

## Marina Warner

Marina Warner is a prize-winning writer of fiction, criticism and history; her works include novels and short stories as well as studies of female myths and symbols, fairytales and lullabies (*Alone of All Her Sex*, 1976; *From the Beast to the Blonde*, 1994; *No Go the Bogeyman*, 1998; *The Lato Bundle*, fiction, 2000). She is currently working principally on the Arabian Nights and a novel inspired by her parents' time in Cairo after the war, to be called *Inventory of Life Mislaid*. Her most recently published book, *Phantasmagoria*, is a study of spirits and mass media. She is Professor in the Department of Literature, Film and Theatre Studies, University of Essex.

For further information see

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## Memory Maps: Places, Things, and Stories

Visual artists have long explored themselves in relation to places by walking, mapping, collecting, and bringing personal responses to reconfigure meanings and personal experience; writers have begun following in their footsteps in more ways than one. The creative writing project called Memory Maps, which I have been working on with colleagues in the Literature Department at the University of Essex and at the Victoria and Albert Museum, seeks to stimulate writing that reconnects people to places and to stories. Memory Maps are not restricted to retrospection or personal experience, but can involve discovery, investigation, dream and reverie. The form, which has been gaining a wide readership recently, invites participants to see memory as a process that takes place in the present, an activity of making as well as recollecting.

Memory Maps also seeks to explore ways of approaching the issues of belonging and identity without returning to the past and familiar lines of demarcation. Is it possible to re-vision stories of the past in a new light that realign memories? Seamus Heaney has asked that we listen to 'the grief not the grievance'. The writing aims at encouraging aspiring writers, scholars and students to reflect on the workings of their own memories and imagination, in response to the distinctiveness of places, things and images. If we are the stories we tell to ourselves, what can be done with this? How can the rich grain of past storytelling be re-activated now in ways that will re-establish links to places and to one another?

The project also aims at returning literary studies, both in scholarly research and creative writing, to the material realm, reconnecting reading and writing to sensory experience by mapping chosen sites by walking, as well as exploring museum stores and other archives, and listening to things that talk. Frequently today, children enjoy visiting museums, but young adults drift away. Philosophers, psychologists, as well as poets and photographers are increasingly fascinated by the richly emotional meanings of things (eg */Evocative Objects* /ed. Sherry Turkle; Nicholas Thomas, */Entangled Objects/*; Lorraine Daston, ed. */Things That Talk/*).

Marina Warner will explore these ideas with reference to the work of contemporary writers (eg W.G. Sebald and Rebecca Solnit), and artists (eg Tacita Dean).