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"The other provides the map of the self"
—Paul John Eakin

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PREFACE

This book is an amended version of my PhD dissertation entitled *Rewriting Myths through Life Writings in Marina Warner's Fiction*. I started investigating Warner's novels following an undergraduate comparative postcolonial literature course in 2002 on *Indigo* and William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. What was most striking was the extent to which Warner's novels were under-represented in spite of their fictionalization of important episodes of history and their invaluable participation in a tradition of historical, postcolonial and postmodern fiction. I chose four specific novels owing to their novelistic conventions: the subtle pattern of spatiotemporal shifts between past and present, historical and fictionalized reality, which results in an interesting narrative and textual layering. I focus on their mythological dimension as well as their metafictionality and self-reflexivity whose thematic and structural elements provide rich insights into history and life writing theory and criticism.

In the course of my research, I also gradually became aware of the recurrence of life writing themes and life writing types such as diaries and letters in her fiction. Such metabiographical aspects of Warner's novels have mostly been overlooked by critics and theorists who concentrated on feminist, post-colonialist, mythological and mythographical readings in their essays and reviews. This analytical gap as well as most critics' failure to link the binary, tide-like movement – in the sense of ebb and flow movements – within Warner's novels to the concept of re-writing past lives prompted me to bring this important notion of metabiography to the fore. I felt there was a clear need to focus on this particular combination as an alternative strategy of re-thinking issues of gender, race and folklore.

INTRODUCTION

Marina Warner is mostly known as a cultural historian through her works on female imagery and fairy tales. She is also a renowned novelist and mythographer, studying and re-writing sociocultural, religious and gender myths, both within her fiction and non-fiction. Warner was born in 1946, daughter to an English bookshop keeper and an Italian mother, brought up in Cairo then Brussels before moving to England. Her mother experienced Italian fascism while her father was the proud descendant of an ancestry of English colonizers. Such a rich multicultural identity deeply influenced Warner's consciousness/conscience as a historian and novelist, impinging on the themes and structure of her works. Writing a new novel approximately every decade since 1977, Warner-consciously or unconsciously-made sure that most of her fiction and non-fiction were written in alternation because of the correspondences between their themes. Indeed, Warner's cultural histories, based on meticulous research and precise documentation, are given, in her novels, a fictional continuation or "postscripts" (Tredell 36) "I like pursuing a dual search, at several levels of inquiry, historical and imaginative. It is like a treasure hunt" (Zabus, "Yarn" 528). Fiction allows Warner a wider, more imaginative scope for her analyses and themes. Explaining the relationship between her fiction and non-fiction, Warner clarifies that "there should be no difference between the enterprise of imaginative writing and the enterprise of biography or essays" (Tredell 35). In other words, both "enterprises" usually rely on very similar narrative strategies and require the use of creativity and imagination in their composition. Four novels are going to be focused upon in this book; a synopsis of each will help clarify the rationale behind my choice of these particular novels.

In Warner's first novel, *In a Dark Wood*[1] (1977), a twentieth-century English Jesuit priest called Gabriel is composing the biography of a member of the seventeenth-century Jesuit mission in China. Gabriel and his biographee share their religious skepticism and ambiguous sexual orientation despite the different periods they belong to. The English priest is later sent by the Church on an inquisition mission to southern Italy in

[1] The title of this novel will be abbreviated to *Dark Wood* from now on.

order to investigate the miraculous apparition of the Virgin Mary to three little girls.

The Lost Father (1988), Warner's third novel, is also situated in southern Italy and is related to Warner's mother's origins and history. It is about a mythical duel which triggers Anna's desire to compose her grandfather's memoir. She resorts to different types of fact collection but also resorts to fictionalisation to make up for the gaps of history and the fleeting past.

In *Indigo; or Mapping the Waters* (1992), a postmodern, feminist and postcolonial parody of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1623), fictional leaps between the seventeenth and twentieth centuries introduce a variety of locations and characters from Sycorax's everyday life in the pre-colonial Caribbean, to the first contact with Kit the English colonizer and, three decades later, his descendants in post-colonial London. The novel traces the lives of these different generations and reflects the destructive effects of colonization and slavery on both sides of the Atlantic. Like most of Warner's novels, however, it ends on a hopeful and reconciliatory note: Caliban and Miranda's wedding. *Indigo* has provoked many an artist and critic, not only because the time of its publication coincided with the rise of postcolonial studies, but also because it relies on a canonical literary text in its feminist rewriting.

The Leto Bundle (2000), on the other hand, is more explicitly mythological than the other novels, displaying such fantastical characters as a talking she-wolf and a time-travelling goddess named Leto who gives birth to human hatchlings. Leto's never-ending journey of survival from ancient to modern times, striving to find home and shelter, reflects universal, timeless themes of displacement, exile, social rejection and maternal self-sacrifice. The parallel lives of a Victorian scholar, a female academic and a pop singer intertwine and separate as they interact with the goddess in her different shapes, turning her into an icon, a resurrected Virgin Mary.

This book analyses the structural functions of Warner's mixture of fiction and life writing, especially as the self-reflexivity and *mise en abîme* of letters or diary extracts uncovers the hidden side of biographical procedures. These self-reflexive biographical subtexts will be designated as "metabiography"; their built-in structure within Warner's novels will be equated with the horticultural engrafting of shoots upon different varieties of trees:

> Engrafting ... a term in gardening, which signifies the taking [of] a shoot from one tree, and inserting it into another, so that they may closely unite,

> and form one trunk ... The great aim of this useful art is, to propagate any curious sorts of fruit-trees, to insure the growth of similar kinds, which cannot be effected by any other method ... [the grafted shoot] may be rather said to take root in the tree it is grafted, than to unite with it. (Willich 229)

The term "engrafting" is my personal coinage for the *mise en abîme* technique and as the thread connecting biography to fiction and giving birth to metabiography. Literally, the concept of "engrafting" implies permanently attaching a vital element taken from one tree to another tree. With the aim of perpetuating a particular or "curious sorts" of fruit, the latter uses the tree on which it is engrafted as "soil" and source of nourishment and growth. Interestingly enough, when applied to Warner's novels, this process figuratively embodies the juxtaposition of types of life writing and fiction, which occurs on two levels: thematic and textual or visual. Warner's novels contain diaries undergoing editing, memoirs being written, letters, and chronicles which continually interact with, and infuse the narrative structure, its themes and characterization. The fact that Warner systematically relies upon this engrafting strategy[2] invites reader and critic to trace[3] a significant pattern and function within her works. Engrafting not only facilitates the mixture of different genres within her fiction, but also highlights the hybridity of life writing itself.

In "Fictional Metabiographies and Metaautobiographies: Towards a Definition, Typology and Analysis of Self-Reflexive Hybrid Metagenres", Ansgar Nünning positions this generic hybridity along with self-reflexivity as postmodern trends in history, fiction and life writing which reflect the "crisis in representation" and questions the textual reconstructions of the past as "more and more novels not only cross the boundaries between fact and fiction, they also tend to blur genre distinctions. As a result, an increasing number of postmodernist novels seem to resist generic classification all together, or at least test the limits of it" (Nünning 195). However, it would be necessary to tackle the question of the metamorphoses these genres may undergo at their mutual contact and the extent to which they keep their respective original formats. Another relevant consideration would be to relate the figurative to the literal purpose of "engrafting" as a process. Does it seek to "perpetuate" and revive particular types of life

[2]The different "engrafting" techniques as well as their relation to the nature of particular types of life writing, especially memoirs and diaries, in Warner's metabiographical fiction have been the scope of a chapter which is not included in this book. See "Metabiography in Marina Warner's Fiction" in *The European Journal of Life Writing*.

[3] Tracing is used in the double sense of locating and drawing.

writing through a fictional boost? Can fiction be a source of evolution and "growth" for diaries or memoirs simply by extending their generic limits and exposing their internal processes? The two genres share the same themes of biographical research and the necessity of fictionalisation, in addition to textually permeating each other and leading to multiple layerings of text levels and the alternation between free indirect speech, third and first-person narration. These levels of narration participate in the plot development, enriching the structure of the novel and providing the reader with access to the characters' hidden thoughts or unconfessed desires. In *Indigo* and *The Lost Father*, letters and diaries in particular are included in their original format and constitute the principal form of metabiography. Thus Warner's novels are a complex medley of characters' thoughts and parallel lives reflected in a multitude of textual levels which can at times be confusing. In *Dark Wood*, for example, the personal memories of the biographer are structurally blended with his narration of the events related to the Jesuit mission in China and the diaries of his biographee. These three levels of texts are brought together by the religious and political themes they share despite the three centuries separating the biographer from his subject. So, instead of the allegedly unbiased unique voice of an omniscient narrator, the different perspectives of the biographer, the biographee and their entourage provide a more comprehensive portrait of their life and times.

Influenced by Roland Barthes and his deconstruction of sociocultural Bourgeois mythology, Warner's mythography in "both enterprises" concerns itself with the study of the material circumstances from which myths and beliefs stemmed. Indeed, she relies on a deep analysis of the historical conditions and political motives which will help uncover the myths most relevant to her stance as a feminist novelist and cultural historian. By re-positioning those myths within history, Warner also rewrites them by modernizing their setting and changing their perspective. As Tobias Döring phrases it "our present [is] shaped by the past while the past is, in turn, continuously reshaped through present re-interpretations" ("Hyphen" n.pag.). Indeed, the Caribbean colonial past, Italian fascism and other historical moments are in a constant dialectic with present-day perspectives of younger and modern generations. The latter in *The Lost Father* and *Dark Wood* strive to reconstruct their identities and understand present circumstances by exploring/researching their ancestors' past through letters, diaries and so forth. As such, these novels particularly reinforce the interrelatedness of history with fiction.

But the most important concern with Warner's "life writings" is that, being included in a novel, they are fictional(ized). Allen Hibbard identified this

trend in postmodern fiction as "novels that in some way or another respond to the conventions of biography, or trace the journeys of biographers" (29). Warner's fictional works self-reflexively introduce the themes and structure of life writing along with a continual reworking of myths. In *The Lost Father*, the female protagonist tries to reconstruct her southern Italian grandfather's memoir while deconstructing myths about Catholicism and southern Italian women. In *Indigo*, letters, memoirs and epitaphs are included in their original format and deconstruct colonial and patriarchal myths. Thus the re-writing of literary and cultural canons of the past is a commonplace strategy, especially in Warner's *Indigo* (Connor 166). All these novelistic manifestations are linked to post-modernism; its loss of faith in official versions of history and in language as a transparent medium of representation. However, Warner's novels are historical fictions which confer a second wind of factuality on the life writing extracts. Treating gender and ethnic issues in a mythical and historical guise, *The Leto Bundle*, for instance, exposes such marginalised members of society as exiled and stateless persons through annals, chronicles and emails. This deconstruction is achieved by the incorporation of the Leto myth within realistic environments and fictionalized historical events. As a result, the genealogical victimization perpetuated upon different generations and strata of society due to gender, colour or class differences is exposed through the continuing interplay of various temporal spaces, of history and fiction.

In terms of gender discrimination, Warner's non-fictional works also present a history of the prejudice inherent to the iconography and symbolism of the female body as well as an analysis of the evolution of representations of women's moral and physical characteristics in society and religion. The latter are commented upon in more detail in *Alone of All her Sex: The Myth and Cult of the Virgin Mary* (1976) and *Joan of Arc: The Image of Female Heroism* (1981). Most importantly, such discriminations and mystifications are achieved through a "projection/rejection" process or "othering" discourse which Warner describes as "produced by precise historical circumstances". Warner characterises such "stories" as "self-protecting", and describes how they "can sometimes be totally interpenetrated with hostility". She then explains that "people structure strangers to ward them off, to expel them" (Fraser 366,371). This notion of "othering" is predominant in all of Warner's novels and culminates in *The Leto Bundle* which turns out to be a bundle indeed, made up of various silenced and oppressed members of society. The latter are given textual and thematic space by having their lives told, described, confessed, either by them or by their entourage. So Warner's metabiography resorts to a "de-othering" process, an attempt at comprehending and grasping a different culture or

viewpoint. This book thus represents not only an enquiry into the nature of fact and fiction, history and myth, but also a way of getting the balance of power relations right through the exposure of the myriad ulterior motives underlying the myth-making strategies of grand narratives of history and literature.The deconstruction theories of Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes will function as points of departure for the definition of what are exposed by metabiography as untruths or "myths" specific to Warner's narratives. These are stories, fables and false beliefs; myths in the Barthesian sense, that is those in which ideologies hide and whose historical constructedness needs to be uncovered[4]. Derrida and Barthes re-locate such myths as signifiers both within the text and within history. What are the implications of this terminology for Warner's metabiography and what type of deconstruction may be adapted to its myths?

This book also concentrates on questioning the objectivity and factualism of life writing while at the same time exploring the postmodern and feminist issues relevant to the genre. There have been many attempts at defining and positioning life writing as a genre by theorists like Ira Bruce Nadel, Liz Stanley and others. Stanley, for instance, explains how feminist life writings cross "conventional boundaries of genres" (65) through the mixture of fact and fiction. Another feminist "departure ... from biographic convention" is called "'intellectual autobiography', focussing on factors involved in the genesis and development of the writer's understanding and interpretation of the biographical subject ... that is, it focuses upon biographical processes, rather than the product of these alone" (136). In other words, (auto)biography turns into a metabiographical exploration of life writing and its mechanisms. Stanley also emphasizes the "anti-spotlight approach" (249) through which she strives to position the biographee in his/her social environment in a way similar to Warner's method of re-positioning persons and events in their historical context.

Woolf, on the other hand, wrote three fictional biographies, *Orlando: A Biography* (1928), *Flush: A Biography* (1933) and *Roger Fry: A Biography*

[4] As to the relationship of myth to history, Warner explains to David Dabydeen in a 1992 interview, that "[m]yth almost always has a very deep hinterland of quite practical, legal and economic circumstances" (Dabydeen 119), a "hinterland" in which Warner positions different myths in order to clarify and demystify them. Doring reinforces Barthes's and Warner's views of the constructedness of particular myths which are taken for granted and naturalised as universal and immutable "historical determinations" and should be "questioned and changed" ("Hyphen" n.pag.).

(1940). Concerned with the balance between fact and fiction, she has always refused to be limited by factuality in her quest for biographical truth. Stanley takes as an earlier example of metabiography Woolf's *The Journal of Mistress Joan Martyn* (1906) in which a fictional female biographer and her female biographee represent women's voices never represented or "preserved" before (161). Woolf herself wonders about the appropriate use of facts and the definition of a life, a doubtfulness which makes her resort to fiction and the satire of conventional biographical methods "[h]ow can one deal with facts – so many and so many and so many? Or ought one, as I incline, to be purely fictitious. And what is a life?" (Letters n. pag.) In *Orlando*, for example, the hardships linked to the writing of a biography are dramatized and the laws of the genre openly transgressed, which, in Nadel's words, turns this work into "a metabiography" (141). In "Lives without Theory", David Ellis explains

> Popular though biography has become, there has yet been no comparable interest in how it 'works' ... the tendency [of the twentieth century] has been rather to write books that ... initiate the reader into the behind-the-scenes secrets of the craft of biography without attempting a sustained analysis of any element which might be described as fundamental. (2)

This lack of any in-depth poetics of biographical writing is an obsolete idea since life writing theory has developed considerably in the last thirty years. Most importantly, the poststructuralist and postmodern deconstruction of self, fact and history as stable and truthful reflections of reality has influenced the theoretical definitions of biography as well its ethical, historical and representational concerns. What is most interesting in that regard is the way the view of biography develops towards less and less certainty about the extent to which its aspirations as a genre are realistic, especially when it comes to establishing neat boundaries between fact and fiction. Such boundaries are crossed by Warner as she shows a deep interest in the reconstruction of the past through her historical fictions, "trying to find historical paradigms for contemporary situations" (*On Histories* 11). I try to (re)locate Warner's metabiographical myths within their cultural and socio-political spheres and examine the (de)mystifying implications of fictionalizing specific histories and/or geographies such as World War One in fascist southern Italy and the seventeenth century in the Caribbean. As Warner has always been described as a historian and mythographer, I wanted to explore a different meaning of myth as a prejudiced or received idea, a "human [self-]deception" on the one hand, and the genre of life writing as a form of historical record and a "covert life-myth" (Edel, Writing 17), both contextualized in her fiction.

Existing criticism on Warner's fiction varies widely and mostly focuses on mythology[5] and mythography and the link between myth and history as well as on feminist, post-colonial and postmodern[6] issues. Warner explains that "[m]yths convey values and expectations which are always evolving, in the process of being formed, but – and this is fortunate – never set so hard they cannot be changed again" (qtd. in Coupe 14). So Warner's continuous reinterpretation and rewriting of myths reflect their narrative constructedness and their consequent adaptability to different contexts, authors and readers.The structure of Warner's novels is also widely analysed, especially in relation to typology, textual collage[7] and the multiplicity of voices. Sir James Fraser analyses the "scriptural pattern" or "typology" according to which stories of the past keep being recapitulated and materialized into new forms in the present, as is the case in the Old and

[5] Laurence Coupe concentrates on Warner's most recurrent analytical strategy, namely the retelling and reconstruction of religious and secular myths. Coupe emphasizes the importance of myth as a pattern underlying Warner's novels. In "The Comedy of Terrors", he explains how Warner does not just expose history as the "repressed content" of myths but relies on New Historicism and "the power of ... documentation" (Coupe 52) to reposition myths within their material circumstances and allow the reconstruction of more accurate alternatives.

[6] Attempts at positioning Warner's fiction consider the extent to which she adheres to postmodern trends, namely the postmodern "crisis of representation" in historical novels and "historiographic metafiction" (Kilian; Wanquet) which display an acute awareness of the constructedness of both history and fiction. It is also the metafictionality of Warner's fiction, pointing to its own inadequacies as a representational tool for silenced voices (Propst, "Unsettling Stories" 333), as well as Linda Hutcheon's concept of "historiographic metafiction" which brought the notion of "metabiography" to the fore in this book as an alternative mode of representation. Also in relation to postmodern issues of history as "conventional representation of the past," Kilian analyses the life writing genre through her comment on the ambiguous interaction between the present and the past. She provides a few pertinent examples from *Dark Wood* and *The Lost Father* like the influence of the present state of mind of both Gabriel and Anna on their understanding of their subjects' past lives, both turning into a "subjective perceiver who brings a specific context to a historical document" (Kilian 56-57) and provides his/her (Gabriel/Anna) own version of events and people. In this regard, Lisa Propst also comments on the documents in *The Leto Bundle* in terms of reflecting the needs and desires of the people who record them.

[7] The terms "juxtaposition" or collage applied to the structure of metabiography are used by Daniela Corona and Richard Todd to describe Warner's multiculturalism, multiple time frames and the "juxtaposition of forms" (156-58) or genres as "interruptive forces" like life writings, constantly invading her fiction.

New Testaments. This principle is secularized in Warner's fiction, clarified as a "recapitulation in an actual form of the promise of the past." She explains this further in an interview with Lisa Hopkins as "prefigurement: in fact all my novels are ... all structured in the way that we were taught *the* text, the Gospels, were structured ... So that ... everything returns again" (89). Döring also insists on the centrality of the "dialectical relationship between then and now" ("Hyphen" n.pag.) to Warner's fiction, for past histories and stories can be manipulated and re-told, either by historians or biographers, in a way that suits particular ideological purposes in the present, thus perpetuating all sorts of myths, while the present is itself d etermined by the past. Many such myths are commented upon and analyzed by critics of *Indigo*[8].

The first chapter attempts to investigate the consequences of engrafted metabiography as it interacts with and influences the two genres of fiction and life writing. I consider two possible reasons behind the engrafting strategy; structural/aesthetic and thematic/ethical. The latter in particular paves the way for the deconstruction of context-specific socio-political myths. Stanley's definition of the "mystifications" contained within (auto)biography as the series of "knowledges" contingent on their speaker's viewpoint and socio-cultural and political milieu (251) also establishes metabiography as a myth-making or mythopoeic tool. In light of these life writing theories and literary examples of metabiography, I attempt to establish the same link between the structure and themes of Warner's fictional life writings and the strategic reconstruction of different types of myths within her novels. Although my definition of myth takes as its starting point Barthes' theory in *Mythologies*, I later derive my deconstructive method from social constructivism, Derrida's deconstruction theory as well

[8] Steven Connor points out the "myth of origin" or "myth of creation" (of the British Empire), explaining *Indigo*'s aim is to "secularize the mythical ... insist on what is already *there* before the creation of myth" (190), that is the Caribbean history and culture erased by colonial historians. As to post-colonial and feminist issues, Caroline Cakebread, Eileen William-Wanquet and Döring analyse *Indigo* as the most obvious example of myth deconstruction, especially in relation to gender, race and "ownership of history" (Chillington Rutter). Indeed, these critics mainly focus on the novel's power to re- establish the doubly victimized Caribbean and feminine identity through the retelling of Caribbean folklore, myth and fairy tales, allowing previously silent subjects to express themselves. Döring describes Père Labat's memoirs as "Liamuiga's early history, as it has been perpetuated in colonial myth-making ... colonial romance ... a false narrative" ("Hyphen" n.pag.). In this case, life writings are considered as the myth-making tools of colonization while being relegated to the "lower" literary category of "romance."

as Warner's own method. Derrida did not believe in fixed truth or meaning ("Logos") and thus continually strove to destabilize ethnocentric binary oppositions in his deconstructive reading like black/white and savage/civilised. Focusing on the internal mechanisms of the text and its signifiers, Derrida thus exposed "violent hierarchies" which he then reversed by showing the instability of their meaning. But unlike Derrida, Warner does not stop at "the double binds" and tensions that are articulated in the text" (Derrida, *Norton Anthology* 1683), referring to the latter's internal mechanisms and contradictions, but re-positions apparently "naturalized" ideas within their historical circumstances instead, a technique which helps identify the external ideological elements lying behind the creation of such ideas. I locate this demystifying stance within the life writings engrafted upon Warner's novels by carrying out a close textual analysis of edited diaries, letters and chronicles and the resulting complex structure. The deconstructed meanings and oppositions are spotted in the gaps and inconsistencies within the discourses of diaries or letters, complemented by a thorough study of their historical and material circumstances for a more political and context-specific dimension. Such an investigation also helps expose Warner's fictionalization processes and the realistic themes emphasized as a result. I then undertake a close examination of Warner's fictionalized autobiographies, *The Lost Father* and *Indigo*, to demonstrate how engrafted metabiography functions as a deconstructive tool through the re-presenting/re-membering of subaltern and unprivileged cultures like rural southern Italy and the pre-colonial tribal Caribbean. In addition to that, Leon Edel's notion of the "covert myth", "the figure under the carpet" in *Writing Lives* (161) provides a metaphor which is pertinent to what I am seeking to explore through the literary psychology of Warner's characters, what their words, dreams, images and slips of the pen/tongue reveal about their hidden desires, their inner selves such as the erotic motifs and symbolisms Davide uses in his diary and the chivalric imagery in Anna's memoir. As mythography implies replacing fossilized and prejudiced ideas with "new" socio-historically-based ones, I critically look into Warner's own mythopoeia as she instils her own myths as a white Creole and privileged female historian. Does she fall in the trap of reversed ethnocentrism or rather succeed in universalizing the past re-imagined by her metabiographical extracts?

In the second chapter of the book, I concentrate on establishing thematic links between what I define as religious and pagan/folkloric myths in Warner's fiction. Most importantly, my cultural and religious distance from Catholicism and the Bible allows me to read the latter critically in my identification of its gender myths and its sexual connotations. This is

especially interesting in relation to the awe commonly generated by Christian iconography and which Warner elaborates upon in her work about the lingering symbolic power of the Virgin Mary.

In relation to the notion of folklore, I have felt it to be a more precise denomination than merely "cultural" because of the specificity of the customs and belief systems pertaining to the Caribbean and to southern Italy at specific points in time. I was later confirmed in my belief by Corona's[9] comment on the "folk category ... [as] the identification of a cultural heritage specific to ethnic minorities" (150). Although this definition concentrates on southern Italian rural culture in *The Lost Father*, it may be applied to pre-colonial Caribbean culture in *Indigo*. I thus attempt to show that Warner's fictionalized autobiographies[10] revive neglected cultures by destroying the mythology surrounding them[11]. These thematic explorations and demythologizations of particular cultures add a socio-politically committed or "engagé" dimension to Warner's novels. For it is by demythologizing these cultures and their inhabitants that she also helps retrieve the voices of the weak and the oppressed and those neglected by "official history" or its destructive

[9] Corona points out that "through letters, diaries, papers, *The Lost Father* ... grafts onto the novel structural models, linguistic elements and thematic motives belonging to the entire folk area, with proverbs, songs, rituals ... fables" (156). This remark reflects the function of diaries and memoirs in *The Lost Father,* which re-locate and re-historicize events, people (women and peasants) and a popular culture ignored, primitivized and silenced by official history, thus functioning as folkloric and socio-political myth deconstructing tools. In addition to defining folklore, Corona also focuses on Italian immigrants and the ethnic mythology they internalized about themselves in a racially-prejudiced America (157-58) so it is also through the deconstruction of this mythology that Warner's novels aim to revalue these subaltern cultures and social categories.

[10] Zabus and Todd associate *Indigo* with *The Lost Father* as fictional explorations of Warner's "family histories [and] imaginary homelands" (Zabus, "Mingling" 121), and of their "historical and cultural backgrounds'' (Todd 103).

[11] In an interview with Zabus, Warner explains that she wanted to destroy some mythical conceptions of southern Italy "as a benighted place of poverty and cruelty and a kind of emptiness," to re-right/re-write its history and shed light on its social problems ("Spinning" 520). In parallel, Warner acknowledges her attempt to demythologize the Caribbean culture as well, namely the myths of chaos, sorcery and ruthlessness surrounding it "I did want to give voice to the ordinariness of the culture that had been crushed ... to show that it was a practical, working society, not a place of voodoo magic and cannibals .... There exists the possibility of a material sympathy that we can have with the Other" (Dabydeen 122).

internalization. Döring also explains the necessity for Warner to impose herself as a female historian/novelist by deconstructing the myths expanded by her imperialist ancestors and re-inventing her own, a doubly inscribed mythopoeia which adds an interesting and richer dimension to male history and literature. In this regard, "engrafted" life writings may be compared to active acts of remembering different eras and locations, trends and cultures (Meneglado 218). In relation to *The Lost Father*, Warner adds "that's the enterprise, to fight forgetfulness – and fascism, the way fascism is about forgetfulness, about telling a story which obscures the story, always insists on covering it over with another" (Hopkins 90). Warner thus links the act of remembering – through fiction and fictional life writings – with the destruction of such myths of the past as those created under totalitarian and imperialistic regimes

In the course of my investigations, I have noticed that the constant linking all these myths is gender discrimination and derogatory representations of the female. So, in chapter three, after I engage in a brief dialogue with a variety of feminist theories and their definitions of patriarchy, I attempt to reflect the specificity of Warner's feminism[12] in its reuniting of different categories of women through space and time. I also attempt to supplement my feminist mythography with a colonial and ethnic one through the variety of historical and socio-cultural backgrounds offered by Warner's fiction without falling into the trap of mystifying or discriminating against specific members of society. However, this same variety proves problematic because of the disparity of its cultures and timeframes. Regarding gender myths, I engage with Alison Stone's concept of "women's genealogy" (Stone 92) to develop a unified stance among such different women's experiences from Greek antiquity to the Caribbean and southern Italy, without essentializing or reducing their cultural particularities. But I did not want my analysis to

[12] In "Retrieval of Unheard Voices", Richard Todd analyses Warner's feminism in its retrieval of marginalized subjects' voices but does not reduce it to the simplistic strategy of replacing one discourse by another. Rather, he defines her fiction as "an augmentation of a total discourse" (Todd 99) and moves past the novel's alleged aim to destroy male domination of most modes of representation towards a more balanced and inclusive relationship between genders. Through her postmodernist transformation of "icons of patriarchal" and "Western literary tradition" (Todd, "Retrieval" 99-100), Warner re-rights the balance between masculine and feminine "voices" by providing a textual space for each while demystifying such literary canons as sports' literature and travel writing. Still, Todd does not lose sight of the fact that Warner's retrieved voices remain "invented" ("Silenced Voices" 198), highlighting their imaginative nature and the impossibility of making "the subaltern speak" again.

be limited to second-wave feminism's female status as a victim, which is exemplified by the theories of such critics as Andrea Dworkin and Catharine A. MacKinnon. I try instead to reflect the strategies of female empowerment and subversive strategies through fictionalized (self-) representations of women's lives.

The fourth chapter will be establishing a link between literary theory and the types of myths unraveled by Warner's metabiography. In practical terms, I will define and position these myths in relation to postcolonial theory. The first part of the chapter will focus on the post-colonial deconstruction of gender and patriarchal myths in *Indigo* and *The Leto Bundle* and question the extent to which metabiographical techniques uncover or sustain them. In the second part of the chapter, colonial, social and ethnic myths will be exposed by being re-positioned within their historical and material circumstances, thus relying on historical records as elements external to the text in my deconstructive strategy. I argue that particular belief systems serve as a foundation to the historical discourses disseminated by imperialism, colonization and Fascism. I will then consider the way the alternative discourses of women and minorities recovered by Warner's metabiography tend to construct a genealogy of the "Other" that will ensure thematic and structural continuity within Warner's fiction.

CHAPTER ONE

ENGRAFTING POETICS AND METABIOGRAPHICAL FICTIONS

1- "Engrafting" in Marina Warner's Novels: Processes and Rationale

One shared quality between all of Warner's novels is their reliance on, and inspiration from historical and contemporary facts and events. She herself states that "[e]ven the most fantasy novels have got to be rooted in some kind of plausible structure" (Hopkins 86). This particular characteristic makes Warner's fiction similar to the genres of history and life writing, which are considered by many critics to be based on facts (Nadel; Stanley). However, these genres necessarily involve fictional techniques which their linguistic reconstruction of a person's or a particular community's life requires. Nünning explains "the constructivist view that biography (and history are) a subjective and constructive process which does not reproduce the past but is only an intellectual construct'' (197). So events are by necessity fictionalized when they are turned into textual "historical representation" (qtd. in Nünning 208).

As a consequence, the "engrafting" of biographical extracts upon novels which already contain some factual realities makes the concept seem natural, not by any means contrived or artificial. Indeed, these extracts include partly-true events which add to their overall authenticity while diminishing their answerability to the strict rules of the genre to which they originally belong. For example, the diaries edited by Gabriel in *Dark Wood* are about the Jesuit mission in China, a prominent episode of both Christian and Chinese history which actually took place in the seventeenth century. The bibliography at the end of the same novel dutifully provides the sources which inspired its events, also declaring Andrew da Rocha's life circumstances as "historically authentic", even though the priest "and his Diaries are imagined" (*Dark Wood* 249). In this sense, Warner, also a historian, partially keeps her fidelity to the demands of factualism while seeking to demonstrate the artificiality of life writing's generic requirements

through a mock-bibliography and a fictional imitation of diary editing. Another example is provided by the socio-political circumstances the engrafted memoirs are reconstructing around Davide and his family, the main characters-cum-biographees in *The Lost Father*. Indeed, Mussolinian southern Italy and Italian imperialism during the first decades of the twentieth century form the background to the characters' political conversations and attitudes. Moreover, the artificiality of (hi)storytelling is occasionally put to the fore as in the following quotation about one of Davide's daughters:

> [Lucia's] talent for rhetoric: 'Latest News from Tripoli', in the early days of the campaign, imitated the radio bulletins to give an account of an engagement in which a company of Italian bersaliers ... had fought valiantly for the glory of the patria and the Leader. Lucia did not invest the words she wrote down with any felt belief; she had overheard and she reproduced. She took on the colours of others readily, like a space on which a brilliant shadow falls from a Venetian glass. (*Father* 15)

The metaphor of "Venetian glass" aptly describes Lucia's talent for the innocent mimicry of political propaganda whose subtleties and underpinning implications a child cannot grasp. Chronicles and annals originating in conventional models for telling the stories of legendary ancient and medieval battles or martyrs are also engrafted on the main story in *The Leto Bundle*. Equally in *Indigo*, letters and epitaphs related to English Imperialism and colonization of the Caribbean are submitted to this same technique. However, there can be instances in which confusion reigns unless a clear difference is made between the main narrative and the engrafted biographical and historical texts. The main narrative is the first-level text, the main plot or series of events which advance and develop the story's action. In *Dark Wood*, the tumultuous events in the lives of Gabriel and Jerome are structured around editing techniques, biographical concerns and the engrafted diaries of Andrew da Rocha. Free indirect speech constitutes the most recurrent engrafting strategy due to a form which allows a continuous flow of voices and characters, seldom interrupted by punctuation which would conventionally separate the different perspectives and the two genres from one another. In *The Lost Father,* Davide's sister's voice and those of other women sometimes mingle in a medley of gossiping, pleas and prayers, putting the reader's visual and interpretative discernment to the test as to who says what. In the following quotation, a tragicomic logic of the least of two evils is applied to immoral women and spinsters:

> She'd heard her mother talking with her cousins ... A mother of twelve, just had another still-born ... the cord was around his neck, marks of sinfulness

> ... But all the messages that the parliaments of women busily exchanged ... stuck at one figure ... a special kind of other woman ... Rosalba was never ever going to be one of them; never, never ... – she winced at this, 'Please, no' – but pressed on rather than be ... the woman-who-had-never-had-a-man ... Old maid. No. Above all, Lady, she entreated Mother of God on earth, I will do anything ... but please please don't let nothing happen to me. (*Father* 68-69)

The repetition of such words as "never'' and "please'' increases not only dramatic emotionality but also the immediacy of the metabiographical text. These different points of view are the more invaluable because of their engraftment upon Anna's memoir and the rich insights of multiple character narration they afford. Every thought, every sigh of every personage is recorded and valued. Although Warner's "intrusive" characterization in *Dark Wood* has been criticized (See Jessica Griffin), the advantages offered by her "fictional narrator" in *The Lost Father* make up for Warner's alleged narratorial flaws:

> The intrusive and occasionally condescending voice of the author as omniscient narrator, which throughout the first novel [*Dark Wood*] breaks in to reveal and explain the characters' thoughts and motives rather than revealing them through their own words and actions, in the latest novel [*The Lost Father*] has been replaced by the voice of a fictional narrator, through whom both the world in which she lives, as well as the world about which she writes, are seen, and whose humour and understanding of her characters contribute much to the success of the novel. (n. pag.)

Warner's initial reliance upon an intrusive type of narration may have proved inefficient. Instead of leaving room for the character's voice and the reader's own interpretations, Warner's first novels overanalyze, even judge her characters *à outrance*. But the presence of Anna as a fictional "voice'', together with the shifts in narration types in *The Lost Father* strike a more original note. Indeed, these narratorial techniques provide the reader with an increased, more evenly dispersed accessibility to the characters' psyches.

The change of narrator also signals a transition between third-person engrafted life writings and Anna's first and second-person meta-memoir. The meta-memoir includes her personal reflections about different biographical processes and memory-related objects such as photographs. Anna also frequently addresses Fantina through second-person narration, as if to validate the accuracy of her facts directly from her mother. In addition to that, the mother-daughter exchanges, even the most casual ones,

epitomize the differences between two generations of displaced femaleness like their opposed reactions to the chaotic littering in present day Ninfania[13]:

> When we returned together ... in the late Fifties, there was litter in the streets of southern Italy ... that had changed the appearance of your childhood home, where nothing was ever discarded ... I didn't mind the new litter in Italy; trash in cities makes me feel comfortable, as increasingly its absence from the street indicates money. (*Father* 90)

Fantina, a conservative Italian woman uprooted from Italy to England, is shocked by "ice cream wrappers and sweet papers and carrier bags and plastic bags strewn about'' her previously immaculate native land. Meanwhile, Anna, only half-Italian and brought up in a consumerist London, sees litter as "historical specimens'' (Father 90-91). The latter is an ironic echo to her grandfather's childhood passion for archaeology and such relics as old coins.

On the other hand, the novel was praised for its variety of spatiotemporal perspectives (See Griffin); those of early twentieth-century southern Italy and America as well as the memoirist's ongoing biographical research in the London of 1985:

> 'My father used to bring us ice cream,' you told me then, for the first time, 'When we were all asleep ... ' Rosa saw no one from her hideaway in the dark arch of their carriage door ... She got to the other side ... and again hugged the shadows ... In the morning, you'd never be quite sure if you hadn't dreamed of his presence in your bedroom ... Rosa too woke up the next day unsure whether she had walked in the street below in a dream. (*Father* 92-94)

The previous exemplifies how two characters, Fantina and her aunt Rosa, separated by time (twenty years) and space, are brought closely together through the fluid alternation of second and third-person narrations and their juxtaposition with free indirect speech. In addition to that, the thematic similarities of sleeplessness and dreams with their share of secrecy and excitement build invisible bridges between the two contexts. There is also a disturbing contrast between two opposed sets of forbidden pleasures; the scene of the innocent childish joy of eating ice cream in the middle of the night and the murkier excitement of an adolescent sneaking out to a tryst. In other cases, transition from the main narrative is usually achieved through visual devices which divide the novel into a series of extracts. These divisions can take the shape of a symbol, the title of a memoir "[f]rom How

[13] Fictional southern Italian city.

We Played: A Family Memoir by Sir 'Ant' Everard" (*Indigo* 151), or a diary entry "[f]rom the diary of Davide Pittagora/ Bay of Naples, 2 April 1913." (*Lost Father* 144)

Thematic transitions may also intervene; these can be achieved through a change of perspective or a particular utterance which implicitly announces the interruption of a diary or the beginning of a memoir. As an instance, Gabriel's casual physical gestures during his reading and editing of diaries announce the return of the main narrative "Gabriel pursed his lips", "At this point Gabriel rubbed his eyes", "Gabriel pushed the diary away from him" (*Dark Wood* 63, 69, 224). Equally important are the instances when the language used in some life writing extracts is so elegantly elevated and metaphorical that they themselves turn into a sort of mini-novel within the main narrative. For example, Anna's memoir in *The Lost Father* is drenched in literariness and motifs, sometimes verging on Romantic stereotypes:

> Larks were singing out over the field to the west and the air stirred in the wisteria clusters, blowing their honey about the countryside; now and then crickets started up their sibilance in chorus, as if a conductor were bringing them on cue, and the pigeons ... billed dozily in the dovecotes. (7)

Anna's memoir is indeed very poetic thanks to a sensual description of nature and of its components; birds, insects and plants. Warner speculates on her own tendency towards the lyrical as deriving from her mixed Italian origins and her French school education "my native love of metaphor the long, singing line, the sensuous overkill rather than the English tradition of close-lipped irony and lean syntax" ("Rich Pickings" 31). Anna, also half English, half-Italian, turns into Warner's fictional persona whose linguistic and cultural taste is engrafted upon the memoir.

Equally important is the fact that the focus of the memoir is not only limited to the subject's personal life but also extends to the history and social circumstances s/he belongs to. In *The Lost Father*, the cultural practices, social problems and political issues of southern Italy during Davide's lifetime are as important as his personal growth and maturation. The historical and the factual seem to naturally infuse into the fictionality of the memoir and to provide an authentic background to the more intimate family moments. Among the fictional techniques used in the imaginative building of the memoir, there is multiple character narration continually wavering between male and female perspectives personified in Davide/Tommaso and Rosa/Caterina (Davide's sisters). There are also recurrent flash forward allusions that establish an atmosphere of suspense and expectation such as the brief mentioning of a "scar where the bullet had entered'' (*Father* 77),

letting the reader wonder as to the circumstances which lead to that event. Characterization also complements the descriptive and metaphorical passages by revealing the characters' complexities and ambiguities. For example, Davide reacts negatively to Tommaso's revelations of a "superior" knowledge of women and sex, and, in a curious blend of disgust and envy, thinks of ending their friendship, but "[t]o change allegiances now could cut across Davide's voiceless but ingrained idea of manhood ... Davide's sense of justice was too sharp to avoid him for no reason except that the knowledge [Tommaso] had passed on to him had got under his guard and into his secret places'' (*Father* 29). Omniscient narration poeticizes Davide's internalization of such patriarchal values as the vital preservation of (a constructed image of) virility while simultaneously betraying his unconscious fear of a threatening female sexual "appetite" (*Father* 28).

Second-person narration is also used in characterization "[h]er (Rosa's) heart emptied itself out, you could have tolled her and she would have sounded hollow and cracked'' (*Father* 86). Rosa's muddled state at the sight of her "lover" is described through a narrative device which confers greater immediacy and drama upon her emotions. Indeed, this technique modifies the narrative flow by changing the perspective of the text, including an imagined reader who directly witnesses, empathizes with, or "tests" the character's metaphorical emptiness. It also promotes a sort of collusion between narrator (Anna/Warner) and reader (Fantina/imagined reader) through shared knowledge of, and expanded access to Rosa's hidden emotional plight.

Warner's decision to engraft a memoir upon her novel may be explained by the fact that other types of life writing such as autobiographies were usually confined to the male sphere and excluded women as private, unimportant subjects "women's autobiography has long been beset by problems of ... generic acceptance into a canon dominated by male practitioners and theorists" (Sanders, "Women's Autobiographies" 946). Warner could possibly have chosen the memoir because of its marginalized status as a genre, especially compared to the status of autobiography. As such, the former gives voice to silenced and ordinary people, not only to famous individuals with great achievements. Helen M. Buss explains:

> Memoirs have often been seen by literary critics as incomplete and superficial autobiographies and by historiographers as "inaccurate, overly personal histories" (Billson). This situation was changing by the end of the 20th century, as critics began to see the subversive and revisionary