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The Dream of Sycorax in the Americas: Understanding Magical Realism in Indigo

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Abstract

Marina Warner's *Indigo* retells *The Tempest* in the setting of *Liamuiga* and its main focus centers on giving a voice to the silenced female characters of *The Tempest*. Warner's *Sycorax* is a shaman and adopts *Dule/Caliban* and *Ariel*, the children of slaves. The appearance of drowned slaves on the *Liamuiga* shoreline marks the beginning of *Sycorax*'s nightmare, forecasting the arrival of the English invaders whose first action is an attempt to burn *Sycorax* alive in her tree house. She survives, but later dies on the night of a bloody fight between indigenous islanders and the English. Her resting place becomes a shrine for the islanders, slaves and European inhabitants as her voice continues to be heard throughout the island. In this paper we intend to show how Warner uses the techniques of magical realist fiction to empower *Sycorax* and articulate her overarching dream of the return of peace and freedom to the colonized island of *Liamuiga*.

Keywords: *Indigo* or *Mapping the Waters*; *Magical realism*; *Sycorax*; *Shaman*; *The Tempest*.

Introduction

The Tempest, a Shakespearian tragicomedy, is a source of inspiration and a key reference point for several writers commenting on the rise of post-colonialism in the 1960s.¹ It is believed to be the last play Shakespeare wrote alone and shows Prospero, the legal Duke of Milan, in a faraway island trying to bring his fifteen-year-old runaway daughter Miranda back to her lawful place. He does through the use of illusion and trickery raise a storm to trap his brother

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¹ The text and themes of *The Tempest* formed the basis of much of George Lamming's *The Pleasure of Exile* (1960) considering the play from the viewpoint of Shakespeare and his colonial interests in Elizabethan England. Several writers, predominantly from the Caribbean, used the characters and the theme of the play to write the colonial process in reverse; Li (2005) referred to *The Tempest* as "one of the most rewritten literary works with the rise of postcolonialism" (p.73), also stating that Lamming uses the relationship between Prospero and Caliban as a metaphor for the meeting between the colonizer and colonized (p.73). Li adds that Lamming is not the first to study *The Tempest* as "a colonial allegory", but his reading has an innovative importance because it recommends an alternative to Shakespeare's depiction of the colonizer/colonized relationship (p.73). Mannoni's *Prospero and Caliban* (1950), Rhys' *Wide Saragasso Sea* (1966), Michelle Cliff's *Abeng* (1984), Hulme's *Colonial Encounters* (1986) and *No Telephone to Heaven* (1989) are all concerned with *The Tempest* and the rewriting and reimagining of its narrative and protagonists.



Antonio along with Alonso, the king of Naples, his brother Ferdinand, Sebastian, and Gonzalo, a Milanese courtier. All are in the process of returning from Alonso's daughter's wedding in Tunis. While Prospero and Miranda watch the shipwreck, he tells her daughter how they came to the island twelve years ago when his brother seized power. When Prospero came to the island, he made Caliban his slave. There was also a spirit, Ariel, who was imprisoned by Caliban's Mother, Sycorax. After her death, Ariel remained a prisoner in the tree until Prospero made him his servant. Ariel informs Prospero of Caliban's plans to revolt and he also brings Antonio and the others to Prospero's cell and Prospero reveals himself. He forgives his brother and prepares to return to his dukedom. Miranda and Ferdinand become engaged and Ariel becomes free.

Borrowing several characters from the play, Marina Warner published *Indigo or Mapping the Waters* in 1992. *Indigo* is characterized by its travels through several time spans and spaces, setting in the seventeenth and twentieth century Liamuiga, London and Paris. Warner's focus in the seventeenth century in Liamuiga is predominantly on the characters of Sycorax and Ariel, articulating the stories of lesser known characters in the original writing of *The Tempest*. Sycorax is the wise Caribbean witch and shaman of the island, as well as the foster mother of Caliban. By empowering her, Warner retrains the dominant narrative as that of the islander's stories, and by using magical realism she also shows Sycorax's dream: the return of matriarchy and ownership of the island to a time of pre-colonization.

Indigo or Mapping the Waters

Indigo has been studied and analyzed by numerous scholars from a postcolonial or feminist perspective. Grossman (1992) calls *Indigo* "a Woman's *Tempest*" in that Warner "borrows the names of Shakespeare's island natives in "The Tempest" and re-imagines the witch Sycorax, mother of Caliban whom Prospero the European defeated, as a nurturing tribal wisewoman" (p.1). The novel blends together history and Warner's own family history, with the author stating that she wrote the novel based on her ancestor's colonization of an island in the West Indies. Al-Hadi (2010) states that "in Siren/Hyphen, and 'The Maid Beguiled', Marina Warner reads the history of one of her ancestor's Sir Thomas Warner who was the English governor of St Christopher's and Nevis, and his Indian wife" (p. 179). *Indigo*'s Anthony Everard, Al-Hadi adds, is also the literary equivalent of Warner's own grandfather, Sir Thomas Warner, and Ariel, Shakespeare's servant, is based on his Indian mistress (p.179). Al-Hadi quotes Warner further, stating that "I used to be furious with my father when he boasted of this ancestry, and used to say, '[w]e come from a long line of pioneers'" (pp.179-180). This shows Warner's displeasure at pioneers and colonizers even if they were her ancestors.

The story of *Indigo* is told predominantly from Miranda's point of view. It opens in the twentieth century, with a five-year-old Miranda preparing to go to

her newborn Aunt's christening. Her Father, Kit Everard, is the first child of Sir Anthony Everard and he has a dark complexion due to his mother being an Island native. His new-born half-sister is from an English Mother and is fair, unlike her brother. Kit Everard is a loser and a gambler, experiencing a difficult life while his sister lives in luxury. In the novel, we can see the fair sister's explicit superiority to the dark brother. At this point, the novel moves to the seventeenth century Liamuiga. We read how Sycorax delivers Dule, later called Caliban by European, from his dead African Mother and how she lives in exile and adopts Ariel as her foster daughter. We read how Liamuiga becomes colonized by the English and sits under the domination of the white men for centuries.

Returning to twentieth century England, Miranda becomes a journalist and we are introduced to events from her perspective for the first time. The Everard family returns to the Caribbean to celebrate their first arrival on the island, this time with Xanthe and her husband intending to colonize the island by developing hotels and using the natural beauty of the green island to attract tourists to the area. This infuriates the inhabitants of the island and years later they revolt. Later in the story, Xanthe is drowned at the age of 35 while we can hear Sycorax's voice. All the women of the Everards are doomed to an early death, as if a collective curse hung over them. Miranda returns to England and marries an African actor whose role in a production of *The Tempest* was that of Caliban. Miranda's marriage with Caliban at the end of the novel seems to be a way for correcting the colonial mistakes made in the past.

Understanding Magical Realism in *Indigo*

The term magic realism first appeared in German philosophy in 1798, recorded in the German poet and philosopher Novalis' notebook. It then entered the critical lexicon of the world of art in 1925 through Franz Roh's essay on the theories of magical realism, before being further developed in Europe by the Italian literary critic Bontempelli. Whilst the genre was almost forgotten in critical European circles in the 1940s, it emerged in the discussions of European educated Latin American writers such as Pierti, Asturias and Carpentier who wanted to present a Latin American version of surrealism. Writers such as Echevarría and Spindler also tried to define different types of magical realism based on the definitions of Roh, Carpentier and magico-realist fiction written in Europe and Latin America. Magical realism as a literary genre first flourished in Latin America throughout the 1960s and became a globally recognized phenomenon from 1980 onwards. Magical realism took a huge leap forward and gained global attention as a result of Noble prize winning writers incorporating aspects of it within their fiction.

The views of critics on magical realism are split into distinct camps: those who try to show it as a postcolonial genre because of its textual hybridity (magic plus realism), and even those who recognise its cultural hybridity and its rise in

the postcolonial countries, and those who find it to be postmodern in nature. Some critics also employ a postmodern framework to analyze magico-realist novels due to the time of its popularity and alternative narratives regarding realism.

However, in *Nation and Narration*, Bhabha (2003) states that “Magical realism, after the Latin American boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent postcolonial world” (p.7). In regards to the genre of magical realism’s birthplace in Europe, it cannot completely be the language of postcolonial countries which Homi Bhabha offers. Bowers (2005) suggests its appropriateness as a postcolonial strategy in writing because marginal writers in countries other than postcolonial states have used it as a criticism of the dominant culture within their own countries (p.46). Given the appearance of magical realism in the 1920s, a time of modern art’s growth throughout Europe, we can concur with Faris (2004) that magical realism is “like a tree with its roots in modernism and branches in postmodernism” (p.30). There is universal agreement from all critics and writers on magical realism regarding the oxymoronic characteristics of it, (Slemon, 1988; Bowers, 2005) and the presence of the code of natural and supernatural in the text (Spindler, 1993; Chanady, 1985; Faris, 2004; Cooke, 2007).

There are three illuminating definitions of magical realism that we consider most significant. In the preface to his essay on magical realism, Roh (1925) states that “with the word ‘magic’ as opposed to ‘mystic’ I wish to indicate that the mystery does not descend to the represented world, but rather hides and palpitates behind it” (p.16). Carpentiere’s famous definition of marvellous adds: “To begin with, the phenomenon of the marvellous presupposes faith. Those who do not believe in saints cannot cure themselves with the miracles of saints, nor can those who are not Don Quixotes enter, body, soul, and possessions, into the world of Amadis of Gaul or Tirant le Blanc” (1949, p. 86). The last illumination is Flores’s (1955) definition of the appeal of magical realism that “[t]he novelty is in the amalgamation of realism and fantasy” (p.112). Angel Flores’ article “Magical Realism in Spanish America” has significantly influenced many magical realism scholars. Discussing Albert Camus’ *The Stranger* and Kafka’s *The Trial* and *The Metamorphosis*, Flores (1949) notes that “time exists in a kind of timeless fluidity and the unreal happens as part of reality and it happens and is accepted by the other characters as an almost normal event” (p.115).

Considering the critics of magical realism, Chanady and Faris are two of the most prominent ones. Chanady (1985) identifies the presence of the natural and supernatural, antinomy and authorial reticence as key characteristics of all magical realist texts. Faris (2004) defines the five characteristics for a magical realist text as irreducible element, presence of the phenomenal world, merging realms, unsettling doubts and disruptions of time, space, and identity. These identified characteristics are going to be examined and discussed specifically in *Indigo*.

The Irreducible Element

What Faris calls the irreducible element, Chanady identifies as the presence of the supernatural. Chanady considers the presence of the supernatural as the essential characteristic of magical realism, stating that “the occurrence of the supernatural is contrary to our conventional view of reality.” (p.18) But the presence of supernatural is not problematical in magical realism, unlike the fantastic. Faris defines the irreducible element as “something we cannot explain according to the laws of the universe as they have been formulated in Western empirically based discourse that is according to ‘logic, familiar knowledge, or received belief,’ as David Young and Keith Hollaman describe it” (p.7). This puts the reader in a difficult position regarding the collection of evidence to establish questions about the position of events and characters in such fictions.

An irreducible element in *Indigo* is found in seventeenth century Liamuiga, where Dule is delivered from his dead mother by Sycorax who was said to have a sixth sense. This sense guides her towards the corpses of African slaves. She is able to hear their voices and “all of a sudden, the new space she had entered was lit up as if by lightning, and in the flash, she remembered something from the bodies she had laid out before their burial, something she had not properly understood in the strain of tending to their dismemberment and rottenness” (p.83). She then orders her covey doe, saying “someone is sleeping there, I can see her! Find her, go, find her, Now” (p.83). Sycorax delivers Dule from his dead mother and breastfeeds him:

But when she put a little finger in his mouth, he sucked with startling force, and did not cry when he found no nourishment there, just went on pulling so hard that she wondered if he could start her old milk again. So she tried and felt a tingling in her stomach as if it might begin to rise again, but the infant this time spat out her nipple and began to wail. Her milk was thin and whey-like, it needed the child’s mouth to sweeten it. She cradled his weak whimpering head near her breast, and stroked his lips on her nipple again and felt the tide of love for this puny thing flood her from the knees up so that, when he took it between his blunt gums and began suckling again, she was able to nurse him as if she were truly his mother. (p.87)

Sycorax’ breastfeeding of Dule, another woman’s baby, “as if she were truly his mother” (p.88) while simultaneously considered old by her community, is supernatural and can be considered a highly improbable event that Hegerfeldt sees as “the fantastic elements are not restricted to what by rational empirical standards is considered physically impossible; highly improbable events can have a similar effect” (p.79). In this case, even though the fantastic element of breastfeeding Dule by Sycorax is not totally impossible- it is a highly improbable event- it is regarded supernatural.

The Phenomenal World

The second feature of a magical realist text that Faris mentions is “that its descriptions detail a strong presence of the phenomenal world. This is the realism in magical realism, distinguishing it from much fantasy and allegory” (p.14). Chanady refers to the “realistic detail” as the essential factor to magical realism (p.47). She also remarks that:

In order to define a story as magico-realist, it is not a sufficient condition that the natural and supernatural are present in the text. The degree of presence of these two codes is essential in determining to which mode a particular narrative belongs. If there is insufficient realistic detail, the story tends towards the fairy tale or other types of pure fantasy. If the supernatural does not constitute a coherent code, it is perceived as out of place or absurd, or as a dream of hallucination within a realistic narrative. A dream about the supernatural, narrated in the form of free indirect discourse within the framework of a realistic novel, does not transform the narrative into an example of magical realism. (p.57)

Therefore, for calling a story a magico-realist fiction the amount of supernatural and natural events should not predominate the other. Faris states that the phenomenal world happens in several ways, and one method is through realistic description “that create a fictional world that resembles the one we live in, often by extensive use of detail” (p.14). Use of the detail brings two points to consider: “On one hand, this attention to sensory detail continues and renews the realistic tradition. On the other hand, in addition to including magical events ...or phenomena ...magical realist fiction includes intriguing magical details” (p.14). Bowers (2005) also states that magical realism “relies most of all upon the matter-of-fact, realist tone of its narrative when presenting magical happenings” (p.3). Due to this reason, it is often regarded as a kind of literary realism. But Bowers adds that magical realism’s “distinguishing feature from literary realism is that it fuses the two opposing aspects of the oxymoron (the magical and the realist) together to form one new perspective” (p.3). Accordingly, equal existence of magical events plus the realist ones is one of the key points which creates magical realism.

This realistic description of magical events in *Indigo* is observed when Sycorax goes to the place where the dead bodies of the drowned slaves are covered:

She made a circle around her with the herbs and sat down on the ground with her back against a coconut tree, while the winds that had brought in the dead stirred its leaves above and eddied about her neck. The cavey stretched out beside her, nose in her paws, and Sycorax scratched the animal’s dry and stubbly orange fur as she looked into the darkness.[...]

On that night, the door gave in the mind of Sycorax, and light struck the contours of a place where she had never been and she saw the dead men and women under the shallow layer of earth as if she knew them and she could hear as they lay, with their faces turned to the earth and murmuring (p.82).

The ghosts tell her of the place (Africa) they have come from and that they were sent overboard because the slave ship found them heavy on board: “‘The boat had the motion of a cradle,’ one said. ‘It rocked us, rocked us.’ ‘Yet it gave no comfort.’ ‘No comfort, no.’ [...]” (p.82) The mystical depth presented here, which is conjuring up ghosts and/or the souls of the dead, is evaluated by Bese (2012). He refers while “Many Christian societies associate conjuring with magic... This spiritual spectrum occupies a considerable place in African culture and spirituality” (p. 31) Hearing the ghosts of the slaves, Sycorax suddenly remembered something from the corpses, something she had not correctly understood in the tension of paying attention to their dismemberment and decay (p.83). In these sections Sycorax’s preparing for the supernatural event-her vision- comes with description which we see in the description of realist scenes.

Unsettling Doubts

Unsettling doubts is the third quality of a magical realist fiction according to Faris, who states that “before categorizing the irreducible element as irreducible, the reader may hesitate between two contradictory understandings of events, and hence experience some unsettling doubts” (p.17). Faris goes on to explain that:

The question of belief is central here, this hesitation frequently stemming from the implicit clash of cultural systems within the narrative, which moves toward belief in extrasensory phenomena but narrates from the post-Enlightenment perspective and in the realistic mode that traditionally exclude them. And because belief systems differ, clearly, some readers in some cultures will hesitate less than others, depending on their beliefs and narrative traditions. (p.17)

Faris says belief systems in different cultures is not identical. So the degree of acceptance of magical events will vary. The same debate of unsettling doubt in Chanady’s discussion is characterised as authorial reticence. She explains that in magical realism, in contradiction to the fantastic authorial reticence, there is an acceptance of the supernatural and the strange world view offered in the text. (p.149) If there is no authorial reticence description of the supernatural, or a challenge to analysis the view that is different from our normal view of reality, this would only take our attention to the oddity or even impossibility of definite

events and beliefs (p.149). Chanady hypothesises that magical realist scenes might look like dreams, but they are not dreams, and the text may entice us to both nominate them as dreams and not to do so (pp.17-18). The way magical realist text makes the reader hesitate about what they thought as the dream is also considered, with “magical realist narratives almost seem to bring up the possibility of interpreting what they chronicle as a dream in order to forestall that interpretation, after having first aired it as a possibility. That strategy, while allaying the reader’s doubts, also calls them into being, causing the reader to hesitate” (Chanady, p.18). Bowers (2005) similarly states that one of the distinctive features of magical realism is “its dependence on the reader to follow the narrator in accepting both realistic and magical viewpoints of reality on the same level” (p.3). Therefore, magic should be accepted as well as realistic.

Regarding *Indigo*, the reader may wonder if Sycorax while in the burial place of the salves is seeing a dream. Were the ghosts the creation of her mind or were they really appearing to her? Can Sycorax heal and does her shamanistic power work even after death? Is her voice heard in the island? The narrator creates doubts but also tries to clear them. Reading the notes on the saman tree is a way of clearing doubts on Sycorax’s healing power. In the novel set in the eighteenth century, we read the slaves’ wishes:

They sometimes fancy they pick up the voices of the past, answering their prayers, and after presenting their gifts of flowers and fruit, they come away filled with hope that the great loas have agreed to grant whatever they were being implored to do.

The slaves pressing their tintacks into the tree whisper:

- their love of a man, their love of a woman
- their love of a child
- their hopes of reprieve from punishment
- their thanks for surviving punishment

[...](211)

There are other notes on the saman tree in the twentieth century: ‘[...] Xanthe and Miranda were walking, excited by their own daring, along a path that led from the huge ancient saman tree hung with dried garlands and scraps of prayers (‘Lord, make me well agane’, ‘I thank you, lady, that, I live to see my child walk after the bus knock her down’).’ (p.324) The notes on the saman tree which show the wishes of people and the fact that these wishes did not die after the centuries serve as evidence of Sycorax’s healing power in the level of the text.

Merging Realms

Faris defines merging realms as the “closeness or near merging of two realms” (p.21). To explain this, Faris refers to the metamorphosis of a woman to swine in *Pig Tales* in which a narrator is a captive, torn between two worlds:

The magical realist vision thus exists at the intersection of two worlds, at an imaginary point inside a double-sided mirror that reflects in both directions. Ghosts and texts, or people and words that seem ghostly, inhabit these two-sided mirrors, many times situated between the two worlds of life and death; they enlarge that space of intersection where a number of magically real fictions exist. (pp. 21-2)

Merging the realms is what Chanady considers the resolution of antinomy: “The magico-realist author creates a convincing world view which is radically different from our own. It may be based on Western superstition, such as ghosts and doubles, or it may be based on a culture with a different perception of reality entirely, such as that of the Indians of Central America” (p.114). She adds that magical realism is not limited to these two traditional types, and must not essentially contain the familiar themes of the supernatural. (p.114) In her later study, Chanady (2003) claims that a concept like antinomy, “with its strong implication of logic and rationality’, is actually unrelated to most magic realist writing (p.432). In her later work on magic realism she leaves the concept of antinomy ‘in favour of a broader reflection on the mode.’” (p.432) It seems that she abandons the antinomy due to it only being found in some magico-realist fictions and not all writings.

Considering merging the realms in *Indigo*, Sycorax hears a calling for her from the corpses of the slaves buried on the beach. In this circumstance, she is merging the worlds of the dead and living and the past and the present. Later, Sycorax’s voice is heard in the island in the twentieth century:

The isle is full of noises, so they say, and Sycorax is the source of many. Recent sound effects –the chattering of loose halyards against the masts on the fancy yachts riding at the anchor in the bays, the gush and swoosh of water in the oyster pool at the luxury hotel-aren’t of her making: Sycorax speaks in the noises that fall from the mouth of the wind. (p.77)

The reflection of Sycorax’s voice after her death in the world of the people who are alive is another example of merging the realms in *Indigo*.

Disruptions of Time, Space, and Identity

Faris (2004) considers the fifth characteristic of magical realist fictions the disruption of time, space and identity (p.23). In *Indigo* the reader’s sense of time is disrupted when we see some of the chapters in the novel having no specific

reference to time such as *Paris 196-*, *London 196-*, *Kensington 197-* and *Liamuiga 198-*. We see the novel starting in post-war London with a small Miranda and her parents, Kit and Astrid, at the christening of Kit's new-born half-sister Xanthe. Later the novel moves to the seventeenth century and Liamuiga, showing the indigenous people of the island in harmony with nature. During this time we are also introduced to Sycorax, Caliban and Ariel. The reader is able to observe the gradual entrance of English colonizers including Kit Everard and his men destroying nature, cultivating tobacco and sugar. It moves to the eighteenth century, presenting the slaves' suffering from colonisation. The novel again moves to the twentieth century, showing Miranda's life as a young girl in Paris and London. It returns to Liamuiga again with Kit Everard's great grandchildren, Miranda's father, Miranda and Xanthe, showing the neo-colonial business plans of Xanthe and her husband. The novel moves between the Caribbean island and London. In addition to our commonly held concepts of time and space, magical realism reorganizes our sense of identity, Faris states that "[t]he multi-vocal nature of the narrative and the cultural hybridity that characterise magical realism extends to its characters, which tend toward a radical multiplicity" (p.25). Thus, cultural hybridity which exists in the narrative is observed in the characters, too.

Cultural hybridity in characters in *Indigo* is seen in Kit (Miranda's father) and Miranda. Kit's father, Sir Anthony Everard, is a descendent from Sir Christopher (Kit) Everard who was the first English colonizer of Liamuiga. Anthony married Estelle Desjours, a Creole English islander. After she drowned when Kit was thirteen years old, they moved to England. In regards to his dark complexion, the students at his school called him Nigger Everard behind his back: "He knew his name only by hearsay, and could never claim it as something he didn't mind, or defend his mother from insinuation. Not that he wanted to deny she was a Creole. But it was hard to shout out against his fellow pupils, 'And what of it, anyway, what's the matter with mixed blood?'" (pp.67-8). Kit is a gambler and a dead beat who does not have a sense of belonging. Sparrow (2002) called Kit "the novel's most divided figure", stating that without money and power Kit "has lost his connection with 'whiteness,' but his family name and history still distance him from the islanders. [...] when in England, in spite of his father's renown, Kit's colonial background and racial indeterminacy relegate him to second-class status" (p.126). Returning to Liamuiga on his half-sister's request to celebrate the 350th anniversary of the Everard's landing in Liamuiga, Kit becomes more puzzled about his true belonging being in England or the Caribbean island: "The aerial map of his birthplace unfurled and streamed in the high vault above him. He was wrapped in the presence of the islands, and yet, recognizing them, all he could feel was the stab of loss. He could not know any longer what it meant to belong somewhere" (p.292). Kit suffers from this sense of hybrid identity because he does not know his true location.

Miranda, like her father, has a dark complexion but she does not suffer from a lack of a sense of belonging as much as her father. Like her father she has the feeling of “the other”, especially when she compares herself to her young blonde Aunt Xanthe. De Leon (2010) argues that Miranda’s “outstanding hair difference-abounding dark, frizzy curls-metaphorises her alienation from canonic, Eurocentric beauty paradigms, which the novel ironises via metafictional winks: ‘Beauty is Power’.”(p.196) She states that Miranda and Kit’s “shared vulnerability brings to the fore the core of logocentrism’s politics or representation, that is, the binary structures whereby difference is excluded, our most improper or darker sides conversely cast on the abject other, and discursive monologisms authenticated, made real. The irony of it lies in the ways Miranda translate such fear for her marginal position into the same excluding and othering terms: she feels –fears –her newborn aunt is ‘changeling’”. (p.191) Kit proceeds in the same way. De Leon (2010) mentions that “Miranda learns to author her own subjectivity.”(p.189) She goes on to say, “this means to resist and, simultaneously, to accept Prospero’s heritage within. It also means, and requires, recognizing the semiotic and female other within, which she must incorporate into that new project of integral self-identity which aspires to naturalise hybridity [...]” (p.189). In a report that she was making for *Blot*, Miranda goes for an interview regarding *A Fleur de Peau* with its director Jean-Claude Meursault. After her interview, she takes some pictures from the movie scenes. One of the black actors, George Felix, notices and shouts: “‘Some bitch exploiting me, joining in the fucking imperialist adventure, selling my image...’ He thumbed his chest with his gun. ‘Oh baby, you just go right ahead and grab what you can when you can.’” (p.263) Miranda wants to explain that she “didn’t have a moment to ask” but hears George Felix, a black actor who moved forward suddenly and said;

‘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...’. (p.264)

At that moment, “Miranda wanted to tell him that her father was called Nigger Everard at school and was rejected in his own family because his mother had been Creole. She wanted to tell him about Feeny that she loved; how she herself was a ‘musty’; couldn’t he see it?” (p.266) She likes him to know that she is not very different from him, she actually is not a pure white European but a hybrid.

George Felix’s assault looks like a sexual invitation to Miranda who certainly would submit to the role of “female sexual object” as defined by de Leon (2010, p.203). And, a few days later, Miranda sleeps with him. Propst (2008), studying the scenes of sexual violence in Warner’s works, states that:

Warner's depictions of the potentially positive consequences in fictional cases of sexual violence can appear to condone that violence. In *From the Beast to the Blonde*, for instance, Warner examines women's longing for beasts in modern versions of "Beauty and the Beast." In her novel *Indigo*, Warner imagines a Miranda aroused by the Caliban figure who violates her. However, without neglecting the harm that sexual violence can cause women, Warner is more interested in the different ways that women can react to it. (p.126)

Fifteen years later, while Miranda was taking pictures of the famous people with the survival t-shirts she had designed for charity, she meets George who has changed his name to Shaka and is acting in the role of Caliban in *The Tempest* (pp.388-395). Li (2005) believes that the attraction Miranda feels to George Felix is established in a view that they share the hybrid nature of a colonial in addition to postcolonial identity and "the common fate of Creolization" (p.77). Both are postcolonial figures, Caliban/Shaka; an African and Miranda: an English –Creole from her father's side.

At the end of the novel we hear from Serafine, the old Caribbean maid who worked for Sir Anthony Everard, that Miranda and Shaka have married. They had a daughter named Serafine, named after Miranda's favorite nanny from the islands who we read in the novel is supposedly a descendant of Sycorax. Little Serafine with hybrid blood (English, Caribbean, African) is a hope for the new generation (p.401). De Leon (2010) argues that hybridity does not make the difference less but rather emphasizes it, mainly representing its "irreducibility" (p.188). Regarding the newborn Serafine, he explains that she brings with herself the hopeful possibilities of another identity in progress, destined to find a real space for her otherness (p.188). The wish which can come true in the postcolonial era.

The Dream of Sycorax

Part II: *Indigo/Blue* in the novel starts with Sycorax and her voice being heard all over the island: "The isle is full of noises, so they say, and Sycorax is the source of many. Recent sound effects –the chattering of loose halyards against the masts on the fancy yachts riding at the anchor in the bays, the gush and swoosh of water in the oyster pool at the luxury hotel-aren't of her making: Sycorax speaks in the noises that fall from the mouth of the wind"(p.77). Immediately we are introduced to Sycorax and her dream, which is in fact a nightmare:

To Sycorax it feels as if she began to die the day the corpses landed on Liamuiga. She's been dead now for some time, though the exact moment when she could say she ceased to be has become a blur. She thinks- and speaks – of her death as beginning when the children first spotted bodies and brought the report back to the village. When she

sighs or clicks in the shaking of the palms and breathes out with the rip of the surf, you can hear her despair that her death will never come to an end; she hasn't got much imagination. (pp. 77-78)

She is dead for centuries when we first read the novel, but the novel moves backwards and forwards to tell us about the silenced voice of the shaman of Liamuiga. Her voice is choking her in the throat, and she only becomes comforted when her dream becomes true. Observing her character, we see a person who cares not only about her community but humanity as a whole. Sycorax is rejected by her husband for delivering Dule (Caliban), the son of a dead African woman (p.86), yet she accepts the decision and goes to live in her brother's village. Her brother, Tiguray, who is also the head of the village, accepts her and her adopted son warmly. However, Sycorax finds that her presence makes mothers or expectant mothers agitated because she was associated with death, having delivered a baby from a dead mother (p.88). Sycorax moves to a remote part of the island and lives with Dule, yet people continue to come and see her for her remedies, advice and indigo. She continues to respond to the people's wishes as much as she possibly can (p.93).

Years later, her brother comes to her with a five-year-old girl named Ariel and asks Sycorax to adopt the child because her biological parents were no longer present as her father died working in the plantation for the white men and her mother was taken as a mistress (p.97). Tiguray tells his sister that these men who came by the sea could not live according to island custom unless somebody from the island taught them how to live. He tells her about them, their works on their plantation and their survival as a result of assistance from the natives (p.99). However, she was previously warned of the white men's arrival by Caliban who was full of hate and rage towards them. He asked her to curse them so they would not come near their island: "Curse them, Mother. Use your arts, change their conditions with your skills; alter their shape, as only you know how. So that they learn to fear us and do not stay. They use our water and eat our substance, they're not welcome. Not on Liamuiga, nor on Qualie." (p.102)

Sycorax adopts Ariel as her daughter and passes on all her skills to her. Ariel speaks little, instead regularly hums tunes. She helps Sycorax in dying indigo and gathering herbs. As Ariel grows up, Sycorax passes on her experiences of love but does not provide her with a chance to leave her and be with other people to understand it. Caliban, who had left Sycorax's tree house earlier and lives with the men in one of the nearby islands, encourages Ariel to free herself from Sycorax's tree prison (p.116). This sequence reminds us of the tree in *The Tempest*, in which Sycorax had imprisoned Ariel and forgotten to free her. (I. ii. 277)

Ariel, by listening to her foster brother's advice, builds a cabin for herself in Sycorax's neighbourhood and one day takes her mother there to show her the

new way of life: “There, upstream on the other bank, in a coconut grove, Ariel showed her mother the enclave she had built herself, with a spliced fence, a cabin of palm fronds and a hammock slung from one trunk of a shady tree to another” (p.119). Sycorax wants to express her discontent at the new situation and convince her that it is not safe for her to live alone, but Ariel does not let her say anything more, saying “I’d like to live here now, [...]I’ll be quite safe”(p.119). On that same day, Sycorax was in the spa with Ariel. She was talking about love and it made Ariel angry because she had never had a chance to know what it was or how it felt. She left Sycorax angrily in the spa and went to her cabin. On her way, she saw that Sycorax’s tree house was on fire (p.130).

The Englishmen under the command of Kit Everard had landed around Sycorax’s property. After Ariel left her, Sycorax followed. Unable to find her, she went to her tree house but she saw the Englishmen. She climbed to her tree house but the Englishmen set fire to the old woman’s house while she was there (p.129). Ariel found Sycorax with broken bones and burns after falling from the tree house. Sycorax and Ariel were the first hostages taken by the English. A large group of islanders came to negotiate their release, highlighting the importance placed on the role of women in island society. Kit was assured that as long as they kept the women, the islanders would do nothing (p.158).

Sycorax’s dream started from the day she was burned in her tree house. She wished a life for the islanders before the arrival of the white men, replicating an island idol and living in harmony with nature. Whilst Ariel was tending to her wounds in the cabin, Sycorax asked her not to teach her knowledge about the herbs and secrets of the island to the white men to ensure the colonizers would not survive and remain on the island (p.165). She asked her not to betray them but Ariel did. The first night Ariel was in her cabin with Sycorax, Kit Everard came to her cabin and stood at the door. He wanted to know how Sycorax was, supposedly. Every night he went to Ariel’s cabin and eventually one night Ariel followed him (p.166). After some time, Sycorax warned Ariel that she was carrying the white man’s child. She asked her to let her help have an abortion with the herbs, and when Ariel did not accept she said she would curse the baby so that it would be a beast.

Sycorax’s dream was receding from her. Her adopted daughter and the island were becoming more and more dominated by the white men. Propst (2008), in her discussion about sexual violence in Warner’s novels, states that after Kit Everard makes Ariel his mistress “[h]is assaults on her mirror his violence toward her people and her land” (p.131). The English did not keep their promise of leaving the island in nine months; instead they built plantations and brought the slaves from Africa in chains to work in tobacco, indigo and sugar fields.

Dule, Sycorax’s adopted son who was full of hatred towards the English, planned an ambush. With the help of Tiguray, Sycorax’s brother and the chief of the village, and other runaways from plantations in the nearby islands, Dule and a number of other pirates and the islanders prepared for it.

By signs written on stones he informed Ariel to be ready for the coming war. Ariel, silent for a time and tolerating many voices in her head such as her baby's, the curses of Sycorax, plantation construction and the clanking of slave's chains, spoke at last and asked to meet Kit. She prepared food with poisonous oysters for him but he noticed her strange behavior and suspected that she had ulterior motives (pp.183-5). At night his men were ready for the attack, reminding us of *The Tempest* when Ariel hears Caliban's plan of ambush (III, ii,108-109) and intends to reveal it to Prospero to give him advance warning.

In *Indigo*, Ariel finds out about the colonizing intentions of Kit. She wants to end it but she cannot. On the night of the bloody fight, Ariel ties her son Roukoube to her chest and Sycorax to her back. On attempting to run away, the guard noticed and Sycorax asked Ariel to put her down and run away (pp.188-189). She tried to confuse the guard by cursing so that Ariel and her son could elope (p.190). Sycorax cursed in a similar fashion to the time she was hostage and the time she set a fire in front of Ariel's cabin and made the English frightened with her curses, hoping that her curses would do help the island.

On the next day the shore was filled with the corpses of the islanders. Dule was brought to trial to serve as an example to others as he was considered the ringleader (p. 204). The English changed his name to Caliban. Under the request of Ariel, Kit allowed the islanders a ceremony for the burial of Sycorax. She was buried under her tree house, the saman tree, in a standing position given to the prophets of the island.

From this point onwards, Sycorax's voice was heard across the island, particularly on windy days. She heard the laments of the slaves who came to her tree and asked the lady of the island to do something for them:

The slaves pressing their tintacks into the tree whisper:

Their love of a man, their love of a woman

-their love of a child

-their hopes of reprieve from punishment

-their thanks for surviving punishment

-their fear of being burned alive on a barbecue like the young slave who ran away last week and was caught and tried and sentenced to death by this method

-their terror of having a foot chopped off for stealing (some of them have been stealing)

-their trust that their little boy will recover from the quartan fever.

Some women ask for:

-a fertile womb(they also ask for a barren womb sometimes).

Many pray, on the death of the master:

-that the new one may not be worse. (p. 211)

The slave's prayers hung from the saman tree requesting their needs from the lady of the island, the shaman conjurer Sycorax, shows the depth of their suffering. Their wishes are mostly related to their encounter with the colonizing masters and their fear of punishment or when they pray for the death of the master. Sycorax heard them but she could do nothing, although her dream would become true centuries later. In the second half of the twentieth century, with the other islands of the archipelago becoming independent, *Enfant-Beats* (*Liamuiga*), which had been under the domination of the English and the French, was still under the control of England. The island feels the steps of Everard's neo-colonization when Xanthe, the great granddaughter of Christopher Everard and her fiancé Sy Nebris, exploit the beauty of the island as a tourist attraction. They build gambling hotels in *Enfant-Beats* and do not let the natives enter these places.

Tired from centuries of colonization, subordination and humiliation, the citizens of *Enfant-Beats* stage a coup. Under the leadership of Abdulmalik, an ex-policeman who was living with his group in the bushes, the Prime Minister of *Enfant-Beats* and some parliament members were taken hostage. On the fourth day of the coup, Abdulmalik articulates the anger of the islanders which had been choking them since the day the English stepped on the island and Sycorax's house was burned. His speech reflects a postcolonial hero's power:

'Just give me what I want,' Abdul stood at the door jerking his head back and forth as he kept watch on them and on the corridor. '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!"'(pp. 354-5)

Li (2005) notes that 'Malik's speech has a powerful bearing on the neo-colonialist era of global capitalism in the post-independence Caribbean' (p.81), going on to highlight that after the Second World War and with the ending of colonial empires, many former colonies became independent (p.81). However, *Liamuiga* becomes independent much later than other islands in the archipelago.

It was on the fourth day of the coup that Abdulmalik shot the Prime Minister in the head and then left the building zig-zagging. There was an order

to shoot him in his leg if he resisted but the bullet hit his head instead. Abdulmalik's coup had the significant benefit of shifting power back to the islanders. Atala Seacole, a descendant from Sycorax, became the first female Prime Minister of the island. And it is her voice that is mixed with Sycorax's across the island:

Another voice rose and joined in the babble on the air, not addressing Sycorax directly as a suppliant, but vaulting past her, to speak to someone else, to a public audience beyond, of financiers, of bankers, of international loan brokers, of politicians. Yes, the old woman would have sat up if she weren't cabined and cribbed under so tight under the tree, in order to hear Atala Seacole, speaking up, calling out:

-At a rough reckoning eighty per cent of the food served in the tourist industry in the two islands that make up this country is imported- and this is God's own garden where anything and is imported-and this is God's own garden where anything and everything will grow, if you just drop the seed on to the ground-

-sixty-five per cent of this food is thrown away by the hotels and restaurants that import it. Oh yes! I know some of it is recycled at the kitchen door-

[...](p.372)

Atala articulates that even after its independence the island remains under neo-colonial pressure, its nature exploited and used as a tourist attraction. She strongly wishes her countrymen would recover the island's economy by restricting foreign investment and protecting their beautiful land and sea, Li writes (2005, p.80). He considers Atala Seacole's voice the return of matriarchy to the island, going on to state that "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". (p.80) Li also adds that "Atala Seacole is to Sycorax's liking because she returns the island to female leadership and self-determination" (p.82). Sycorax becomes relived and sleeps, her dream accomplished: "After you, she is thinking, everything that began all those years ago will be accomplished, and the noises of the isle will be still and I- I shall at last come to silence" (p.376). Eventually, Sycorax reposes after centuries.

Conclusion

Sycorax in *The Tempest* had no voice, but in *Indigo or Mapping the Waters*, Warner lets her tell her story. In *Indigo*, Sycorax is similar to Caliban's mother in *The Tempest* (a foster mother here), and a shaman who is powerful and respected by her community. Not only does Warner give voice to her, but she makes Sycorax powerful using the techniques of a magical realist text in contrast

with the colonizing English men. They included a number of events that showed a strong belief in her powerful capacity to perform a number of roles: Dule's delivery from his dead mother and his breastfeeding, the realistic description of a magical event in which Sycorax goes to the place the dead bodies of the drowned slaves are covered, or clearing the uncertainty by notes hung from the saman tree. Meanwhile, Warner fulfills Sycorax's dream: the return of peace and self-determination to the islanders. While the Island was exploited with the colonial and later neocolonial purposes, with a coup the island moves towards freedom and self-rule. When a descendant from Sycorax becomes the first female Prime Minister of the island, and the island returns to matriarchy and peace, Sycorax's dream is realized and her disturbed voice, which was heard after her death, now becomes silent.

Sycorax is no longer the unvoiced colonized "blue-eyed hag" of *The Tempest*, but a powerful matriarch whose island is rightfully returned to its legal inhabitants.

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