the mineral heart of a pale rainbow, she became forever smooth and sheeny and hard. (376)

While Miranda cannot help feeling the "classic liberal guilt" of a colonist descendent (268), and "her father's angling" for doing hotel busi-

ness on *Enfant-Béate* simply “shamed her” (313), the cold and practical Xanthe thinks it is illogical and “absurd” to feel that way about things which “happened three-and-a-half centuries ago” (279). Her attitude to “history with a big H” with “the Elizabethan seadog, the dream of Eldorado, the lost paradise” (278), is to make use of it for today’s profits. In her view, “guilt is unhealthy anyway” (279). What is healthy is profit, and what is profitable is to join hands with the neo-colonial prospector Sy whose maritime empire is built exactly on the spot of the hot springs where *Sycorax* used to offer both spiritual and physical remedies for her people all over the island. Three centuries later, Sy and Xanthe turn the hot springs into a site of a massage spa frequented by the international jet set, thus repeating what happened three centuries earlier in a renewed neo-colonial expropriation. When Miranda and Xanthe are attacked by Jimmy Dunn’s boys in their first visit to the hot springs, Miranda is struck with remorse for “trespassing” (332), while Xanthe, driven by her business instinct, urges Sy to buy the site from the government and thereby evicts Jimmy Dunn and his family from their settlement to make way for her luxury spa as a “condign punishment” (345). Xanthe chooses to marry Sy despite family objections because he is rich and is shrewdly business-minded. Sy has bought the site of Kit Everard’s first landing with the intention of developing it into a special oyster bay so that he will be able to disprove V. S. Naipaul, whom he quotes as having once said (drawing on the idea of James Anthony Froude) in *The Middle Passage*, “history’s built around achievement, and nothing was ever achieved in the Caribbean” (304). When Sy hatches his huge water-mapping plans he almost imagines himself as the modern Prospero who “can deal with everything—even the might of sea, of the wind” (322). Yet, like the first Kit Everard who cautions not to “tempt Providence” (180) in his earlier colonial venture, Sy’s conscience reminds him of the potential for punishment and he thinks “shoosh, in case the gods hear us and get a bit cross” (322).

Although Xanthe’s drowning connects her to Sir Anthony Everard’s first Creole wife Estella and the “tiny silver woman” (221) in the fairy tale told by Serafine, what is more significant is its connection with the coup led by Jimmy Dunn, an islander—a postcolonial Caliban who foments political activism against the contemporary Prospero’s plot.

Jimmy Dunn has deliberately adopted a Muslim name, Abdul Malik, meaning “son of the king.”⁷ The name has explicit references to 1960s Black Power Movement and gestures towards a rejection of slavery and the Christianity associated with it. If the name of Abdul Malik “is not far from being an anagram of the combined letters of Caliban and Dulé,” as suggested by Steven Connor (195), the point of the contemporary plotline is then to bring forth the theme of historical repetition and reparation. Outraged by “the selling of the islands to the money-men behind the hotels and the casino and all the rest of the tricks the Westerners turned” (352), Jimmy Dunn forms Shining Purity of the One God Liberation Movement and launches a political coup at the Government House in Jamieston. The unsuccessful coup has its historical resonance in the doomed uprising led by Dulé on the colonialist stockade three hundred years before. Among the nine fatalities, Xanthe is counted as “an indirect victim of the coup” (368), for she drowns when she makes her sea crossing from one hotel to another during the time of the attack. Thus the blessing and gifts given to Xanthe by her Godmother, the Princess, who stands for the good fairy, are cancelled out by the curses secretly uttered by the bad fairy, Miranda’s mother Astrid whose husband Kit is Xanthe’s half-brother (and thus a natural rival for the family fortune). Xanthe’s resolution and promise that “[she]’ll never be mean again to Sy or anyone else” (372) is juxtaposed to the appeal from Atala Seacole, the post-independence female Prime Minister of Liamuiga, who urges her countrymen to revive the island’s economy by curbing foreign investment and taking care of the beautiful land and sea on their own. Under the tree, Sycorax hears both voices. To Sycorax, Xanthe “hadn’t cared, she had never known how to love well,” (375) and “she had given her first and last cry for the love that most people crave all their lifelong days” (376). Therefore Xanthe’s transformation into “a pearl of rare size and beauty” (376) befits her person and is not a genuine ‘sea change.’ Her resolution, Sycorax notes, is “a New Year’s resolution, routine false promises, she’d heard far too many” (373), whereas Atala Seacole’s appeal gives Sycorax hope of recovering the idyllic matriarchal utopia for her own people, which will finally still the noises of the isle and enable her to attain peace.

Atala Seacole, therefore, represents the voice of a post-independence nationalist politician. Influenced by Marxist-Leninist theories of capitalism and imperialism, and working in opposition to her governor uncle Sir Berkeley (“a prominent member of the coming generation of indigenuous and non-white officials, hand-picked to handle transition to nationhood on account of his British education, his sturdiness and loyalty” 310), she renounces complicity with Prospero’s neo-colonizing project. Instead, she aligns herself with Caliban’s anti-neo-colonialist politics. Although not supportive of Abdul Malik’s surprise assault on the local parliament, she sees “some justice on his side” (352). His speech at the coup actually has resonance with what she says later to an international audience. Both refuse to remain trapped under the colonial influence and call for a repudiation of foreign intervention and American commercialism. In Malik’s words,

Let’s see the end of the foreign putrefaction in our land. Let’s see the back of the gamblers and fornicators, the followers of Satan and Belial, who flaunt themselves in the abominable bikini and pour the tainted rum punches and mint juleps down their throats of evil. Let us say to the US dollar: we don’t want your filth here. Let us say to the great plastic card, no, we don’t want you here; let’s say to the great white god Jesus Christ we don’t want you here. Let us say goodbye to the little white lies. Yes, we have our own riches and they will buy us all we need, yes, they will.

Let us say, ‘Get thee behind me’ to Coca-cola and Pepsi-cola and blue jeans, to the concession and the franchise, the deal and the dollar, let us say to the Tempter, ‘I see you for what you are. Get thee behind me!’ (354–55)

Malik’s speech has a powerful bearing on the neo-colonialist era of global capitalism in the post-independence Caribbean. After the Second World War, along with the dissolution of colonial empires, many former colonies achieved independent status. Liamuiga, it seems in the novel, did not gain its independent status until very recently. While Liamuiga experiences the growing pains of its initial years of independence and

strives to move out from the shadow of colonial influence, the island has become the focus of world attention like many other so-called peripheral areas. Big Western powers keep interfering in its politics and economy, trying to turn it into a new colony. Atala Seacole is politically insightful when she sees that Liamuiga “with its train of attendant succubi, rights of aliens to the airstrip . . . electronic espionage, strategic drug and arms smuggling, destabilization, anarchy rippling outwards . . . could act like a rogue virus in the immune system of world politics” (367). It might turn itself into “a Middle Eastern foothold in the Caribbean” with Abdul Malik becoming “an embryonic Colonel Gaddafi or Saddam Hussein” (367), which brings to mind today’s tension between America and the Middle East. Atala Seacole feels grateful to Abdul Malik for having cleared the way for her and her ideas, in particular, her plans for Xanthe and Sy’s hotel, “The Spice of Life.” She turns the hotel into a training school where the Béatois “will learn other skills beside catering and tourism” (375). Atala Seacole is to Sycorax’s liking because she returns the island to female leadership and self-determination.

If Atala’s fore-mother is Sycorax, representing the pre-historical voice of matriarchy, Miranda’s fore-mother is Serafine Killebree who is another important female voice in the novel. Serafine looks after the Everards and observes the ups and downs of the colonial family. “Ow[ing] a great deal to Jean Rhys’s *Christophine*,” Warner admits, Serafine emerges in the story as a storyteller who “occupies a position both inside the society to which she belongs, and outside” (*Signs* 266-67). Her name “Killebree,” after the French *colibri*, the tiny hummingbird in the Caribbean, endows her with a voice of a female enchantress who, as a twentieth-century counterpart to Sycorax, possesses some of Sycorax’s poetic power and *sangay* (a word from the ancient island vocabulary, meaning a kind of “preternatural insight and power” 86), and represents “the oral culture of women, [and] all pre-Gutenberg female voices” (*Signs* 267). Her tales that both begin and end the novel not only structure its narrative, but also shed metaphorical light on both themes and plots. Both the initial story, based on the Greek myth about King Midas and the Golden Touch, and the final story of a tigress getting trapped when looking herself into the mirror, are reminders that one must be careful about what

one desires or covets. Like the Queen of Sheba and the Mother Goose figure, two of Warner's favourite fairy-tale figures, Serafine is a "wise queen, an anonymous outside figure" who "holds the secret of the story [and] knows the riddles" (Warner in Zabus 528). Miranda, who finds her Prince Charming in Caliban (Shaka), or Xanthe, who drowns in the same waters that are to be mapped by her knight Sy and is then absorbed by the sea-monster Manjiku who swallows anything female that comes his way (especially pregnant or menstruating women), are both reflected in the stories that Serafine orally passes on to Miranda, who will in turn impart them in turn to her daughter Feeny.⁸

Yet, Serafine "tells the story of Ariel as she has been told it" (Warner in Zabus 521). In this light, she is the ironic and ambivalent transmitter of the official story of Ariel's alleged betrayal. Warner deems this moment "sad but part of the human condition" (521). It is the historical condition for the house servants of the colonial white household that has fostered not only the internally colonized Serafines but also the "too articulate" Christophines.⁹ As a colonized subject who is treated well by her master, Serafine lives and thinks by the master's rule without realizing it, just as she is unaware of the textual slippages in her bedtime stories. In an interview, Warner explains both Serafine's dilemma and her potential to speak:

In a way, what the novel perhaps suggests is that Feeny weaves another story within the story—the "Beauty and the Beast" story. In that one, she's free of the historical burden. She teaches Miranda to rethink the world; she herself can't do it because she is a colonized subject. . . . In a sense she has been incorporated and colonized; she's an island that has been taken over. But at the same time, through her possibilities of rethinking her lot and distributing rewards and punishments, she stands for me as the exemplary fiction writer who can be colonized and still speak.¹⁰ (Warner in Zabus 521)

Warner's point about Serafine as a colonized subject who is inevitably and involuntarily complicit with the colonialist discourse points to the dispossessed and silenced position of the colonized at large. The colo-

nialist discourse forces other possible discourses into a subordinate and marginal position. Even anti-colonist discourse can be contaminated by the dominant ideology of colonialism. It gives rise to both amnesia and aphasia when it comes to constructing the subjectivity, identity, epistemology, and history of the colonized. Being a colonized subject, the colonized participates in the historical and discursive construction of his or her own subjectivity and history within the colonialist discursive framework, involuntarily becoming complicit with the colonialist conception. Warner is optimistic, however, about the fact that the experience of colonization does not prevent storytellers from telling their stories: “the Anglophone writer is in a position to reach more people, so that out of the colonized position, he or she addresses a larger audience and then reinvents the experience that audience has received historically” (Warner in Zabus 521). It is Warner, the writer who strives to write against the grain by retrieving Sycorax and Ariel’s stories, who sets the record right by imagining the other side of colonial memory and by revealing what is concealed and erased. Her endeavour suggests that just as “the isle is full of noises,” colonial memory or colonial history is open to more than one account and interpretation.

The colonial narrative is not only oral and verbal but also visual, as constructed by Warner in *Indigo*. Where history is erased to make room for neo-colonialist enterprises such as hotels and casinos, its traces can still be seen on the island: “where the old coppers of the sugarworks now held water lilies and horned toads, and the cast-iron cogs and hubs of the gear used for the crushing of the cane stood about the lawns like garden sculpture” (357). These traces are historical fossils revealing the colonial moment when sugar was bound up with the history of slavery and played an enormous role in building up the British Empire. As Niall Ferguson has noted, “the Empire had begun with the stealing of gold; it progressed with the cultivation of sugar” (13). The discourse of sugar permeates the narrative of *Indigo*; Warner herself reveals how Caribbean colonial history was “mostly all driven by the hunger for sugar”:

The trade in this commodity was so gigantic that the production, acquisition and consumption of sugar controlled national

economies and the fate of people for three hundred years and still does in a slightly less savage way today. (I put something sweet into almost every chapter of the book—stealthily—just to hint how pervasively sugar flows through our world). (“Rich Pickings” 30)

A careful reader will notice the explicit connection between the colonizer and the colonized, between tea and sugar in one of the very earliest scenes of the novel where the modern-day Everards are proudly boasting of their pioneering history at the family tea party to celebrate the christening of Xanthe:

There was a pause, while the reverie of colonial sunniness passed over them, and Serafine in black uniform with white bib filled their glasses from the bottle she carried on a silver tray, and came back to pour for the tea-drinkers. (42)

The West Indian nanny “in black uniform with white bib” serving tea to the colonial descendents who are notorious for their sweet tooth calls to mind the history of Caribbean sugar plantation which, for the conquered, is informed not by sweetness but by sorrow and bitterness. Later, as the story proceeds, sugar is incorporated into the narrative time and again. In the first autumn of Kit’s settlement in Liamuiga, he is informed by Tom, his right-hand man, who has just come back from his mission to London for reinforcement and supplies: “in the city, the talk is sugar. Sugar, only sugar. . . . Our good patron the Lord Clovelly enjoins you, Kit, not to squander our chances here on indigo and tobacco. The market will soon be sated, in his opinion. Sweetness is in the air!” (176). Tom has actually brought to the island African slaves, “all to work on the new sugar plantation; to stake out cane fields in the rain-forest” (176). The role sugar played centuries ago resembles the role that oil plays today.¹¹ Its impact on the economic, social, and political destiny of both the Empire that consumed it and the regions whose people (Africans) and land (the American continent) suffered great devastation for the production of it is equally far-reaching (Mintz and Walvin). However, the history of the sugar industry changes with the history of

colonialism. By the time Sy and Xanthe attempt to renew the colonial enterprise of exploitation in their island tourism industry, sugar (according to Sy) is no longer a profitable commodity: “with punitive tariffs against us from the United States sugar corporation . . . demand is falling everywhere” (302). Talking about Liamuiga’s potential effect on world politics with its potential for corruption, Atala Seacole again uses the metaphor of sugar to suggest the dangerous threat posed by what is happening on the island:

Just like sugar . . . when it flowed from these islands and poisoned the age of Enlightenment with its attendant trades and plagues! In a chain of greed, sugar linked the [slave] merchants in Biafra and the Gold Coast to the Yorkshire coaldigger who was sipping his cup of sweet hot tea in the chimneynook in order to ease his lungs—corruption here now can do the same, it can inflict such wounds on the First World that it can never recover. (367)

The sport of Flinders, like the sugar industry, contributes extensively as well to the allegory of the novel. As the game has resemblance to cricket, baseball, and contact bridge, in which “judgment and stealth and nerve rather than feats of rude strength are required from a player” (45), it becomes metaphorical of Prospero’s theft of Caliban’s island. A master of Flinders is said to possess the quality of *sangay*, once possessed by the great sorceress Sycorax. The link between present and past is explicitly suggested in the way that Flinders is invented in order to absorb the history of the islands. The names of the houses for which rival teams compete—Grand-Thom’ and Petit-Thom, Figtree and Mangrove, Creek and Jamieston, Sloop’s Bight, Rebecca, Belmont—are drawn directly from the history and geography of colonial *Enfant-Béate* (45). They represent different island enclaves that the team strives to occupy with a raised flag as a sign of victorious occupation.

So cricket comes in. It becomes in the novel what is called Flinders, an imaginary sport that is first played on the island of *Enfant-Béate* and then spreads to the British Empire just as sugar does. The name Flinders, as Warner wishes, does hover between the recognizable and the

magical, between sport and *sangay*. In reality, cricket is an English game exported to the Caribbean, as C.L.R. James discusses in his well-known book *Beyond a Boundary*. Warner's grandfather Sir Pelham, author of *My Cricketing Life* was the England captain of cricket and for a long time, President of the Marylebone Cricket Club.¹² Warner comments in an interview: "In those days, the captain of a cricket team was the alternative to the King of England. It was the national game, highly structured in social terms, very much Gentlemen vs. Players" (522). In the same interview, she makes the following connections between cricket and British colonialism: "Cricket epitomizes the British view of its own colonialism—mannerly, courteous, calm and effective. It crystallizes in itself the British view of themselves as colonizers. They were not Goths or Huns; they came in with cricket, the civilizing art of cricket" (Warner in Zabus 522). This self-appointed civilizing image of the missionaries prevails throughout the history of British colonial enterprise. Cricket, like other forms of British education, like English literature, for instance, becomes the "fabric of colonial discourse," to use Hulme's term (46).

Warner claims ironically in "Between the Colonist and the Creole: Family Bonds, Family Boundaries," that "the history of the West Indies in the pioneer years of the seventeenth-century had to appear a graceful, controlled, law-abiding act of conquest in the interests of civilization. It had to be cricket" (202). She explains her creation of the game in an interview:

I wanted the game—the Imperial game which did not cease to be an Imperial game but which became also the game of those who had been conquered and colonized and their successors—to be calqued exactly on the battle I describe between the indigenous inhabitants of the island and the first colonizers, because I wanted to show the irony that the most civilized sport is actually born out of conflict. (Warner in Tredell 248)

Although Warner wants the game to be "more violent than cricket in the way it was played" so that it has more historical resonance, Flinders nonetheless remains a gentleman's game (249). Like cricket, it is known

for its grace, restraint and fair play, which the colonists assume as principles for their missions of colonial conquest, while in reality, they use cannons and guns to subdue people who have only shell tools. When in 1992 the 500th anniversary of Columbus's Voyage to the New World was celebrated in many European and American countries, "the few descendants of the then inhabitants of those islands—in common with native Americans throughout the continent—mourn rather than celebrate the quincentenary of Columbus's arrival" (Hulme and Whitehead 1). Columbus's arrival in the so-called New World, whose consequences have divergent and sometimes debatable interpretations, has given rise to an almost "infinite rehearsal," to use Wilson Harris's well known phrase, of oppression, exploitation and racial discrimination of one world of and against the other.

The pros and cons of British imperial expansion have been a topic of contention among politicians, economists and historians ever since the existence and the disintegration of the Empire, and this discussion continues.¹³ The Warner family's contribution to the Empire has been taken as a family pride for generations, but to Marina Warner, a descendent of a founding father of British colonies in the Caribbean, the matter is of imperial rape, theft and arrogance. When she heard that the "glowing epitaphs to the liberality and nobility of slave owners in the graveyards of the West Indies" were carved "by stonecutters who did not know how to read or write, who were their slaves," she "felt prickly shame creep over [her]" ("Between" 201). The cargoes of tobacco and other crops shipped back by the early colonists to add to the capital of the mother country were harvested in a manner similar to other modes of primitive capital accumulation described by Marx in *Capital* as "dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt" (712). Taking Walter Benjamin's dictum in his famous "Theses on the Philosophy of History," that "every history of civilization is at the same time a history of barbarism" as the starting point for *Indigo*, Warner transforms cultural memory, beautifully as well as politically, through retracing and regenerating a web of historical and literary archives (Warner in Dabydeen 123). Because the narrative is set in London, Paris and the Caribbean, the novel is informed by a cosmopolitan

perspective that is distinctively multicultural and multiracial, striving to celebrate “*le métissage*” and to cover a whole spectrum of “colour values” so as to highlight the post-postcolonial cultural and political landscape (Warner in Tredell 249). To re-imagine Prospero’s conquest against a broad background of the earlier colonial encounter; to reweave the violent dispossession of the colonized into the story of Sycorax, Ariel and Caliban (Dulé); to recast Miranda’s story so as to redress its colonial and racist residues; and to represent history in a different light to both present and future generations that includes a critical perception of her own family history—all this takes courage and talent. Her rewriting of *The Tempest* is a testimony of the continuing power of the act of writing to render the colonial memory both alive and relevant today.

Notes

- 1 I would like to thank Mary Jacobus and Shirley Samuels for their constant and valuable comments, Gillian Beer, Heather Glen, Ato Quayson, and Pam Hirsch for numerous readings of earlier drafts.
- 2 George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile*. According to Zabuz, the first critical study of colonization to make use of the Prospero/Caliban metaphor is *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonization* by Dominique Octave Mannoni (16). Felperin, on the other hand, points out, acknowledging Jonathan Bate, that the honour of the first reading of *The Tempest* as a colonial allegory should be attributed to William Hazlitt who, responding to Coleridge’s view of Caliban “as an original and caricature of Jacobinism,” wrote, “Caliban is so far from being a prototype of modern Jacobinism, that he is strictly the legitimate sovereign of the isle, and Prospero and the rest are usurpers, who have ousted him from his hereditary jurisdiction by superiority of talent and knowledge. . . . He is the Louis XVIII of the enchanted island. . . . Even his affront to the daughter of that upstart philosopher Prospero could not be brought to bar his succession to the natural sovereignty of his dominions” (Hazlitt qtd in Felperin 177).
- 3 “The Sea is History” is a poem by the Caribbean Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott.
- 4 Cf. introduction, *The Tempest*, 27.
- 5 This was suggested to me by Marina Warner herself in a brief interview at the “Making Waves” Conference, Cambridge University, 4–5 July 2003. See also Warner in Tredell 249. Although in light of Barthes’s notion of the death of the author, Warner’s own comments about her writing, as suggested here and in a number of interviews and articles cited in this article, may not necessarily be a specially privileged one, they contribute to a multi-dimensional reading of the novel.

- 6 The meaning of “the gilded one” is suggested by Zabus (141). The meaning of whiteness and hardness is implied in the English word “xanthene,” which, according to OED, means “a tricyclic crystalline compound derivatives of which are used as brilliant, often fluorescent, dyes.” There may be also a play on words between “gilt” and “guilt.”
- 7 This was pointed out to me by Ato Quayson.
- 8 This connection is first observed by Zabus (145).
- 9 This term was used by Jean Rhys when discussing her characterization of Christophine in *Wide Sargasso Sea*. See Rhys, *Letters* 297.
- 10 The Beauty and the Beast reference mentioned in the interview could also refer to either Xanthe and Sy or to Miranda and Shaka.
- 11 George Lamming made this remark at a talk at the Commonwealth and International Literatures Seminar organized by the Faculty of English, Cambridge University, 4 Nov. 2003.
- 12 Richard Todd notes, “a special stand in Sir Pelham Warner’s honour was built at Lord’s cricket ground in St. John’s Wood, north-west London, in the 1950s. St Kitts even has its ‘Warner Park’ cricket ground” (112).
- 13 Two significant historical analyses are presented in Young and Ferguson.

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