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Rights of Passage: a Cross -Cultural Study of Maroon Novels by Black Women.

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**RIGHTS OF PASSAGE:
A CROSS-CULTURAL STUDY OF MAROON NOVELS
BY BLACK WOMEN**

A Dissertation

**Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

in

The Department of English

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the use and implications of the trope of marronage, the African-American practice of self-emancipation to forge alternative New World communities, in selected novels by Black women writers of North America and the Anglophone and Francophone Caribbean. It draws on theories of liminality to posit a theory of liberatory practice that deconstructs hegemonic narratives, both personal and historical. Postmodern approaches are deferred in favor of locating these texts and their concerns as deriving from the epistemological consequences of modernity. Cross-cultural Black women's texts were chosen to illuminate the recognition of shared subjugations across national and linguistic borders, as well as comparable resistant strategies. The reclamation of the submerged history of marronage across these cultural borders offers the possibility for re-centering the African Diasporic subject in the Americas, enabling the subject and her community's participation in resistance and the creation of alternative American ontologies. Close readings of Beloved by Toni Morrison, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People by Paule Marshall, and Heremakhonon by Maryse Conde demonstrate the transition of marronage from historical and geographical territorial identity to submerged but reclaimable psychological rite of passage. The study concludes that reading African Diasporic fictions through the lens of marronage enables the cultural work of identity and community-building, critique, and affirmation.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Revolution begins with the self, in the self. The individual, the basic revolutionary unit, must be purged of poison and lies that assault the ego and threaten the heart, that hazard the next larger unit -- the couple or pair, that jeopardizes the still larger unit -- the family or cell, that put the entire movement in peril. (Bambara 109)

This study investigates the manner in which three novels by Black women writers in the Americas describe what Patricia Hill Collins has called “the journey from internalized oppression to the ‘free mind’ of a self-defined Afrocentric feminist consciousness” (104). The novels are Toni Morrison’s Beloved, Paule Marshall’s The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, and Maryse Conde’s Heremakhonon. This study is intended to rearticulate the contours of each novel’s primary female character’s quest for agency by drawing on cultural theory from a variety of sources to the extent that such theory appears to illuminate the complex theory of human change, and particularly change from internalized oppression to self-determination, that these fictions describe. In particular, this study draws on the historical experience of marronage, or Black self-emancipation in the New World, as a central image informing both the process of change and the desire for it.

Black Cultural Theory

Much contemporary Black women’s writing addresses issues of fragmentation, losses, and gaps in narrative, history, community, and self.¹ In Alice Walker’s famous essay, “In Search of Our Mother’s Gardens,” she describes searching history for artistic foremothers and finding them in Jean Toomer’s Cane, where they are

themselves unaware of the richness they held. They stumbled blindly through their lives: creatures so abused and mutilated in body, so dimmed and confused by pain, that they considered themselves unworthy even of hope...And when

those frail whirlwinds fell...no one mourned. Instead, men lit candles to celebrate the emptiness that remained, as people do who enter a beautiful but vacant space to resurrect a God. (232)

Walker, however, is unwilling to accept “lit candles to celebrate the emptiness.” Rather, she insists that the contemporary presence of Black women’s creativity is testament to an ongoing decision to survive and create passed down through the generations.

Walker refuses the notion that Black women’s creativity, like Topsy, “jes’ grew.” Her refusal compels the replacement of votaries with interrogatories: “How was the creativity of the black woman kept alive, year after year and century after century, when for most of the years black people have been in America, it was a punishable crime for a black person to read or write?” (234). It was kept alive, she answers, through “contrary instincts” (235).

In Walker’s discussion of Phillis Wheatley, and references to Nella Larsen and Zora Neale Hurston, it becomes apparent that she is talking about the internalization of the external forces of terror and repression that characterized New World slavery, so that “contrary instincts” echo DuBois’ famous characterization of “double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity....two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder” (2). Walker’s primary example of internalized contrary instincts or double-consciousness is Wheatley’s characterization of Liberty as a goddess with golden hair, “usually read,” Walker notes dryly, “prior to hanging Phillis’s memory as that of a fool” (236). Walker retrieves Wheatley from the hanging post, however, by grounding Wheatley’s choice of imagery in her experience as a slave and maid to

women whose golden hair did indeed represent liberty. Finally, she asserts that Wheatley's prime contribution was not what she wrote, but that she "kept alive, in so many of our ancestors, the notion of song" (237).

Walker is explicitly recognizing the human impulse to self-expression that drove Wheatley to create poetry despite having to engage with the oppressive Other. Similarly, W.E.B. DuBois opens The Souls of Black Folk with a chapter entitled "Of Our Spiritual Strivings." He closes it with "The Sorrow Songs," and heads each chapter with a bar from a spiritual, "some echo of haunting melody from the only American music which welled up from black souls in the dark past" (vi). He, like Walker 75 years later, explicitly recognizes a continuing tradition of the "expression of human experience born this side the seas. It has been neglected, it has been, and is, half despised, and above all it has been persistently mistaken and misunderstood; but notwithstanding it still remains as the singular spiritual heritage of the nation and the greatest gift of the Negro people" (156).

In a text addressing the social, economic, and political conditions facing Black Americans at the turn of the century, DuBois not only includes in his frame of reference, but uses as the frame for the entire work, the "neglected...half despised, and....persistently mistaken and misunderstood" art form of the spiritual, and celebrates it as the means through which "the slave spoke to the world. Such a message," he adds, "is naturally veiled and half articulate" (159). He also offers the example of a song passed down in his family for two hundred years "knowing as little as our fathers what its words may mean, but knowing well the meaning of its music" (158). In other words, keeping alive "the notion of song."

The frame of The Souls of Black Folks is also its margin, the points of entry and exit into a complex and challenging text engaged with the disciplinary discourses of history, sociology, economics, and government. However, DuBois recognized the significance of including the creative and reflexive aspects of Black subjectivity that resist capture in sociological and historical analysis. As he put it, “To the real question, How does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word” (1). Instead, he answers with the suggestion of human complexity of Black Americans that opens the book; its full assertion of representative humanity closes it. From the margins, DuBois engages his readers with “a tale twice told but seldom written” (v) that Walker takes up in the section of her essay that follows her revisionist and reclamatory reading of Phillis Wheatley.

Black Subjectivity and the Dominant Subculture

More overtly than DuBois, Walker stakes out the claim that Black people’s, and specifically Black women’s, interiority and its expression are not contained in the canonical or disciplinary discourses of the dominant subculture. I use the term “dominant subculture” as a means of addressing hegemonic discourses that continue to hold sway over official culture, but whose totalizing claims have been significantly diminished by critiques over the last thirty years, both within disciplines and, as in Walker’s case, without. By “subculture” I mean a group of

people not only...in similar circumstances, in order to generate similar perspectives. They should also be in effective interaction, and in some measure isolated from others -- in this way, their reciprocal flow of meanings becomes a comparatively large part of the total cultural flow reaching them. (Hannerz 72)

By “dominant,” I draw on James Scott’s discussion of forms of domination that share certain structural characteristics. While his emphasis is on stark systems of ascriptive dominant status infused by “strong elements of personal rule” (20), in this instance I use “dominant” to refer specifically to New World elites, what Audre Lorde has called the “mythic norm” and Mary Louise Pratt identifies as “European, male, secular, and lettered” (30). While such a definition may seem to contain essentialist implications, it is used here to identify a historically specific group status that has shaped power relations and the distributive cultural apparatus throughout the hemisphere since the arrival of Columbus. This group has often been identified as “mainstream culture” or the “dominant culture,” without further elaboration. “Subculture” seems more appropriate to me because it suggests that it shares a larger cultural matrix with other subcultures, and interactional borders of subcultures within a network of power relations. I retain “dominant” because these interactions occur within unequal power relations, and thus share Scott’s qualification that “similar structures of domination, other things equal, tend to provoke responses and forms of resistance that also bear a family resemblance to one another” (21-22). It is Walker’s interrogation of these forms of resistance that leads her to look to the margins of official culture for evidence of Black cultural production and self-expression. She finds it in anonymously made quilts and her mother’s garden. Like the spirituals cited by DuBois, Walker’s quilts and gardens are evidence of “respect for the possibilities -- and the will to grasp them” (242).

Black Female Subjectivity and Black Cultural Studies

This study, then, is an investigation of the way Morrison, Marshall and Conde, as contemporary Black women novelists of the Americas, are continuing to elaborate “respect for the possibilities -- and the will to grasp them” through the depiction of the interiority of Black female protagonists. In the tradition of Black cultural studies as articulated by Mae Henderson and Barbara Christian, it draws on the historical and contemporary project of multi-disciplinary, cross-cultural, attention to Black culture and experience that simultaneously “challenges received and conventional disciplinary paradigms in the construction of knowledge” (Henderson, “Where” 60).²

As Hill Collins and others have pointed out, Western epistemology has relied on binary oppositions to assign value. That is, two terms are designated mutually exclusive opposites and at the same time mutually reliant for meaning, e.g. Black/White, male/female, literate/illiterate, slave/free. Then one of those terms is privileged and the other devalued in a hierarchical relationship, e.g. white is superior to black, male is superior to female. In turn, these binary terms are reified in human bodies. Slavery is not seen as a social institution imposed by human beings but as the property of a particular body whose individuality is erased. Similarly, female bodies come to signify sexual pleasure at the expense of other human qualities. Audre Lorde uses the term “mythic Self” to identify this body imprisoned by a signifier. The dominant mythic Self -- white, male, lettered -- generates a mythic Other: black, female, illiterate, etc. (116). This symbolic structure is enforced by institutions of acculturation and their dominant narratives -- the family, the law, the economy, religion -- and sometimes most significantly by the absence of liberating narratives within these institutions.

I focus on the struggle of the Black female protagonists offered by Morrison, Marshall, and Conde to construct a Self that incorporates the qualities of the Other without reproducing the hierarchical epistemological violence of the initial model. Since most critical, feminist, literary, economic, psychological, anthropological, and social theory has been developed either in the absence of or in contrast to the devalued qualities of Black people, and Black women in particular, this work has relied on the corrective re-visioning of scholars who have either posited the centrality of Black women's experience in the modern era, or examined closely the significance of peripheral, marginal, or oppressed locations. I realize that such an approach may seem to perform exactly the operation I claim to want to undo. That is, by positing Black women's centrality, I risk reproducing hierarchical violence. However, my approach is less centrifugal than perspectival. I am not arguing to replace Eurocentric models with Afrocentric ones, but rather am asking what we are able to perceive if we locate Black women's experience as fundamental human experience. In other words, this project aims to contribute to the ongoing project of decolonizing literary study by (a) not presuming the universality of prior theory based on a limited, and exclusive, range of human experience and (b) illuminating particular contributions by Morrison, Marshall and Conde that offer useful lenses for renegotiating the historically oppressive and repressive relationship between Self and Other which has produced the necessity for such decolonizing work. This study intends to bring to the surface a counter-narrative of resistance to the dehumanization that has resulted from historical mutual antagonism, a counter-narrative that suggests the possibility of mutual recognition (Shohat and Stam 241).

The Modern and the Postmodern

Specifically, I will be reading Beloved, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, and Heremakhonon as late modern novels concentrating on the presentation of Black women's interiority within forms of domination ranging from those infused with the terror of strong personal rule (i.e. slavery) to the more ambiguous, but no less dominant, forms of the present³. I emphasize late modern, as opposed to post-modern, because although each of these works is concerned with psychic and cultural fragmentation and dispersal, and the struggle between Self and Other, their movement is towards a provisional centeredness that enables agency: "a will to grasp" with.

As a theoretical approach to the novels chosen for consideration here, post-modernism seems to represent the "lit candle to darkness" Walker identifies in Toomer's reification of the women whose interior lives remain unrecognized in Cane. Cultural theorist Paul Gilroy, in The Black Atlantic, argues that post-modernism identifies the conditions of fragmentation, alienation, commodification, and incommensurability between Self and Other that characterized the master/slave relationship that he insists is intrinsically bound to modernity. I share his concern that a periodisation between the modern and the post-modern implies "an innocent modernity" and pretends that its "postmodern" legacies of "race," for example, are strictly contemporary phenomenon. Such a cleansing periodisation threatens to repeat the erasure of "the people without history" (44). It also erases the consideration of the critiques and creative visions of those whom anthropologist Sidney Mintz, among others, characterize as the first modern people, by virtue of being the first to experience

what would become “the common features of the industrial West (imported foods, time-conscious work regimes, factory production, impersonal work relations, etc.)” (9).

Cornel West has succinctly described these foundational features as they developed in the United States:

The most crucial brute fact about the American terrain is that the USA began as a liberal capitalist nation permeated with patriarchal oppression and based, in large part, upon a slave economy. Born modern, born liberal, and born bourgeois, the USA’s relative absence of a feudal past gave way in the northern states to an agrarian utopia of free independent farmers on “free” land. In the southern states, the thriving economy of slavery underscored an aristocratic ethos and an entrepreneurial ethic. These beginnings facilitated the ideological predominance of an American-style liberalism which, on the one hand, promoted the sanctity of private property, the virtue of capital accumulation, and the subordination of women; and, on the other hand, encouraged the flowering of a slave-based society principally upon the ideological pillar of the inferiority of non-Europeans, especially Africans. (Prophetic Fragments, 38)

Women of African descent are subordinated in two categories -- race and gender -- within this framework; calling the categories of subordination into question is an important challenge to the structures of subordination, but runs the risk of erasing the counter-narrative to triumphalist modernity that the subordinated have maintained as collective memory, and that could provide an alternative ontological vision to those structures. Like Gilroy, cultural theorist bell hooks has also wrestled with the usefulness of postmodern theory to the analysis of the historical and cultural life of Black peoples. She recognizes the historical specificity of the contemporary moment where “social identity is formed through mass-mediated images and where culture and economy have merged to form a single sphere” (Yearning 8). However, she concludes that “the overall impact of postmodernism is that many other groups now share with black folks a sense of deep alienation, despair, uncertainty, loss of a sense of grounding

even if it is not informed by shared circumstance” (Yearning 27). In other words, hooks, rather than erasing Black specificity in favor of a generalized alienation, suggests that postmodernism be read as a new name for the extension of Black people’s distressed experience of modernity to a wider range of groups, still more likely to be identified by markers such as class, gender, race, sexuality, etc., than by desire or mutual commitments. This renaming enables a continued segregation of oppressions, so that Black oppression remains in one dated register, and the consequences of economic restructuring being visited on the white middle-class becomes a totally distinct phenomenon. One of the historically inevitable outcomes of such systems of classification has been the scapegoating of Black people as the source of economic malaise, rather than as co-sufferers.

Postmodernism’s useful critiques of essentialism and the limits of such identity politics, noted by both Gilroy and hooks, does not necessarily challenge the construction of identity hierarchies or participate in a liberatory project. Its critical analysis does not necessarily lead to critical intervention. Indeed, the postmodern subject, alienated and fragmented, is often rendered incapable of intervention. The hegemonic forces arrayed against it are described as too powerful, its potential allies too different and occupying too many incommensurable specific subject-positions to ever create coalition. It is an argument for stasis, with the potential for scapegoating.

Both Gilroy and hooks argue that it is not enough. hooks calls for a radical postmodernism that “calls attention to those shared sensibilities which cross the boundaries of class, gender, race, etc. that would be fertile ground for the construction

of empathy -- ties that would promote recognition of common commitments, and serve as a base for solidarity and coalition" (Yearning 27).

It is the counter-hegemonic, liberatory practice and potential of Black Atlantic cultures that is lost in the theoretical move from modernism to postmodernism. hooks's "radical postmodernism" of empathetic ties around common commitments has been part of New World Black history since the arrival of the Western expansionist project in this hemisphere. Simon Gikandi notes the power of the Western modernist mono-narrative: "the conventional European narrative in which the islands exist solely as a project of the conqueror's expansionism" (Gikandi 6-7). This study concentrates on the counter-narrative within modernity, what Cornel West has identified as "New World African modernity," consisting of

degraded and exploited Africans in American circumstances using European languages and instruments to make sense of tragic predicaments -- predicaments disproportionately shaped by white-supremacist bombardments on black beauty, intelligence, moral character and creativity. New World African modernity attempts to institutionalize critiques of white supremacist authority and racist uses of power, to bestow dignity, grandeur and tragedy upon the denigrated lives of ordinary black people, and to promote improvisational life-strategies of love and joy in black life-worlds of radical and brutish contingency. (Keeping Faith xii).

New World African modernity is thus neither an anti- nor postmodern project, but an explicitly modernist one that insists on the redefinition of modernity to include all its participants.

Thus, this project seeks to participate in what Gilroy has called "some reconstructive intellectual labor which, through looking at the modern cultural history of blacks in the modern world, has a great bearing on ideas of what the West was and is today" (45). The vehicle through which this labor will engage with "the modern

cultural history of blacks” in the present work is fiction. I will be paying particularly close attention to the social construction of self and community at historical junctures of great significance to Black Atlantic history: emancipation from slavery, national independence, and neo-colonialism. Rather than reading these moments as examples from the Western master narrative of the extension of Enlightenment principles and ideals to the colonized, whose “entry into the European terrain of the modern has often demanded that colonized peoples be denied their subjectivity, language and history” (Gikandi 2), I will be looking at some representative ways in which Black Atlantic peoples have reconstructed “subjectivity, language and history” both within and against the Western master narrative.

Black Diasporic Subjectivity in Process

I have chosen to rearticulate a theory of Black women’s diasporic subjectivity in process through a close reading of novels by Morrison, Marshall and Conde whose middle-aged, female protagonists undergo interior journeys that both catalogue the forces that have constructed them in a historical position of subjugation, fragmentation, and alienation, as well as perform a process of liberation and empowerment. Their process of transformation does not culminate in an ideal, totalizing, and fully stable subject, but in a grounded, situational, open, and self-reflexive subjectivity capable of agency and choice. Citing bell hooks, literary critic Carole Boyce-Davies has identified this position as “a radical Black diasporic subjectivity” (Black Women 37). As hooks points out, its territory is not only resistance to hegemonic pressure, but also engaging in the “process [that] emerges as one comes to understand how structures of domination work in one’s own life, as one develops critical thinking and critical consciousness, as

one invents new, alternative habits of being, and resists from that marginal space of difference inwardly defined” (Yearning 15).

The selection of Morrison, Marshall and Conde as contemporary Black women writers is not an essentialist gesture, but a recognition of the ways that identities continue to be marked and limited in the late modern world. At the same time that the consideration of Black women’s subjectivity reveals the instability of given structures and categories, it also reveals the persistence of inalienable humanity that has managed to be sustained and to continue to create under the most horrific conditions of modernity. How this has been possible, what subject-positions and commitments have enabled that agency to survive, is significant not only to present generations of similarly-positioned Black women, but to those Others who are now entering the categorical location of Blackness in modern society. Like Boyce-Davies, I think that the investigation of “questions of Black female subjectivity bring a more complex and heightened awareness to all theoretics and feminist concerns rather than escape from them” (Black Women 29). Therefore, this study draws on those theoretical approaches that assist me, as critic, to rearticulate (Hill Collins 31) those themes and tropes that can be read as describing a process of emancipatory change, what Patrick Taylor has called “the narrative of liberation.”

The Narrative of Liberation as Quest

Dorothy Lee has identified the “theory of the quest as a motivating and organizing device” (346) in the works of Toni Morrison. I am extending her analysis to Toni Morrison’s Beloved, Paule Marshall’s The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, and Maryse Conde’s Heremakhonon, whose protagonists participate in a quest for self that

necessarily implicates the strengths and weaknesses of their communities, which in turn shape, and are shaped by, their protagonists' abilities to address two of the persistent themes in Black women's writing, what Paule Marshall has identified as "the encounter with the past and the need to reverse the present social order" (McCloskey 317). Cornel West links the mythical realm of the quest to the historical in his assertion that

New World African moderns become a people of time, who constitute a homeland quest in offbeat temporality, a quest found in the timing of our bodies in space (how we walk and gesture rhythmically), the timing of our voices in ritual and everyday practices (the syncopation and repetition in speech, song, sermon and prayer) -- in short, the timing of our communal efforts to preserve our sanity and humanity in Euro-American modernity. (Keeping Faith xiii)

This study concentrates on the juncture between the mythical and the embodied in black female subjectivity. In "Go Eena Kumbla: A Comparison of Ema Brodber's Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home and Toni Cade Bambara's The Salt Eaters," Daryl Dance links the quest device with these thematic concerns in her description of the narrative movement within these two novels focused on black women's "homeland quest in offbeat temporality":

Female characters (and an occasional male)...experience an emotional, mental, and/or physical illness,...display similar symptoms, and...tend at some point to "go eena kumbla" [protective hiding -- Jamaican folktale term]. They share also their exploration of the process of psychic healing that grows out of a community, is usually mediated through a female and/or an ancestor figure, and moves each character toward a cleansing transcendence, a spiritual rebirth, a psychic wholeness, a revelatory discovery, a reclaiming of self within black community, and a personal liberation. (Dance 182)

While all three novels under consideration here share this "general cultural pattern" (Dance 169), they are not carbon copies of each other. They are set in the United States, the anglophone and francophone Caribbean, and Africa. They were published between 1969 and 1987, and their temporal settings range over a century, from the end of slavery

in the United States to the immediate post-Independence moment in the Caribbean and West Africa. Although Morrison, Marshall, and Conde acknowledge their familiarity with each other's works, there is little evidence of direct influence. The connection between them lies in their thematic and stylistic concerns:

They describe racial and sexual exploitation, economic destitution, and racial segregation in the struggles of modern urban life as well as of colonial times. Although the texts are creative and imaginary, they grow out of individual and collective experience and are fueled with materials that have long been of interest to anthropologists and historians of comparative slavery in the Americas. (Coser 4)

What these novelists appear to have in common is attention to describing a process of critique, rejection, and reformation analogous to the Maroon experience in the New World.

Maroon

By Maroon, I refer to the distinctive New World phenomenon of enslaved Africans emancipating themselves from the Master/Slave paradigm and taking to New World wildernesses with two goals: to resist recapture and to form community.⁴ Maroons were generally adult, generally recent arrivals from Africa, and generally escapees from slavery after a relatively short period of confinement. They were people with histories, but without successful models for New World community formation. Their success and survival depended on being able to effect a transformation from reactive object and property (their location in the prevailing social structure constructed by the dominant subculture) to creative subject in community. The wildernesses of the New World provided the ground on which they could reclaim subjectivity and begin the difficult process of community formation. Cornel West recognizes this process as

what we get when Africans in the Americas, confronting their exclusion from the human family by white supremacists, use this as an occasion to remake and recreate themselves into a distinctly new people -- a world-historical and monumental process in which oppressed and degraded people invent themselves in alien circumstances and with alien languages and products. (Keeping Faith xiii).

However, West forecloses the success of this effort. While acknowledging New World Africans as a modern people characterized by exile and mobility, seeking free spaces, he asserts that “this space is never reached” (Keeping Faith xiii). Both on historical grounds, and as psychological metaphor, this study argues that this space is indeed reached, although perhaps not as a permanent condition. The notion of permanent free space implies either a utopian future or an Edenic past, both unmoored from human history. Rather, the positive value of permanence, fixity, or certainty is called into question as an absolute, and put into play as one of many possibilities to be negotiated, sometimes desirable and sometimes disabling. For example, the plantation structure was intended to enforce its own permanence, but its certainty was undermined by New World African creativity.

“Free space” was claimed by New World Africans wherever it was possible, either geographically or psychologically. As Melvin Dixon points out in his compelling study of geographical metaphor in Black American culture, the wilderness came to represent a place of refuge from the confines of the plantation economy -- discursive and financial -- in which Black people were chattel and denied interiority, esteem, identity, and any possibility of constituting themselves as fully human. The wilderness offered not only an alternative geographical location on the borders of the plantation; it also promised “alternative spaces and personae slaves could assume” (14). Dixon

argues that this vision of wilderness as free space was incorporated by slave singers into songs of spiritual sustenance and counsel, that appropriated “a religious vocabulary for communication more than for belief. Revolutionary sentiments and plans for escape and insurrection were often couched in the religious imagery available to slaves who had few terms to use as weapons against despair and moral degradation” (12).

The wilderness, then, represented “a zone of trial and deliverance beyond the plantation” (13) on physical, moral, spiritual, and emancipatory levels. As Dixon notes,

the slave songs initiate pilgrimages and other self-creating acts, including resistance and escape, that ultimately defeat the inertia of place and identity upon which the institution of slavery had thrived. By seizing alternatives through poetry and music, slaves charted journeys to many kinds of freedom. (14)

Marronage was the concrete expression of the assertion of full Black humanity during slavery. The word Maroon is derived from the Spanish cimarron initially used to describe cattle and other domesticated animals that escaped to the wild from the earliest European settlements in the Americas. The first Afro-American Maroon took to the hills of Hispaniola shortly after disembarking in 1502. Although the term was also used to describe Native Americans who fled Spanish captivity, by the 1530’s it was in general use to describe Africans in the Americas who had fled slavery and implied “fierceness,” being “wild” and “unbroken” (Price 2).

Anthropologist Richard Price notes that “Before 1700, the great majority of maroon leaders on whom we have data were African-born” (20). They included Africans who had fled slavery shortly after arrival, as well as Africans who were in unskilled labor positions on the plantations. In other words, Africans who were least

acculturated to the plantation system, including the developing Afro-Creole culture of the plantation. Initially, a relative few were Creole, i.e. American-born, Africans in skilled positions, although as both European- and Afro-Creole cultures took hold in the Americas, their leadership became more significant.

The earliest Maroons brought to the wilderness with them (a) a desire to unite and (b) some experience of plantation Afro-Creole culture -- modes of cultivation, a common language, etc. Their primary concerns were military: how to communicate, get supplies, conduct defensive ambushes, and replenish their own populations. Where there was still a Native American population, relationships varied from cooperative alliance, and sometimes absorption of one group by the other, as in the case of the Black Caribs, to open hostility and the use of Native Americans to hunt Maroons. In the southern United States, Seminoles and Maroons joined together to fight, but maintained their own fighting bands (15-16).

Increasing the Maroon population, which in a state of war-readiness could not depend on natural increase, compelled ongoing contact with plantation society, which was also the source of intelligence on the movements of the enemy and the provider of goods that Maroons could not manufacture. Maroons maintained extensive contacts with plantation slaves, with whom they may also have had kinship and slave ship bonds, suggesting a cross-fertilization of Afro-Creole culture indifferent to European juridical boundaries. While "Maroon communities were deeply inimical to the slave plantation nexus because they offered a rival version of creolization (based on) constraint and an alien form of agricultural exploitation" (Craton 64), the plantation margins of slave

quarters and provision grounds provided a sort of “semi-permeable membrane” between these competing, yet inter-dependent, Afro-Creole cultures.

Maroons also maintained relations across a remarkable span of colonial classes, many of whom were willing to deal with Maroons if it was in their self-interest. These included outsiders within colonial cultures, like Jews and pirates, as well as temporary alliances with colonial powers seeking to capture or regain a particular territory. The breadth of these contacts, and the opportunities for betrayal that they offered, ensured that a major concern within Maroon bands was the formation and maintenance of group identity and loyalty.

Maroons recognized the necessity of forging intangible bonds of allegiance between human beings dedicated to their own freedom and rights of autonomy under beleaguered circumstances. One of the ways that Maroon identity was strongly bonded was through spiritual practice. While Maroons may have maintained the spiritual practices of their peoples of origin, they also created rituals for including new members, preparing for battle, and other tasks. The forms of these rituals varied from Maroon community to Maroon community, although Mavis Campbell notes the presence of the Yoruba orisha Ogun throughout the Caribbean.

Marronage as History and Metaphor

I deploy marronage as both historical referent and metaphor for self- and community recreation in the New World. I particularly recall it as an oppositional narrative to the notion of Africans becoming tabula rasa via the Middle Passage. Whether marronage was practiced as actual escape, or circulated as rumor of a space

apart, it destabilized the totalizing efforts of the plantation economy and ideology.

Cornel West notes that

The trauma of the slave voyage from Africa to the New World and the Euro-American attempt systematically to strip Africans of their languages, cultures, and religions produced a black experience of the absurd. This state of “natal alienation” -- in which Africans had no right to their past or progeny -- prevented widespread transmittance of tradition to American-born Africans. Such alienation was more pervasive in the USA than in other parts of the New World principally because of a low ratio of blacks to whites which facilitated more frequent and intense black-white interaction. Only 4.5 percent of all Africans imported to the New World came to North America....Therefore second- and third-generation Africans in the USA made sense of and gave meaning to their predicament without an immediate relation to African worldviews and customs. (Prophetic Fragments 161)

Despite this effort at the depletion of African cosmology and practices among New World Africans, the principles of African communal existence were renegotiated within various systems of oppression to form creolized forms: Black Christianity, marronage, obeah, santeria, vodoun, and more. These practices also represented metaphors for psychological processes whose aim was “natal restoration,” which obviously could not depend on the legal traditions of either Africa or the New World for their validity, and often had to be maintained in the realm of the symbolic, since the literal was subject to imminent disruption.

The boundaries of marronage, then, were semi-permeable both literally and metaphorically with the Master/Slave plantation economies; they also remained open to new arrivals and their cultural inputs, and adapted to change over time. In historical terms, the depletion of Maroon vitality followed either the closure of Maroon borders in treaty agreements to refuse new arrivals, or their permanent isolation, or the destruction of the entire community in war, which led to the capture and sale of its members. While

descendants of the Maroons of the early anti-colonial resistance still occupy Maroon lands and struggle for contemporary recognition of treaty and other rights, comparable to Native American peoples, marronage as symbol of resistance has also been recuperated within some contemporary Black Atlantic societies.

The Cimarron National Movement in Colombia, for example, explicitly invokes the settlements of self-emancipated Blacks as symbols of “freedom and independence of the American continent.” The Brazilian Black Consciousness movement invokes Zumbi, Dandara, and the Quilombos (Maroon settlements) in their activities to promote the creation of alternative free spaces. Thus marronage emerges as a significant trope in Black Atlantic symbolic systems and as practice.

Marronage as Process

It is the process of marronage that is central to this study. That is, how did one leave one’s social structural location as inhuman chattel and become restored to full human agency? The type of internal and external movement necessary to enable the kind of restoration suggested by Dance’s description above can be elaborated using anthropologist Arnold van Gennep’s theory of the Rite of Passage. Van Gennep identifies three phases to the rite: separation, transition, and incorporation. During the middle phase, “the ritual subjects pass through a period of ambiguity in which they are stripped of their statuses and attributes characteristic of their previous state, undergo ordeals, and receive instruction from ritual elders.” Van Gennep’s structural outline was further elaborated by anthropologist Victor Turner⁵, who paid particularly close attention to transition, which he renamed the liminal, or threshold, state. While Turner

recognized that the liminal state is necessarily destructive of “that which was fundamental to an earlier stage” (From Ritual to Theatre 84), he also asserted that

in most culture to be regenerative....new meanings and symbols may be introduced -- or new ways of portraying or embellishing old models for living, and so of renewing interest in them. Ritual liminality, therefore, contains the potentiality for cultural innovation, as well as the means of effecting structural transformations within a relatively stable sociocultural system. (From Ritual to Theatre 84-85)

Although Turner’s earliest elaboration of liminality was grounded in classical anthropological ethnography, he also borrowed some of his central metaphors from literary analysis. Such exchanges between the humanities and the social sciences have become a two-way street, as Kathleen Ashley points out in the introduction to Victor Turner and the Construction of Cultural Criticism. Just as literary study in the United States has sought contextual models as alternatives to formalism, anthropology has incorporated literary constructs into its analyses, including narrative, point of view, symbolism, and more. What makes Turner’s work particularly germane to this study is his focus on the issue of change in social groups, and particularly on the way that meanings are created or changed. His elaboration of liminality clears a space in which the individual as both idiosyncratic self and communal agent both participates in what is, and opens the possibility of what might be. The individual, in this case the Black woman, constitutes a stable referent whose meanings change contextually, and who assumes multiple meanings simultaneously. This study focuses on the intersubjectivity of this meaning-making as a complex negotiation of the wilderness between the plantation and its meanings on the one hand, and marronage and its meanings on the other. As marronage and the plantation are separated by a semi-permeable membrane,

so are the discourses of each interpenetrated in the individual psyche and the communal subculture.

Authoritative and Internally-persuasive Discourses

Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin's⁶ contrast of authoritative discourse and internally persuasive discourses can be attached to the construct of plantation/marronage. Bakhtin describes authoritative discourse as that which cannot be questioned, that which demands and receives unquestioned allegiance: "It is indissolubly fused with its authority -- with political power, an institution, a person" (343). Thus the plantation and its subsequent revisions can be seen to have provided the authoritative discourse for the meanings of Black womanhood in the New World.

By contrast, Bakhtin describes the internally persuasive discourse as that which makes the word, or language, one's own. Allegiance is replaced with intention, and the reproduction of meaning with "newer ways to mean" (346). The internally persuasive discourse is dialogically engaged with other internally persuasive discourses between and within consciousnesses. It is discourse in "interanimating relationships with new contexts" and thus remains "open" (346). Thus, internally persuasive discourses can be aligned with the meaning-making of marronage.

Unauthorized subcultures can also have their authoritative discourses. Thus the "interanimating relationships with new contexts" can constitute a veritable wilderness, or liminal zone, of meaning-making between and within the plantation and marronage. Discussing how these discourses are engaged, as intra- and inter-subjective processes, differentially empowered and historically contextualized, requires a complex framework of interconnected spheres of meaning-making.

Ontology, Ritual, History, Myth

Marronage appears in various forms in all three of the novels I am analyzing. Hortense Spillers, in her analysis of The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, identifies four interrelated levels of inquiry in that work: myth, history, ritual, and ontology. The mythic she identifies as the realm of the timeless, the eternal, while history “evades an explicit text...except by a structure of inference that rests solidly on the historical information that the reader already commands” (161). The historical facts of the Middle Passage and the Triangle Trade are the sources of a “compendium of potential interpretations” (161). Similarly, the history of marronage has been a mythical presence, a shadow at the margins of the official history of the New World. In the novels cited here, it is deployed both as recuperated history and as myth awaiting historical expression. Ritual (for example carnival, ceremonies of arrival and departure, birth and death, and other transitions), is an important source of these potential interpretations, and Spillers designates it as that which “raids [history’s] exquisite silence...for the very authority that gives the everyday...its special richness” (161). Finally, the level of ontology, or the protagonists’ ground of being, is demonstrated as intersubjective, the “individual in the comprehension of the surround” (153) of history, ritual and myth.

Each of these novels is a Maroon novel, then, not only to the extent that their protagonists undergo processes of transition or liminality that enable them to reach for a free space, nor to the extent that they explicitly cite Maroon history, but also to the extent that they portray the confrontation with the “marginal space of difference” from which alternative conceptions of power, freedom, emancipation, and community can

emerge. Because the individuals and communities in question are descendants of enslaved Africans, their “Middle Passage back” (Wilentz 100) to full humanity, must navigate the mythical, ritual, epistemological/historical, and ontological systems that allowed their enslavement. To recover agency, they must confront their participation in those systems, and must seek to create or recover liberatory structures for self and community. It constitutes the renegotiation of authoritative and internally persuasive discourses.

Discourses of the Orishas: Yemaya and Shango

The primary epistemological shift that I will be tracing is from a state of “being” to a state of “becoming”, a shift that reflects movement away from Western materialistic certainties and towards African cosmological perspective. In the novels analyzed here, I identify two internally persuasive discourses responsive to the plantation economy that locates the black woman as object. The first is the discourse of outrage, or anger, best symbolized by the Yoruba orisha Shango.⁷ Shango is understood as a mortal king who is received into the pantheon of orishas by virtue of his commitment to justice, despite his abandonment and exile by his fellow mortals. His colors are red and white; his natural manifestations are thunder and lightning. He is the only orisha whose primary location is the sky, rather than the earth. In these novels, the Shango discourse is a reaction to oppressive conditions that seeks to balance the injustice created by that oppression through the use of force. It represents an agonistic response, an eye-for-an-eye form of justice that creates and holds a boundary against further intrusion. The Shango discourse is the discourse of direct resistance, and grief expressed as rage.⁸

There is, however, another discourse associated with an orisha that becomes possible on the interior side of the boundary created and preserved by the Shango discourse. This is the discourse of Yemaya. Yemaya is the Yoruba orisha of the river in West Africa, translated to the mother of the ocean via the Middle Passage. She represents the maternal, the care-giving, the healing. She also represents those values deliberately repressed by emerging global capitalism: human needs that exceed the needs of profit. The Middle Passage is the representation of what that repression makes possible: the reduction of human beings to objects and their subsequent torture. These novels suggest a process of recuperation that requires confronting the Middle Passage and its woundings in order to recover those human qualities that are dissociated in that moment. This dissociation, or erasure, is perpetuated historically through the authoritative discourse of the dominant subculture and internalized by the culture as a whole. However, on the margins of the dominant discourse, in Maroon spaces, in storytelling, in free psychic spaces, the Yemaya discourse has also been retained, even if not privileged. These novels, then, represent a Maroon alternative, fueled by the discourse of Shango resistance in order to clear a space for the restoration of Yemaya. They describe the restoration of the repressed maternal -- the Black maternal. However, the values associated with the Black maternal are not here solely the province of Black women. They are also repressed in white men, white women, and black men, as well as in social expectations, systems of economic organization, and notions of rationality. Therefore, I call them maternal relations that are dissociated throughout Western culture, but whose restoration is most urgent in those most closely identified with them, and on whose bodies their attempted total dissociation was/is most violently practiced:

African peoples and their descendants, and most specifically women of African descent.⁹ Among the Jamaica Maroons, for example, Grandy Nanny is recognized as an ancestral presence who is common “mother” to the Eastern Maroons (Bilby 74). A historical figure of the 1700’s, in collective memory and oral tradition she is revered as the spiritual and military guardian of her descendants, who are bound to each other through their recognition of her as founding ancestress, regardless of “blood” connection. In the oral histories, Nanny herself never had any biological offspring; rather, her maternal connection derives from the investment of collective allegiance. Thus, early on, Maroons recognized the significance of restoring matrilineage and feminine power, and the principles of relatedness that both represent, in the face of the brutal attempts to erase both in the plantation economy.

The present endorsement of incarceration in the United States, and welfare reform in the absence of the provision of child care, are but the most recent incarnations of cultural dissociation towards the care and growth of peoples of African descent in the New World. The continued disregard for human life evidenced by these policies also affects other gendered and racially marked populations in the society, producing a socially sanctioned numbing that is characterized as the norm. Each of the novels described here attempts to disrupt that norm, traces its sources, and charts a recovery to an enabled and enabling subjectivity, specifically constituted through black women’s experience, that recognizes emancipation not as a deed, but as a process.

Becoming Maroon as Ritual Liminality

This study regards the quest, or journey, from entrapment to emancipation as a rite of passage analogous to the journey from enslavement to resistance undergone by

Maroons. While not engaged in military guerilla warfare, the female protagonists in Beloved, The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, and Heremakhonon are facing conditions hostile to their emancipation. The novels chart their journeys to reclaiming agency in the world, a difficult and dangerous passage whose contours are specific to their individual historical and social locations, but which share the following general contours:

1. As a subject, the female protagonist is constituted in a liminal state, on a boundary determined by the authoritative Manichean structures she partially believes in, is subjugated by, and in which she participates (i.e. slave/free, black/white, woman/man, body/spirit, evil/good).
2. Exhausted and powerless, she withdraws into space that makes no demands on her -- Dance's kumbla, van Gennep's separation, Turner's liminal. This is a very dangerous location, outside the ordinary social structure. At the same time, its disorganizing qualities offer the potential for reorganization or transformation. It is distinct from, yet coexists with, ordinary social structures. Regardless of whether or not there is a healer available, the Manichean order is dissolved. The subject confronts that which she has suppressed in her efforts to preserve the known order that has subjugated her.
3. With the assistance of a healer, or ritual specialist, or wise elder, or ancestress, the subject can explore the things she has hidden from herself without fear of the ordinary world rushing in to crush her at such a vulnerable moment. The healer maintains the boundaries; protects, urges, and challenges the subject; and enables, rather than directs, her reconstitution. The healer is a fellow-sufferer, one who has usually undergone or is simultaneously undergoing the same process of recuperation, as the subject.

4. In the absence of a healer, the subject may collapse into chaos, suicide, a repetitive cycle of self-destruction, or permanent dislocation from social life. However, the subject may recognize and choose a healer at any point.
5. Finally, the subject reconstitutes herself in terms (narratives/words/symbols) that are meaningful (or internally persuasive) to her, that enable her to value and participate in social life and a future whose bounds are unknown. She returns to a different location in social space than the one from which she separated. The unknown no longer represents the feared repressed, but an unmarked field from which anything can emerge. She has always been an agent in her own construction, but she exhausted her power supporting structures that harmed her; she is now an empowered agent, capable of choosing the conditions for her own well-being.

I argue that this process of change and growth is comparable to the Maroon experience in the New World. Maroons left the plantation, entered spiritual and communal wildernesses, and re-made themselves and each other into free and resistant peoples. New arrivals often had to undergo ritual processes of transformation, either in the form of lengthy apprenticeships or other ordeals, before being fully accepted into the existing community, which was in turn revitalized by their presence. Maroon was not merely a legal or external designation; it represented an internal transformation from chattel slave to free subject, a healing of the psychic wounds of enslavement, and a restoration of self in community.

The Novels

The theme of “textual healing,” to cite Farah Jasmine Griffin’s felicitous phrase, has become apparent in the works of contemporary Black women writers, as well as

those from other groups disenfranchised in contemporary society. The central concern of these works is the restoration to self and agency of the disempowered subject. A number of novels could have been chosen to demonstrate this theme, and indeed some writers' entire body of work addresses this issue. However, I've chosen the three novels for this study because they describe a pattern that emerges not only from within a disenfranchised group within a culture, but cross-culturally. Therefore, the novels selected for this study cross national and linguistic borders, yet retain a recognizable thematic emphasis. They also cross borders between personal and historical crises; that is, the crisis of the protagonist is connected to a crisis in her socio-cultural surround, in ways that both mirror and critique the crisis and responses to it. Finally, all three novels smudge the borders between memory, the present, and future possibilities. Thus, their deliberate engagement with liminal states on a number of levels lend them particularly well to a study focused on the risks and possibilities of liminal states for personal and social transformation.

Beloved: "Anything dead coming back to life hurts"

Set on the banks of the Ohio River in the years immediately preceding and following emancipation in the United States, Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987) immediately declares its concern with the liminal position of Black people in America. Time is fluid in *Beloved*, and the story of Sethe, the protagonist, synecdochally represents the story of Black Americans, told in flashbacks that start with the suspicious and descend to the almost unspeakable. Sethe has made it from slave to fugitive to a pre-emancipation freedom neither she nor her community is fully ready to sustain. After a feast celebrating Sethe's and her baby's escape from slavery, the community,

unaccustomed to joy, retreats into jealousy and fails to warn her of the approach of her former master. Sethe, determined not to return to slavery, kills one of her daughters and attempts to kill her other children. When she is released from jail, she is treated as a pariah at the margins of the Black community, and maintains her own distance from her community.

The story opens with the description of the haunted space that Sethe occupies, a powerful metaphor for her location in physical, psychic, historical and mythical terms. One by one her family leaves her. Finally, Sethe and her daughter Denver, the baby she gave birth to on the banks of the Ohio River, are alone in the house. Their stasis is broken by the arrival of Paul D., a former slave from the plantation where Sethe and the only family she had known had also been enslaved, ironically called Sweet Home. His presence challenges, but cannot overcome, that which haunts Sethe; it opens a gate into liminality -- the space of disorientation and possibility -- where Sethe must confront another intervention in the form of the unexpected arrival of Beloved, who challenges her motives for killing her baby.

The psychic journey to self-emancipation that Sethe undertakes nearly kills her, much like her physical journey to freedom in Ohio. Morrison uses Sethe's dangerous vulnerability to call into question the social expectations imposed on Black women in the Americas coming out of slavery, and to signal the absence of consideration given to the wounds and potential desires of Black women. Definitions of motherhood, the family, community, history, memory and self-determination are all problematized. The Manichean dichotomies of sanity/madness, Black/White, man/woman, dead/alive, human/animal, free/enslaved, and civilized/savage, are reversed, blended, conflated or

rendered meaningless in the narrative's reconstruction of Sethe's life. She is "out of balance," but the narrative carefully demonstrates that her condition is not idiosyncratic, although it may be extreme. Her struggle is to read the "facts" of her life differently, to recognize, for example, that the scars on her back can represent a tree, or scars, or both, or more, depending on the lens through which she views them.

Sethe is not the only character in the novel in a liminal state. Her daughter Denver hovers in adolescence; Paul D. between slave and emancipated manhood. The White people's carnival, a conventional figure for liminality, cannot meet their needs. Even the erotic connection between Sethe and Paul D. is severed by *Beloved's* presence. Sethe confronts the past on her own, but she is ultimately, and barely, saved from self-destruction by the intervention of the community's women, alerted by her daughter Denver to her condition. Morrison portrays no easy faith-healer's convention, however; Sethe's community is complex and contradictory, already incorporating the divisions fostered by slavery and nurtured by White class structures. It is also in the process of beginning to forego and repress those elements of slave life that enabled joint survival -- the cultivation of separate plots of land for material and spiritual sustenance; modes of teaching, healing, spirituality and art that had been uniquely theirs; and a relationship to power among themselves that, had it been developed, might have assured that Beloved would indeed not be a story to pass on.

While marronage as rite of passage informs my reading of the movement within Beloved, I argue that it is Sixo, another enslaved African on the Sweet Home plantation, who represents marronage. Unlike Sethe and Paul D., whose consciousnesses are revealed by the omniscient narrator of the novel, Sixo is presented only through their

recollections, or “remembering” of him. To Paul D., he is the “wild man”(11). To Sethe, he is a teacher of healing arts, subversion, and counter-narrative. Morrison, through Sixo, adds Maroon elements to the historical facts of the Middle Passage and the Triangle Trade that are the source of Spillers “compendium of potential interpretations” (61). This historical link is not self-evident; rather, as Spillers points out, history “evades an explicit text...except by a structure of inference that rests solidly on the historical information that the reader already commands” (“Chosen” 161).

Sixo’s representation of Maroon culture is evident to the reader whose “structure of inference” includes what Veve Clark has characterized as “Diaspora literacy...the ability to read and comprehend the discourses of Africa, Afro-America, and the Caribbean from an informed, indigenous perspective” (304). Clark emphasizes that such literacy is not acquired merely through “intellectual exercise. It is a skill that requires social and political development generated by lived experiences”(304). Morrison’s deployment of Sixo throughout the novel is both aide-memoire for her characters and for her readers, both those informed by diaspora literacy and those not. For those not, he is surely a mysterious figure demanding further investigation; for those so informed, he represents elements of both grand and petit marronage. Most specifically, he represents the discourse of Yemaya beneath the discourse of Shango for both Sethe and Paul D. That is, beyond the rage of judgement that Sethe and Paul D. perform in order to understand who they are, and which Sethe acts on so painfully towards her children, Sixo offers a model of alternative intersubjectivity retained during enslavement that finds its echo in freedom in Baby Suggs’ recuperative preaching in the Clearing.

Beloved, then, opens this study because it clearly links Sethe's personal crisis to the sociocultural crisis of emancipation in the immediate post-slavery era. It depicts, and moves beyond, single-faceted resolutions to the crisis: withdrawal into numbness; carnival reversals; restoration of the nuclear family; self-righteous rage. It demonstrates the role of psychological projections in the construction of self and other, and the role of the other in enforcing or transforming those projections in relations of unequal power. Finally, it recalls the Maroon as a figure of living memory who represents possibility on the margins of authoritative discourses. The model of relationship represented by Sixo is also a model for the restoration of brutally disrupted maternal relations, not only for Sethe and Beloved but for all of the characters, within and between each other. All of these themes are explored through the consciousness of a Black female protagonist struggling for a sense of self under conditions determined to not only erase that sense of self, but even the desire for it. The other two novels pursue these themes in more contemporary settings.

The Chosen Place, the Timeless People: "Sometimes a person has to go back, really back -- to have a sense, an understanding of all that's gone to make them -- before they can go forward"

Paule Marshall's second novel, *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969) is set in the Caribbean a hundred years after the setting of Beloved, and insists that Sethe's story of degradation, erasure, and sacrifice has indeed been passed on. The whip has been made invisible, and is disguised by intellectual, economic, social, cultural and psychological structures that even those they diminish accept, adhere to, and even believe in as well-intentioned, if presently imperfect. Merle Kinbona, the protagonist, has pursued the modernist myth of progress, and been crushed by it. She has retreated

in bitterness and despair to Bourne Island, her home in the Caribbean, where she uses the distancing effect of irony to contend with personal and historical pasts.

Almost every kind of relationship to White supremacist capitalist patriarchy finds a representative in this novel, from the ancestress figure of the peasant cane cultivator Leesy, who refuses modern technology, to Saul, the Jewish American anthropologist/development expert, the “technological agent who must recover feeling, memory, extension, generosity, and receptivity” (Spillers, “Chosen” 171). The people of Bournehills, the shadow side of Bourne Island, are descendants of Maroons. They deliberately refuse the Eurocentric rite of passage into a technical modernity by which they know they have already been exploited, and annually reconstruct a past that affirms them in a Carnival float that commemorates their ancestors’ uprising. Their patience is indeed timeless, as they await an opening in the hegemonic narrative that will enable them to construct a future that will also affirm them. They endure neo-colonialism, and see little difference between this system and the activities of the well-intentioned American foundation, funded by capital whose seed money came from the sales of their ancestors. Thus the development project, by failing to acknowledge its origins in their historical exploitation, continues to reproduce hierarchical relations that locate them on the bottom. They are still surrounded by and interpreted by others through the lens of imperial capital, in pounds sterling and U.S. dollars, and their only contemporary defender is Merle herself.

Merle’s stasis is interrupted, however, by the present reality of the closing of the local sugar mill and by Saul’s intelligent sincerity. She is between the sugar workers and the Western intellectual: she can neither fully ally herself with, nor fully distance

herself from, either one. The tropes of the Carnival and the recuperative power of the history of marronage allow Merle and Saul to carve out a space where each can assist the other in acknowledging what they need to be “set free to readdress the world” (Spillers 171). Saul, like Paul D., is a wounded healer, one who recognizes and enables Merle to acknowledge her own pain, which Marshall situates within “a denser context of ideas, actions and ideologies which are particular to the middle years of persons -- and societies” (Skerrett 69). Saul’s presence enables Marshall to explore the implications of Diaspora, Jewish and African, and questions of exile and homeland, margin and center, from psychological, historical, and social perspectives. Since marronage is primarily a process of change and in effect the reconstruction of interiority -- from the geographic to the psychological -- Marshall’s contrastive development of the characters of Merle, Saul, his wife Harriet, and Vere the mechanic during the liminal rite of Carnival demonstrates who holds the greater allegiance to the established order, and who actually experiences freedom in its temporary release. Only Saul and Merle wind up able to carry the potential *communitas* of Carnival into a healing actuality, in the tradition of marronage.

Like Beloved, then, The Chosen Place, the Timeless People clearly links its protagonist’s personal crisis to the sociocultural crisis of national reconstruction in the immediate post-Independence era. It depicts and critiques comparable single-faceted resolutions to the crisis: strategies of replacement, where old hierarchies are staffed by the formerly dominated; non-resistant passivity; carnival reversals; self-righteous rage as frenzied speech. In the complex interactions of its characters, it plays out the role of psychological projections in the construction and transformation of self and other in

relations of unequal power. Finally, it recalls the Maroon as historical legend, who continues to assert possibility from the margins of authoritative discourses. Since the Maroon is no longer part of living memory, but not yet memorialized in authoritative discourse, remembering Maroons becomes a dangerous task, challenging to the dehistoricized, naturalized Manichean order. Yet Marshall, like Morrison, appears to insist on the necessity of remembering and recreating in the present the possibility of liminal space as a means of transforming destructive sociocultural relations, and deliberately includes an archetypal Maroon legend as historical model for present and future possibilities. As in Beloved, these themes are explored through the consciousness of a Black female protagonist; while Merle shares Sethe's struggle for a sense of self under conditions determined to erase and silence her, she is in greater interaction with her surrounding community and its choices. Her recovery is also predicated on the restoration of maternal relations, which are available to her from a number of sources. Maryse Conde's Heremakhonon moves this process "back to Africa."

Heremakhonon: "Try, try. I'll pay anything to recover"

Maryse Conde's Heremakhonon (1976) features an Antillean heroine, Veronica, who, rejected by her Caribbean home, in turn rejects metropolitan exile in Paris to go to Africa in search of her "nigger with ancestors" (30). Lemuel Johnson neatly summarizes her problem throughout the novel:

Caribbean Veronica's investment in an ancestral phallocentricity, as the means of getting through to the "other side," only results in a myth-making and myth-mocking copulation -- in the course of which, once more, she must shake her arse if she is to save her soul. (134)

She finds herself in an Africa that reveals more similarities with than differences from her Caribbean island home. The patriarchal violence she witnesses is not solely the result of imperialist intervention, but reflects a pre-imperial patriarchal order that imperialism has used for its own ends. Veronica must overcome her fear, awe and envy of such traditional phallocentric power in order to come to her own.

Her own stasis, in Paris, has been disrupted by the glance of an African street cleaner, upon whom she projects her desires for “no hatred, no anger, no intolerance, no amazement” (14). He becomes an unavoidable presence in her dream world, and she goes to an unnamed African country to escape his recurrence. Upon arrival, however, she is confronted with choices of identity and allegiance. Her immediate affair with Ibrahim Sory, nationalist politician/assassin, installs her in the luxury villa of Heremakhonon, literally, “Welcome House.” However, it separates her from her colleagues at the university, the idealistic student Birame III and his professor, Saliou. They represent resistance, which she initially dismisses as weak and ineffective. Their subsequent murders at the hands of Sory forces her to acknowledge that she “looked for [her] self in the wrong place. In the arms of an assassin” (176) and she releases herself from her futile quest for phallocentric approval. The novel ends with her return to “Spring in Paris,” armed with new questions, and an urge to explain.

Heremakhonon, Conde’s first novel, addresses the theme of liminality within New World African historical and psychological experience that Wangari wa Nyatetu-Waigwa argues is developed throughout Conde’s six Antillean novels. Similarly, Veronica’s quest journey prefigures that of Tituba, the Maroon witch of I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem (1992; French 1986). In Heremakhonon, however, Veronica is still

seeking conventional remedies to her sense of displacement and exile. But the conventions she seeks to comfort her are also the creations of that which oppresses her. For example, she attempts to become a healer, working in a clinic where she insists that her activities have no political implications. However, such a clinic wouldn't require her voluntarism in the absence of a system of economic discrimination and exploitation. Similarly, Veronica's quest for a "nigger with ancestors" reflects Conde's critique of Negritude:

The proponents of Negritude made a big mistake and caused a lot of suffering in the minds of West Indian people and black Americans as well. We were led to believe that Africa was the source; it is the source, but we believed that we would find a home there, when it was not a home. Without Negritude we would not have experienced the degree of disillusionment that we did. (Clark, Interview 117)

Through Veronica's disillusionment and acknowledgement of her own liminality and absences, Conde is also critiquing the masculinist postures of resistance via nationalism and negritudes that James Arnold has elaborated as "the erotics of colonialism."

Veve Clark has pointed out that "it is clear that Veronica Mercier is literate regarding...the Antilles, France, and Afro-America. She is, however, naive when faced with...ancient and modern Africa" (304). That is, she is conscious of the contents of "the erotics of colonialism" in Europe and the Americas; however, Africa is a dark continent to her, as she is to herself. Unlike Freud and others, however, she is unable to either mistake herself for the dark continent, or make her interior visible in its geography or social organization, despite her efforts at voluntarism.

Like Merle, Veronica deploys an ironic certainty to hold herself apart from the immediate events she confronts. Thus Conde comments on both the possibilities and

limits of narrative. Eventually, events overcome Veronica's ironic distance, and she is forced into a realm of uncertainty where her guides include a bisexual Frenchman, while conventional life explodes into Carnival in extremis: civil resistance, which is met with military repression.

Like Beloved and The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, Heremakhonon clearly links its protagonist's personal crisis to the sociocultural crisis of national reconstruction in the immediate post-Independence era, connecting the Caribbean crisis to that of an Africa whose idealization is dangerous to itself and others. It suggests that Negritude and its valorizations remain narrow responses to colonialism, rather than transformative ones. Heremakhonon recoups marronage in the contours of the protagonist's quest, which takes place in the absence of either living or legendary memory of Maroon history. Veronica must in effect reinvent the maroon rite of passage in order to effect her own escape from the social and psychological traps of colonialism and neo-colonialism. If remembering Maroons is a dangerous task in contexts where they are at least acknowledged to have existed, embarking on a Maroon rite of passage without any awareness of that model is doubly dangerous. Yet the principles of marronage are represented by the characters of Saliou and Birame III, in their challenge to both the neo-colonial order imposed by global capitalism, and to the African reconstruction of history that enables continued oppression. However, the absence of awareness of marronage as liminal space in her Caribbean heritage slows Veronica's ability to recognize the value and possibility represented by Saliou's and Birame's movement, both for their country and for herself. As in the other two novels in this study, these themes are explored through the consciousness of a Black female

protagonist; Veronica's journey to Africa from the French Caribbean suggests a Pan-African female consciousness. This Maroon consciousness reclaims the desires of Black women from the margins of historical and authoritative discourse, where they have been depicted as monstrous, abnormal, or invisible, and refuses to inflate them in a simple gesture of replacement. Rather, it renders them ordinary and deserving, despite the forces of patriarchy, racism, and global capitalism that continues to seek to contain them.

The inclusion of Heremakhonon in this study highlights the problematics of perceiving or conducting the "Middle Passage back" as a literal, as opposed to a metaphorical, event. Veronica is seeking a geographical cure that ignores the complexities of African history, and fails to imagine that the patriarchal authoritative discourses she is trying to escape might have their analogues in both pre-colonial and neo-colonial Africa. Her tale is a cautionary one, like Sethe's, against strategies of recovery that are satisfied with superficial changes: the replacement of one set of actors with another within unchanged social and power relations. Like Merle, Veronica must also contend with African patriarchal violence as well as the European form, and their blended, or hybrid, expression.

While a number of other novels by Black women writers lend themselves to this analysis, the consideration of these three -- Beloved, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, and Heremakhonon -- enables this study to compare and contrast a range of Diasporic visions. These three protagonists -- Sethe, Merle, and Veronica -- represent significant female and historical crisis points in the reconfiguration of New World power relations as they struggle to recognize themselves as part of humanity, despite the

history of subjugation along a range of axes that is a part of their heritage. The struggle of marginalized peoples today is to retain the valuable uses of the margin while rejecting the notion of margin as a permanent, subjugated, or identity-based location.

Discussing the margin as social space, bell hooks points out that

Black women with no institutionalized “other” that we may discriminate against, exploit, or oppress often have a lived experience that directly challenges the classist, sexist, racist social structure and its concomitant ideology. This lived experience may shape our consciousness in such a way that our world view differs from those who have a degree of privilege (however relative within the existing system). It is essential for continued feminist struggle that black women recognize the special vantage point our marginality gives us and make use of this perspective to criticize the dominant racist, classist, sexist hegemony, as well as to envision and create a counter-hegemony. (Feminist Theory 15)

Black women writers have consistently taken up the task described by hooks, to simultaneously critique and envision. Indeed, in the novels considered here, the margin as social structural space is simultaneously a physical, cultural, historical, and psychological location, fraught with danger and possibility. It is the occupation and use of those spaces that this dissertation explores.

I argue that Black women writers locate their protagonists in these spaces to further a project of self and historical recovery and, in so doing, theorize a relationship between self and historical change that exists in direct and useful relationship to the crisis facing Black people in the world today, particularly in the increasingly conservative Americas. I call these novels Maroon novels because of their explicit and implicit recovery of the history of marronage as a vehicle for demonstrating the long history of counter-hegemonic resistance in the Americas, and the ongoing hegemonic suppression of transgressive history. These novels can be read as vessels of cultural memory that call for the restoration of maternal relations across the borders of race,

class, gender, sexuality, and the other markers of difference and limitation that are part and parcel of modern history. Maroon resistance and community-building evaded the Manichean master/slave dichotomy, and the interlocking systems of racial and gender oppression dictated by the plantation system. Maroons chose marginal and defensible territories, and instituted rites of passage that enabled community members to incorporate the experience of slavery and reconstruct themselves as active participants in their own lives and futures. Thus, the recovery of Marronage as history, metaphor, and process offers the possibility for the transformation of the self as subject and agent of both personal and communal histories.

¹Significant academic study of Black women's literature emerged in the early 1970's at the convergence of the development of Black Studies and Women's Studies departments resulting from the Civil Rights movements of the 1960's. Thirty years later, participants and beneficiaries of this shift in academic attention have produced a number of historical review essays, significant among them Barbara Christian's "But What Do We Think We're Doing Anyway: The State of Black Feminist Criticism(s) or My Version of a Little Bit of History" and Ann duCille's "The Occult of True Black Womanhood." A very useful bibliographic essay is Andree Nicola McLaughlin's "A Renaissance of the Spirit: Black Women Remaking the Universe." As the field has grown, its efforts to articulate useful theoretical lenses through which to consider the work of Black women writers continue to develop. From early dialogues to articulate the meanings of Black feminist criticism (Barbara Smith, "Towards a Black Feminist Criticism," and Deborah McDowell's response, "New Directions for Black Feminist Criticism") to efforts to identify a tradition (Barbara Christian; Hazel Carby) to more recent explorations of the relationship between psychoanalytic theory and Black women's writing (Claudia Tate; Elizabeth Abel, Barbara Christian and Helene Moglen) many critics continue to develop theoretical perspectives that emerge from the literature and are then negotiated with existing Euro-American theoretical constructs which have been formed in the absence of any consideration of either the existence or the creativity of Black women's writing. For a strong statement of the struggle to make a space for theorizing Black women's literature within the existing academic context, see Barbara Christian's "The Race for Theory."

²The insertion of cultural studies into the U.S. academic paradigm has prompted a crisis for Black Studies programs and advocates by threatening to reproduce the history of American amnesia towards Black intellectual productivity. In effect, cultural studies offers to absorb the critical perspectives of traditionally under-represented groups in the academy by offering a protective umbrella in politically beleaguered times. The notion of an academic Rainbow Coalition has its attractions and strategic usefulness, but many practitioners of Black Studies are compelled to remind their enthusiastic colleagues that from the point of view of Black Studies, cultural studies is "old wine in new bottles." That is, if Black Studies imagines a historical origin in W.E.B. Du Bois' The Souls of Black Folk (1903), cultural studies' identifiable practices of interdisciplinarity, historical contextualization, and critical attention to popular culture and academic practice have been mainstays of the Black intellectual tradition, which has been (and arguably continues to be) much less enthusiastically welcomed. Responses have ranged from efforts to articulate the specificity of Black Studies as an emerging discipline without reifying its borders (Azevedo) to connecting Black Studies with British cultural studies of the London and Birmingham Schools as a global field (Diawara and Hall), to Wahneema Lubiano's call for the visibility of the cultural studies project within Afro-American studies.

³ See Derrick Bell, particularly Gospel Choirs, for a discussion of the way segregation and white supremacy have shape-shifted after the legal challenges of the U.S. Civil Rights movement.

⁴ Maroons and marronage have been identified as discursive elements in Black literature before. Edward Kamau Brathwaite explicitly invokes the Maroon as part of the suppressed history of the plantation era in the Americas in his poem X/Self and his discussion of that poem in "History, the Caribbean Writer and X/Self." French Caribbean critic and writer Edouard Glissant celebrates and laments the maroon "that we have collectively denied or forgotten [as] the hero who in our true history has taken unto himself the cause of our resistance" (emphasis in original). However, the most complete discussion to date of marronage as theoretical lens is Barbara Lalla's. Her assertion of marronage as historical event and psychological (dis)location as paradigmatic in Jamaican literature is convincing, although its limitation to a national boundary seems artificially enforced and part of disciplinary considerations that are tangential to this project. The only truly recuperative novel she identifies, however, is Erna Brodber's Jane and Louisa Will Soon Come Home, whose structure is also foundational to the framework, provided by Daryl Dance, through which I am reading works by Black women writers from throughout the New World. Lalla's emphasis is on the perspectival shift enabled by occupying the outsider-within position of the Maroon. She locates marronage as the extreme position of alienation from which characters share their perspectival truths, a position of alienation which they may occupy permanently, or from which they may be healed.

⁵ For a thorough consideration of Victor Turner's contribution to literary studies, see Ashley. With specific reference to African-American literature, see Nathan A. Scott Jr.

⁶ For a critique of the affiliation of DuBoisian “double-consciousness” with Bakhtinian “heteroglossia,” see Dorothy J. Hale. She calls the “shared attempt to theorize social identity by way of literary formalism” (447) “social formalism” (448), and asserts that ultimately it erases the specificity of African American difference by overgeneralizing subaltern voicings. My effort to rename Bakhtin’s abstract linguistic discourses within African-American historical discourse is intended to claim Bakhtin’s formulations for African American literary theory or, in other words, to reverse the problematic she identifies, which seems to me more a possibility than an inevitability of conjoining both theorists.

⁷ This naming of discourses is made possible by the increasing visibility of orally and ritually maintained African-American archetypes in critical discourse. It builds on Henry Louis Gates Jr.’s elaboration of Eshu in The Signifying Monkey by “crossing over” two other significant orishas from the realms of anthropology and religious studies into literary criticism. The multiple characteristics of both Shango and Yemaya will be elaborated in subsequent chapters. For discussions of them as archetypes and literary symbols, see Fernandez-Olmos and Paravisini-Gebert, Wande Abimbola, and James T. Houk.

⁸ For a discussion of the relationship of grief to rage, see Rosaldo. I’m positioning Shango as the vessel through which enslaved Africans remembered and expressed the grief of separation from being and each other through the injustice of enslavement.

⁹ The trope of the “Middle Passage back” is the juncture of history, psychoanalysis and myth in Black literature. The specifically feminine, as qualities and as bearers of memory, has been elaborated by Gay Wilentz, Bernice Johnson Reagon, Karla Holloway, and Houston Baker, among others. However, I am not aware of other instances where those qualities have been so directly associated with Yemaya in critical discourse. Again, like the use of Shango above, I am positioning Yemaya as the vessel through which the enslaved and continually oppressed remembered and expressed those qualities of healing, recovery, comfort, care, and sustenance brutally repressed by the dominant subculture.

CHAPTER 2: BELOVED MAROONS: RECOVERING SELF AND COMMUNITY

Toni Morrison's Beloved (1983) is a very complex novel, deliberately ambiguous in many of its meanings. Even the figure of its title, Beloved, refuses to hold still as either ghost or actual human.¹ For critics, as for other readers, the work performs the task of not only telling its story, but forcing the reader to reflect on the way that the reader's perspective illuminates or renders invisible aspects of the complexity of the work.² In this way, the work insists on its contextuality in the moment of reading, and Morrison recaptures the role of the traditional West African storyteller, the griot, in both the structure and themes of Beloved.

Morrison herself has expressed her desire to translate into print the exchange between the oral storyteller and audience, rendering the work participatory rather than expository or explanatory: "My language has to have holes and spaces so the reader can come into it" (Tate, "Morrison" 125). Morrison recognizes the specificity of African diasporic transmission of collective wisdom via oral forms, and is seeking to make that available in written form. In "Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation," Morrison writes of her perception of the function of the novel:

We don't live in places where we can hear those stories anymore; parents don't sit around and tell their children those classical, mythological, archetypal stories that we heard years ago. But new information has got to get out, and there are several ways to do it. One is in the novel. (340)

This reading of Beloved, then, is concerned with what "information" Morrison is conveying that stretches back into the African diasporic oral tradition, and its function as community narrative. Historically, the griot mediates between "tradition and destiny, a mediation balancing the competing claims of memory and of renewed vision

and insight” (Hord and Lee 11). Central to the griot’s, and Morrison’s, concerns is the ethical development of the community.³ Morrison’s particular concern is the pariah figure, the outlaw within the community, and how the community’s treatment of its “other” reveals its values, of good and evil, belonging and exile, woundings and delusions. She takes as a given the marginalization of African-Americans within U.S. society, and while the functioning of African-Americans as scapegoats for the dominant subculture is a subtext in her work, she focusses on the choices and values made within African-American communities as her subject. In Beloved in particular, I am interested in what Morrison as griot chooses to offer her characters as memory, and her vision of the role of memory in enabling or disabling subjectivity and agency. That is, what do her characters need to remember in the present in order to envision a future?

In this chapter, I argue that Morrison draws on African American collective memory to offer a range of alternative ways to structure self and community. Her focus, however, is on Sethe, her protagonist, and her transformation from slave to “becoming” woman. Morrison uses the extremity of her protagonist’s experience to demonstrate the profound journey both necessary and available to human beings seeking to recover from the damage, historical in origin but personal in experience, of White western patriarchal capitalism. Thus Sethe’s journeys recapitulate the contours of marronage. They occur on multiple planes simultaneously: physiologically, in her development from girl to woman and mother; geographically, in her fugitive escape from Sweet Home plantation; and psychologically, in her near-fatal breakdown when she faces her past.

Each of Sethe’s journeys follows a difficult, winding, and wounding path. The telling of Sethe’s story, then, is a journey of recovery. Webster’s offers multiple

meanings of “recover”. The most applicable one is “to save from loss and restore to usefulness.” Through Sethe, Morrison reveals the hidden aspects of collective memory in order to heal a multitude of ruptured relationships, instigated by the Middle Passage.

Before discussing Sethe’s process of recovery in Beloved, I will describe the role of the character Sixo, as exemplar of marronage as recovered history and historical recovery. I focus on Sixo first so that when Sethe unconsciously recreates the processes of marronage in order to clear a space for herself to be in the world, and consciously draws on the memory of Sixo, we recognize him as a character who embodies both petit and grand marronage, historically and in Sethe’s consciousness. After discussing Sixo, I then elaborate on Sethe’s struggle for identity and community, first as a child seeking connection, and then as a series of failed attempts to escape enslavement, first by marrying Halle, and second by running to Cincinnati. The final section of this chapter rearticulates Sethe’s last-ditch effort at recovery as a journey of psychological marronage which, in the long absence of a community of experienced Maroons to assist her, nearly destroys her. Her trials finally compel her community to recover their own historical memories of trauma and mutual aid, and come to her assistance.

To describe Sethe’s transformation, I draw on Victor Turner’s theories of structure, anti-structure, and ritual healing, Robyn Weigman’s descriptions of the dominant subculture’s location of blacks and women during and after slavery, and aspects of African and African-American spirituality that have served as healing tropes in the New World. Following the discussion of Sixo, I present Sethe’s journey in a somewhat linear fashion, recapitulating most of her life in the order it would have been

experienced, although Morrison reveals it in the order in which Sethe's consciousness dips in and out of memory in the present-time of the novel.

Historical Background to *Beloved*

Morrison's first epigraph for this novel, "Sixty Million and more," resonates with another Holocaust, the mid-twentieth century slaughter of Jewish people and others in Europe, and asserts that each Holocaust has its aftermath, "and more." Her number is drawn not only from those who survived the Middle Passage to land in the New World, but also includes those who lost their lives on the journey from the interior of Africa to the coast, in the coastal slave dungeons, and on the Atlantic under the horrific conditions of transport. During the era of slavery and subsequently, efforts have been made to domesticate its horrors through comparisons to European feudalism, North American industrial working conditions, and a general pastoralism of acceptable mutual interdependence between slaveowners and enslaved.

While the historical context is not made explicit in the novel, other commentators (including Morrison) have provided that background. In 1873, the present-time of the novel, African-Americans were a mere ten years past Emancipation, and four years away from the end of Reconstruction. Morrison has acknowledged an actual woman, Margaret Garner, as the source for her protagonist, Sethe. Margaret escaped slavery with her family after the passage of the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which determined that enslaved people, even in free states, remained the property of their former owners, who had the right to recapture them and take them back to slave states. Garner's former owner tracked her down, and in the moment of recapture, Garner attempted to end her children's lives rather than return them to slavery, literally

enacting the words of the spiritual, “Before I’ll be a slave, I’ll be buried in my grave.” She succeeds in killing one, and tries to kill two others (Henderson, “Morrison” 65). The resemblance between Margaret Garner and Sethe ends there, however. Barbara Christian notes that Garner was not tried for killing her child; instead she was tried for stealing (herself) and restored, as “property”, to her master. Garner was re-sold into slavery and is said to have died in Louisiana.⁴

Morrison is part of a long tradition of autobiographers, historians, novelists, poets, and artists who have sought to interrupt the ameliorative and authorized narrative of slavery by depicting the human costs of enslavement and their ongoing consequences. Her description of the character of Sixo reaches deliberately into that silenced narrative to remind contemporary readers of forms and costs of resistance.

Character as “noble synecdochic purpose”: Sixo

Each character in Beloved represents what Hortense Spillers, in her reading of Paule Marshall’s The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, has recognized as some “noble synecdochic purpose” where “they are the part that speaks for the whole, just as the whole is configured in their partialness” (154). I identify “the whole” here as the narratives of New World history and myth, and the subjectivities produced by those narratives. Sixo is the predominant figure of marronage in the novel, presented to the reader through the recollections of Sethe and Paul D, a man who has shared enslavement with her on the Sweet Home plantation and reappeared in her life eighteen years later in Cincinnati.

Sixo is one of the Sweet Home men, each of whom represents a response to the condition of enslavement, and the consequences of each of those responses. At first,

Sweet Home and its enslaved people are the property of Garner; after his death, his wife's brother Schoolteacher takes over. Under his more overt domination, the enslaved men rebel, and are punished. Paul A, Paul D, and Paul F are rendered invisible as human beings, the first two sold, the other slaughtered, like the animal stock they are considered to be within the structure of slavery.

Prior to Schoolteacher's takeover, Halle and Sixo each engage the structure differently. Halle plays by the rules of a structure he has not created, whose very existence is dependent on his non-existence as a full human being. Nonetheless, he works to purchase his mother's freedom. His agency in creating the conditions for his mother Baby Suggs' freedom is the distinction that attracts Sethe to him. Sixo represents his opposite, the wild man -- the Maroon. He retains sufficient memory of his cultural heritage and his previous experience of freedom to grasp every opportunity to keep himself whole.

Unlike Sethe and Paul D, whose consciousnesses are revealed by the omniscient narrator of the novel, Sixo is presented only through their recollections, or "remembering" of him. To Paul D, he is "the wild man"(11). To Sethe, he is a teacher. Morrison, through Sixo, adds Maroon elements to the historical facts of the Middle Passage and the Triangle Trade that are the source of what Spillers calls the "compendium of potential interpretations" (61) available to history. This historical link is not self-evident. Rather, as Spillers points out, history "evades an explicit text...except by a structure of inference that rests solidly on the historical information that the reader already commands"(61). Sixo's representation of Maroon culture is evident to the reader whose "structure of inference" includes what Veve Clark has

characterized as “Diaspora literacy...the ability to read and comprehend the discourses of Africa, Afro-America and the Caribbean from an informed, indigenous perspective”(304). Morrison’s deployment of Sixo throughout the novel is both aide-memoire for her characters and for her readers, both those informed by diaspora literacy and those not. For those not, he is surely a mysterious figure demanding further investigation; for those so informed, he represents elements of both grand marronage (escape in order to form self-sustaining communities) and petit marronage (short periods of escape).

We are introduced to Sixo in Paul D’s recollection as “the wild man,” different from the other enslaved men. Paul D lists the men of Sweet Home: “Paul D Garner, Paul F Garner, Paul A Garner, Halle Suggs and Sixo, the wild man”(11). The Pauls are already subsumed and barely distinguished from each other by the naming practices of the man who owns them; Halle has retained some distinction from his name and the presence of his mother on the plantation; and Sixo’s very name defies the conventions of the system that entraps him. Its significance is not revealed until near the end of the novel. But on introduction, Sixo’s name signals his difference, reinforced by the appositive “the wild man,” suggesting that the others have been tamed, or broken, in some fashion. Sixo is thus at once marginal and powerfully distinct.

In Paul D’s recollection, Sixo has forged his own relationship with the land they share, a relationship that stirs Paul D’s admiration, envy, and discomfort. Sixo

went among trees at night. For dancing, he said, to keep his bloodlines open, he said. Privately, alone, he did it. None of the rest of them had seen him at it, but they could imagine it, and the picture they pictured made them eager to laugh at him -- in daylight, that is, when it was safe.
(25)

Paul D's recollection of their eagerness to laugh at Sixo does not suggest pure ridicule; rather, the qualifier that the laughter only occurs in daylight suggests that it is uneasy, a response that reveals desire combined with a self-deprecatory sense of unattainability. It is both the desire and the self-deprecation that are disguised by laughter, but Paul D's enduring recollection testifies to the significance of Sixo's nighttime freedom, or petit marronage. Sixo is also revealed to be a provider of sustenance and an inventor: he experiments with preparing night-cooked potatoes, a food indigenous to the New World; in other words, Sixo is improvising methods of self-sustenance that do not rely on the benevolence or self-interest of his captor.

Just as Sixo improvises his relationship to sustenance, he must also forge his own relationship to time. Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in The Signifying Monkey, highlights the trope of the clock, or watch as a European cultural signifier of time and discipline, described in the early slave narratives of Olaudah Equiano and others. The timepiece-measured day is foregrounded as a culturally-specific relationship to time from the perspective of a narrative voice accustomed to organizing time by different methods. Specifically, Gates notes that for Equiano, "the watch, he fears, can see, hear, and speak, and appears to be quite capable of and willing to report his actions to his sleeping master once he awakes. The watch is his master's surrogate overseer, standing in for the master as an authority figure, even while he sleeps" (155). Along with a portrait and a book, the watch is one of "the very signs through which Equiano represents the difference in subjectivity that separates his, now lost, African world from the New World of 'white folks' that has been thrust upon him" (155). Morrison's deployment of

Sixo, however, rejects any linear movement from a “now lost African world” to “the New World of ‘white folks’.” Rather, she suggests a contestatory co-existence, compounded by a new environment. In Paul D’s recollection,

Time never worked the way that Sixo thought, so of course he never got it right. Once he plotted down to the minute a thirty-mile trip to see a woman. He left on a Saturday when the moon was in the place he wanted it to be, arrived at her cabin before church on Sunday and had just enough time to say good morning before he had to start back again so he’d make the field call on time Monday morning. He had walked for seventeen hours, sat down for one, turned around and walked seventeen more. (21)

On his return, Paul D and the others disguise his fatigue. His effort, if not his success, has elicited their admiration. More than eighteen years later, Paul D recalls, “Now there was a man” (22), a man he has characterized as “wild” in a definition of wild that includes “gentle” (21).

This notion of what constitutes the wild is central to Sixo’s role in the novel on two levels: on one level, Sixo represents the wild as freedom to embrace a set of rules grounded in harmony with nature. Hence his obeisance to the Native American spirits occupying the cave where he hopes to meet with the Thirty-Mile woman; his nighttime dancing; his experiments with potatoes; his knowledge of bugs in the grape arbor and how to heal Sethe’s son’s wounded finger. His structures of mind and experience allow him to expect a harmony in the night and in the wild, and to seek it out. Counterpointed to Sixo’s representation of the wild as free and harmonious, Morrison presents the notion of the wild as dangerous in Schoolteacher’s attribution of animal characteristics to Black people. Stamp Paid, a free Cincinnati African American who has helped

fugitives escape across the Ohio River, recognizes the wild as a construct that can be made dangerous in a human being through continued mistreatment:

Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood. In a way, he thought, they were right. The more coloredpeople spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside. But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks had planted in them. And it grew. It spread. All through and after life, it spread, until it invaded the whites who had made it. Touched them every one. Changed and altered them. Made them bloody, silly, worse than they ever wanted to be, so scared were they of the jungle they had made. The screaming baboon lived under their own white skin; the red gums were their own. (198)

In this passage, Morrison describes how white racism's projection of dangerous wildness is enforced by power -- physical, narrative, and symbolic -- to the point that Black people who attempt to counter it on its own terms wind up engaging in the same repressive behaviors that are the source of racism. Terry Eagleton argues that Freud recognizes the material base of psychological organization: the unconscious is produced as a container for pleasurable drives that do not serve social productivity (151). In the West, a particularly harsh line is drawn between the unconscious and the conscious, producing a split personality that projects its unconscious other, and yet needs its interruptions. In some other cultures, a more negotiated and structured crossing of the line between the conscious and the unconscious can be, and is, enabled through ritual.

Sixto, in effect, recalls such an alternative narrative -- disengaged from the white western capitalist patriarchal structures that entrap him physically -- that serves as a

model for Black masculinity to Paul D. Sixo's relationship with the Thirty-Mile woman exists independently of and in opposition to the relationship Schoolteacher wants his slaves to have as brood mares or studs, but the oppositional role is secondary to the creative one. Sixo says of the Thirty-Mile woman, "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order. It's good, you know, when you got a woman who is a friend of your mind" (272-273). Their relationship demonstrates an embrace of the Yemaya discourse, less as one in need of restoration, but more as a refusal to abdicate their interdependence and inner feelings. Both Sixo and the Thirty-Mile woman take enormous risks to honor their feelings, rather than succumb to the numbing normative condition of the plantation. When Paul D is seeking to heal his relationship with Sethe, he recalls Sixo's characterization of his relationship with the Thirty-Mile woman. Sixo has sought and found a relationship that reflects him back to himself as whole. That such a relationship is forbidden by the society he inhabits requires him to make extra efforts for its development and maintenance, to the point of attempted escape.

Sixo thus reflects both grand and petit marronage, and physical as well as psychological marronage. He is constantly seeking the free marginal space. In his nighttime explorations, he has learned of the Underground Railroad and forged alliance with slaves on other plantations. Thus Sixo initiates the idea of escape, or grand marronage. Sixo is also constantly confronting the dominant subculture's narrative. Paul D recalls that "Sixo had a knowing tale about everything" (219), stating that Garner has died from a gunshot, not a stroke; that his widow has brought Schoolteacher to the plantation not because she needs his help but because she needs a whiteman on

the place for symbolic purposes; that the doctor is poisoning Mrs. Garner, not healing her, by “giving her to drink what stallions got when they broke a leg and no gunpowder could be spared”(219). He demonstrates the absurdity of enslaving human beings in his argument with Schoolteacher over the stolen shoat. Schoolteacher gets Sixo to admit that he has killed, cooked, and eaten the shoat, but Sixo argues that he has not stolen it, merely improved Schoolteacher’s property by consuming it. For his pains, he is locked up with the animal stock every night. In Paul D’s recollection, Sixo functions as a challenger of the master narrative.

In Sethe’s “rememory,” as she tells Paul D, he is recalled as a healer, who knows how to set her son’s broken thumb so that it heals correctly (161). The gendered difference of their memories offers an avenue for further exploration of where the elements of resistance and cultural affirmation in the Maroon narrative might offer a reconciliatory bridge between contemporary Black men’s and women’s texts.

However such an intra-cultural reconciliation might be framed, Sixo’s death demonstrates the irreconcilability of the Maroon narrative with the authoritative discourse of official history. Sixo and Paul D give themselves up to Schoolteacher so that the Thirty-Mile woman can escape, and it is at this point that Sixo “gives up English, because there is no future in it”(25). He exchanges the language both foreign and useless to him for a song in a language that neither the whitemen nor Paul D can understand.

They wait. For his song, perhaps, to end? Five guns are trained on him while they listen. Paul D cannot see them when they step away from the lamplight. Finally one of them hits Sixo in the head with his rifle, and when he comes to, a hickory fire is in front of him and he is tied at the

waist to a tree. Schoolteacher has changed his mind: "This one will never be suitable." The song must have convinced him.

The fire keeps failing and the whitemen are put out with themselves at not being prepared for this emergency. They came to capture, not kill. What they can manage is only enough for cooking hominy. Dry faggots are scarce and the grass is slick with dew.

By the light of the hominy fire Sixo straightens. He is through with his song. He laughs. A rippling sound like Sethe's sons make when they tumble in hay or splash in rainwater. His feet are cooking; the cloth of his trousers smokes. He laughs. Something is funny. Paul D guesses what it is when Sixo interrupts his laughter to call out, "Seven-O! Seven-O"

Smoky, stubborn fire. They shoot him to shut him up. Have to.
(226-227)

To Schoolteacher, Sixo is too wild, too dangerous, too uncontainable; to Paul D, Sixo has demonstrated qualities of courage and sacrifice that he can only dream of, in a language he does not recognize. These narratives are not reconcilable, so those with the power of physical and cultural authority and enforcement "shoot him to shut him up. Have to." But shutting Sixo up doesn't silence his narrative: his child with the Thirty-Mile Woman, Seven-O, is on the way. Sixo's mode of resistance generates a "smoky, stubborn fire," in Paul D's recollection, that is never entirely silenced, put out, or forgotten, and offers him a model for what a man can be outside of the master-slave paradigm. In the tradition of Wheatley, DuBois, and Walker, Morrison uses Sixo to keep alive the notion of song as zone of creativity.

Morrison has provided an important historical lesson by reminding her readers of the historical presence and continuity of African-American resistance to oppression that has been at least as creative and self-sustaining, if not more so, as it has been reactive. Sixo's legacy is echoed not only in Paul D's recollection, but also in Baby Suggs', Halle's mother and Sethe's mother-in-law, summoning of the people to the

Clearing, a collective echo of his nighttime dancing. Sixo's creolization involves his adaptation of New World material and social configurations that include and exceed those of slavery or Euro-American culture. He has a culture that sustains him in a way that Schoolteacher's never will, and his model for adaptation reveals Schoolteacher's to be hollow, shallow and destructive. Morrison's reassertion of Sixo's marronage reveal that Schoolteacher's disciplinary efforts at silencing his alternative creolization have ultimately failed. However, they have only failed by a narrow margin, and do not hesitate to continue to press for complete domination. In shifting the focus of this discussion to Sethe, I will now discuss how marronage is or is not recalled in subsequent historical communities.

Sethe in Community

Sethe, of course, exists in a community wherever she is, on the plantation or in Cincinnati. Through her portrayal of Sethe's relationship to her communities, Morrison offers a critique of African-American community formation through the demonstration of what Sethe lacks in order to transform the historical trauma suffered by all African- and other Americans. Throughout the novel, Morrison offers a range of Black historical experiences in the Americas. From this historical mosaic, Sethe's community has chosen values that enable them to abandon her for the majority of her journey, withholding from her the "communitas," to use Victor Turner's term, that would enable her to safely traverse the Middle Passage back that her personal history represents. Turner defines "communitas" as a state of being that exists

more in contrast than in active opposition to social structure, as an alternative and more 'liberated' way of being socially human, a way both of being detached from social structure -- and hence potentially of

periodically evaluating -- its performance -- and also of a 'distanced' or 'marginal' person's being more attached to other disengaged persons -- and hence, sometimes of evaluating a social structure's historical performance in common with them. (50-51)

It is Sethe's distance from the "other disengaged persons" that retards her Maroon passage. "Communitas," for Turner, is "a loving union of the structurally damned pronouncing judgment on normative structure and providing alternative models for structure" (51). Turner's notion of the structurally damned echoes Fanon's "Les damnees de la terre," the damned, or wretched, of the earth, "those who live in the town belonging to the colonized people, or at least the native town, the Negro village, the medina, the reservation" (39). However; by "communitas," Turner is describing a social relation that is not dependent on the geographical proximity usually assumed by "community" and enforced by segregation in Fanon's example.

From this margin, experienced socially and sometimes reinforced geographically, decolonization, or emancipation, predicated on the dissolution of the Manichean order, is enacted by a process that "transforms spectators crushed with their inessentiality into privileged actors, with the grandiose glare of history's floodlights upon them" (Fanon 36): in other words, a Maroon rite of passage. A reading of Morrison's Beloved as Maroon novel, then, recognizes the ongoing efforts of the "structurally damned" in the New World to extract from the specific history of the Middle Passage and slavery, Spillers' "compendium of potential interpretations" (161), an interpretation that doesn't merely reproduce their marginality, but releases them from damnation and offers the possibility of an alternative structure. To get there, each must pass through liminality, the zone of chaotic possibility out of which new meanings and

new structures, or old structures revitalized, can emerge. Sethe's journey from the structures of enslavement to a tentative articulation of her own subjectivity and agency is thwarted time and again, by the overarching authoritative discourse of white western patriarchal capitalism, the localized authoritative discourse of African American free people struggling for acceptability within the overarching discourse, and her internalized, unspoken horror at both what has been done to her and what she has done. I discuss her efforts to recover agency within these structures before turning to the discussion of her near-fatal healing journey.

Structure in *Beloved*

Morrison signals that her work will encompass the mythical as well as the historical on New World ground from the opening page of the novel. Sethe's house, a "structure," is gray and white, representing intangible clouds, located on "Bluestone" road, the earth.⁵ It is located on the margins of Cincinnati, part of the only-recently consolidated state of Ohio. Furthermore, the house is both on loan (it belongs to the white abolitionist Bodwins) and haunted.

The supernatural presentation of the house, 124, reiterates both the marginality of the African-American community, and of Sethe within that community; but it also signals the presence of instability within that structure. The repressed past has the ability to shake the structure, and does so. The house and its inhabitants are devoted to coping with the energies of a murdered baby's ghost, a mythical and historical figure representing an ever-present, nearly unspeakable past. However, as long as the structure is devoted to managing and repressing that history, no new structures can come into being. Hence Sethe's sons Howard and Buglar flee when each turns 13, the beginning

of puberty, a recognizable life-crisis, because the consistent instability of 124 offers them no structural opportunity to make their own difficult passage into adulthood.

124, then, could be said to represent an African-American anti-structure, or liminal space, vis-a-vis the dominant subculture. By anti-structure, I mean “the latent system of potential alternatives from which novelty will arise when contingencies in the normative system require it” (Sutton-Smith 18-19). It represents what the dominant subculture does not want to know about itself, and to the extent that its inhabitants are able to face what the culture wants to forget and find ways to heal from it, it maintains an alternative to existing structures. Sweet Home plantation, on the other hand, represents the formative structure of the dominant subculture in the novel. Sweet Home’s structural polarity makes itself evident early in the novel: “suddenly there was Sweet Home, rolling, rolling, rolling out before her eyes....It never looked as terrible as it was and it made her wonder if hell was a pretty place too”(4). Sethe explains to Denver the stability of structure that Sweet Home represents:

Where I was before I came here, that place is real. It’s never going away. Even if the whole farm -- every tree and grass blade of it dies. The picture is still there and what’s more, if you go there -- you who never was there -- if you go there and stand in the place where it was, it will happen again; it will be there for you, waiting for you. So, Denver, you can’t never go there. (36)

Sweet Home, then, is another living ghost, an invisible structure of self, society, history, and myth where Sethe’s role as Black woman is as slave and brood mare. At the beginning of the novel, the only alternatives she can offer her descendants are death or stasis, but she remains fixed in her determination that they will never experience Sweet Home’s utter degradation and dehumanization. The only anti-structure that Sethe is

capable of imagining herself creating is “not Sweet Home,” a simple act of negation that is resistant, but not liberatory.⁶ Early in the novel Morrison has provided spatial metaphors, psychically and geographically, that locate Sethe in a form of limbo, betwixt and between past and future, in a nearly uninhabitable present.

Morrison has set up the polarities of slavery and freedom, past and present, in Sweet Home and the house on Bluestone Road. However, freedom, arguably the prevailing ideal of the American Dream, is represented as entrapment in the present in a borrowed, haunted house. 124 is also located on the margins of the African American community, itself on the margins of white Cincinnati, not only geographically but also economically and socially. The African American community is struggling to establish its own structures in freedom, a near-impossible task in an overarching context where white America requires the projection of their inferiority and marginalization in order to maintain its own structure. Sethe poses a profound challenge to both Euro-American and African American efforts to create structure in the aftermath of enslavement.

Sethe as Quest Figure

Like Sixo, and arguably all the characters in Beloved, Sethe is “the part that speaks for the whole, just as the whole is configured in their partialness.” Sethe and those around her must struggle to accept the part that she represents.

Morrison’s choice of Sethe’s name resonates with symbolic meanings that reveal the historical and mythical depth of associations she represents, especially associations with woundedness and quests for redemption. The Biblical Seth was a son of Adam and Eve. Genesis 4:25 states: “And Adam knew his wife again; and she bare a son, and called his name Seth: for God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel,

whom Cain slew.” Sethe, then, can be seen as representing the Africans brought to slave in the New World to replace the original inhabitants, the Native American Abel, slain by their brother, the European Cain. By naming Sethe after the third child of Adam and Eve, Morrison introduces a mythical complex already tainted by the violation of the sacred and murder, re-enacted in a historical New World.

The Biblical Seth is also a quest figure. According to Esther Quinn, the legend of Seth is connected to that of the rood-tree, the Cross of the Christian crucifixion.⁷ Quinn pursues the origins and developments of the legend as a syncretic formation drawing on healing motifs from Sumerian and Jewish traditions, which was eventually Christianized after dispersal in Greek and Latin translations. In the Jewish apocryphal version of the story, Seth is given a twig, which becomes the “oil of mercy” in subsequent Greek translations. For the purposes of this study, the association of Sethe with Seth can be said to reflect the “journey back” that Morrison’s character must undertake. The legendary Seth’s journey takes place when Adam is about to die. Adam bids his son Seth go to Paradise for the oil of mercy. The path will be apparent, since, as Adam and Eve left Paradise, their footprints were burned upon the grass, and no vegetation has ever grown there. Seth is refused the oil of mercy, but is granted three glimpses of Paradise, and literal seeds of redemption. Seth’s quest represents his desire not only to heal his immediate situation (his ailing father Adam) but also his father’s breach, which resulted in his expulsion from Paradise. Similarly, Sethe’s recovery is predicated on her quest for the “oil of mercy” which has been withheld from her by her community, her baby, history, and herself. Like Seth, she does not receive it directly; instead, she is offered the possibility of redemption in the surround of her community.⁸

Also like Seth, Morrison's Sethe is linked to the image of trees, whose multiple meanings are both contradictory and conflated. Her memory of Sweet Home includes "Boys hanging from the most beautiful sycamores in the world. It shamed her -- remembering the wonderful soughing trees rather than the boys. Try as she might to make it otherwise, the sycamores beat out the children every time and she could not forgive her memory for that" (6). Similarly, the marks on her back, the result of a vicious whipping for attempting to escape, are variously "a revolting clump of scars"(21), "a chokecherry tree" (79), and "roses of blood" (93), "none of which," at the start of the novel, "Sethe could feel because her back skin had been dead for years"(18). It is her struggle, her journey, throughout the novel, to recognize and incorporate that which she, her community, and the nation they inhabit, have turned their backs on, in both mythical and historical terms.⁹

Both Denise Heinz and Robyn Weigman argue that there is a critical difference between the mythical Eden and its analogous counterpart, the New World, when viewed through the lens of African-American experience as it is described in Beloved. Heinz asserts that

Emancipated blacks faced a total loss of the civilized society of which they were adjunct....the freed slaves were totally divested of any social structure. Their return into an asocial existence is an ironic reversal of the condition of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, the beginning of existence before memory and history....the freed people, despite their divestiture of the world, were not afforded the innocence of Adam and Eve. They possessed knowledge of a world and then were cast into an Edenic existence. For them, knowledge precedes innocence, an impossibility that turns Eden into Hades. (Heinz 111)

Robyn Weigman also asserts that, for the dominant subculture, under slavery, the enslaved were without social structure. They were, by law and in treatment, property,

not humans, subject to the will and whims of anybody white. Both critiques articulate the location of black people within the structures of white society. I would call this an accurate representation of the authoritative discourse of the time. Legal, symbolic, narrative, and psychic structures promoted and enforced the idea that White men were the highest attainment of humanity, and everyone else was deficient, to a greater and lesser extent, to the degree that their bodies revealed their achievement of White manhood or difference therefrom. Points of identification with this mythic norm might lie along the axes of race, gender, class, or some combination thereof. The two most obvious axes of difference, of course, were race and gender. Black women, subjugated as a class by race-based enslavement, did not receive gendered recognition by those authoritative structures.

However, what Morrison also demonstrates is that within that proscribed location, the enslaved and newly-emancipated attempted to exercise agency wherever possible, continually complicating their attempted erasure as human beings within the dominant structure. Sethe is the primary figure through whom she demonstrates both those efforts and their difficulties.

Early Rites

Sethe undergoes three significant rites of passage in the course of the novel: her marriage to Halle, her escape to Ohio and, eighteen years later, her restoration to herself. The first two fail to produce reaggregation to community. This section discusses the elements that aid or inhibit Sethe's movement to new structural locations.

Morrison's depiction of the movement from slavery to freedom as juridical, communal, and psychological process is depicted in a number of major characters in the

novel, including Sethe. To a greater or lesser extent, they take the form of the process described by Daryl Dance: from disharmony, to protective hiding, to spiritual cleansing, rebirth, and reintegration into community. These features also characterize rites of passage, which anthropologist Arnold van Gennep defines as “rites which accompany every change of place, state, social position and age.” They are marked by three phases: “Separation, margin (or limen, signifying ‘threshold’ in Latin), and aggregation”

(Turner, Ritual Process 94). Turner elaborates on van Gennep’s distinctions:

The first phase (of separation) comprises symbolic behavior signifying the detachment of the individual or group either from an earlier fixed point in the social structure, from a set of cultural conditions (a “state”) or from both. During the intervening “liminal” period, the characteristics of the ritual subject (the “passenger”) are ambiguous; she passes through a cultural realm that has few or none of the attributes of the past or coming state. In the third phase (reaggregation or reincorporation) the passage is consummated. The ritual subject, individual or corporate, is in a relatively stable state once more and, by virtue of this, has rights and obligations vis-a-vis others of a clearly defined and “structural” type; she is expected to behave in accordance with certain customary norms and ethical standards binding on incumbents of social position in a system of such positions. (Ritual Process 94-95)

The real-time of the novel is 1873. All of the characters have made at least one passage: from legal enslavement to legal emancipation. Sethe has made a number of passages, characterized by the presence or absence of rites to mark her changed states. More important than ritual action here is ritual content. The liminal state is characteristically presided over by ritual elders and specialists who assist the initiand to become a “blank slate on which is inscribed the knowledge and wisdom of the group, in those respects that pertain to the new status” (Turner, Ritual Process 103).

Sethe must continually struggle for a sense of self from a base of zero¹⁰, which reflects the effects of the attempted erasure of African humanity via the Middle Passage,

most clearly delineated in this novel as the loss of maternal relations. Hortense Spillers, in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book," offers the argument that the entire history of African/European social relations sought to destroy any vestige of kinship feeling -- whether in familial terms or at the more abstract level of shared humanity -- among the enslaved, and also between the enslaver and the enslaved. On all conceptual levels -- in a complex feedback loop between psyche, culture and myth -- this project was predicated on the reduction of black women to objects of reproductive capacity, and the replacement of kinship relations with chaotic relations under the guise of capitalist logic. She states:

The destructive loss of the natural mother, whose biological/genetic relationship to the child remains unique and unambiguous, opens the enslaved young to social ambiguity and chaos: the ambiguity of his/her fatherhood and to a structure of other relational elements, now threatened, that would declare the young's connection to a genetic and historic future by way of their own siblings. (Spillers, "Mama's Baby" 472)

Spillers' description of the site and consequences of this maternal erasure reflects what I describe in the introduction as the attempted eradication of the Yemaya discourse, the designation of those states of human interaction as inconsequential that do not lead to profit per se, but contain relational qualities, what I term "maternal relations." This discourse, the attempted erasure of the natural mother and the modes of affiliation structured from this first relationship, is driven underground, or thrown overboard, in the Middle Passage, yet stubbornly refuses to disappear. It is the specifically maternal and nurturing interactions that white Western patriarchal capitalism seeks to repress in all its participants, and assigns to an inferior service position in the culture as a whole.

Morrison includes a scene from early in the child Sethe's life to show how human socialization, also beginning at ground zero, intertwines in complex ways with the socialization of enslavement, and how the authorized effort at maternal erasure is effective, but not complete. Sethe is born into slavery on a plantation she can no longer recall. She can barely recollect her own mother when asked if her mother ever combed her hair, a simple act of connectedness. She remembers receiving that kind of attention from another woman, Nan. Concerning her own mother, she recalls being drawn aside and her mother lifting her breast to reveal the brand she received in slavery. It is a cross within a circle, a symbol with many possible interpretations. On the mythical level, it is a powerful cross-cultural symbol that predates Christianity. The circle represents perfection, the whole of the universe and the self, and the eternal, since it has no beginning or end (Biedermann 69-71). The cross represents the axis mundi, or tree of life, connecting the earthly plane to the heavenly one. In African traditions it also represents the crossroads between the realms of the living and the dead. The cross within the circle is also the figure of the quest cross in medieval heraldry. In historical terms, the cross within the circle is the classical figure of the Mappa Mundi that represented the European view of the known world prior to the discovery of the New World (Biedermann 81-84). By branding Sethe's mother with the cross within the circle, Morrison evokes a complex of symbolic associations that include quests, redemption, Eurocentric and Afrocentric worldviews and, finally, the meanings Sethe's mother associates with it, that of both identity and enslavement. The child Sethe, seeking to establish relations with her mother, asks her mother to mark her too, so that they can know each other. Her mother slaps her (61).

In this scene, Morrison captures the disruption of maternal relations produced by New World slavery and emergent capitalism as it is enacted on the bodies of black women, and leaves it to the reader to imagine the psychological consequences for “small girl Sethe” (62). Her simplest, most primal desire, to identify with her mother, is rebuffed with a slap because she does not understand the meaning of the “mark” she is choosing to represent that desire. Anything resembling an intimate nurturing relationship has been driven underground and made unavailable by the dominant symbolic, economic and social structures of the time. Sethe next remembers her mother as a dead woman, first hanging from a tree and then part of a pile of bodies. Sethe’s memory that “It was a lot of them” (61) suggests the kind of wholesale massacre that would follow a rebellion, uprising, or attempt at group escape, thereby identifying her mother as a Maroon as well.

Locating Sethe’s natural mother as a Maroon provides the link between the Yemaya discourse and that of marronage. Despite the pressures of the authoritative discourse of chattel slavery and the plantation economy, Sethe’s mother maintained an internally-persuasive discourse, shared with figures like Nan, that restores her to herself in the world and inspires her to participate in an act of resistance for the purpose of liberation. This effort does not succeed in producing sustained liberation; however, it maintains the discourse of liberation and mutual dependence, those maternal qualities subverted or repressed by the authoritative discourse, as a desire worthy of risking death itself.

Joanne Braxton links this tradition of maternal resistance with marronage in her discussion of the “outraged mother” archetype in Afra-American¹¹ fiction. She argues

for an intertextual relationship between the oral histories of Nanny of the Jamaican Maroons and the rearticulation of oral narratives in Zora Neale Hurston and in family histories in the works of Harriet Jacobs, Alice Walker, Gayl Jones, and Toni Morrison. Sethe's effort to "rememory" her "outraged mother" resonates with Braxton's argument that in Afro-American narrative, "the ancestor figure is an outraged mother who embodies the values of sacrifice, nurturance, and personal courage" (314). That these qualities are fragmented and distributed among different women in Sethe's recollection reflects the disruption to maternal relations by enslavement.

Sethe's willingness to remember the story of her mother for her daughter Denver and visitor Beloved unlocks another memory, one that she does not share. She remembers the caretaker Nan drawing her aside at the scene of her own mother's death. Nan is crippled, missing one arm, which symbolizes the brutality of slavery and particularly the destruction of nurturance, since Nan can only wrap one full arm around the small girl. She waves the stump of her other arm, and tells Sethe the story of her birth, that Nan and Sethe's mother had made the Middle Passage together and been raped repeatedly by the white sailors. Sethe's mother aborted every pregnancy by a white man, but Sethe's father was black, an African, and Nan tells the girl that her mother gave her his name, and that he was the only one she "put her arms around" (62). Nan, Sethe's crippled adopted kinswoman, attempts to redeem the horror of Sethe's mother's death by locating Sethe's origins in love, however temporary and inexpressible. Above all, she seems to be emphasizing that Sethe is the result of her mother's choice to love and to bear a child, however painful and uncertain the consequences under the condition of enslavement. Nan seems to want Sethe to

remember that she is a child of love and willful union, not the product of rape and a dead woman, and that she carries her father's name through her mother's choice, not the name of the slavemaster.

Morrison is showing that despite the life-and-death power of the plantation economy, both symbolic and economic, the Black woman sought spaces, however tiny, to exercise agency and choice. In this description of Sethe's mother's attempts to create a future by having a child, and attempting escape, she is pointing to those practices for survival engaged in by the enslaved despite the efforts of the dominant subculture to erase all possibilities of agency and desire among them. Robyn Wiegman, in American Anatomies, rightly points to slavery as not only an unpersoning, but an ungendering. That is, the gendered assignments of the emerging white middle-class that delegates domestic duties to the female, what Spillers calls the "patriarchalized"¹² female gender" ("Mama's Baby" 467), are not available to the enslaved. Both male and female slaves are expected to perform productive economic labor, and to reproduce that labor force as forms of machinery, not humanity. To serve the economic interests of the dominant class, the inner life of the subordinate class is erased or repressed.

The primary signifier of racial, gender, and class difference has often been identified as Western rationality and literate expression. Morrison, however, is pointing to a more insidious assault, the effort to rid black people of feeling states and the ability to respond emotionally to their conditions. Sethe's mother's energy is deflected from forming affective bonds with her child by being required to work ceaselessly. The practically anonymous Nan is expected to care for numbers of children not her own as an act of reproducing labor, not love. Both Sethe's mother and Nan, however, are

depicted as defying those restrictions wherever possible, even if that space of defiance is miniscule. They do remember gendered roles and responsibilities, and enact them as much as possible. And their memories are not drawn from the model of European class divisions, but from Africa. Sethe's unnamed mother has attempted to deploy both of the alternative discourses I have named earlier: that of Shango, in her act of direct resistance, and that of Yemaya, in choosing to give birth by a chosen partner. I am not suggesting that Sethe's mother was Yoruba, or that a historical woman in her position would have named her actions in this way. I am arguing that her actions recall a way of being in the world opposed to the dominant authoritative discourse.

Sethe remembers that Nan, her mother, and others spoke in a language that is lost to her: "Words Sethe understood then but could neither recall nor repeat now" (62). Lost with the language is the memory of what that language named. But Morrison gives Sethe the message that the language contained. Sethe realizes that she is trying to extract "meaning out of a code she no longer understood" (62). And the meaning she recalls is that of her mother's love and drive to act in the world, regardless of her location under the Eurocentric code. Her response to this recollection ranges from shame (at the fact of her mother's, and her own, location as rape-able and lynchable object) to recalled childhood indifference, to adult anger, "but not certain at what" (62). She is still missing a dialogical partner, someone to share language, memory, code, and the construction of meaning with. She longs for her mother-in-law, Baby Suggs, a strong maternal figure, but she is dead, and her daughter and Beloved are inadequate to the task. The only thing that settles her is that Paul D., her contemporary and sharer of memory at Sweet Home, is on his way home.

In this short scene, Morrison describes in miniature the arc of attempted recovery that Sethe will undergo in the whole of the novel. An inquiry into the past is met with a surface response, the naming of which clears a space for deeper repressed contents to emerge, much of which is without language. However, the absence of language does not signify a total absence; rather, it is the absence that indicates a lost presence. Sethe withdraws from her inquirer to attempt to decode the lost presence, but when she assigns meaning in that space, she is without a community to share her discoveries with. Her process allows no end-point, no reaggregation, because she is isolated. In this scene, she aborts the process and returns to the mundane, leaving meaning unresolved. But the reader is able to begin piecing together meanings, to attribute significance not only to Sethe but to the complexity of African-American experience during and since the period of slavery.

Sethe's recollection of repressed memories of her mother and Nan, and the meanings, not just the facts, of their lives, restores to African-American communal memory the notion of spaces of nurturing and feeling-states that enslavement and the ideology and practices of the dominant structure have sought to erase with each subsequent generation. Henderson uses the term "motherlines" to describe the recovery of narrative that Sethe performs in recollecting her childhood for her daughter, and indeed for herself. Sethe's mother's sacrifice of herself for the possible liberation of her community is an enactment of desires Sethe shares, but has enacted differently. It remains a shadow narrative in Sethe's memory until she redirects her aggression in the same direction as her mother's at the end of the novel. Her mother's early example, recalled by Sethe to satisfy the inquiry of the next generation, reintroduces to Sethe's

consciousness a negotiated relationship between body and soul: the body might slave for the master, but the soul makes its own choices. Both her mother and Nan pay with their bodies for attempting to reclaim their physicality, to bring their bodies back into alignment with their souls, to experience their bodies as the expression of their own souls' desires, rather than as alienated expressions of an Other's will and desire¹³.

In effect, they are attempting to overcome their own zombification. As Joan Dayan points out in Haiti, History, and the Gods, "the zombi -- a soulless husk deprived of freedom -- is the ultimate sign of loss and dispossession" (37). The contemporary robot is the analogue to the zombi, but the robot is originally matter and the efforts in artificial intelligence are to give this object the power of choice. The zombi is its opposite, a human from whom the soul is removed in an effort to render it totally material. Enslavement can be read, then, as the effort to zombify an entire people.¹⁴ Narratives like Beloved help contemporary readers to remember the long history of survival that was predicated on bodies acting one way, while consciousness maintained an alternative narrative, waiting for the opportunities to bring the two together again. Braxton, in her discussion of the outraged mother, recalls Sophia, from Alice Walker's The Color Purple. Sophia has been imprisoned for being "uppity". She slaves in the prison laundry: "Her outward behavior is that of a model prisoner, but her internal life is a different matter: 'I dream of murder, she say, I dream of murder sleep or wake'" (309).

The effort to erase Sophia's, Sixo's, and Sethe's mother's and Nan's alternative vision is more complex than merely emptying people of will and desires of their own, aligned to the performances of their own bodies, but to replace that will and desire with

an alienated one, forcing the body to perform on behalf of Others to the exclusion of or in active opposition to one's own desires. That such a performance bears a resemblance to the performances of mothering, where the desires of the self are subordinated to the needs of the infant, further complicates extracting that self from alienation towards repossession. The primary distinction between the two is that the subordination of the parent to the child involves a complex of identity and difference that is predicated on identity, on mutual recognition as part of a whole. Barbara Christian notes that this is the paradox at the center of Morrison's novel: "how the natural and personal emotion, mother love, is traumatically affected by the political institution of slavery" ("Somebody" 336).

Morrison's assertions of resistance to zombification are all located in communal action, either grounded in interconnection or in the desire for it. This sense of interconnection in the New World context of historical slavery relies on the restoration of maternal relations, within the self and mirrored in community relations. Her assertion, however, is demonstrated by negation, by the depiction of what Sethe lacks in order to be restored to a self she has never fully experienced, affirmed, or attributed meaning to. The description of Sethe's memory of herself as a girl shows her desire to affirm her place in the world as the daughter of her mother, a forbidden relationship under slavery. Nan attempts to give her a sense of value based on that relationship. However, it is the slimmest of emotional bonds, and competes with her mother's slap and hanging in Sethe's memory. Barbara Christian describes this as "the chaotic space of mother-love/mother-pain, daughter-love/daughter-pain" ("Somebody" 339). However, as Grewal points out, the missing language in Sethe's memory is not "a

universally repressed, preverbal maternal semiotic but...a specific violence done to a mother language” (113). Sethe’s quest for maternal relations, as daughter and mother, illuminates the interrelationship between history, psyche, myth, and community. Both her first and second attempts to gather the pieces of herself together fail because of the failure of all those elements to pull together on her behalf.

In Sethe’s first major rite of passage, when she attempts to become a woman herself, she is without models on the Sweet Home plantation. Her expressions of her sense of identity and agency take the tiniest forms: “she who had to bring a fistful of salsify into Mrs. Garner’s kitchen every day just to be able to work in it, feel like some part of it was hers, because she wanted to love the work she did, to take the ugly out of it” (22). Later, she condemns herself for believing in either the power of the salsify or the significance of her marriage on the plantation. She condemns herself for believing that even these small gestures mattered: “As though a handful of myrtle stuck in the handle of a pressing iron propped against the door in a whitewoman’s kitchen could make it hers....A bigger fool never lived” (23). However, these tiny gestures of Sethe’s elicit the reader’s empathy and recognition of desire for agency in the world, for self-possession, even if the adult Sethe cannot forgive herself for believing in them.

Halle, one of the enslaved men on the Sweet Home plantation, asks Sethe to marry him, and she agrees. If Sethe’s fistfuls of flowers represent the expression of a self within a system that denies it, Halle’s renting of his labor in order to buy his mother’s freedom represents that resistant participation in even larger terms. In the end, this is the quality that makes her choose him. He embodies sacrifice in the name of familial bond, and his allegiance to his mother and her freedom indicates a respect for

the female. As Sethe recalls it, “His care suggested a family relationship rather than a man’s laying claim” (25). Patriarchal possession, whose grossest expression is slavery, is replaced with fraternal, familial allegiance. Halle cooperates with the rules of the system, but with emancipatory goals. In Sethe, he seeks a partner, not a possession or a servant.

Morrison’s description of Sethe’s desire for some way to mark her union with Halle, her movement from childhood to womanhood, reveals the absence of ritual elders and knowledge in Sethe’s life on the Sweet Home plantation. Sethe feels a need to mark the sacred power of her changing status, but has no structure to rely on or way of gaining the knowledge she needs: “There should be a ceremony, shouldn’t there? A preacher, some dancing, a party, a something. She and Mrs. Garner were the only women there, so she decided to ask her” (26). Mrs. Garner, the white plantation owner’s wife, merely approves of the marriage, and attributes Sethe’s desire for some way to mark the occasion as Black mimicry of White customs. Mrs. Garner’s worldview renders impossible Sethe’s possession of creative agency or a self with desires. The effort to zombify others rebounds on Mrs. Garner’s own sensibilities, limiting the possibility of mutual recognition.

Sethe resorts to constructing her own wedding gown out of borrowed fabrics. The juxtaposition of her desire and action, and Mrs. Garner’s perspective, reveals the simultaneous presence of irreconcilable narratives, each generated by historically distinct subcultures on the plantation. Out of the scraps of fabric she can find in Mrs. Garner’s house, Sethe manufactures a garment to serve her purposes; she has crossed into enemy territory to “garner” the resources she needs to mark the change in her status

and identity. Mrs. Garner, on the other hand, regards her efforts as pathetic and imitative. She recognizes neither Sethe's effort at dignity, nor her own role in withholding from her the appropriate recognition for either the sacred ceremony about to be performed, or Sethe's ingenuity at accomplishing her purpose regardless of the obvious obstacles. In an apparently contradictory gesture, she gives Sethe a small pair of crystal earrings as a wedding present, and wishes her and Halle happiness. Mrs. Garner's recognition of Sethe and Halle's marriage, and at the same time her complicity in that structure which refuses to recognize that marriage, exist simultaneously. Her gift does nothing to change Sethe and Halle's objectification; however, it adds to her self-image as benevolent.

Similarly, Sethe and Halle consummate their marriage in the cornfield, marking the importance of the occasion with a change of clothing and a sacred site, before re-entering the normative structure as husband and wife. Morrison offers the response of the other enslaved men on the plantation to demonstrate that multiple and conflicting meanings can come from any subculture. Paul D recalls that Halle thought he was finding privacy by taking Sethe to the cornfield, a liminal space that existed because it produced "a crop animals could use as well as humans" (26). In Paul D's recollection, "the jump...from a calf to a girl wasn't all that mighty" (26), representing his own confusion about categories, human vs. animal, and reflecting the paradigm of the dominant subculture in which he occupies the latter, and subordinate, position. In accepting the dominant subculture's binary opposition, he chooses it as the only empowering structure. Admittedly, he only grasps it tentatively, but it does serve to allow him to place himself in the human category and the female human Other in the

subordinate one, or at least closer to it than he is. In any case, like Mrs. Garner, while he performs small gestures of recognition and kindness, they are more to enhance his own self-image than to grant to Sethe the interiority that recognizes the desires fueling her actions. Like Mrs. Garner, the recognition and identification he withholds from Sethe reflects that which he does not wish to acknowledge about himself.

The normative structure that Sethe and Halle re-enter is not one that they control, and their relationship as husband and wife and, subsequently, parents is not acknowledged by their status in the symbolic order of the dominant subculture as chattel slaves. When Garner dies and Schoolteacher takes over the farm, he initiates Sethe's second rite of passage.

Schoolteacher's intention is to literalize the dehumanization of the Sweet Home slaves, to in effect erase their contestatory narrative. Instead, what it generates is their full-scale attempt at grand marronage, in the form of group escape. This is a much larger and longer rite for Sethe than her marriage to Halle and motherhood; it emerges from Schoolteacher's attempt to erase the small space she has claimed by those two acts, and more fully implicates community in the success or failure of its results.

Schoolteacher's arrival reveals the power of the dominant subculture to express its will without consideration for the full humanity of the subordinate subculture. Morrison effectively reflects both the range of domination and its ultimate fixedness in the contrast between Garner and Schoolteacher. Garner's self-image is bolstered by his idea of making "men" of his slaves. As he puts it to the other slaveowners, "if you a man yourself, you'll want your niggers to be men too" (10). He thrives on the individualism that his stance represents; when he jokes that the other slaveowners

wouldn't want "nigger men" around their wives, he is beaten for the insult, but proud that his slaves' manhood enhances his own. Schoolteacher, on the other hand, rejects Garner's ego-boosting identification with his slaves. He perceives his relationship with the slaves as equally God-like, but where Garner sees them as "in his own image," Schoolteacher sees them as beasts under his dominion. He takes notes on their animal and human characteristics, using ink that Sethe herself has made. Schoolteacher's scientific approach to the black people in his midst is intended to reify the differences between them and, by writing them down, to lend them a truth-value within Western rationality whose contestation the objects of his study are never to achieve. Both Garner and Schoolteacher assume that the people in their midst are intended to serve their will, despite the variations in their approaches to slaveowning. Both exist on the dominant side of a fixed boundary that they retain the power to set. Garner's ego-gratification is more overt, but Schoolteacher's is no less present, even if disguised as dispassionate scientific inquiry. When Sethe becomes aware of his efforts to permanently condemn herself and her children not only to the condition of enslavement but to the totalizing humiliation of it via her and their expulsion from the category of human, she undertakes her second major rite of passage away from the master/slave structure, into the unknown. She becomes a fugitive, a Maroon.

Sethe's first attempt to escape proves disastrous. Sethe's movement from legal enslavement to legal freedom is aborted by another liminal passage, intended to destroy her will: for her audacity in claiming ownership of herself, she is first stripped, beaten, and the milk of her breasts is sucked at by those who have been engaged in delineating her animal characteristics; unwilling to re-enter their structure on their terms, she flees a

second time. Heavily pregnant and lactating, a vision of re-birth, practically reduced to the blank slate of the ritual passenger, she reaches the banks of the Ohio River, an obvious threshold, where she faces the possibility of simultaneously giving birth and dying. She is assisted by another marginal figure, Amy Denver, a Euro-American girl herself fleeing indenture and abuse. Amy Denver midwifes Sethe's delivery and gives her the key to her passage: "Anything dead coming back to life hurts" (35). Ferried across the Ohio by Stamp Paid, Charon reversed, Sethe is reunited for the space of one moon -- 28 days -- (a clearly feminine time-signature) with her children and her husband's mother before the four white horsemen -- an obviously apocalyptic image -- find her. Rather than submit, Sethe slays one daughter and attempts to kill the rest of her children; she then shuts down her life. Legal freedom has not guaranteed itself on even minimal, juridical, terms, let alone become internalized in Sethe's psyche in any meaningful, generative way. For 28 days, Sethe has been surrounded by

Days of healing, ease and real-talk. Days of company: knowing the names of forty, fifty other Negroes, their views, habits; where they had been and what done; of feeling their fun and sorrow along with her own, which made it better. One taught her the alphabet; another a stitch. All taught her how it felt to wake up at dawn and decide what to do with the day...Bit by bit, at 124 and the Clearing, along with the others, she had claimed herself. Freeing yourself was one thing; claiming ownership of that freed self was another. (95)

The problem of claiming ownership and responsibility for that freed self is one that afflicts the community as well as Sethe. Baby Suggs, her mother-in-law, the figure of Yemaya for whom Halle has sacrificed his labor, is the primary representative of the newly-freed's efforts to create an alternative foundation in freedom, rather than accept the structures of self and society that had subjugated them. Her buggy ride across the

border to freedom returns her to a ground zero where she must choose what to carry over and what to leave behind of the old life. Baby Suggs is surprised by the beating of her own heart, a fundamental symbol of interiority, and insists on keeping her name, in case the relationships she values from her past life are trying to find her.

Baby Suggs' efforts are directed at reclaiming those feeling-states shrunk by enslavement and threatened in freedom. Her main vehicle in the novel is through the use of her home as a way-station and gathering-place, a site of exchange between past and future, and her declarations of self-love in community in the Clearing. In the Clearing, Baby Suggs' shares her deliberately unauthorized knowledge with the newly-freed. She says that there is one story that holds them in contempt, and another that holds them in love, and that it is their responsibility to hold on to and transmit the narrative of love. She attempts to embed this Maroon narrative in their bones, just as the hostile narrative has been embedded in them by enslavement. Her invocations are in a sacred space, "known only to deer and whoever cleared the land in the first place"(87), and eschew words:

...she shouted "Let the children come!" and they ran from the trees toward her.

"Let your mothers hear you laugh," she told them, and the woods rang. The adults looked on and could not help smiling.

Then "Let the grown men come," she shouted. They stepped out one by one from the ringing trees.

"Let your wives and your children see you dance," she told them, and groundlife shuddered under their feet.

Finally she called the women to her. "Cry," she told them. "For the living and the dead. Just cry." And without covering their eyes the women let loose.

It started that way: laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up. Women stopped crying and danced; men sat down and cried; children danced, women laughed, children cried

until, exhausted and riven, all and each lay about the Clearing damp and gasping for breath. (87-88)

Baby Suggs' attempts to create a boundary-crossing, liminal ritual, where emotions necessarily repressed in the face of the authoritative discourse of white supremacy might have their recognition and release. Once these emotions are released, she speaks to the space opened there in an affirmative chant of adoration for the black body and soul in alignment and harmony with one another, a deliberate counter-narrative to the authoritative discourse that not only refuses to recognize black interiority, let alone affirm its expression, but seeks actively to erase its difference in order to maintain the alienated productive labor of black bodies.

When Sethe arrives at her doorstep, with the assistance of members of the community, Baby Suggs begins to enjoy the possibility of the future she has been imagining, but not yet experienced. However, she has misjudged the depth of the intertwining of white supremacy with her community's psyche. She believes hostility to black people is exclusively the province of white people, and her work as a preacher has been to heal the wounds of that hostility; she has failed to notice the extent to which that hostility has also been adopted and normalized. Her preaching of love has not yet overcome the fear, generated by and authorized by white supremacy, but also internalized by her community, of black wholeness. Morrison depicts, primarily through Sethe and Paul D., the various ways that humans cope with trauma and its promised repetition: withdrawal, shrunken expectations, madness, etc. Baby Suggs, on the other hand, has chosen to "lay it all down" and begin again, from the beating of her heart.

So when Stamp Paid shows up with a bucket of blackberries, she organizes a community feast that rapidly becomes too much, too soon. The witnessing of her family's reunion re-opens the wounds of a community whose main characteristic is still fragmentation, not wholeness. Resentment, envy, and anger at their denial of good fortune comparable to that of Baby Suggs is turned against her, the available target, and not towards the white western patriarchal capitalist structures and history that have deprived them of the same joy.

Sethe is also a target for the community's hostility. What should be a triumphant ceremony of reaggregation reminds the community of their own deprivations, and stirs the envy that enables Sethe's abandonment. When the four white men appear on horseback to recapture Sethe and her children under the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, no warning is sent from the community. Abandoned, Sethe chooses to end her children's lives rather than submit to the structure she has so recently escaped. She in effect mirrors the community's own displacement of hostility, away from the apparently unassailable target of white supremacy, and towards the more vulnerable one of her own children. Sethe asserts that her ambition was to make her children safe. The question becomes one of who or what is protected by these gestures of rage.

The community's joy turned sour, and its inability to protect one of its own, and thus itself, from the four horsemen, can also be seen as a metaphor for the historical progression from Emancipation through Reconstruction to the Nadir that Morrison elaborates more fully in other parts of the novel. Sethe's community, like Sethe herself, is reduced to stasis. Her inability to ask for, and their inability to grant, forgiveness, mirror each other. Her killing of her daughter represents the murder of not only her

“best thing,” but the representative of the community’s best thing, the future. “To Sethe, the future was a matter of keeping the past at bay. The ‘better life’ she believed she and Denver were living was simply not that other one” (42). It is into this condition of death-in-life, as Robert Jay Lifton has described for survivors of Hiroshima and Bruno Bettelheim has noted among Holocaust survivors, that, eighteen years later, Paul D. intrudes.

Sethe’s Struggle for Communitas: Ritual Healing

Gurleen Grewal notes that in Beloved, “the complexity of the novel stems from the fact that it constantly merges the physical and the psychical, the literal and the metaphorical” (107). One modality for bringing these elements together without losing their specificity is ritual. In ritual, elements that are usually perceived as distinct categories are perceived as being in relationship to one another. A special space is cleared where the rules of perspective are acknowledged to be changed. In that space, actors who have one identity in everyday life assume other, symbolic, identities. The act of ritual produces ritual subjects who, in turn, produce the ritual. In traditional cultures that practice ritual, the members of the culture and the participants in the ritual are conscious of their roles as ritual agents. In Beloved, however, while there is a psychological necessity propelling Sethe, and other characters play a role in her ritual healing, both the shape of the ritual and the responsibility of the community to participate have been forgotten. Sethe’s recall of her suffering activates, first, her community’s own recall of their own suffering and, eventually, their response. Sethe’s perceptual shift from categories -- then/now, here/there, mother/daughter, slave/free, human/animal, self/other -- to interrelationships also activates her community’s

perceptual shift, which in turn enables their response. The ritual healing Sethe undergoes thus heals not only herself, but her community by enabling them to experience their common humanity in *communitas*. The experience of *communitas* -- “a direct, immediate and total confrontation of human identities” (Turner, From Ritual to Theater 47) -- in turn throws into relief the constructedness of “normative” structure, as both communal and psychic formation, and therefore the potential to shift its constitutive elements through human agency.

Sethe’s final rite of passage in Beloved is the ritual that fills the real-time frame of the novel. The first two rites of passage described so far -- Sethe’s marriage and fugitive escape -- are available to her, and to the reader, as psychic contents released during the process of this overarching rite that structures the novel. At the beginning of the novel, Sethe is in a structured space of liminality vis-a-vis her community, and rigid containment within herself. This containment is interrupted by both the arrival of Paul D. and Beloved. In the central section of the novel, Sethe’s psyche circles inward and downward like a drop of water beginning at the top of a whirlpool and descending to its depths. It eventually reaches a crisis, which Denver draws to the attention of the community. Finally, the community intervenes and the scene of original trauma is reproduced, this time with healing consequences for both Sethe and her community.

This overarching healing ritual is analogous to another rite of recovery described by Victor Turner, which uncannily, though not entirely, mirrors Sethe’s experience. It is particularly productive to a reading of Beloved because of its concern with the effect of a dead child on its mother. Some have noticed that *Beloved* can be read as an *abiku*, a Yoruba and Ibo term for the same child whose spirit refuses to stay

anchored to earth, and who plagues its mother by being born over and over again only to die (Grewal 106).

In Things Fall Apart, one of the protagonist's daughters is believed to be an *abiku*, and Achebe is articulate about the combination of fear and desire that such a child inspires in those around her, and the efforts that are made to secure the child's life on earth. In The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure, Victor Turner describes a Ndembu ritual called Isoma, which is the manifestation of a shade that causes a woman to bear a dead child, or that brings death to a series of infants. The sufferer is said to have been caught by the shade because she has "forgotten" her direct matrilineal kin, who can be generalized to a past not structurally represented, but requiring loyalty. In terms of Beloved, this shade can be read as the outraged mother of the disrupted Yemaya discourse, refusing generativity to her descendants until she is recalled and given her due. According to Turner, "the curative rites...have as one social function that of 'causing them to remember' these shades" (Ritual Process 13). The shade has thus cast a curse, rendering the sufferer barren, and requiring the sufferer to remember the ancestor before the barrenness can be relieved.

Paul D's arrival exposes, although it does not entirely eclipse, the barrenness of Sethe's world. She has "worked hard to remember as close to nothing as was safe"(6). The sudden appearance of Paul D provokes memory and, with it, danger. His arrival disturbs the haunting presence of the house, and Sethe's and Denver's static relationship with it and each other. Above all, his presence dissolves their barren stability and opens up the idea of possibility: the narrative voice notes, "Whatever they were or might have been, Paul D messed them up for good" (37). Sethe "was distracted by the two orange

squares that signaled how barren 124 really was. He was responsible for that.

Emotions sped to the surface in his company. Things became what they were: drabness looked drab; heat was hot. Windows suddenly had view” (39). But Paul D only succeeds in disrupting the shadow over Sethe, Denver and 124. Their “trouble” cannot be alleviated by a simple rite of status-reversal, i.e. Paul D coming in and saying to the past “I’m here now, you go away,” or by taking them to that more recognized rite of status reversal, the carnival¹⁵.

The potential *communitas* of carnival is bounded by structural racial classifications. Black people can only attend on the day designated for them, and then only because it is a mediocre carnival. Nonetheless, they make the most of the opportunity for status reversal, observing white folks in positions of impotence and themselves as powerful. As Turner points out,

Cognitively, nothing underlines regularity as well as absurdity or paradox. Emotionally, nothing satisfies as much as extravagant or temporarily permitted illicit behavior. Rituals of status reversal accommodate both aspects. By making the low high and the high low, they reaffirm the hierarchical principle. (Ritual Process 176)

The carnival scene also reminds Sethe of the alternative to her rigid stasis: impermanence and change. On the way to and from the carnival, Sethe notices that although she, Paul D., and Denver are not holding hands, “their shadows were. Sethe looked to her left and all three of them were gliding over the dust holding hands. Maybe he was right. A life” (47). It is, indeed, the repressed shadow selves of all three that must come to terms with each other and with the shadow made corporeal in the form of the woman they find in front of 124. Paul D’s arrival as sharer of memory has violated Sethe’s determination to keep the past at bay, and even offered some comfort as

the reward for remembering. The carnival, though inadequate as transformative rite to fully address the depths of Sethe's self-loathing and resistance to change, has demonstrated that structures are impermanent and human manipulations. As James Scott notes in Domination and the Arts of Resistance, "Inversions...do, however, play an important imaginative function, even if they accomplish nothing else. They do, at least at the level of thought, create an imaginative breathing space in which the normal categories of order and hierarchy are less than completely inevitable" (168). The arrival of the woman on the stump into this "imaginative breathing space" introduces the possibility of transformation.

Part of the process of the Isoma ritual involves the collection of medicines which symbolize both the condition of the patient and the cure. Thus symbols have both auspicious and inauspicious aspects. Similarly, the girl who becomes known as Beloved is both auspicious and dangerous. She is auspicious in the sense that she reflects the ritual principle of appearance or revelation. Turner points out that

what is made sensorily perceptible, in the form of a symbol, is thereby made accessible to the purposive action of society, operating through its religious specialists. It is the 'hidden' that is 'dangerous' or 'noxious.' Thus to name an inauspicious condition is halfway to removing that condition; to embody the invisible action of witches or shades in a visible or tangible symbol is a big step toward remedying it. This is not so very far removed from the practice of the modern psychoanalyst. When something is grasped by the mind, made capable of being thought about, it can be dealt with, mastered. (Ritual Process 25-26)

However, what is inauspicious about Beloved's arrival is that while that which is hidden is dangerous, it has been hidden because it is dangerous. Almost everything that constitutes the past of the characters in Beloved is at the level of the intolerable, and the unspeakable. Traumatic memory is a complex phenomenon. As Grewal points out,

“Historically, a beleaguered people could not afford to look back; they had to keep going to meet the demands of the present” (102). She notes the hundred years it took for a novel like Beloved, concerned about the interiority of the enslaved woman, to take on the task of claiming this latent historical memory.

The liminal exchanges between Beloved, Sethe, Paul D and Denver, in which these memories are recalled to consciousness, are particularly dangerous because they are unmediated by experienced members of the community of previous sufferers. In most rites of passage, the threshold state is supervised by those who have an awareness of what they are demanding of the initiand, as well as the social space that the initiand will occupy at the end of the process. Without such intervention, the process threatens to become the end, and Sethe is almost killed by the absence of fellow sufferers who recognize when she has reached the point where she is able to receive new knowledge, new wisdom, and thus “to reaggregate.”

Sethe’s descent into the kumbla, the protective hiding place where she confronts her past, is provoked by Paul D’s counting her feet, his assumption of Schoolteacher’s stance of identifying her as animal, not human. His concern with the number of her feet, however, is directly related to his ambivalence about his own humanity, and his understanding of his own manhood. He has recognized the rooster Mister as freer than he is.

Mister was allowed to be and stay what he was. But I wasn’t allowed to be and stay what I was. Even if you cooked him you’d be cooking a rooster named Mister. But wasn’t no way I’d ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun on tub. (72)

Unspoken but implied in the words “Alfred, Georgia” is Paul D’s rape by his white captors.

Thus, Paul D’s wounding of Sethe, like the community’s, is directly related to the wound he himself is carrying. Sethe’s response is to fully enter the liminal condition she has been avoiding until Paul D’s arrival, and circling since.

She had come to believe every one of Baby Suggs’ last words [the only bad luck is whitefolks. They don’t know when to stop] and buried all recollection of them and luck. Paul D dug it up, gave her back her body, kissed her divided back, stirred her rememory and brought her more news: of clabber, of iron, of roosters smiling, but he heard her news, he counted her feet and didn’t even say goodbye. (188-189)

Aspects of liminality include status equality, anonymity, absence of property and status, nakedness or uniform clothing, sexual continence, humility, disregard for personal appearance, total obedience, suspension of kinship rights and obligations, foolishness, and the acceptance of pain and suffering. Sethe undergoes all of those conditions when she locks herself in the house of “no-time” (191) with Beloved and Denver. Released from having to remember, she is now freed to: “Thank God I don’t have to rememory or say a thing because you know it”(191). Since Sethe believes that Beloved already knows Sethe’s act, and has come back to her, Sethe feels free to explain and to attempt to make amends. All roles disappear: “By the end of March the three of them looked like carnival women with nothing to do” (240). By then Sethe’s expiation is complete, but she is unable to restore structure to the situation: “When once or twice Sethe tried to assert herself -- be the unquestioned mother whose word was law and who knew what was best -- Beloved slammed things, wiped the table clean of

plates, threw salt on the floor, broke a windowpane" (242). Unable to recover a structured position, Sethe continues to wallow in her misery:

[Denver] had noticed that even when Beloved was quiet, dreamy, minding her own business, Sethe got her going again. Whispering, muttering some justification, some bit of clarifying information to Beloved to explain what it had been like, and why, and how come. It was as though Sethe didn't really want forgiveness given; she wanted it refused. And Beloved helped her out. (252)

In Isoma ritual, the curse is

felt to smack of witchcraft and hence to be 'bad,' but, at the same time, to be partially justified by the victim's neglect of her matrilineal ties past and present. The rites are partially to effect a reconciliation between the visible and invisible parties concerned, although they contain episodes of exorcism as well. (Ritual Process 20)

The process of Isoma involves: (a) recognition of barrenness; (b) the seeking out of "a diviner who demonstrates the precise mode of affliction in which the shade...has 'come out of the grave to catch her'" (13); and (c) the appointment of a doctor, who then collects other doctors to help. Significantly,

These are either women who have undergone exposure to the same kind of ritual and have thus gained entry into the curative cult, or men closely linked by matrilineal kinship or affinity to a previous patient. The patients may be regarded as "candidates" for membership of the cult, the doctors as its adepts. The afflicting shades are believed to have been former adepts. Cult membership thus transects village and lineage membership and brings into temporary operation what may be termed "a community of suffering" -- or, rather, of "former sufferers." (Ritual Process 13-14)

It is Denver who seeks help, and Ella who "divines" the mode of affliction and produces the alternative model of healing *communitas* that releases Sethe from Beloved and the haunted past. To do so, Ella must recover the mode of community feeling demonstrated by Baby Suggs in the Clearing: "Accepting no title of honor before her name, but

allowing a small caress after it, she became an unchurched preacher, one who visited pulpits and opened her great heart to those who could use it" (87). In the Clearing,

Baby Suggs allowed

laughing children, dancing men, crying women and then it got mixed up....In the silence that followed, Baby Suggs, holy, offered up to them her great big heart. She did not tell them to clean up their lives or to go and sin no more. She did not tell them they were the blessed of the earth, its inheriting meek or its glorybound pure. She told them that the only grace they could have was the grace they could imagine. That if they could not see it, they would not have it..."More than your life holding womb and your life giving private parts, hear me now, love your heart. For this is the prize." Saying no more, she stood up then and danced with her twisted hip the rest of what her heart had to say while the others opened their mouths and gave her the music. Long notes held until the four-part harmony was perfect enough for their deeply loved flesh. (88-89)

The *communitas* described here meets the characteristics of *communitas* described by

Turner: "A relationship between concrete, historical, idiosyncratic individuals...in

direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities" (132). Baby Suggs,

holy, in the Clearing, represents spontaneous *communitas*, which

breaks in through the interstices of structure, liminality; at the edges of structure, in marginality; and from beneath structure, in inferiority. It is almost everywhere held to be sacred or "holy" possibly because it transgresses or dissolves the norms that govern structured and institutionalized relationships and is accompanied by experiences of unprecedented potency. (Ritual Process 128)

Denver initiates the reconstruction of this *communitas* when she steps out into the world beyond 124. That this *communitas* has been lost is reflected in Stamp Paid's rebuke of Ella for not taking in Paul D: "Why? Why he have to ask? Can't nobody offer?" (186), and in the hesitations accompanying the decision to rescue Sethe: "The heat kept a few women who promised to go at home. Others who believed the story

didn't want any part of the confrontation and wouldn't have come no matter what the weather....They had no idea what they would do once they got there" (257).

Morrison again produces a mythic resonance by setting Sethe's redemption at "three in the afternoon on a Friday" (257). Sethe has endured her stations of the cross; she is to be rescued by a community of former sufferers. Her redemption is her community's. As Turner points out, "what has been undone by the curse has to be done all over again, although not in precisely the same way, for life crises are irreversible. There is analogy, but not replication" (Ritual Process 21). Mistaking Bodwin's hat for the return of Schoolteacher, this time Sethe decides to protect Beloved by directing her violence at her attacker, not her child; this time the community intervenes to protect her from harming herself and others. In this way, the symbolic elements of the traumatic event that initiated Sethe's and her community's isolation from one another are reconstructed. Sethe remembers trying to protect her child; the community remembers that they have a role in each other's well-being. The ghost of traumatized mother-daughter love, embodied in Beloved, is allowed to disappear by their mutual remembering of her. As Grewal puts it, "this forgetting is not an act of the unconscious. It is the forgetting enabled by a therapeutic working-through of the repressed material of historical trauma" (117). In the space cleared by bringing the repressed to consciousness and letting it go, maternal relations are able to be restored within Sethe, between herself and Paul D, between them and the community. Denver, the future, steps out into the world enabled to form loving relationships of her own.

The novel ends with possibility -- Sethe's uncertain "Me?" answers Paul D's "You your best thing, Sethe. You are" (273) -- and caution: "This is not a story to pass

on” (274-275), repeated three times in an almost incantatory fashion. It is popular now to assert that “It takes a village to raise a child.” Morrison has told its opposite: “It takes a village to abandon a child.” She has searched the mosaic of New World history and myth for modes of healing and recuperation that might enable African-Americans to lay down the burden of the past and imagine, anticipate, and create a future. I call what she has described a Maroon rite of passage, bent on rejecting an oppressive structure, reviving the experience of *communitas*, and reconstructing self and community in an alternative structure, outside the Manichean dynamics of the dominant subculture. As Turner notes,

Prophets and artists tend to be liminal and marginal people, “edgemen,” [and women] who strive with a passionate sincerity to rid themselves of the clichés associated with status incumbency and role-playing and to enter into vital relations with other people in fact or imagination. In their productions we may catch glimpses of that unused evolutionary potential in mankind which has not yet been externalized and fixed in structure.
(Ritual Process 128)

Morrison points outside the structure, to the margins, towards both the risks and benefits of reclaiming elements of marronage, what I have called the Shango discourse of resistance and the Yemaya discourse of maternal principles. Sethe has been caught by the authoritative discourse and enacted the Shango discourse in her rage for justice; but it is the mother-and-child reunion awakened in her with the appearance of Beloved that enables her to rediscover the creative discourse of Yemaya. Her suffering reflects both personal and historical trauma, and Morrison critiques both Sethe’s community and present discourses of Black motherhood as a specific instance of a larger critique: the repression of the values represented by Yemaya in New World society as a whole. She points to Sethe’s and contemporary society’s margins and repressed histories for the

source of that potential, simultaneously cautioning both structure and margin against self-destruction, and towards mutual recognition and exchange, or a revitalizing *communitas*.

¹ Terry Otten perceives *Beloved* as both, as does Gurleen Grewal. Most other commentators tend to come down on one side or the other: materialized ghost or ghostly human being.

² For a discussion of the complexities of reader-response theory when juxtaposed with the interactive qualities of textual orality and historicized identities, see Holloway and Demetrakopoulos.

³ In her comparison of Morrison with Sarah Orne Jewett, Marilyn Sanders Mobley also locates the griot as mediator between the self and the community.

⁴ Further elaboration of the historical ground of *Beloved* is available in Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic*, pp. 64-68. Gilroy notes that "These stories raise complex questions about the mediating role of gender categories in racial politics and in particular about the psychological structures of identification facilitated by the idea of maternity." Unfortunately, he finds it "impossible to explore these important matters here"(68), and elides Garner's "death before dishonor" into Frederick Douglass's treatment of the same topic with regard to his achievement of free black masculinity. See also Christian and Grewal.

⁵ Mae G. Henderson's rendering of the road as "Blues-tone" is indicative of the polysemous possibilities of reading this text through the multiple lenses of Black experiences and histories.

⁶ For a reading of the house on Bluestone Road as a revision and in intertextual relationship with Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, see Lori Askeland.

⁷ Quinn's summary of the legend, drawn from the *Cursor mundi* of the late thirteenth century, continues as follows:

In Seth's first glimpse of Paradise, he beholds a dry tree; in the second, an adder twined about the trunk; in the third, a newborn baby in the top. He is told that the dry tree and the serpent represent the sin of man and that the baby is Christ, who will be the oil of mercy. Seth receives three kernels of the tree of life and plants them in the mouth of his dead father. From the kernels three trees grow -- a cedar, a cypress, and a pine -- and remain growing in the vale of Hebron until the time of Moses.

These three trees are uprooted by Moses and become the wands with which he sweetens the waters of Marah and brings forth water from a rock.

David inherits the wands, which are now united to form a single staff. With it he changes the color and shape of some Ethiopians. The staff is replanted and grows into a tree.

Later Solomon attempts to use it in building his Temple, but in whatever way the tree is cut, it is always too long or too short. Perceiving its miraculous power, Solomon has the tree placed in the Temple.

One day a lady named Maximilla accidentally sits on the tree, and, when it bursts into flame, she is inspired to prophecy. The Jews, hearing that Christ will die upon this wood, put Maximilla to death and hurl the tree into a pit.

Miracles are performed until the Jews remove the tree and place it over a brook to serve as a bridge. The holy nature of the wood is announced by Sibyl, who refuses to walk on it and instead wades through the brook barefooted.

As the time of the Crucifixion approaches, a cross is made of the tree. The cross, however, cannot be lifted by any except Christ, since it was destined for him. By his dying on it he becomes the redeemer or the oil of mercy for mankind. (Quinn 2-3)

⁸ Henderson privileges the Biblical association, but footnotes Seth's association with the Egyptian god of confusion. p. 86, n.36.

⁹ Changing the terms of her story as Sethe's major task is recognized in various forms by many critics: Henderson revises Hayden White's notion of "overemployment" to describe Sethe's efforts to "reconfigure" or "reemploy" her history (p.73); Mobley uses the language of transformation "through narrative to reclaim and affirm cultural difference, to challenge cultural and literary norms, and to demonstrate the dynamic process by which...readers and respective cultures might be transformed" (13); Gilroy describes it as a "the confrontation between two opposed yet interdependent cultural and ideological systems and their attendant conceptions of reason, history, property and kinship. One is the dilute product of Africa, the other is the antinomian expression of western modernity" (219).

¹⁰ Spillers also uses this notion of "ground zero" in "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book."

¹¹ Afra-American is Braxton and McLaughlin's term for experiences that are specific to women and girls of African descent in the Americas.

¹² spelling in original.

¹³ In her reading of Paule Marshall's Praisesong for the Widow, Barbara Christian elaborates on the relationship of body and soul: "that the body might be in one place and the mind in another, is characterized not as fragmentation but as a source of wisdom, stemming from a history of the forced displacement of blacks in the West" (75).

¹⁴ Barbara Lalla also makes the analogy between enslavement and zombiefication as a form of "spirit thievery" that "fuses issues of political domination in colonial relationships with those of gender" in her reading of Jamaican writer Erna Brodber's Myal (98).

¹⁵ For more discussion of carnival as rite of reversal, see Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 3: MAROONED ON BOURNE ISLAND: THE ALCHEMY OF RITUAL

Paule Marshall's second novel, The Chosen Place. The Timeless People, effectively disappeared from public view between its publication in 1969 and its reprinting in 1984. The surprisingly sparse critical attention it has received has prompted a number of speculations: Hortense Spillers asserts that it doesn't fit the critical expectation of maturing work, appearing too early in Marshall's career to be recognized as her major achievement; Joseph Skerrett, Jr. argues that it is a novel of public life, in contrast to the focus in her other works on interiority; Barbara Christian views it as part of a widening progression in Marshall's oeuvre which is perhaps contradicted by Praisesong for the Widow and Daughters. Timothy Chin neatly sums up these arguments, but also adds the canonical challenges posed by this particular work by an African-American woman novelist of Barbadian descent set on an imaginary Caribbean island, and suggests that both the critical neglect and attention it has received are reflections of the historical context of its publication and reception. In particular, he notes the challenges to canon-formation in both the African-American and Caribbean literary traditions that this novel, its major concerns, and its authorship represent. He explicitly cites Marshall's location as a writer "betwixt-and-between" cultural constructs of national, regional, and literary traditions, simultaneously acknowledging that these categories are (perhaps necessarily) false. As an African-American novelist of Barbadian heritage, ideally Marshall's fictions would be available to both traditions and continue to challenge the reification of borders between New World African experiences, a project she engages more explicitly in her more recent novels. On the other hand, gauging from the critical attention this particular work has received since its

reissue, it appears that once more it is falling between the categories and neither side is fully engaging it and the questions it raises.¹

While I agree that The Chosen Place, the Timeless People poses canonical challenges, I think that the deeper challenge it poses is through its depiction of black female subjectivity in the African Diaspora. Despite Barbara Christian's efforts to locate Marshall's work in the tradition of African-American women's writing which includes Alice Walker and Toni Morrison, Marshall's creation of the character of Merle Kinbona challenges a number of the archetypal forms that have become acceptable lenses through which to view black women characters.

The primary violation that Marshall has performed in Merle is offering to readers a highly intelligent, self-aware, and articulate black woman character. Merle suffers, but hardly in silence; she struggles like a warrior woman, but sometimes loses; she is not particularly interested in sex; she loves and identifies with the folk, but is simultaneously impatient with them; she is depressed, but refuses to go mad; and she has let her ex-husband take her child away from her. In addition, she is highly self-reflexive about her circumstances, continually attempting to understand and articulate (a) the social and historical forces that have contributed to her interiority and, more reservedly, (b) those aspects of her personal experience that shape her perspective on the public world. She has abandoned the British university education that was supposed to secure her position in the world and for which she is supposed to be grateful; she offers no vision of "uplift" and has no intention of becoming part of any "Talented Tenth." In short, not only does she not fit into any of the available categories, she actively challenges their value, and readers' presumptions of being able to "read" her any better

than she can herself. Like Sethe in Beloved, she challenges received notions of black womanhood.

Unlike Morrison, however, Marshall does not give the reader access to Merle's interior quandaries. As readers, we know Merle through her speech and actions, and are offered possible interpretations through other characters' reactions to her. What is particularly striking about the criticism of this work to date is the remarkable absence of compassion or empathy for Merle and her crises as human responses to her circumstances. Despite her centrality to the work, her vividness and complexity, each critic seems to find some aspect of her possible to dismiss. Hortense Spillers refers to Merle's withdrawals in a footnote as "melodramatic self-indulgence" ("Chosen " 175); Edward Kamau Braithwaite asserts that she "never comes off the page"; and other readings focus as much, if not more, on the other finely drawn characters and themes of the novel rather than on Merle herself as a synecdochal personification of historical crisis.

Historical Crises: Merle and Sethe

Merle and Sethe both serve as synecdochal personifications of their social and historical circumstances and, through their characters, Marshall and Morrison reveal the unspoken consequences and repressed histories that are submerged by the authorized triumphalist New World historical narrative. Marshall and Morrison are offering a more complex psychological and cultural reality, where the new is more often the old in amended form, the past haunts the present, and the institutionalized cultural pressure towards reproducing the status quo often overwhelms individual and collective efforts to produce genuine change.

Their heroines appear unlikely, to say the least. Sethe has committed infanticide and both keeps and is kept at a distance from her community by the enormity of her act and her refusal to either ask for or grant herself forgiveness. Merle has refused to take advantage of her invitation to enter the ruling elite by virtue of her education, and has lost her child to an intolerant husband, and so been robbed of that focal marker of womanly success, motherhood. Like Sethe, Merle offers no apologies for her situation, and is also marginalized by both her community of origin (even if in a valorized way) and the one she is supposed to have attained. They are both, in effect, outsiders within subcultures that accept or reject them.

Selecting such outsider figures as central consciousnesses for these novels enables them to represent that which is disguised, but not destroyed, by the would-be innocent triumphalist modern narrative. Both Beloved and The Chosen Place, The Timeless People open with the assertion of stasis as the condition of their central characters, Sethe and Merle. However, this stasis is portrayed as itself an activity, an act of refusal to participate in the reconstitution of their societies according to the values of their historical oppressors, and a refusal to participate in the collective amnesia that such a reconstitution requires. Neither Sethe nor Merle, as black women, stand to benefit by the adoption of white supremacist patriarchal institutions and values. Neither race nor gender enables them to participate in the renegotiation of cultural reality to include them. Therefore, they have opted not to participate.

This act of refusal enacts what I've earlier called the discourse of Shango. Both Merle and Sethe have critically judged their communities for their exclusion, and have drawn a boundary between themselves and that community in the name of social justice.

Each of their communities has gone on without them, perhaps even comforted by their presence on the margins, since both Merle and Sethe serve as signifiers of the danger posed by acknowledging the common history that innocent modernity insists on erasing. After Emancipation, it is in the economic interests of white America to begin erasing the human costs of slavery. After Independence, it is in the economic interests of global capital to erase the human costs of colonialism. In both instances, accountability for the past is denied, and systems of exploitation are reconfigured to co-opt those among the formerly exploited who might offer the greatest challenge to continued exploitation.

What is significant in the choice of Sethe and Merle as protagonists is that neither Morrison nor Marshall are satisfied to portray them as crushed victims. Rather than portraying them as fixed signifiers of the devastation of modern history, they portray their stasis as a form of crisis, and crisis as a form of opportunity, not to be denied or forgotten, but passed through. Each novel explores what each woman lacks in order to become generative, not just resistant, in their lives and their cultures. By focusing on female characters, the novels suggest a critique of nationalist solutions as masculinist appropriations of modern institutions, and each suggests an alternative model for cultural reconstitution predicated on those human relations of interconnection, interdependence, and mutual recognition that I've described as maternal relations, or the discourse of Yemaya. Modern history has sought to sever or submerge these maternal relations in favor of hierarchical models of acquisition. The case I argue for both of these novels is that the process of psychological recovery described for each of the female protagonists is a microcosmic representation of a process of historical and cultural recovery offered as a counter-narrative to triumphalist

modernity, a maroon narrative. In their rendering, the psychological is inseparable from the historical and the cultural. They seek to recover, either implicitly in the case of Beloved or explicitly in the case of The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, the history of marronage in the New World as an underground site of resistance, creativity, and alternative models of psychological and cultural construction directed towards universal and mutually accountable liberation.

Where Sethe is a character imagined a hundred years ago, Merle was written as a contemporary of the writer and her historical moment. Sethe's life includes the legal change for African-Americans from chattel slaves to free human beings, but Beloved explicitly deromanticizes that change, consistently pointing out its limits as a legislated amendment whose economic, cultural, national and psychological challenges are ignored or suppressed. She implicitly critiques an emerging African-American middle class for adopting the institutional values and structures of European-Americans, and asserts that their unexamined premises will ultimately defeat such efforts. Thus her critique of African-American community reaggregation following the crisis of the Civil War and Emancipation resonates as a critique of African-American complacency following the crisis of the 1960's Civil Rights movement and its attendant legislative changes. Beloved serves as both cautionary tale and source of alternative possibilities for community formation in the New World.

The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, by contrast, is written contemporary with the historical crisis it depicts: the reconstitution of colonized nations following the struggle for decolonization worldwide, which occurs simultaneously with the struggle for Civil Rights in the United States. Just as Beloved narrates the post-Emancipation

cultural context as background for its characters interior dilemmas, The Chosen Place, the Timeless People foregrounds its more contemporary historical context and invites the reader to interpret the relationship between that context and each character's interiority. More overtly than Morrison, Marshall depicts her characters struggling with the relationship between their choices and global historical forces.

Despite the difference in portrayal, however, those forces are comparable in both works. Both works depict the Middle Passage as foundational experience for both African-American and Caribbean peoples. Both define the initial experience of peoples of African descent in the New World as objects of property, markers in a global economic game that depended on captivity and conquest even as an emerging ideology of human rights and freedom was being articulated. Both recognize and name complex interrelationships between hierarchical categories of race, class, gender, economic and political power, oppression, and resistance, and depict the flexible operation of those categories as necessary to the ultimate maintenance of white supremacist patriarchal capitalism. Both focus on how those categories operate and what effects they have when viewed through the lens of black women's subjectivity.

Finally, both novels insist on human capacities and potentialities that exceed those categories, and that have found their expression in the interstitial locations of the psyche and of history. In Beloved, the interstitial psychic location is explicitly spiritual; in The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, it is enacted in spiritual and interpersonal ways that can be rearticulated in the contemporary languages of both ritual and psychology. In Beloved, the historical interstitial location is nearly occluded by Sethe's absence of language for naming both her mother's and Sixo's liberatory efforts as

marronage; in The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, the semi-permeable relationship between legend and history, and the relationship of narrators to historical authority via the categories of power named above, is made explicit in the story of Cuffee Ned, Maroon insurgent.

The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, then, expands the Diasporic narrative of this project. Where the figure of Beloved rearticulates the effects of the Middle Passage, and Sethe comprehends her world through the lens of her plantation experience, Merle in Marshall's work also identifies the Middle Passage as mythic point of origin, but expands the metaphor of the plantation from a local site in the United States and the Caribbean to a global construct that continues to enact its categories and demands in the contemporary world. Marshall portrays the postcolonial nation as a shape-shifting reproduction of the relations of power institutionalized through the economic and cultural discourses of the 18th century plantation, the operations of colonialism that fed the Slave Trade, and the extractive conquest and division of the world by the European powers that reached its epitome in the late 1800s.

What Marshall also offers is the possibility of the shape-shifting reproduction of resistance to the supposedly all-encompassing plantation discourse, most explicitly through the narrative of Cuffee Ned and its repetition among the people of the timeless place, Bournehills. This possibility is reiterated through Bournehills' own endurance and, finally, through the complex portrayal of marronage as liminal rite of psychological passage either enacted or refused by the major characters of the novel. Marshall sometimes explicitly writes about interconnection in the more analytical portions of this lengthy work but, more dauntingly and with great finesse, she more

commonly writes interconnection itself in subtle dialogues and interior reflections that reveal mutual recognition, exposure, vulnerability, and risk. And it is ultimately this assertion of risk that closes the novel. As Merle becomes reconnected to her suppressed maternal relations, the community of Bournehills, with the assistance of outsiders, also risks inventing new modes of interrelationship and mutual support toward a common end. Where Beloved ends with the anticipation of this possibility between Sethe and Paul D, The Chosen Place, the Timeless People depicts it as actuality and model for the realization of alternatives in the New World. As James Baldwin put it:

In this endeavor to wed the vision of the Old World with that of the New, it is the writer, not the statesman, who is our strongest arm. Though we do not wholly believe it yet, the interior life is a real life, and the intangible dreams of people have a tangible effect on the world. (Baldwin 12)

On the Threshold

From its opening scene, Paule Marshall's The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, like Morrison's Beloved, signals its preoccupation with myth, ritual, history, and ontology within a quest narrative.² Merle Kinbona, Marshall's protagonist, simply "the woman" until she calls her own name at the end of the first chapter, is stymied in her journey to the airport by a mudslide precipitated by

the heavy, unseasonable rain that had fallen the night before. The woman hadn't been told this, though, and in her impelled and reckless way she nearly sent the car she was driving hurtling onto the empty roadbed where it would have been hopelessly mired, for days perhaps, in a thick bog of mud and broken marl. (3)

This moment of arrest is a metaphor for Merle's own psychic and emotional stasis. Her hesitation at the edge of the roadbed represents how she hasn't allowed herself to fully acknowledge the impact of the past. In other incidents and the larger frame of the

novel, she continues “in her impelled and reckless way” and reveals how “hopelessly mired” she is, in both the short- and long-term.

Merle and the road maintenance man, Mr. Douglin, exchange views on the condition of the road. Their responses to the missing road indicate another important theme of the novel: the perspectival relationship between myth, ritual, history, and ontology. What appears mythical to one character is living history to another, and vice versa, and their frames of reference, particularly their experiences of empowerment or the ability to affect events, both shape and are shaped by how they locate phenomena. To Mr. Douglin, a local peasant, and Merle’s passenger, Leesy, the road’s appearances and disappearances belong to the realm of myth, the realm of the inarguable. Indeed, for Leesy, the road’s disappearance is an occasion for the fulfillment of prophecy: “‘I tell you,’ she cried triumphantly, ‘everything’s going down to grass. We’re seeing the last days now’”(9). Merle engages in similar commentary; but her tone is ironic, suggesting that what the old folks see as mythical, she recognizes as historical -- the result of exploitation, neglect, a failure to invest resources locally. Still, she engages in a discourse of mythical power with a difference: she assigns Mr. Douglin agency in both the disappearance and potential reappearance of the road by asking him what he has done with the road. He responds in like humor, and in this moment we can see that Merle has found a language in which to reconcile her relationship with the “timeless” Bournehills people by recombining history and myth in creative ways.

Marshall’s early description of Merle reveals that she has had a more difficult time making the reconciliation between self and history. Both her car, a Bentley acquired from the departing British governor, and her clothing are described in

meticulous detail. The car is a relic of empire, “a symbol of the prestige and authority accorded to the most representative figure of imperialism and colonialism on the island, the governor” (Pettis 90). While the narrative suggests that Merle herself might have helped to batter and deform it, even in its decayed state it possesses the power to make her look “shorter than she was”(4). The dwarfing power of the imperial legacy is still in play, although it no longer represents perfection or even inviolability; it remains the vehicle in which Merle’s movements must take place.

If the car is an inheritance, her clothing is more obviously her own attempt to create herself:

And she was dressed like a much younger woman, in the open-back shoes which featured some rather fanciful, embroidered scroll-work across the instep and raised heels to give her height, and a flared print dress made from cloth of a vivid abstract tribal motif: cloth from the sun, from another cosmos, which could have been found draped in offhand grace around a West African market woman. Pendant silver earrings carved in the form of those saints to be found on certain European churches adorned her ears. The saints, their tiny faces gaunt with piety, their eyes closed in prayer, were trembling anxiously from the force of her annoyance. Numerous bracelets, also of silver, bound her wrists. But these, unlike the earrings, were heavy, crudely made, and noisy. They lent a clangorous, unsettling note to her every move.....She moved always within the ambience of that sound. Like a monk’s beads or a captive’s chains, it announced her. (4-5)

Merle’s appearance, like the heritage of the Caribbean, combines Africa and Europe, and the result is an unresolved tension. Her appearance reflects the lengthy, ongoing, and unrenegotiated conflicts between colonialism, slavery, imperialism, and its subjects. The potentially fertile and creative recombinations of those origins are disjunctive, continually contentious, and inharmoniously synthesized.

The critical historical juncture that Merle's appearance reflects is the post-Independence moment, a moment of Black consolidation following the crisis of anti-imperial resistance. What from the historical mosaic will be selected or allowed to occupy the new formation is as contentious as Merle's clothing, and the difficulties posed are not only historical; they are personal. On the personal level, the narrative suggests "she appeared to be trying...to recover something in herself that had been lost: the sense and certainty of herself as a woman perhaps"(5). She is described as dressing like a "younger woman," suggesting the arrest of a psychic progression. The unraveling of chaotic historical and personal pasts becomes the narrative task of the novel. The quest for wholeness on both levels is both distinct and intertwined, and further complicated by the blurring of boundaries via perspectival shifts between myth, ritual, history and ontology.³

Shadowlands

As Merle's unresolved tensions, demonstrated in her appearance, reflect a repressed, unrecognized, unnamed and therefore unreconciled past, so does the landscape of Bourne Island reflect the history of colonialism and slavery in the Caribbean. In the last chapter, I noted Freud's assertion that the unconscious is produced by the repression of those impulses that are not considered necessary to social functioning. Carl Jung terms one element of those unconscious contents the shadow. He identifies the shadow as those contents of the psyche that the ego regards as negative and, as a result, turns away from. He says,

The shadow is a moral problem that challenges the whole ego-personality, for no one can become conscious of the shadow without considerable moral effort. To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality

as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance. (Jung 145)

According to Jung, self-knowledge is abdicated in order to preserve “ego-personalities,” either from the shadow within the self or the shadow within culture.

Jung notes that while some contents of the shadow are easy enough for the self to perceive and absorb, others can be deeply resistant, and ensure their own survival by translating themselves into projections. Some qualities do not succumb to absorption through will and insight because the projecting self convinces itself that “the cause of the emotion appears to lie, beyond all possibility of doubt, in the other person” (146; emphasis in Jung). In “The Phenomenology of the Self,” Jung asserts the following:

Let us suppose that a certain individual shows no inclination whatever to recognize his projections [gendered language in the original]. The projection-making factor then has a free hand and can realize its object -- if it has one -- or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power. As we know, it is not the conscious subject but the unconscious which does the projecting....The effect of projection is to isolate the subject from his environment, since instead of a real relation to it there is now only an illusory one. Projections change the world into the replica of one's own unknown face. In the last analysis, therefore, they lead to an autoerotic or autistic condition in which one dreams a world whose reality remains forever unattainable. The resultant *sentiment d'incompletude* (a feeling of incompleteness; unfinishedness) and the still worse feeling of sterility are in their turn explained by projection as the malevolence of the environment, and by means of this vicious circle the isolation is intensified. The more projections are thrust in between the subject and the environment, the harder it is for the ego to see through its illusions. (146-47)

Thus projections are not simply intellectual forms of avoidance; they have an emotional tone, and can produce their own feedback loop that enhances their defenses.

Marshall's description of Bourne Island from four distinct perspectives -- the omniscient narrator and three characters -- reveals that what is repressed within finds its reflection without, so that the shadow is revealed as a psycho-social projection whose

repression is constructed by and constructs sociopolitical formations. From the chaos of human and historical experience, certain aspects are deemed worthy of the light while others are hidden. The specific formations of the revealed and the concealed from a range of positions in Western modernity are illuminated in Marshall's description, from multiple vantage points, of Bourne Island.⁴

The reader's first introduction to this landscape is from the air, a god's-eye view conveyed by the omniscient narrator. This perspective offers the island as a whole: "it was small, poignantly so, and vulnerable, defenseless. At any moment the sea might rise and swallow it whole or a hurricane uproot it and send it flying" (13). Marshall immediately counters the apparent literal insignificance of the island by describing it in mythically significant terms:

the island below had broken rank and stood off by itself to the right, almost out in the Atlantic. It might have been put there by the giants to mark the eastern boundary of the entire continent, to serve as its bourn. And ever mindful of the responsibility placed upon it in the beginning, it remained -- alone amid an immensity of sea and sky, becalmed now that its turbulent history was past, facing east, the open sea, and across the sea, hidden beyond the horizon, the colossus of Africa. (13)

In tandem with a Western geographical assessment of Bourne Island, Marshall here offers a mythical creation narrative that lends it significance via differentiation, and paradoxically locates it on a border: between America and Africa, and between the past and the future.

As much as it is a border, Bourne Island also contains one:

Winding down from the northern tip of the island like the deformed spinal column of some huge fossil buried there from prehistoric times, the ridge, called Cleaver's High Wall, described a crude semicircle along the northeast sector of the land before curving in and disappearing into the sea halfway down the east coast. Rearing up out of the land, the

ridge divided Bourne Island into two unequal parts. To the west stretched the wide, gently undulating plain with its neat orderly fields and the town poised at its southern edge. To the east and sealed off from that bright green world lay a kind of valley which occupied less than a quarter of the land space on the island. Viewed from the plane, it resembled a ruined amphitheater whose other half had crumbled away and fallen into the sea. (13-14)

The violence of the ridge's appearance is echoed in its name, which again suggests some mythical agency wielding the butcher's tool. Monumental time is evoked in the analogy of prehistoric burial. The forces that continue shaping the island have created a duality: the bright green world of the undulating plain separated from the ruined amphitheater, itself divided and half lost to the sea. The landscape of Bourne Island thus reiterates the affiliation of dualities already introduced by the description of Merle, and simultaneously suggests wholeness, or complementarity. The bright green world is made more visible by the presence of the ruined amphitheater, and vice versa, and both are surrounded by the ocean, which also has two faces. Seen from the level of the airplane, dualities appear both oppositional and complementary, and a portion of the whole remains in mystery. The wholeness of this perspective stands in contrast to the reactions of the passengers on the plane approaching Bourne Island. The cumulative effect of these perspectives is both to delineate the distinction between interiority and exteriority, and simultaneously to blur the boundary between the two, as they shape each other. As Joyce Pettis puts it, "Marshall's fiction offers an intriguing interplay between physical place and psychological space in the negotiation of community" (38), and this interplay is demonstrated in some of the characters' initial views of Bourne Island.

Among her characters, the first perspective Marshall offers is that of Vere, the returning farm laborer. A number of Caribbean governments have agreements with the U.S. Department of Labor to provide seasonal workers for agricultural employers in the United States. Thus contemporary Caribbean economies reproduce the labor transactions of colonialism: the government reproduces the role of the African conqueror trading conquered peoples for goods and indifferent to the futures awaiting those who are traded. This performance takes place in the present under the rubric of desirable development via employment and the return of desired currency.

Vere is returning not only with cash in U.S. dollars, but with other kinds of currency as well: a set of wants that may not be appropriate to his home, and a perspective on the superiority of those wants, demonstrated first by his wardrobe, and then by his purchase of the Opel. Vere's coming-of-age experience in the United States has not only caused him to question his "home" values, but to unquestioningly replace those values with the consumerist desires of the American Empire. In exchange for his labor, the United States has not only provided him with currency, but has also made itself the desired object on which that currency is to be spent. In other words, global capital has not only consumed his labor, but seeks to re-consume what it has given in exchange, in a never-ending spiral of consumption that feeds the needs of global capital and erases, or relegates to the shadows, those needs that do not equate with the needs of capital.

Yet it is in the shadows of Bourne Island that Vere recognizes his home. He first recognizes the main town, New Bristol, and here Marshall again signifies the interpenetration of light and shadow by noting that the town "as always, was partly

obscured by a pall of haze that not even the noon sun could ever completely burn away”(13). However, it is his oblique glance, beyond the wing of the plane, at Cleaver’s High Ridge that is “suddenly, painfully, familiar”(13). His immediate recollections are disturbed by losses: the death of his grandmother Leesy’s husband, his mother’s death giving birth to him. His effort to remember “home” is as confounding as Sethe’s recollection of Sweet Home, although where she recalls the trees and cannot forgive herself for forgetting the boys hanging from them, Vere recalls the losses and, finding no comfort in the past, turns to “the daydream, comforting and familiar, which in the last year had come to serve as the antidote for everything that troubled him”(15), specifically the dream of becoming the hero and avenging all past losses by winning the Whitmonday Motor Race in a car of his own construction. Vere, then, is striving for a future of technological success that will erase the pain of the past. His ego-ideal is the unencumbered New Man, without shadow or origin outside of his own technological creation, the self-made man of American individualism.

The second point of view on Bourne Island is that of Allen, the American. Marshall marks Allen as the quintessential “Aristotelian,” noting his talent for categorization and making him right in his silent evaluation of Vere as part of the “Farm Labor Scheme”(15), an evaluation which limits Vere to his location in the circulation of global capital and admits none of his needs or desires as a human being in a life-process in tandem with, and possibly in opposition to, the needs of global capital. Allen has been handsomely rewarded for participating in this categorization process to the exclusion of all others; however, Vere’s hat also prompts a memory that evades categorization and is uncomfortable for Allen: participating, as a child, in an act of anti-

Semitism in which he silenced himself to maintain the approval of his friend. Allen remembers not only witnessing but, through his silence, consenting to an act for which he feels he has gone unpunished. This example of Allen denying himself both participation and forgiveness becomes part of a larger self-denial revealed in the novel.

Marshall reveals the cost of this self-denial in her description of Allen's physique: "But this strength, all the force and passion hinted at in his build and in his strong Mediterranean coloring, lay unused. One had the sense of its quietly atrophying within the bulky professorial tweeds he always wore" (17). Allen is evaluative, not creative, accepting the categories he has been given, regardless of the misshapen world (or self) they produce. Both Merle and Saul attract him even as they disturb him; he senses in them a relationship to life that includes its messiness and its uncategorizable pain and humor, what Morrison calls its "eruptions of funk" (The Bluest Eye 83). He has been to Bourne Island before, and there been able to relax a little, grow a garden, experience an emotional bond. Bourne Island, on the periphery of the world in which he feels he must repress himself in order to "belong," is the place where he feels able to venture into territory he doesn't allow himself at home. If the United States represents economic wealth and power to Vere, Bourne Island represents emotional release to Allen.

Harriet Shippen, on the other hand, reproduces the perspective of the classic explorer, convinced that she is entering a space of absolute difference in which she is absolutely superior. Her perception of Bourne Island reflects her perception of everyone: her memory of meeting Saul, her husband and the chief researcher of the group she and Allen make up, includes both her fascination at his exoticness as a Jew

marked stereotypically, and the announcement of conquest in her introduction of herself to him: "Dr. Amron, I'm Harriet Shippen, a kind of hanger-on here at the Institute. We're going to steal you from Stanford"(20). Describing herself as a hanger-on disguises her relationship to power (her family funds the Institute, and the considerable power she wields is revealed at the end of the novel), and lessens the proprietary threat and promise of theft that follows.

Harriet, like Allen, has been trained from childhood to repress any sense of self that might lessen her relationship to historical power. She, also, is provoked by the landscape of Bourne Island into uncomfortable memory, in her case punishment for ruining a pillow slip in the effort to escape the enforced isolation of the mansion where she was raised. Her punishment was not for actual escape, but for imagining its desirability. The landscape of Bournehills evokes this intrusive memory, and she has the most obviously psychological response:

she wondered...how an island as small as this could sustain such a dangerous division. To add to matters, the hills were filled with shadows even though it was noon and the sun stood at its zenith. Because of the shadows Bournehills scarcely seemed a physical place to her, but some mysterious and obscured region of the mind which ordinary consciousness did not dare admit to light. Suddenly, for a single unnerving moment, she had the sensation of being borne backward in time rather than forward in space. The plane by some perverse plan might have been taking her away from the present, which included Saul and the new life she was about to begin with him, back to the past which she had always sought to avoid.(21)

Harriet represses this sensation as quickly as it has emerged. Of the four travelers, she is the one with the most power in the actual world to shape the landscape in such a way as to restore her comfort. Thus Marshall has set up a dynamic in which the white woman from the United States possesses the greatest economic power, but she disguises

it in her apparent service to the men in her group, a gendered subordination that reflects her approved role in the social structure, acted out in her caretaking behavior towards Saul. She even tries to reject his attempt to take care of her by purchasing her a sunhat. "I'm not the type"(23), she protests. Her "type" -- neat, pleasant, in control, covert, self-effacing, and confident -- and its narrow confines have become acceptable to her; but Saul responds that the reality of the heat of the sun might burst those confines, a foreshadowing of the confrontation awaiting her in Bournehills. The difference between her self-sufficiency and Saul's relational approach is revealed when he wants the name of the person meeting them. She reaches into her handbag, while Saul calls out to Allen, and both she and Allen speak Merle's name simultaneously. Saul's approach is relational -- it requires contact with another person -- while hers reinforces her self-sufficiency within her controlled borders. This difference between them will be at the heart of their conflict with the landscape, the people, and each other for the balance of the novel, and reflects the different historical and cultural locations they occupy and are intended to represent. Marshall postpones the reader's access to Saul's shadow places, portraying him as sleeping throughout the flight, and leaving him available to the projections of others, including Harriet and Saul: He is slowly revealed to the reader throughout the novel, as he becomes revealed to himself and the people of Bourne Island.

Liminal Spaces

Most of the major characters of the novel -- Merle, Saul, Harriet, Allen, and Vere -- are in a psychosocial location that can be described as "betwixt and between." I take this formulation from Louise Mahdi's exploration of Victor Turner's view that "the

‘betwixt and between’ times, the threshold transition times, deserve special attention as constructive ‘building blocks’ for change, or possibly transformation and initiation to another level of consciousness”(Mahdi ix). The introduction of shadow elements with the introduction of each major character signals that part of the novel’s concerns will be about the potentials enabled by what I call “shadow play.” By this I mean the revelation of the ordinarily repressed, and its impact on consciousness and action through the choices the characters make about how to process these repressed materials and the conditions that enable or require their repression. Marshall’s gender, ethnic, class, racial and sexual diversification of her main characters reveals the social “interestedness” of such repression, as opposed to some universal psychological need.

Jung points out that the individual can wrap him or her self up in the cocoon of illusions, where projections and environment get caught in an endless loop -- malevolent environment produces disempowerment which obscures the role of the ego in projection -- which is designed to ensure the survival of the projection and its service to the ego. Cultures, consisting of groups of individuals, also produce this phenomenon. Ulf Hannerz, in Cultural Complexity, describes this as the circulation of consistent symbols among groups of people who are located “not only...in similar circumstances, in order to generate similar perspectives. They should also be in effective interaction, and in some measure isolated from others -- in this way, their reciprocal flow of meanings becomes a comparatively large part of the total cultural flow reaching them” (72). This can be a valuable activity: the location of universities on campuses is not only a logistical function, but a cultural one, so that the “flow of meanings becomes a comparatively large part of the total cultural flow reaching” students. But that kind of

isolation can also permit shadow- projections to go culturally unchallenged when they, too, are shared. These projections usually only become identified as projections when those on whom they have been projected refuse to participate in the illusion. This refusal disrupts the smooth circulation of shared symbols and their meanings. Otherwise, they are considered natural, real, objective and true. The disruption of culturally shared projections rather infrequently emerges spontaneously from within the individual, or the cultural grouping that shares the individual's projections. Jung uses the particularly violent language of "collision" to describe the ego's encounters with inner and outer worlds over the course of a lifetime. Marshall explicitly links inner and outer worlds through the role of history in the formation of her characters. As Eugenia DeLamotte puts it, "Linking oppression to repression, Marshall links both to silence" (229). Naming oppression is relatively easy; speaking what has been repressed is a challenge that some, not all, of her characters are able to meet. Those who do are enabled by their ability to recognize their common humanity, spurred by the everyday relationships they develop on Bourne Island and make explicit at Carnival. Those who don't are deprived by their commitment to repressing their shadow selves at the expense of possible connection.

Merle, Vere, Allen, Harriet, and, as we shall see, Saul, are on a collision course with their shadows and projections. The process of repression and "shadow play" may be common to all the characters, but the actual repressed contents suggest a diversity of permissible and transgressive elements, and Marshall demonstrates that they are conditioned by social location, both in terms of contents and means of expression. Each of the characters has the opportunity to depart from their "normal" fixed location and

examine other possibilities, which they may then choose to incorporate or not into a new “normal”. This process is reproduced in and dependent on the social climate as well, in a series of recognizable steps that I discuss later as ritual. Some of the rituals are made explicit, for example Carnival. The overarching rite of passage that structures the novel is unnamed, but forms the backdrop for the apparently individualized atomism of modern life, whose narrative of linear progress represses the cyclical bases of ritual. In the words of Erich Neumann,

...in modern man [where] collective rites no longer exist, and the problems relating to these transitions devolve upon the individual, his (sic) responsibility and understanding are so overburdened that psychic disorders are frequent. This is the case not only in childhood but also in puberty, in marriage and mid-life, at the climacteric, and in the hour of death. All these stages in life were formerly numinous points at which the collectivity intervened with its rites; today they are points of psychic illness and anxiety for the individual, whose awareness does not suffice to enable him to live his life. (Neumann 186)

For the purpose of this analysis, I call the rite of passage that structures this novel the “Shadow Play,” both for its encounter with the repressed, and the “shadowy” nature of its presence as an underlying element of the novel. Each of the major characters of the novel -- Vere, Allen, Harriet, Saul, and Merle -- is positioned “betwixt and between” histories and futures, personal and social. However, their individual situations are specific to them as individuals, while simultaneously intertwined with each other.

Vere: The Self-made Man

As discussed earlier, Vere has just returned to Bournehills after three years in the United States on the Farm Labor Program. He is Leesy’s grandson, and thus represents the future of Bournehills. He is also twenty years old, on the verge of adulthood, but without male adults whose role modeling he is either willing or able to accept. His

grandfather was crushed, literally, by the rollers of the sugar cane factory, and the older men of the village are still tied to the sugar estate in some form or another. Vere, on the other hand, has been to the United States and has seen the other material possibilities of the world. He is open to the new, but without a structure -- socially or psychically -- to facilitate its incorporation. He is between the stable repetition of Leesy's life and totally uncharted possibilities. Marshall's description of him on the night of his arrival, at Leesy's, reflects this still unformed quality about him: "Flat, the features merely roughed in, his face appeared unfinished. It was like a piece of sculpture upon which only the initial work, what's called the boasting, had been done"(30). "Boasting" is an interesting choice here. Although Marshall specifies its use as a term in sculpture, it of course invokes its other meaning. Webster's offers: "To possess and often call attention to," and specifically uses the example of a sports car! Vere is seeking to possess his manhood, and believes the signifiers of masculinity -- his suit, car, woman, child -- are the equivalent of its reality. Marshall here is both revealing the constructedness of masculinity and again complicating it with its supposed "other" -- the stereotypical feminine qualities of the color and drape of Vere's suit, the vanity of his desire to paint the car red. In the shadows, however, lurk those other "feminine" qualities, specifically emotion, that Vere is repressing, and without which his full experience of self remains at a distance, contained in its trappings, which can, and do, fail him. In this space, he has both desires -- to build a car and win the Whitmonday Race -- and shadows, specifically the deaths of his grandfather and his child, and his rejection by his uncle in the United States and his woman in Bournehills. The rigidity and determination called for in achieving the former are the tools he brings to addressing the latter.

These concerns emerge in his conversation with Leesy on his first night back, when he reveals without emotional expression his rejection by the uncle and glosses over the misery of the farm work program. Marshall describes him as possessing a sort of “immunity” or defense against the damage that has been done to him, and projects the effects of that “immunity” over his possible lifetime:

as he aged and his flesh thinned, those broad bones slanted high under his eyes would fill with shadows underneath, so that by the time he was forty-five or fifty, an old man already playing dominoes in the rumshop and drinking his finger of rum with pursed and trembling lips, those deep hollows under the bone would have become the repository of his dead dreams. (30)

Vere’s “immunity,” figuratively inherited from Leesy and Bournehills, is both shield and barrier, protection from the pain of the past, and simultaneously limit on possible futures. Leesy doesn’t challenge it, except with respect to his continued interest in his baby-mother. She turns to the “shadows” and addresses them, referring to Vere in the third person, as if she’s engaged in a conversation with listening ancestors, and urges him to place his concerns for the baby-mother behind the shield of immunity. He insists on leaving an opening, however: “I want to ask her a question.” What that question is, and the significance of it to his developing masculinity, is left unsaid until the Carnival section of the novel. It remains a silent current of tension underlying Vere’s actions in the reader’s attention, thus reproducing in the reader the shadowy nature of Vere’s own motives to himself.

Vere, then, lies between boyhood and adulthood. He seeks a masculinity that he understands as a possession, and whose full possession has been threatened by the assault on his procreative heterosexuality by the death of his child, and the limited

economic opportunities afforded him both in the United States and in Bournehills because of his race, class and nationality. His consciousness, therefore, is focused on achieving this masculinity through the proud display of his car, and the punishment of the woman whom he blames for the death of their child. His sense of empowerment extends no further because his analysis of his ability to affect the world extends no further. His liminality is complicated by the absence of experienced elders who have successfully, in his eyes, negotiated change.

Allen: The “Neutral” Observer

Like Vere, Allen is also struggling with questions of masculinity, which in the code of his cultural location also has specific external indicators. They include heterosexuality, dominance, and activity in and upon the world. Allen’s very choice of career is suspect, though disguised. That is, as an academic researcher, his relationship to the world is more passive or, more accurately, indirectly active. His actual activity appears passive: he collects data, which he then presents to others to act upon. His work is intellectual; its activity is interior and less visible than the overt display of masculine physicality involved in, say, construction, or cane-cutting, or Vere’s car repair, which produces a material object. His choice of work requires him to appear invisible, to put aside a self and replace it with a method that appears to be uninflected by historical racial, gendered, sexual, and class attributes. Marshall describes this disappearing act in Allen’s reunion with Merle at the cocktail party, where Merle’s “gaze did appear to penetrate the rimless glasses which served Allen as a kind of psychologist’s one-way screen that he could look out, analytically, upon the world but the world could not look in” (65).

Allen's ability to "disappear" is made possible exactly because of his historical racial, gendered, sexual and class attributes. He is a white man, ostensibly heterosexual, and of the class that can afford not only to attend but to run the institutions that validate his supposed objectivity. The source of Allen's class power, like Harriet's, is disguised through a process of mystification that makes it appear that the self is submitting to structure, rather than generating and perpetuating it. Like Harriet, Allen represses the cost to his self of such submission, and prefers to ignore, or repress, those aspects of self that are not already incorporated into the structure, his differences.

I have already noted Marshall's description of Allen as repressing a certain vitality or passion that is disappearing from disuse. In Allen's case, this passion has been funneled into conformity with a pre-existing ideal of co-operation with a culturally specific sameness. He is from a family of immigrants who, instead of celebrating the differences that their origins bring to the so-called "melting pot," have instead chosen to assimilate by discarding and repressing those differences, however sustaining they have been in the past. Marshall explicitly replaces the image of the supposedly benevolent "melting pot" with that of "one of those high-speed American blenders, a giant Mixmaster, perhaps, which reduces everything to the same bland amalgam beneath its whirring blades"(17), an image of scientifically precise violence, as technologically appropriate to the United States as the image of the "Cleaver" is to Bourne Island. Allen's affectionate nostalgia is not for his mother's cutting remarks on the value of conformity; it is reserved for his uncle, whose memory is recovered through Allen's acts of gardening, a metaphor of feminine growth:

he thought of his uncle whom he had loved more than his father, the one who owned the small truck farm in south Jersey... those visits to the farm, which his mother had eventually put a stop to because, in her words, his uncle was “nothing but a common wop” (she was Scotch-Irish, French, “and a little German,” she liked to boast), were all that had distinguished his childhood. At one point his uncle had changed over from vegetables to raising poultry and had lost everything—had simply taken a chance, risked himself, and lost. For some reason Allen had found this admirable, enviable even. He still did. Once, when his uncle had the truck farm and he had gone to visit him, his uncle had picked a large tomato off the vine and given it to him to eat. The tomato had been so warm from the sun, so ripe and red, he had thought of it, he remembered, as a great heart pulsing away in his palm. It had seemed to him to contain all of life. Because of this, perhaps, he had hesitated biting into it, and his uncle, his head thrown back, the black hair on his chest coiling out of his T-shirt, had laughed like a pagan, and his thick arms pumping, had cried, “Whassa matter? Eat it! Eat it!” (113-114)

Allen recognizes, but does not challenge, his mother’s privileging of the almost Anglo-Saxon over the Mediterranean. The qualities associated with his Italian uncle attract his envy and desire, not because they fit the picture of a stereotyped Italian peasant, but because they are recognizable to him as qualities that exceed the structures of the dominant subculture: modest financial ambitions (a truck farm); appetite for satisfying work; willingness to risk change; relationship with nature. These are qualities that are also repressed in Harriet and Saul, and truck farming holds no romance for Vere, but for Allen, they represent an aspect of self that he both denies and desires, and therefore idealizes. While the uncle participates in the national economy of capitalism, he is willing to risk that participation and remains untouched by failure to achieve on its terms. Allen perceives his uncle as recognizing the structure as a game, while for Allen it is the real. He envies his uncle’s ability to recognize areas of life that not only exceed the structure but are more important than it: “a great heart pulsing away...(that) seemed to him to contain all of life”. However, Allen has been shaped to privilege the

technocracy over the tomato, and while he can recognize the qualities of a self outside of the laws of the dominant subculture, he cannot permit them for himself.

Like Vere, Allen lacks a community of experienced elders to assist him in making the transition from boy to man, from adolescent to full adult; and admitting the inadequacy of his passage to date threatens the functionality of the educational and vocational rite of passage that is supposed to have done the job. But since the educational/vocational system serves the needs of global capital and a tiny subculture, it encourages him to suppress large areas of his self: emotion, empathy, desire that escapes patriarchal law, in effect characteristics that are “othered”, usually as the feminine and, in Allen’s case, that represent an enormous rejection and destabilization of the established order: homosexuality. If he has been taught to repress such seemingly insignificant and unthreatening parts of himself as the passion represented by his Mediterranean uncle or the curl of his hair through the agency of his mother and his education, what experience does he have that enables him to address or experience his homosexuality? Allen does not even recognize his repressed state; who he is or might be is as mystified as the attempted reductionism of his education.

The desired outcome of Allen’s education is the regulation of the body to meet the needs of capitalist production. It is part of Marshall’s achievement in this novel that the consequences of this effort are demonstrated not only through its more familiar objects -- enslaved people of African descent, colonized peoples -- but also through those it supposedly privileges: people of European descent, colonizing peoples. She builds on Fanon’s insights about the interdependence of the colonizer/colonized relationship as a set of human attributes accepted and projected within the self and

enforced through the cultural apparatus of political, social and economic relationships. Without Fanon's desperate fear of homosexuality, she explores the manipulation of sexuality as another form of control and possible site of resistance, not only for women, but also for men, and not only for homosexual people, but also for heterosexuals.

Allen's awakening to the repressed contents of his self constitutes the liminal journey he must undergo to even approach his own full humanity. However, Marshall demonstrates, for Allen and the other characters, how dependent the meaningfulness of that journey is on the presence of a community of recognition, and the additional difficulty, if not impossibility, of making that passage in the absence of such a community. While I cannot disagree with Timothy Chin's assertion that Merle (and Marshall) fail to offer Allen a bridge to claiming his homosexuality, I am less certain that this reflects an ongoing "naturalization" of heterosexuality. Rather, I think Allen's isolation at the end of the work is one of the stages, or possible outcomes, of the terrifying journey that each of the characters undergoes in the confrontation with their shadow-selves. Instead, Marshall seems to highlight the inadequacy of Merle's suggestion to Allen that "naturalized" heterosexuality is a solution to his unspoken crisis. Marshall's bar scene descriptions indict sexual tourism in all its forms as yet another commodified barrier to the possibility of genuinely human encounter.

Harriet: Power That Disempowers

Harriet Shippen is the character through whom Marshall most closely examines the impact of the legacy of the economic foundation of the New World on those whom it supposedly benefits. Significantly, she has chosen to make that character a woman, a

choice that both de-essentializes notions of feminist solidarity, and foregrounds female participation in reproducing structures of patriarchal oppression.

Harriet is the inheritor of what Marshall characterizes as the "questionable legacy"(38) of the widow Harbin, who in the eighteenth century

had launched the family's modest wealth by her small-scale speculation in the West Indies trade, which in those days consisted of taking a few shares in a number of sloops making the twice-yearly run between Philadelphia, the west coast of Africa, and then back across the Atlantic to the islands. In a stained, faded ledger still to be seen in a glass display-case at the Historical Society, the widow had kept careful account in a neat, furbelowed hand of the amounts of flour and salted cod, cornmeal and candles that went out on the sloops, the number of slaves taken on in Guinea and then just how much her portion of that cargo, both human and otherwise, had brought in crude sugar, rum and molasses in the islands. (37-38)

There are two elements of this legacy that seem particularly significant to the development -- or absence of development -- in Harriet's character. The first is the "family value" of being able to regard human beings as objects, illustrated in the ability to participate in the slave trade. To enact such a value requires the ability to detach oneself from a notion of common humanity, and to attach oneself to a system of loyalties that declare whiteness, European origin, Christianity, and wealth as superior to, and more meaningful than, any possible common humanity. The widow Harbin is portrayed as unflinchingly participating in an economic system that regards human beings as commodities and reifies that commodification via visible markers of "racial" difference and intangible markers of cultural differences in geographical origin, religion, and relationship to material goods.

Generations later, Harriet is also confronted with the question of choosing common humanity with "others" or remaining loyal to a system of beliefs that predicate

her identity on the inferiority of others. By the time she faces that question, its origins have been so mystified that she has no analytical apparatus to consider the constructedness of her social location and its implications for her sense of self. She no longer overtly shares the anti-human values that the widow would have been able to justify in the discourse of her era, but she participates in those objectifying values as they have become institutionalized, in the form of exploitation, charity, or both.

It is also significant that the widow Harbin is a widow, as otherwise she herself would be allowed only marginal participation in an economic structure that reifies the white woman, as a commodity of exchange. Her widowhood and the existence of descendants indicate that she has herself fulfilled her social role as heterosexual woman, and grants her a measure of latitude to provide for herself and her offspring. Her economic participation at that point frees the state or another man from assuming her as the burden she would be, since her exchange value as a wife has been spent in her first marriage. The widow Harbin, then, provides an alternative model to traditional expectations of womanhood, but does not become Mary Wollstonecraft. Rather, she combines traditional male roles of dominance (by becoming an economic actor) with traditional female passivity: her economic activity is managed via investment and bookkeeping.

This passive relationship to power and the choices involved in the use of power, particularly its gendered proscriptions, is the second significant aspect of Harriet's "questionable legacy." By the middle of the twentieth century, the widow Harbin's originating fortune has become part of Unicolor, which

represented a merger of most of the old family businesses in Pennsylvania, including that of Harriet Shippen's family, and so had its roots struck deep in those homey products that had created the state's first wealth: such ordinary staples as cornmeal and flour, salted meat and fish, lumber, candles and cloth. All these, in the beginning, had been shipped mainly to the West Indies. Early in its history, one of the family businesses that now made up Unicolor had also gained a controlling interest in the Newfoundland cod industry which supplied the dried salted cod still eaten almost daily in places like Bourne Island. The merger of all these various enterprises had, in turn, provided the base for expansion into other areas. So that out of them had come, like endless sproutings over the generations, huge sugar refineries, a soft drink popular the world over, mammoth flour and paper mills, as well as major interests in other, more impressive, industries: iron, steel, oil, the large-scale manufacture of munitions, uranium mining, banking... And over the years Unicolor had reached out to link up with other great trading and industrial empires abroad, including Kingsley and Sons, Ltd., with its vast holdings in Africa, Asia, and smaller places like Bourne Island. Thus, Unicolor was now part of that giant commercial complex which, like some elaborate rail or root system, endlessly crisscrosses the world, binding it up, until the world almost puts you in mind of one of those high-bouncing balls children used to make years ago by twisting layer upon layer of rubber bands around a toy marble. (37)

I quote this passage at length because in a novel in 1969, Marshall has managed to "theorize," anticipating Barbara Christian's terms in "The Race for Theory," the relationship of the founding of the New World to contemporary global imperialism via the mechanism of the transnational corporation, whose capital accumulation is based in, and brings wealth to, the same class of people who were in at the beginning, and normalizes their "passive" accumulation of wealth and power. Global human interrelationships are primarily structured according to the needs of global capital, which continues to be controlled by a limited number of participants, whose activity is conducted at such a remove that intervention in its destructive outcomes, let alone its dismantling, appears impossible. Marshall's comparison of the world to a rubber ball in the hands of children indicates a judgment about the human capacity and accountability of the actors.

Of course, the human costs of neocolonialism⁵ are evident. But the neocolonialists are not interested in amelioration projects that would point to their own dismantling as part of the remedy. So Marshall has Unicorn become the primary investor in the Center for Applied Social Research, a branch of the Philadelphia Research Institute, whose stated mission is "uplifting the impoverished of the world"(36). Pettis notes that "the paradox of the center's involvement in Bournehills is easily transparent; it is funding an anthropological and philanthropical expert to hypothesize the solution to a problem that, in significant part, its parent organization has created" (48). The Center's commendable ambitions are hamstrung from the outset by relegating to the shadows the origins of the "impoverishment of the world," and what exactly will be permitted is guarded by the supervision of a Board of Directors that is interlocking with the Board of Unicorn.

Similarly, the source of Harriet's own sense of "impoverishment" is mystified to her. The child of privilege, she has been disciplined into cooperating with her status and, as noted earlier, punished for imagining the desirability of escape. The human impoverishment resulting from being such a passive beneficiary of the world's wealth, however, has already claimed her parents: her father abandons the practice of law at mid-life to dedicate himself to the biography of the Renaissance robber baron, Lorenzo de Medici, thus displacing his anxiety about the meaning of his own life into the exploration of another's, which he dies before completing. Harriet has diagnosed her mother's death as a slow suicide, also a function of a sense of meaninglessness and uselessness in the world except as consumer. Harriet's own "fashionable education... had prepared her to be little more than another attractive appointment, like an expensive

Waterford chandelier, all cold faceted crystal, in some well-to-do man's house"(41).

While she recognizes and resents her lack of preparation for work of her own, she is far from recognizing any systemic origins of her own commodification, and blames her mother.

Harriet's own sense of self and empowerment in the world, then, reproduces a relationship to power for which she has been well-trained. Rather than assume full responsibility for her own life, she chooses a "better" father in the person of Chester Heald, friend of the family, and entrusts him with the fiscal management of her inheritance. Rather than choosing and pursuing a career, she remains on the margins of the widow's legacy by becoming a fundraiser at the Institute, attempting to remedy the consequences of her position without fully investigating them. She marries two men who have definite work, and makes them her work. In Marshall's words, "love with Harriet was intimately bound up with the need to do for the beloved, to be more than just a wife, and this, in turn, was part of an even larger need, present in her from a child -- and innocent enough then -- to wield some power"(39). Marshall thus characterizes both privileged white men's and women's relationship to power as childish, located in a space of arrested development and unfinishedness whose consequences are carelessly visited on the rest of the world.

Harriet's relationship to herself and to power is overdetermined by historical and class limitations on acceptable roles for women in society. Neither her first nor her second husband are particularly troubled by the absence of meaningful work in her own life. They are content to allow her to arrange their lives and to enjoy the reflected glory she demands. She is angry when her first husband Andrew's work is forbidden to her by

its top secret nature, and she no longer has a role in shaping him. She is comparable to Toni Morrison's unforgettable creation, Sula, in the novel of the same name. Morrison describes Sula at mid-life: "like any artist with no art form, she became dangerous" (121). However, where Sula's creative energies are separated from form, Harriet's commitment to forms separates her from her creative energies.

Marshall symbolizes Harriet's passive relationship to power through her relationship to her hands, "the mild but persistent dysphoria, the better part of her in disuse, with her hands gone numb"(44). Harriet senses that she possesses a "better part," and that it is expressible through action in the world, but her relationship to such action is socially and historically conditioned to be through others. Her unconscious attempts to alert her consciousness: "she had developed.. .an odd sensation in her hands. She would be holding something.. .and she would not be able to feel either the weight or shape of the object"(39). Her conscious dysphoria renders her hands invisible and passive; her unconscious reveals the consequences of that perceived invisibility and passivity, an inaction that is an action:

It was around this same time that the nightmare started. In the midst of the most innocuous dream there would suddenly be an explosion so massive it seemed the molten center of the earth had erupted, and in the searing light that followed, a great cloud shaped exactly like the toadstools she had often uprooted as a child on her morning walks in the woods would slowly and majestically rise in the final silence. And then one morning she had awakened from that recurrent nightmare only to realize, to her horror, that it was not, as she had believed all along, only Andrew's hand on the lever which triggered the holocaust, that mass suicide in which its creators would be the first to go, but that her hand was also there, resting lightly on his, guiding it. (39)

In this disturbing passage, Marshall again theorizes the implication of privileged women in the structure of social domination, which creates a loss of meaning and purpose in

their own lives as well as in the lives of others. As long as Harriet is allied with structures of oppression, she both participates in that oppression and fails to create an alternative; indeed, Harriet fails to realize that her own survival depends on that alternative.

Harriet's goal is to avoid the "slow suicide" of her mother and participation in the mass suicide promised by Andrew's work as a nuclear engineer designing weapons of mass destruction. So long as her vision of the future contains only one consequence to be avoided, rather than a myriad to be chosen among, she is caught in a position of stasis, comparable to Merle's. Like Merle, Harriet is unwilling to visit the autobiographical causes of her stasis and release the repressed emotion and possible alternative understandings available there. When she chooses to leave Andrew, she recognizes that

He had surely already contaminated them, just as he had, she wanted to shout at him (she who had never shouted in her life), contaminated the house they lived in, the food they ate, their beds, even her body so that she no longer conceived -- and when she had, twice in the twelve years of their marriage, she had lost both babies. And remembering the pain as her womb relinquished the bit of life embedded in its wall, she leaned across the poached egg on her plate, and her face composed, her voice calm, said, "Andrew, I've decided to leave you, dear."
(40)

Harriet's "breeding" inhibits her from declaring her rage and making a physical and emotional connection to her analytical insights. Those insights are limited to the interpersonal. She cannot confront larger, mystified structures of power, because that would force her to confront her participation in and responsibility for her loss of meaning and generativity. She is also unable to consider alternative structures that might offer liberatory possibilities for herself and others. At best, she can consider

modifications to the existing structure, and so she goes about replacing Andrew, a "bad" actor in the field of activity, with Saul, a "good" actor, never considering that she might fully recognize herself as an actor.

Marshall has revealed the semi-permeability of the relationship of victim to oppressor in her psychological characterization of Harriet. Both victim and oppressor are constructed within one person via a global economic structure that depends on the psychic structuring of individual participants to inhibit resistance and facilitate cooperation. The power of the structure is in persuading its participants that there are only two locations, one privileged, one unprivileged, and that both locations exhaust all human possibility. Harriet is handsomely rewarded in material circumstances and social approval for cooperating in her own diminishment. Even Saul, her "good" man, fails to intervene.

Harriet's campaign for Saul is described in terms as calculating as the widow's shrewd investments. Harriet "was careful to conceal the full depth and determination of her love"(42); "she contented herself...making no protests no demands"(44); "she was willing to wait. Waiting was nothing for her. She had come after all from a family that had always measured time not in years but in generations"(44). Harriet effaces herself in the interest of gaining some measure of power through what she considers assistance, but which eventually reveals itself as control, of Saul's destiny. This absence of self-knowledge on her part has deep consequences both for herself and for their relationship, as they reciprocally accept each other's silences and repressions. Their premature marriage is a contract of agreed limitations that is a performance of the success of her

will over his emotional hesitations. Her marriage perfectly mirrors her psychic order, which privileges her rationality over her emotion.

Marshall also points to fissures in Harriet's commitment to will over feeling, comparable to the interpenetration of light and dark in the haze over New Bristol, or the dual divisions of Bourne Island. She offers a lengthy description of Harriet and Saul's first physical intimacy, a threshold or liminal entry into the new relationship, where Harriet physically experiences her anger and regret at the time spent with Andrew and her own lost youth. Marshall describes a delicate physical dance of unspoken revelation, hesitation, fear, grasping, recognition, and ultimately resignation, between Harriet and Saul. Harriet, "fearful that he might suddenly end it, withdraw, abandon her...began caressing him, doing so with a wildness that seemed to come from someone other than her"(43); in other words, she projects her need for a life of her own onto Saul, and for a moment is willing to abandon her self-construct to compel him to yield. This moment outside of her "normal" state, "someone other than her," characterized by "wildness," enables her to fully experience her losses, but she still only understands them as interpersonal. Saul recognizes their depth, but carries his own wounds, and admits his inadequacy to fill the role she expects of him. Again, without words, his own "gesture...said there was little he could do to make up for that waste, that what she was asking of him, seeking in him, was too much, and he could not fail but disappoint her; and finally that he came to her as burdened and with as great a sense of loss" (44). In this single tender scene, Marshall describes the significance of touch, of physical connection, as a source of knowledge and exchange between human beings, and as a way of releasing inner knowledge and emotion. Both emotional and physical feeling are

repressed as sources of knowledge in the Western paradigm that privileges the analytical. But in this scene Marshall describes the recuperative potential of both, even if that potential remains unfulfilled in this particular instance. Her more important point is the availability of that liminal space not only in mass movement or revolution or global or national events, but interpersonally, in the ordinary course of life. She also reveals the depth of structures of repression -- psychic, interpersonal, gendered, and class-based -- and the interlocking nature of their mutual reinforcement to inhibit the fulfillment of the potential of liminality.

Saul only offers Harriet resignation, to his, her, and their condition. Rather than refuse to participate in her further self-abnegation, he permits her replacement behavior by "allowing" her to come on the trip to Bournehills where she can "be of use" in the limited fulfillment of self that she has performed within her family, with her Uncle Chester, and in her first marriage to Andrew. Harriet does not believe in change, only in replacement. She has replaced Andrew with Saul, he who brings death with he who promises life; but she has no vision of herself as a woman who could act in alliance with others. She can only envision working through a man, over others.

Harriet's position has been overdetermined historically and socially, and there is no visible reward in her social location for changing that. Saul sees, but takes no responsibility for what he sees, other than forbidding her to interfere in his work, and insisting that she seek his or Allen's permission before acting in Bournehills. He perceives her self-limitations, but is content to attempt to control their possible consequences. At the beginning of the novel, both Harriet and Saul are potential "wounded healers" for themselves and the structures that have brought them to this

juncture. However, only Saul will experience himself as having the flexibility of self to enable the shadow play to reach a climax. Harriet's location as a privileged white woman rewards her for repressing her shadow and her possibilities. Her vision is of all or nothing: she will either achieve success through expressing herself through a man, or resign herself to a terrible emptiness. Her acceptance of her psychic structure reproduces Western binary oppositional thinking, and closes her off from liminal possibilities.

Saul: The Quest of the Diasporic Self

When the other characters are introduced on the plane ride to Bourne Island, Saul is described as sleeping, symbolic of both his experienced nonchalance towards arrival in a new place, and of his slumbering consciousness. Therefore, the reader's first introduction to him is through the eyes of others. He appears at first to be a benevolent screen, on which others project their fantasies, desires, and fears. Only Merle attempts to break through to the human being behind the screen.

The reader learns from Allen's reflections on the plane that Saul is Jewish and in charge of the anthropological project that brings them to Bourne Island. Allen projects onto Saul his disappointment with himself for participating in an anti-Semitic act with his boyhood friend Jerry. By making Saul Jewish, Marshall has opened the question of the possible consequences of Diasporic identities for cultural and political allegiance and alliance. Allen perceives Merle and Saul as individually connected to a fuller complexity of life, a connection that he does not allow himself to experience:

Merle! He had missed her. Like the man, his boss, asleep across the way, she always evoked the most contradictory feelings in him: on one hand, a helpless affection and regard, but annoyance, on the other, that he should feel such

closeness to anyone, especially a hopelessly muddled, mildly psychotic, middle-aged colored woman who talked incessantly.(18)

Both Merle and Saul evoke contradictory feelings because they live within contradictory locations. The relationship of the Jew to Western culture is as fraught as that of the African. Both within and apart from the mainstream of a European Christian tradition, the Jewish and African contributions to Western civilization are foundational yet despised, when not utterly repressed. And the relationship between people of Jewish and African descent in the New World is equally contentious. Throughout the novel, Marshall suggests the need for alliances that reflect the alliances built during the Civil Rights era. However, she makes it clear that it is identification with Diasporicity, as opposed to ethnic fundamentalism, that enables such alliances or coalitions to be built.

Marshall distinguishes between fundamentalist and Diasporic views in her characterizations. For example, she reminds readers that phenotype may be genetic, but cultural affiliation is exactly that, cultural, in Allen's physical description of Saul:

He was asleep in the aisle seat, or appeared to be -- Allen wasn't sure -- his loose, oversize body in which no two bones seemed to fit properly, propped up beside his wife, Harriet, whose face was to the window. Allen's gaze took in the nose, rising like the curved blade of a scimitar out of the pale, somewhat fleshy face, the forehead that in its breadth and height looked vaguely hydrocephalic, the hair, coarse and rust-colored (nigger hair, Allen's mother would have called it) which was beginning to recede at the temples. (17)

The simile of the scimitar connotes both a stereotyped Jewishness (noted also by Harriet and immediately exoticized by her) as well as the geographic area of the ancient Middle East. However, the scimitar is more commonly associated with Islam than with Judaism, and Islam is a more resonant connector of the Middle East with Africa.

Similarly, the description of Saul's hair as "nigger" hair reveals the perceived affiliation in Christian culture between Jews and Africans, and both the debased social location of Africanity and the ease of its transference as metaphor to the stereotypical representation of Jewishness.⁶

Allen's perceptions of Saul include his Jewishness as a form of exterior identification, but he assigns a Catholic interiority to his mentor. He recognizes in Saul's personality a certain ability to hear the one who confesses and provide absolution that reminds him of his Catholic boyhood. Harriet, on the other hand, shares Allen's association of Jewishness with Saul's appearance, but recognizes "that something in him had gone badly awry and needed setting to rights"(20). Thus both project their shadows onto Saul.

The omniscient narrative voice primarily characterizes Saul by his eyes: "the worn, heavy eyelids...would fold wearily over the eyes, which looked almost colorless they were so pale"(16); it refers to "lidded eyes"(19); and "the way his heavily creased lids came down briefly over his eyes from time to time as though to shut out the faces around him"(20). He awakens as the plane approaches Bourne Island:

His eyes opened instantly, but he wasn't really awake yet. For some moments longer he continued to stare quietly ahead, his eyes filmed and slightly inflamed, preoccupied with some other vision. He might have been watching the conclusion of his dream. Turning finally, his eyes clearing, he gave her a sleepy smile. (22)

Saul's ability to see is linked to his willingness to be revealed. At the beginning of the novel, he is aware of the challenge awaiting him in Bournehills but attempts to bring a disguised self, comparable to Allen's, Harriet's, and Vere's, to a project that requires the full revelation of common humanity before the possibility of joint action can be

realized. Saul's mask is that of the expert anthropologist, committed to the amelioration of others' lives. Professionally, he submits his self to an anthropological method that, if placed on a continuum of scientific methodologies, would be to the opposite extreme of Andrew's actively destructive scientific practice. Allen's supposedly neutral categorizations would lie somewhere in the middle. All three share, however, a cultural space that exempts them from being subjects of study and disguises the political consequences of their activity. Saul is not naive about those consequences, but perceives them as a handicap to his humanitarian work, and not as a direct cause or result of that work.

While, on the mythical level, Saul identifies with the Wandering Jew, a Diasporic nomad and human repository of ancient knowledge, in historical terms he is a secular Jew: he and Harriet marry in a civil ceremony. Instead of assimilating to U.S. materialism, Saul has assimilated to U.S. intellectualism, which allows him to continue the learning-orientation of his Jewish cultural heritage. However, U.S. intellectualism does not occupy a vacuum in U.S. culture, and is funded by and expected to serve U.S. materialism and the values it supports, like allegiance to capitalism and its attendant white Christian patriarchal values. Saul has attempted to subvert that relationship by putting his intellectual work in service to those he studies. He resists the scientific objectification of other humans and, the reader learns from Harriet's research into Saul's past, has attempted to "help improve the lives of the people under study"(41). Saul's attempts are disruptive within his academic discipline, anthropology.⁷ As he relates to Harriet,

To make matters worse, some of my colleagues started implying I was nothing more than a bleeding heart. They had always felt I became too involved with the people in the places I worked. Their approach to field work was to rush in a place, collect their precious data, and rush out without stopping to realize it was flesh-and-blood people they were dealing with and not so many statistics for their charts and tables. The bastards....(41)

Again, the political causes and consequences of Saul's alienation from his discipline are disguised in an analysis of purely personal characteristics. The discipline demands an objective and objectifying detachment; Saul observes that statistics in charts and tables violently reduce "flesh and blood people" to the status of objects. Saul violates that objectification by introducing the possibility of mutual recognition and commitment between researcher and subject of research, an emotional or traditionally feminine bond that earns him the accusation of "bleeding heart," a religious image that reflects the exclusion of spirituality from academic discourse and, as a Catholic image projected on a Jew, reinforces Marshall's construction of Saul's paradoxical location.

Saul's pioneering ambitions have brought him nothing but grief. In his effort to be a bridge between the scientific communities, funded by capital, and the communities he studies, exploited by capital, he has failed to recognize the ultimate oppositionality of the ambitions of the former and the latter, and the controlling power of the former. His response to the eradication of his corporate funding has been to ally himself with the lesser evil of university funding. Neither has permitted the results he seeks, and finally the personal cost has outweighed the interpersonal commitment, never fully made because of his liminal location as an "outsider within" the various social locations he occupies: a Jew in the United States; an academic in the United States; an anthropologist seeking applications for anthropology that benefit those studied; a white

American in various Third World communities; an academic funded by private industry, and so forth. In the absence of an analysis of the functioning of transnational imperialism and his own implication in its processes, he is doomed to repeat his failures. By allying himself with the Center for Applied Social Research, he hopes, like Harriet, to replace his “bad” actions with “good” ones. But without tackling the underlying causes of his earlier failures, such an effort is doomed to simple repetition, not transformation.

Similarly, in his marriage to Harriet, he is hoping to not reproduce the catastrophic events of his first marriage. The most he is willing to admit at the beginning of the novel to Harriet is

“I don’t know if I’m fit material for a husband right now. There’s so much that happened before we met which I still haven’t gotten over. I can’t even talk about half of it yet, not even to you.” Which was true; he had never, for example, really spoken to her about his wife’s death or, in any detail, of his experience with the Moran group in California which had so disillusioned him. “I can’t help feeling,” he said, “that I should at least try to clear away some of the dead weight so to speak, resolve those things in some way, before -- how to put it?” -- he gave the dog-eared smile -- “venturing forth again.” (47)

Like Harriet and Merle, Saul’s perception of the future is framed by past experiences to be avoided, rather than perceived as a set of possibilities to be chosen among. The full costs of his past experiences wait to be acknowledged and integrated into the present. In their present silenced form, they are not only painful, but harmful. It is Merle’s voice that forces them to the surface. Their mutual recognition begins in irritation.

Merle and Bournehills

As discussed earlier, Merle Kinbona represents the ontological, epistemological, historical, and mythological welter of contradictions that are the late twentieth-

century postcolonial condition. On the ontological level, Merle is struggling for identity as a woman, as a black woman, as a Caribbean woman of mixed racial and class parentage, as a Caribbean woman who has studied in England, as a Caribbean woman who married and had a child with an African man in England, as a Caribbean woman who is of child-bearing age living without either child or man in the Caribbean. There is no social location to which she "belongs" without reservation. Her peripheral location creates a number of consequences: on the one hand, it would appear to offer her greater freedom than those located in fixed positions, like Leesy or Harriet; on the other, it generates an almost inhuman isolation or absence of community that she responds to in two ways: incessant talk or total withdrawal. Merle's marginalization yet continued existence poses an ontological challenge to Western notions of order, progress, and hierarchy, in short Enlightenment ideals, as policed and validated through structures of education, class, gender, race, and sexuality.

While Merle is conscious of what she stands against, however, the generative basis of her existence is more intuited than articulated. She is on the side of the "little fellar," but she is not one of the "little fellars" either. Her cosmopolitanism, not as a superficial play of manners but as a sense of human community underlying the various manifestations of cultural and social locations, is not fully available to her in the absence of a community that recognizes and desires her. In that absence, she also poses an ontological challenge to herself, which she polices with her two styles: flamboyance and catatonia. If her minor revelations of social difference generate the degree of social disapproval and distancing that she already experiences, she is unwilling to face the costs of full revelation without reciprocal efforts on the part of

her communities. Her speech, then, is an effort to draw others into her worldview, where she might then reveal herself on ground truly common. Her catatonia reflects both exhaustion and recuperation when such efforts fail, time and again, to elicit a reciprocal response.

Merle, then, like Sethe, is a synecdoche for her community of origin, the peasants of Bournehills. Her stasis is parallel to their refusal of the blandishments of modernity for which they have already paid through the experience of New World slavery and whose terms have not changed subsequently, despite emancipation and so-called independence. As Marshall puts it in an interview, “They refuse to settle for the little stop-gap, cosmetic kinds of changes that in no way really ameliorate or change their condition, just put a little surface glow on them. They are holding out for the kind of fundamental change that was struggled for in the revolt long ago” (273-274).

Moving from the ontological to the historical, without ignoring the interconnections between them, on the historical level Merle and Bournehills represent the human costs of transnational capitalism, and its repressed historical record. I have already discussed the costs, for Harriet, Vere, Saul and Allen, of cooperating, with varying degrees of awareness and mystification, with transnational capitalism. For Merle and Bournehills, the costs are exacted for not cooperating, for being willing to eke out a marginal existence via the cyclical repetition of rituals whose outcomes are assured and whose inputs are entirely self-directed. In other words, the community of sugarcane smallholders are working land that cannot be taken away from them, just as Merle inhabits a house that is entirely hers. Of course, total independence is illusory -- hence the smallholders' dependence on and vulnerability to the closing of the sugar mill, and

Merle's ironic dependence on house guests, or outsiders, for her livelihood -- but to the greatest extent possible, the people of Bournehills have established their own boundaries for their own survival, and protect them as fiercely as Harriet, Allen, or Saul protect theirs.

The difference is that the people of Bournehills and Merle are not perceived as having sufficient interiority or self-awareness to be consciously behaving in a particular manner. In the historical construction of white supremacy via colonialist, Enlightenment and imperialist ideologies, only the European self, and its values as practiced by postcolonial subjects, has complexity and rationale. The "Other" -- black, female, poor, illiterate -- is transparent and understandable on its surface as irrational, simple, and inferior, and the actions of "others" are best explained by analogy to the behavior of dumb beasts, whose behaviors are perceived as driven by physical need alone. The problem of shifting perceptions, and the necessity for those judging to consider their own lenses and self-interests in the outcome of those judgments, are the disciplinary and historical abstractions that Marshall personifies in Saul's struggle not only to understand Bournehills for analytical purposes, but to empathize with and to commit to its people on spiritual, emotional and physical levels. In the absence of his recommitment to his own full humanity, and the vulnerability that accompanies the abdication of the privilege of self-certainty for a negotiated encounter, he is limited to reproducing the conditions of exploitation against which the people of Bournehills have so successfully barricaded themselves.

The above is not intended to suggest, however, that the people of Bournehills are the heroic defenders of a pastoral ideal to which all must return. What Marshall

reveals is that they are not behaving in a brutally stupid fashion, which is the stereotypical characterization of supposedly passive peasant populations. Her revision of this discourse in her characterization of the community reveals the intricate rationale within the borders of the community that is designed to ensure their basic survival and block further exploitation. However, Marshall does not neglect to describe the economic malaise, physical suffering, and emotional toll that the Bournehills community also experiences. Their stasis in a changing world is also costly. However, the only expression of change that they can imagine is analogous to Merle's flamboyant speech in its extremity and degree of demanding commitment: the rebellion of Cuffee Ned.

While Marshall presents the story of Cuffee Ned in numerous contexts -- a bar argument, a historical document, oral history, and Carnival performance -- the general and shared contours of the story in each of those contexts are as follows: during the era of African enslavement, a group of rebels, under the leadership of Cuffee Ned, burned the estate of Percy Bryam and the hill on which it stood. They killed Bryam, and with the estate weapons secured the ridge against British attackers. They held the hill for three years and established a Maroon community. However, they were eventually defeated by the British, and Cuffee Ned was beheaded, and his head displayed as a warning to other potential rebels (101-102).

The story of Cuffee Ned connects the realm of the historical to the realm of the mythical. It has been transferred orally through the generations of Bournehills people, often in the form of debate over historical and symbolic detail. At the same time, it has been erased from the official written history of Bourne Island (and by extension of the

New World and the British Empire), and when spoken by Merle, costs her a teaching job. It is the irreconcilable narrative of black New World agency that must be repressed so that the image of black animalistic inferiority (and its twin counterpart, the image of white humanistic supremacy) can be maintained as an ideological norm. Thus history reproduces the stasis and order of things by disciplining its boundaries and evicting its challengers when it designates counter-narratives as mythological, in the sense of invented and superstitious falsehood.

For Merle and the people of Bournehills, however, the story of Cuffee Ned transcends Western disciplinary boundaries. It solicits historical debate at the bar, where one of the debaters tries to rely on Western disciplinarity by asserting the authority of a history book to resolve a disputed aspect of the legend. The other debaters, for whom the book does not represent truth, quickly and laughingly dismiss this option. The legend also provides a mythical figure in Cuffee Ned, who is granted the mysterious powers of the mythical hero, who has no known resting-place, thus who could potentially return. And it provides ritual material in the Carnival masque that illustrates the Akan proverb of Sankofa: "We must return to the past in order to move forward," which suggests a resolution to the conundrum posed by the Tiv proverb that is the epigraph of the novel: "Once a great wrong has been done, it never dies. People speak the words of peace, but their hearts do not forgive. Generations perform ceremonies of reconciliation but there is no end."

The story of Cuffee Ned, then, provides a narrative of a recuperable past and a possible future. Its attendant violence provides a vicarious outlet for present tensions, while the mythological status of its central figure both enables and disables. Cuffee Ned

enables in the sense of allowing the people of Bournehills to envision a future worth surviving for; his image disables to the extent that they are unable to recognize his qualities in one another. The notion of resistance becomes relegated to the superhuman and extra-normal and so finds its most vivid display in the ritual liminal space of Carnival. It is the reclamation of the principle of resistance, creatively adapted to changed and changing conditions, from the realm of the mythical and the historical to the ontological, that constitutes the shadow play for the people of Bournehills. Marshall shows both the safety and danger of stasis for all parties in the New World complex, and thus evades any simple binary oppositionality between oppressor and victim.

Similarly, for Merle, her flamboyant speech and catatonia represent only two possible responses and interactions with her situation, and both cover a deeper wound and pain that she fears to reveal. Her transgressions against disciplinarity are intended as invitations but initially perceived as assaults. The slow and painful construction of empathy as the precondition for solidarity is the challenge facing Merle and Saul and all of the communities represented in the novel. Rituals that aid and hinder this process are the subject of the next section.

Ritual Communitas

The previous sections of this chapter have analyzed the ontological and historical locations of the major characters and the social and psychological fissures they represent. In this section, I want to look at the various rituals that are performed in the novel as “ceremonies of reconciliation,” and the ways in which they negotiate the

possibility of incorporating the psychosocial shadow into the everyday, rather than maintaining it as projection. Specifically, I will be analyzing the welcoming cocktail party at Lyle Hutson's house, the visit to Sugar's nightclub, Merle's welcoming party, the pre-Carnival pig-sticking, and Carnival itself.

Each of these events is intended to be community-building and advancing in some fashion. That is, they are occasions outside of ordinary time that are intended to bring together disparate elements of the society and perform liminal exchanges in the interests of forging common ground. Psychologist Helene Shulman has summarized Victor Turner's stages of healing ritual:

In stage 1, a problem develops in the normal ongoing structural organization of the group. Something no longer fits. The problem is then noted and isolated for special treatment. In stage 2, a special environment is created in the isolated area, called a liminal or marginal space. Here the rules of the normal structure are relaxed, and many experimental and creative possibilities are allowed and encouraged. As a result, people relate less through formal social roles and more through spontaneous expression, sometimes creating a temporary intimate and loving environment that Turner has called *communitas*. Finally, in stage 3, the renewed participants are reintegrated into the formal social structure, which has been shaken up and reorganized a bit so that there is more "breathing space" and more community acceptance for new ideas. (Shulman 58)

The difficulty confronting the characters in the novel, though, is that of constructing sufficiently marginal space in which the rules of normal structure might be relaxed. Indeed, most of the rituals in the novel are structurally overdetermined: they are intended to subdue and contain the new, to accept only its historically expected recognizable features, and to eliminate or subvert any challenges to the norm that the new might represent. This is true both for the structurally powerful and the structurally powerless, both of whom are invested in maintaining their borders against the threat of

mutual destruction. The contrast between Lyle's welcoming party and Merle's demonstrates this assertion.

Catherine Bell, in her recent study of both the discipline of ritual studies and the process of ritual itself, reviews in detail the body of theoretical literature related to the notion of ritual, and argues, persuasively, that what has emerged from the fields of anthropology, sociology, and religious studies as “ritual” has been in response to the systems of thought presupposed in the respective disciplines, rather than in response to some set of actions known as “rituals”. Specifically, she asserts that across disciplines, rituals have been perceived and described as resolving “the complex problems posed by an initial bifurcation of thought and action” (Bell 7), a bifurcation she argues rests in Western discourse, not ritual behavior. She further argues that the dominance of the bifurcating lens then severely limits alternative perceptions of the processes of ritual. She argues that her reading is not intended as a paradigm shift or the assertion of a new, “correct” way of reading ritual. I am interested in her descriptions of “ritualization” for the ways in which they enable readers to perceive apparently casual or ordinary events as forms of the “ceremonies” described in the epigraph to Marshall’s novel. In effect, I borrow from Bell to refine Turner’s theories of liminality to show how Marshall creates climates for liminal exchange and perception in the everyday, as well as in events more traditionally recognized as rituals, such as Carnival.

More specifically, Bell is less interested in “ritual” as object of study than in “ritualization” as a form of productive relationship. She argues that not only does tradition produce ritual, but it is in turn produced by ritual. Some theorists have characterized cultures with written languages as having “traditions” because of the

greater fixity afforded by written historical records, while oral cultures are characterized as having “customs,” necessarily more fluid by contrast. Bell blurs this categorization by citing Rappaport’s arguments that oral cultures also contain unchanging elements in their rituals. Rappaport locates the paradoxical qualities of continuity and change that are part of any ritual by calling the unchanging elements “canonical” and the changing ones “indexical” (Bell 119). The tension between these different elements is not always resolved, as we will see below. However, I retain Rappaport’s language of “canonical” and “indexical” ritual elements to look more closely at ritual activities on both sides of Bourne Island’s supposed divide between the New Bristol neo-colonials and the Bournehills traditionalists.

In addition to the dilemmas posed by Merle Kinbona, Marshall offers another challenge to the reader by refusing to oversimplify the relationship between the neo-colonialists and the traditionalists. They can be contrasted with each other in hierarchical terms in which the neo-colonialists are Western, progressive, materialist, literate, and so forth, while the traditionalists are anti-materialist, conservative, illiterate, and so forth; but the novel doesn’t allow any simple classifications of oppressor/victim, ruler/ruled. In addition, both are located in relative powerlessness vis-a-vis the imperialist, whether British or American. Finally, both enact their own practices for retaining or creating their own system of meanings by performing rituals that contain “canonical” and “indexical” elements or, in Bakhtinian terms, “authoritative” and “internally persuasive” discourses.

Part of Merle’s difficulties, comparable to Sethe’s in Beloved, is that even the most powerfully internally persuasive discourse is never one’s alone. As Bakhtin puts

it, “the internally persuasive word is half-ours and half-someone else’s. Its creativity and productiveness consist precisely in the fact that such a word awakens new and independent words, that it organizes masses of our words from within, and does not remain in an isolated and static condition” (Bakhtin 345). The authoritative discourse of one group (the less-empowered) may constitute the internally persuasive discourse of another (the more empowered), and the relationship may also work in reverse as well. The struggle for Merle, the historical moment of the novel, the other main characters, and the represented communities, is to clear a space where these competing discourses are not seeking to obliterate each other, but where they might find common ground and introduce productive indexical elements to one another.

The ritualizations discussed in this section, then, attempt to incorporate and produce both the canonical and the indexical, and the tension between the two is highlighted when they are confronted with the ambiguous unknown other represented by Saul and his group. The neo-colonials, the traditionalists, and Merle attempt to locate, give meaning to, and benefit from, what he and his group represent. All three constituencies have long experience with the arrival of the supposedly benevolent outsider. At first I conceived of the differences in each response as a progression from rituals that fail to resolve tension to a “successful” ritual. However, I find more productive Bell’s assertion that

Just as strategic differences in ritual traditions can differentiate particular communities, ritualization can also work to integrate communities. Indeed, ritualization appears to be a type of social strategy that can simultaneously do both....the orchestration of rituals in time, some reproducing local communities, others later integrating them or parts of them into larger communities, enables each unit in the system to experience both its own autonomy and its dependent place within a network of relationships with other groups. This orchestration is not a

perfect and holistic order imposed on minds and bodies but a delicate and continual renegotiation of provisional distinctions and integrations so as to avoid encountering in practice the discrepancies and conflicts that would become so apparent if the 'whole' was obvious. (Bell 125)

Marshall introduces us to the authoritative and internally-persuasive discourses of the distinct yet interdependent communities of Bourne Island via each one's ritual traditions, culminating in their encounter in the shared ritual of Carnival. Rather than assessing any particular form of ritual as "successful" or "failed", it becomes more possible to understand Merle's frustration as she envisions different outcomes than are permissible within the existing rituals. Rituals are, after all, made by their participants, even as they produce ritualized subjects.

Lyle's Version of Welcome: Ritualizing the Authoritative

The first encounter between all of the novel's principals, with the significant exception of Vere⁸, takes place at the welcoming reception for Saul, Harriet and Allen at Lyle Hutson's house. Lyle is a member of the newly-independent Bourne Island Parliament. His house is described as a metaphor for the new nation:

The house was a failure, although this was not immediately apparent, and most people thought it handsome, progressive, and new. But the designer, in trying to blend the old and the new, had failed to select the best from each -- those features from the past and present which would have best served his end. Instead, in his haste perhaps, he had taken the worst of both architectural styles, so that although the house stood high on its private rise above the town, and was graced by the avenue of royal palms in front and breathed upon by the flowers in the gardens spread around it, it still could not rise above the profound error and confusion in its design. (54)

The house is set apart from, and above, its surroundings. As a setting for the incorporation of the new, it fails because it reproduces the spatial geography of the colonial norm, which reproduces the closed traditions of race, class, and gender. Saul is

surrounded by the most powerful men on the island, the MPs, the newspaper editor, and the white consultants, while Allen and Harriet are marginalized, Allen on the verandah margin, and Harriet among the women. Saul explains his project to men who are indifferent to any change it might represent, particularly its intention to identify useful local endeavors. They are only interested in the modern bottom line: how much money will be involved.

The common ground being constructed negates Saul's presence as an innovator and reduces him to a signifier of American largesse and expertise. "Against his will" (56), Saul admits that the project might run into the millions of dollars, while insisting that he does not wish this to be the first thing that is known about the project. His admission prompts an outburst that gives him his first local picture of Bournehills, as the shadow of the "respectable" Bourne Islanders before him. The members of the neo-colonial elite burst into a litany of derogatory accounts of Bournehills people's refusal to incorporate products of modern progress into the community. He recognizes in the passion of the neo-colonials' assertions an internalized self-hatred comparable to his own as a young man:

as a boy, he had fled his brothers, those with the sallow, long-nosed look.. ..the look of the long persecuted; and while maintaining his allegiance (for they were his people after all) he had still.. ..often been impatient, even angry, with them.(59)

It is this self-recognition, of the costs to the historically powerless of attempting to assimilate to the forms of power that have not only excluded them but depended on their subjugation for their validation, that enables Saul to recognize the depiction of Bournehills by the neo-colonials as only a partial view. Their masked feelings of

ambivalence towards Bournehills as part of their heritage and legacy will continue to be disguised behind their professed allegiance to the globally authorized signifiers of Western progress: big houses, modern cars and appliances, bourgeois marriage customs, and so forth. The set boundaries of those allegiances are not relaxed at this ritualization of welcome. Rather, Saul is inserted into a pre-determined position. As Lyle says, "We welcome your interest in us. We're flattered that your organization has chosen our little island for so grand a scheme. And I for one am optimistic, since I know you Americans...are famous for working miracles" (62).

Saul and his project are reduced to recognizable philanthropic outreach intended to serve the research interests of his home institution. Any alternative that Saul's project might represent to this familiar model is doomed to failure by the neo-colonial Bourne island elite, who do not perceive Bournehills refusals as resistance, but merely as a stubborn commitment to ignorance. The neo-colonials refuse to recognize that any potential benefit might come to them from the development of Bournehills; it represents an embarrassing heritage of slavery and heroism, neither of which they want to acknowledge, the former out of shame for the past and the latter out of shame for their present relocation as oppressors. As Marshall points out, "Hinkson was almost shouting now, his amber-colored face white with a rage that went beyond Bournehills to include, it seemed, the thing in himself that joined him to those irredeemable masses on the other side of the island"(59). Hinkson has internalized the structures of knowledge and power that participated in the oppression of his ancestors. His location in that structure is the result of replacement, not transformation, and his rage reflects his frustration at the inescapability of history, and the failure of his self-assertion within it.

Merle's arrival destabilizes the structure of the welcoming ritual. She is late, loud, and feared for her unpredictability. Her status as symbolic representative of Bournehills is reflected in the anxiety various members of the party show as they condemn Bournehills in her absence. It is a relationship she embraces, repeating the calumnies against Bournehills in order to disempower them. She forces all within earshot to at least know that she is standing on ground where they are welcome to join her, rather than giving up any ground to join them, and insists on the familial bond by forcing physical contact in the form of a kiss from one and all.

Where the members of the party have been described as standing in fixed locations, Merle circulates, transgressing boundaries with her body, her voice, and her personality, and inviting others to do the same. Marshall emphasizes the common history of the members of the party, particularly the Vaughan clan, but also describes their fragmentation from one another via cooperation with pre-existing racial, class, and gendered stratifications that serve patriarchy, white supremacy, and global capitalism.

In this context, Merle is a Maroon figure, inextricably related to the existing structure as its opposition, venturing into the plantation legacy of Lyle's house to represent an alternative and to claim what is hers, but certain to retreat as well to her less formal but no less structured constituency, the people of Bournehills. She simultaneously embodies the authoritative discourse of Bournehills as her own internally-persuasive discourse, and thus challenges the authoritative discourse of the neo-colonials by, in her flamboyant talk, voicing the intimacy and common humanity that they have chosen to abdicate for material wealth and structural prestige. As Saul pronounces at the end of the party, "The middle class is the same the world over"(74).

As a ritual, the party at Lyle's house has provided the thinnest sense of community. It is more concerned with allocating proper places within authoritative structure than with incorporating anything or anyone new. Social roles are not evaded; they are enforced. Marshall offers an alternative in the trip to Sugar's.

Sugar's: The Canonical Shadow

The welcoming ritual begun at Lyle's reception is continued at Sugar's, a bar in New Bristol, in a party consisting of Lyle, Merle, Saul, Allen and Dorothy Clough, Lyle's mistress and the English wife of the newspaper editor. Significantly, Harriet has withdrawn from the party.⁹ In contrast to the "polite" structures of exploitation that Lyle's reception celebrates, Sugar's reveals the chaotic historical experience of both the Caribbean and those who profited from it, and "impolitely" demonstrates that exploitation, a direct consequence of the choices and consciousnesses present at Lyle's reception. In effect, Sugar's (aptly named) is the shadow of Lyle's.¹⁰

Once again, Marshall has deployed the metaphorical power of geography. Sugar's is located on the margins of New Bristol, but simultaneously, "The town itself had been so laid out that all its cramped winding streets led eventually to Whitehall and down to the former barracoon-turned-nightclub at its foot" (82). The geographical ground that leads to Sugar's also extends historically: "It had all begun here"(82).

Sugar's and its patrons reflect the history of the Caribbean as it continues to be repeated in the present. Marshall's physical description of the place reflects its disparate elements and their incomplete creolization:

The room which housed the nightclub was a long, high nave, whole areas of which were lost to the shadows dwelling beyond the reach of the touring lights. It occupied the second story of a former sugar warehouse. The thick stone walls

still breathed of the crude sugars and muscovado that had been stored there. Previous to this, long, long ago, the building had been, it was claimed, one of the most famous barracoons in the West Indies. The rusted remains of the iron manacles that had been fitted around the ankles and wrists, around the dark throats, could still be seen, some said, in the walls of the cellar.(81-82)

Marshall affiliates Sugar's with monumental, mythical time in the religious imagery of the nave, suggesting that it is a shrine to unseen forces whose physical remnants are the smell of sugar and the physical instruments of torture, dehumanization, and forced labor by Africans ("dark throats") that are declared as the foundational elements in Caribbean and New World societies. These elements are then further complicated.

The part of the room within reach of the lights presented a curious spectacle to the visitor to Sugar's for the first time. It resembled a junk shop rather than a nightclub, so filled was it with an assortment of odds and ends. It could have been the dumping ground of the world. All the discards of the nations, all the things that had become worn out over the centuries or fallen into disuse might have been brought and piled in a great charnel heap here.

The rotting beams, the crude shelves set high on the walls, sagged under a vast collection of objects which had either been forgotten or left behind as mementos by former patrons of Sugar's. For the most part they were the things people usually forget at such places -- handkerchiefs, summer shawls and stoles, jewelry, wallets, keys, eyeglasses and the like. And all of them had been left strangely unmolested, even though many of the regulars of the club were known thieves. But there was the unexpected also. A plump Buddha, the fat draped in oily folds over his belly, sat unperturbed amid the clutter on a high shelf. Another shelf was crowded with a profusion of cheap religious objects -- virgins and saints and mute suffering Jesuses -- in the midst of which lay a broken ram's horn and a toy model of a mosque. A huge Teddy bear like the kind given as prizes on a carnival midway did a clumsy jig from a rafter while a large stuffed bald eagle hovered in mid-air, its spread wings casting their shadow over the entire room and its great hooked beak gleaming blood-red in the ruby-colored light from the revolving globe.

In the shadows high above the patrons' unsuspecting heads a giant kite shaped like a dragon coiled and snapped with each breeze that came drifting over the bay through a line of doors opening onto a balcony. And turned over on its side on a nearby shelf lay a richly carved and painted talking drum, silent now, waiting for a drummer to give it voice. (82-83)

This lengthy quote compresses the multiple diasporas that have met in the New World, and North American imperialism is represented at three levels: material, spiritual, and military. The material objects of possession -- keys, wallets -- and perspective -- eyeglasses -- are left untouched by local thieves, suggesting that contemporary theft is more personal than abstract, and that the abandoned objects are undesirable. The spiritual objects are also abandoned and ineffective -- "mute suffering Jesuses" -- while the military symbols are positioned over everything: the bald eagle of the United States, alongside the Teddy bear, symbolizing Theodore Roosevelt's enforcement of the Monroe Doctrine in a context that provides a subtle reminder of another human activity that also destabilizes, not carnival, but war.

The unexpected Diasporic objects -- the Buddha, the dragon kite, the ram's horn of Judaism and the miniature mosque -- represent the traditions of the multiple non-European peoples who have participated in the creation of the Caribbean and, by extension, the New World, specifically Asian and Middle Eastern. Their unexpectedness exceeds the traditional binarism of Africa/Europe through which the region is typically explained. The absence of Native American elements is only evident to those readers whose pre-existing knowledge of the region would include their presence at the time of the European arrival. In the end, all of these objects are chaotically displayed around the room, suggesting an absence of responsibility towards, consciousness of, or interest in their possibilities. The only object Marshall assigns potentiality to is the talking drum, now silent, an object of communication that requires human physical participation and whose activation would necessitate the reclamation of African cultural values.

Merle narrates the players and the activities of the night to Saul, her voice insisting that he recognize the room, and by extension the structures of Bourne Island, the Caribbean and imperialism, from her perspective. She points out the U.S. military commander, the expatriate power elite, the local power elite, the commodified local men and women and their commodified and commodifying purchasers. All of the relationships Merle points out at Sugar's are predicated on the desirability of exploitation, and both the exchange and global nature of these exploitations are affiliated in Saul's memory with the sale of children in Latin America, and the disdain he experiences from the dancer whose taunt he refuses. He claims no innocence in these exchanges.

However, he resists Merle's call for admission: "She might have been condemned to tell the tale... She, too, might have been witness to, victim of, some unspeakably inhuman act and been condemned to wander the world telling every stranger about it"(89). The use of "too" suggests that Saul is part of, even shares, the "inhuman" story, but he refuses to acknowledge Merle's call. Instead, he listens to her "with a scrupulously objective, professional air.. dutifully he followed her finger around the room but remained outwardly unaffected, unamazed, no matter what he was shown"(89). He even wants to counsel her to share his detachment: "He would have advised her, if he thought for a minute she would listen, that it was sometimes necessary to seal up the heart as he had done and live as best as one could in the midst of it all"(88).

The evening reaches a frenzied carnivalesque note in which everyone, except those at Merle and Saul's table, participates. In the midst of the frenzy,

Inside, Merle's voice and her own anguished laugh were fists striking at Saul's heart, demanding that he open it again, and at his eyes -- the strangely numb, deeply hooded eyes which in their colorlessness looked almost blind at times -- demanding that he open them also. (92)

If Lyle's welcoming party is the local polite ritual of incorporating the new, Sugar's reveals the exploitative global and historical shadow that is foundational to Lyle's misshapen house and party. Saul's incorporation at Lyle's is limited to the dollar amount he can identify; at Sugar's, he recognizes the global and historical context within which his earlier performance at Lyle's is located. However he refuses Merle's emotional invitation to outrage. Although he is physically present, Saul shares Harriet's refusal to participate as either beneficiary of Sugar's political, economic, and sexual offerings, or as opponent. If ritualized activities are meant to produce relations of participation, Saul maintains his guise of investigator, a position of refusal.

Bournehills: Spontaneous Communitas

The day after the welcoming parties at Lyle's and Sugar's, Merle drives Saul, Harriet and Allen to Cassia House, her residence and guest house in Bournehills. Vere is waiting there to see Merle, and Marshall describes a special feeling between these disparate people, encountering each other in a group for the first time.

Merle made the introductions. And for the short time that they stood there with Vere's easy smile like a source of light and strength they could all draw upon, they appeared to comprise a warm, close-knit circle. Their small gathering almost suggested a reunion: the coming together of the members of a family who had been scattered to the four corners of the earth and changed almost beyond recognition by their differing circumstances, but the same still. They might have been searching for each other for a long time, seeking completion. And they had met finally (although it was too late and could only last the moment) here on this desolate coast, before this perpetually aggrieved sea which, even as they stood questioning Vere about the places he had worked in America, continued to grieve and rage over the ancient wrong it could neither forget nor forgive. (109-110)

What Marshall is describing here is what Turner would identify as "communitas", a temporary intimate and loving environment. For a moment, the participants have released themselves and each other from the structural requirements of their social locations that enforce divisions from one other by nationality, religion, race and ethnicity, gender, class and sexuality, their "differing circumstances." For a brief moment, they experience each other as kin, as mutually complementing rather than negating one another, as sharing a common humanity. This moment of spontaneous communitas is one of the possibilities of encounter, though more rarely recorded than the histories of violence, conquest, and exploitation. It emerges between them during the modest ritual of introduction. Shulman, elaborating on Turner, identifies ritual as the effort to "imprint or encode a harmonious, integrated, and loving relationship, not only between members of the social group, but also within the physiological structure of each individual" (Shulman 61). The meeting at Cassia House achieves this goal for a brief moment, but its lasting power is compromised by its backdrop, the keening sea that metaphorizes the historically generative moment that reified the differences that divide: the European conquest of the Americas, the Middle Passage, and their ongoing legacies that construct the participants in the reunion.

On an individual level, the sea also represents each one's unconscious, that space of both personal and historical grief and rage, unforgotten and unforgiven, but unnamed and unaddressed in each one. This repressed past consumes energy that might otherwise be released for more creative, generative ends. Merle attempts to recreate that moment as a community ritual in her welcoming party, but the attempt fails expressly

because it denies the historical and personal revelations that would be required for transformative movement. Indeed, the ritual perpetuates the repression that is the cause of the need for ritual.

Bournehills: Colliding Fragments

Merle proposes a party to welcome back Allen and Vere, and adds to it the opportunity for Saul to address the people of Bournehills and to correct the impression given by the newspaper coverage of his revelations at Lyle's party that a generous handout is forthcoming. So, on a number of levels, the ritual at Merle's is intended to repair the damage done at the ritual at Lyle's. However, the spatial geography at Merle's reproduces that of Lyle's. The upper-class, segregated by sex, occupies the house, while the working class people of Bournehills stay on the beach. The verandah between the beach and the house, the liminal space betwixt and between, remains unoccupied:

The long verandah stood empty. This, in spite of the fact that Carrington's two helpers had set out a table with rum and beer, and the strong kerosene gas lamps glowed a welcome from the overhang to the roof. And it was to remain empty -- like some no man's land no one dared cross...even though Merle kept urging those outside, especially the ones on the darkened beach below, to come up. Periodically, she would lean over the railing and plead with them to come upstairs. But to no avail. Each time she called down they would look off, making it appear she was speaking to someone other than they, gently ignoring her. (132)

The Bournehills community, in effect, holds their own ground, and ignores Merle's suggestion that it is their location that must change. In a reversal of her circulation through the comprador class at Lyle's, Merle carries Saul and Harriet around to the people on the beach, who greet them with skeptical politeness.

The formal portion of the evening involves a series of speeches by the hostess, the minister, the school headmaster, Delbert the shopowner and Ferguson the local historian. Vere and Allen say a few words and Saul takes the stage. He addresses

himself to those he cannot see, a telling metaphor for the stage of his development, and describes the modesty of the initial stage of the project. He senses, however, that they are more interested in "the kind of man he was"(140). He knows that his words are being subject to scrutiny not for the kind of project he is describing, but for the self behind the method. At the end of the speech he says that he has heard that Bournehills has "the best sea air in the world, that it's known to cure whatever ails someone, so I expect to leave here a new man"(141), somewhat banally but nonetheless extending the possibility that he is not only there to change them, but expects to be changed himself, offering the possibility of mutuality in the development project.

The only direct feedback Saul receives is from Merle, who believes that she had mistakenly located and punished him at Sugar's. He dismisses her apology with, "That's all right....I considered it part of the initiation rites. They're standard in my profession"(141). But he also recognizes the continuing incompleteness of the initiation rites as he looks for feedback from the Bournehills community, which has disappeared after his speech.

Marshall gives the last word to Leesy, part of a Delphic chorus of old women, community guardians and protectors. Leesy sucks her teeth and breathes the word "Multimillions!" before falling asleep, indicating that while Saul has made his individual presence known, there is little confidence in his ability to overcome his structured location as the benevolent anthropologist. The self-awareness revealed in his speech -- his interest in how they live their lives, as opposed to wanting to command them -- is on his side. However, he has not spoken his awareness of the significance of his whiteness and his class location, which make him dangerous in the history of Bournehills. In the absence of his revelation of that awareness, the people of Bournehills can only assume his unconsciousness and the threat that represents.

In the failure of Merle's welcoming party to create *communitas* on the verandah, Marshall illuminates the strength of historically constructed structures to perpetuate

interlocking networks of division and oppression. Overcoming such structures can occur in spontaneous moments, such as the reunion that occurs when they all first arrive at Cassia House, but such moments are temporary and individual. However, when structured locations are brought to bear on one another, deeper historical acknowledgements and revelations must be shared and responsibility taken before such *communitas* becomes possible. No credibility can be attached to the new until the existing structure is named and confronted in the effort to forge a common perspective. In the absence of such articulation, the silenced or repressed past is rightly regarded as assumptively endorsed and reproduced in the present. To the people of Bournehills, Saul and company represent the missionary impulse of colonialism, their arrogant supremacy cloaked in "good works" but no less exploitative than colonialism in its raw economic form.

The historically exploited who have survived have done so by learning to negotiate such exploitation by means ranging from necessary capitulation and dependence to refusal and resistance. Pettis notes that "Intuitively, perhaps, the men and women understand that economic assistance from the West to Third World countries, in whatever its guise, will ultimately extend the exploitation already in place" (86). If Saul's ambition is to participate in ameliorative change in Bournehills, he will have to participate in what Samir Amin has characterized as "reciprocal adjustment" (xii) as opposed to the kind of unilateral adjustment that classic and contemporary transnational imperialism demands, depends on, and enforces. The refusal of the people of Bournehills to cross the verandah, like Merle's refusal to participate in polite silence, demands that the privileged confront the unnatural and destructive components of their privilege and adjust themselves. This is the demand of *marronage*.

Bournehills: Call and Response

Much has been written of the significance of the call and response tradition in Black oratory, but usually it is limited to discussions of cultural practice, or literary

tropes, within Black culture, and as a distinct, if not encoded, resistant practice. For the purposes of this discussion, I'd like to extend it to a metaphor of human interrelationship obtaining throughout the Black Atlantic, but with particular inflections depending on who's calling and who's expected to respond. In other words, Saul and the others from Philadelphia believe that they are issuing a call for development that will be eagerly responded to. At Lyle's party, however, Saul finds that only part of the call is of interest to his audience, the financial aspect. He tries to remedy this at Merle's party, but his intended audience offers no response whatsoever, and in effect reverses the role of caller and respondent. As noted earlier, they hold their ground.

To what end, and why? The underlying and global assumption about remedying the inequities between rich and poor is that it is the poor who must change, that in some way their poverty is the product of their own behavior and worldview, as opposed to a direct consequence of the exploitation of their labor and other resources by the rich. Lyle and the comprador class have made this perspective obvious in their discussion of Bournehills at Lyle's party. On the other hand, the people of Bournehills, and Merle, their synecdochal representative, are fully conscious of the history of their exploitation, and their analysis has led them to conclude that it is the exploiter who must change. After generations of practice, they have arrived at customs and rituals that ensure their survival. Change is a risk with devastating consequences for them, simply on the material level. Before they can be willing to consider such change, then, certain factors other than their own change must be in place: the risk must be shared, the process informed by mutual understanding and respect, and the well-being of everyone involved must be dependent on the outcome.

For the people of Bournehills, there has been no progress since Emancipation, or, more accurately, what progress there has been has continued to be predicated on their alienation. So that the consequences of Independence have been the culling of the

best and brightest of their young, their future, for their own betrayal in the comprador class or the reproduction of exploitation in the emigrant class, albeit at a different economic level. That the overseers now resemble them physically in no way compromises the functioning of the plantation. However, in one important respect, the people of Bournehills no longer inhabit the plantation: they are smallholders of their own properties, and they share a freely circulating discourse. They have constructed sufficient social space to make up a distinct cultural location within which they can survive. To this extent, they can be considered modern-day Maroons, and their commitment to their own independence, while limited by dependence on the technology of the foreign-owned sugar mill, also reproduces what I'm calling a Maroon ideology. To the greatest extent possible, they are willing to forego the blandishments of capitalist progress and development that demands the abandonment of their customs and ethics of survival in favor of changes that fit into the logic of their existing customs and ethics. The arrival of the television set and the jukebox has had no relevance to their needs, and so are quickly abandoned. The agricultural expert has insufficiently consulted local knowledge, and so is making errors and has become a subject of their indifference. Each of these rejections is misread by the comprador class as signs of stupidity or ignorance. However, Marshall offers a picture of the community as largely self-sustaining and possessing a logic of self-sustenance that is camouflaged and not easily penetrated. The price of entry is allegiance, another Maroon legacy, and allegiance to the people of Bournehills means disloyalty to the existing economic order and its social discourses. Merle is one of them because she has faced the choice and chosen them. Simultaneously, because of the specificity of her class and gender locations,

experiences, and her interpretations of those experiences, she is foregoing the opportunity to be a trusted conduit of possibilities into the Bournehills community. In effect, despite the appearance at the beginning of the novel that it is the outsiders and the designated leadership of Bourne Island that are issuing the call to change, once Saul and his party arrive in Bournehills, the power shifts, and it is the community that issues the call, not by public pronouncements, but by the maintenance of everyday practices. The next section will analyze the intermediate responses of the various characters to the Maroon call of the people of Bournehills, followed by an analysis of the responses to the overt call via the Carnival masque of the history of Cuffee Ned's rebellion.

Bournehills: Reconstructing Self and Community

The main focus of the next section of the novel is the confrontation and complicity of discourses -- authorized and internally persuasive -- between and within characters, each representing a modern New World complex. Saul's is the primary consciousness through which the reader engages with awareness as process, but his shifts in awareness are prompted by revelations from other characters, representing the breaks, gaps and spaces in modernity into which those relegated to the bottom and the margins can emerge. In other words, Saul's transformations and articulations of those transformations represent the empowered side of unbalanced relations adjusting themselves and making space for those traditionally disempowered to assert themselves. Marshall's characters thus enact an intra- and interpersonal dance of reciprocal adjustment as a metaphor and perhaps starting point for more macro models of structural change. By concentrating on the internal and exchange processes between

characters, Marshall also reveals the sites of resistance to such changes, or canonical investments. She also illuminates the risks posed to efforts to create change when those who are attempting it ignore historical and individual needs and woundings. Global change becomes a question of changing individual relationships to self and others as a prerequisite for community revitalization and action.

The shadow play between Merle and Saul is probably the most revealing aspect of this process. I have already discussed their initial encounter at Lyle's and Sugar's, and the moment of *communitas* achieved on their arrival at Cassia House. That moment is not sustainable, however, without greater mutual revelations and intimacy. At the beginning of the novel, it is a glimpse of possibility. The next section of this chapter is dedicated to the slow dismantling of the obstacles to its more regular experience.

After a month of casual co-existence, while Saul and company become acquainted with Bournehills, there is an explosive scene of engaged discourses. Lyle, representing the neo-colonial authorized discourse, reveals the latest development plan that reflects the predominant model of the time, "capitalism by invitation," where metropolitan powers bargain for infrastructural support and profit repatriation in exchange for minimal local employment. What follows is a dizzying dance of shifting discourse allegiances.

At first, both Merle and Saul argue against the plan, Saul on the basis of competing development models that argue for import-substitution over capitalism by invitation, Merle from the point of view of the reproduction of exploitation. Lyle doesn't bother to argue with Merle; he saves his arguments for Saul, reminding him of the economic powerlessness of Bourne Island especially vis-a-vis Saul's home country,

the United States. Merle moves the argument from the level of intellectual analysis to the personal. Saul's "an island like this" becomes Merle's "we." Saul's competing modernizations are replaced by her repeated analogies to the structures of slavery. Merle argues for the rationality of Bournehills' refusal of modernity in the face of such certain exploitation and then translates what's wrong with Lyle's plan to questions of the relationship of his consciousness to his choices, moving the ground of the argument to interior space. She denounces Lyle's profiteering and links it to the willful repression of an internally persuasive discourse that might have enabled an open-ended vision of development. She reveals the ontological ground of her distress when she says, "to know, to understand and to act and live as if you don't. Man, I wouldn't want to be you for a day..."(212). Lyle responds by attacking her on ontological ground as well. He accuses her of refusing to grow up and of being too emotional. In effect he compounds her powerlessness by conflating her with qualities characterized as childish within authorized discourse, which echoes the characterization of Bournehills people as well. In response to her efforts to banish him, he reminds her of their student days together. This complicated exchange powerfully renders the depth and interdependence of investments, psychic, emotional, and intellectual, in the struggle between authoritative discourses whose outcomes are foreclosed, and internally persuasive ones that offer the possibility of new formations. Saul and Merle have shared the same side for a while, and even make a brief step towards one another at the end of the argument, but the movement is stalled, and Merle disappears into the first of her withdrawals.

Bournehills: Catharsis

The critical ritual in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People is the annual ritual of Carnival. Before looking more closely at that event, however, I would like to look at the preparations for Carnival, which take the form of ritual in their own right. There is a sense in which the psyche must be prepared for the possibilities of the Carnavalesque prior to the actual event which lends these activities the qualities of ritualization as a productive activity. The preparation of costumes and practicing instruments are activities that draw the community together in anticipation. Saul participates in one other ritual that belies any image of Carnival's light-hearted innocence. The portrayal of this preparatory ritual contradicts the tourist image of happy dancing "natives" freed of everyday cares. He is invited to attend the slaughter of Leesy's white sow in the dawn hour by the leading men of the village, on the day before Carnival.

Marshall signals that this event reaches from the mundane to the monumental by comparing the pre-dawn sight of Westminster hill to "Zimbabwe, Stonehenge, the huge heads on Easter Island" (251), sacred and mysterious sites. There is nothing overt in the subsequent descriptions to indicate that a sacred ritual is going to be performed. On the mundane level, the usual assortment of men have gathered as they do every Sunday to slaughter a pig and sell the meat to the villagers. But this day is exceptional because it is a specially chosen pig, Leesy's old white sow, and it is the eve of Carnival. The canonical elements are in place: the knife, the barrel of hot water for cleaning the pig. However, the indexical element is in the reading of these items: the hoist for the pig "had been raised like a cross" (252). The pig itself bears symbolic resemblances to that other great white object of sacrifice, Moby Dick:

It was an enormous animal. In its younger days it had been known throughout Spiretown as a thief and aggressor because of the habit it had of breaking out of its pen and invading other persons' yards, where it would not only set itself up as the supreme authority over the pigs and chickens present, but would appropriate whatever it found there that was edible, battenning on it until its stomach sagged. But it was old now, its flesh mostly fat, and its hide the color of the mud it had wallowed in a lifetime. Beneath its gut the mass of bruised pink teats trailed the ground. Above its long snout its eyes were the glass button ones of a Teddy bear. (253)

Again Marshall references that complicated symbol of aggression and comfort, the Teddy bear. Like the bear, the pig also slips across a boundary of meaning, in her case between human and animal for those gathered, from assertions of being "only a pig" to "she's got some human feelings" (253). In her description of the function of ritualization, Bell notes that while symbols may be agreed on (the cross, the pig, etc.) their meanings are often more productive for ritual participants if they are left unfixed, and that ritual participants experience both ritual mastery and social solidarity because they rarely make any interpretation explicit (Bell 183). This assertion is demonstrated in the actions of the pig-sticking. For this reader, the pig symbolizes the heritage of suffering under colonization as an inner force projected outward and dispatched with a combination of empathy and rage, recognition and sacrifice. For the participants in the ritual, specific assignments remain unspoken, but the cleaning of the pig is described as a performance of violence and rage, occasionally breaking into conflict between the participants, but with the now-dead pig bearing the brunt. The ritual ends with the sharing of the pig's cooked tail and glasses of rum, a culminating communion, and the distribution of the pig's meat throughout the community. As Winifred Stoelting points out, in one of the few reviews to address this scene, "In their awesome destruction of

this aged pig is dramatized their equally awesome determination to survive” (Stoelting 68).

The event awakens multiple responses in Saul: a glimpse into the depths of his companions which he had neither seen nor expected prior to this, a glimpse at his own perpetual outsidership, and finally, a feeling of elation.

And in the midst of all the things that had disturbed him about the pig-sticking, there had been beneath the violence of the act an affirmation of something age-old, a sense of renewal, which had left him exhilarated, in a high mood. Part of it was due to his being more than a little drunk, he knew. But drunk in a wonderfully light, airy way. The rum had not only, it seemed, neutralized the queasy bit of pork he had eaten, but had burned away, like a powerful acid, all that was impure in him, leaving him empty but clean inside. (259)

This ritual has produced a form of catharsis, and opened Saul, and arguably the community he is briefly part of, to expel the pressures and tensions of the everyday in order to participate at a sacred level in the upcoming Carnival as free beings. That this ritual would seem to replicate on a micro level the revolt of the colonized against the colonizer in classical Fanonian fashion produces what Bell calls “ritual empowerment,” an empowerment demonstrated on a larger, more public level, by Bournehills Carnival masque¹¹.

Carnival: Invitation to Communitas

For our purposes, what is most interesting about carnival is the way it allows certain things to be said, certain forms of social power to be exercised that are muted or suppressed outside this ritual sphere. The anonymity of the setting, for example, allows the social sanctions of the small community normally exercised through gossip to assume a more full-throated voice. Among other things, carnival is “the people’s informal courtroom”....Disapproval that would be dangerous or socially costly to vent at other times is sanctioned during carnival. It is the time and place to settle, verbally at least, personal and social scores. (Scott 173)

Carnival has received lots of attention recently, perhaps because at its deepest registers it is a disappearing form of lived experience, and becoming a metaphorical container to describe cultural forms that are attempting to reproduce its effects. However, the passion of Carnival, as expressed in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, rests on the recognition of unequal power relations, which contemporary expressions of Carnival attempt to erase via corporate sponsorship, appeal to tourists, efforts to “clean up” the necessary danger that Carnival requires in order to produce its effects.¹² Bourne Island Carnival is described as being at that crossroads, between the act of community renewal and an income-generating performance for the benefit of outsiders. The people of Bournehills take full advantage of the opportunity to “assume a more full-throated voice” and tell the story that sustains them through the ravages of modernity, colonialism, and neo-colonialism, a story that gives meaning to the cosmos and is indeed shared with all Bourne Islanders, but which those privileged by neo-colonialism are seeking to discard.

The story that the Bournehills people tell via their Carnival float is their founding story, the place where they locate their origins. It is the tale of Cuffee Ned’s revolt against Percy Bryam, the plantation owner. While never explicitly given a date, it draws from the backdrop of the Middle Passage and enslavement a story of empowerment, likely to have occurred in the 1700s¹³, and passed on as oral tradition since. In yet another register, it tells the story of oppressed people uniting to rid themselves of an exploitative enemy, and forging a common identity. It also tells the tale of their defeat by technologically superior forces, but asserts that the death of the

hero, Cuffee Ned, is triumphant, not victimized, and an honorable end that represents possibility, not finality.

Bournehills has won the award for “Best Local Historical” for this masque in the past, and subsequently been barred from the competition for repeating it every year. This small note symbolizes the attempt to repress “local history” in favor of global spectacle and identification with the victors who are one’s own oppressors: other floats depict “Cleopatra’s Egypt, Hiroshima...the Garden of Eden, Wars to Come, The Fall of the Roman Empire...Life on the Moon” (279). But the masque’s power to disturb the norm is made evident in Marshall’s description. The crowd’s first response is denial and shame at this reminder of the history of enslavement: “They’s too pitiful. Oh, God, what is it with them?...Why must they come dragging into town every year in the same old rags, looking s’bad and embarrassing decent people with some old-time business everybody’s done forgot....I tell you, I’m hiding from them with tears in my eyes”(283)! But the persistence of Bournehills people eventually exacts its toll from the audience. The masque is both empowering performance for its participants, and the retelling of the epic that binds everyone on the island, however far they are from its promise in the present. The narrative voice describes how the story of Cuffee Ned, while local to Bourne Island, is also transcendent of time and place:

the experience through which any people who find themselves ill-used, dispossessed, at the mercy of the powerful, must pass. No more, no less. Differing in time, in the forms it takes, in the degree of its success or failure, but the same. A struggle both necessary and inevitable, given man. Arms outstretched, hands opened, the marchers sought to impress this truth upon the watching throngs. (287)

The story is, of course, the story of a Maroon rebellion, and slowly, by repetition, impresses itself on all the Carnival-goers to the point where they become participants in the story, if only for one afternoon a year. It is a deliberate counter-narrative to the narrative of so-called progress that preoccupies the rest of the island the rest of the year. It metaphorically depicts the overthrow of that other narrative, and offers the experience of that resistance as physical act, through dance, song, costume and movement. It insists on, and receives, recognition. Commenting on the Big Drum ritual in Marshall's Praisesong for the Widow, Barbara Christian describes this as "a collective process of begging pardon, correct naming, celebration and honoring" ("Ritualistic Process" 82). It is the authoritative discourse of Bournehills reminding the assembled that while canonical for Bournehills people, it is an indexical possibility for the rest of the nation, demonstrating that those who refuse a Maroon rite of passage remain unquestioningly, if insecurely, embedded in the authoritative plantation discourse in its latest guise. The story of Cuffee Ned, its performance by the people of Bournehills, represents the Shango discourse as border-keeper, maintaining an alternative space through a demonstration of violence in the name of justice. However, Cuffee Ned himself is perhaps more closely aligned to Ogun, the blacksmith god, one of the most enduring orisas on this side of the Atlantic. Cuffee Ned's rebelliousness and use of the machete to kill Percy Bryam aligns him with Ogun, as does his even-handedness as a leader during the period of liberation, described as an era of *communitas*:

"They had worked together!" -- and as if, in their eyes, this had been the greatest achievement, the thing of which they were proudest, the voices rose to a stunning crescendo that visibly jarred the blue dome of sky....a man had not lived for himself alone, but for his neighbor also....They had trusted one another,

had set aside their differences and stood as one against their enemies. *They had been a People!* (287)

The power of the story, the sacred union it describes, draws all the revelers into its sphere. It produces the feeling it describes.

Much has been written about Carnival as either safety-valve outlet for normally repressed social critique, or prelude to revolt. Marshall ignores both theses, and suggests, as Bell does, that what is made of the ritual is dependent on its participants. The next section of this chapter shifts from the social significance of Carnival to its effects on the interiority of the characters introduced at the beginning.

Merle and Saul: Interpersonal Communitas

Carnival produces a space of possibility, a possibility ritually foreclosed at the social level by the arrival of Lent in the case of Bourne Island, but whose inter-and intra-personal possibilities remain open. Just as the story of Cuffee Ned assaults and overcomes the neo-colonial authoritative narrative of progress, both Merle and Saul let down their usual defenses, and enter into a dialogue that enables them to recognize, accept, and forgive each other, and themselves, for being ordinary human beings, and for being wounded by historical experience.

Before they are able to reveal themselves to one another in their entirety, they have engaged in an intricate dance of approach and withdrawal. I have already discussed their moves toward common allegiance at Merle's welcoming party and the argument scene on the verandah of her house. Merle has also fallen into the habit of giving Saul a ride home after his day's research, and seeing his transformation as he encounters not only Bournehills but echoes of his own Diasporic heritage. After his

chilling witnessing of Bournehills elder Ferguson becoming unable to speak in the presence of the British sugar mill owner, Saul seeks Merle out, at the almshouse where she works part-time. He finds her telling the safer Maroon narrative to the children there, an Anancy story. Anancy stories are adapted from West African folktales and told throughout the Caribbean. They feature a spider-protagonist who regularly outwits more powerful oppressors with his intellectual and verbal skill, usually using their own arrogance and self-regard to blind them to his triumphs. Saul listens to the rest of the story, and then bursts with outrage, knowing that Merle is one who shares his contextual understanding of what he has observed: the reproduction of plantation relations on post-Independence Bourne Island. She asks him directly what impact his program expects to have on such an overdetermined context. His response is personal, and in the form of a negative: he is not entirely hopeless (228). Merle in turn responds by sharing her sense of her own stasis and what is necessary for its release: “Something that’s been up has to come down...before I can get moving again” (230), a prophetic statement of personal and global change that Saul fails to hear. He attempts to advise her to change her life, including urging her to go to her husband and child, a topic she has not introduced. His actions are that of the superior outsider presumptively telling the “native” what to do, and she withdraws, masking her true feelings with “the wide false smile which she had summoned both as a camouflage and a shield” (229). His assertiveness has violated a boundary that exists and shifts between them and within Merle. As Marshall puts it, she “seemed to be trying to drive back thoughts which, if allowed to form, might well destroy her” (231). Before Merle can give up that

boundary, she needs to know it is safe to do so, that her vulnerability will not be used against her, and Saul has not provided that assurance.

This conversation is revisited when Merle gives Saul a ride home after the pre-Carnival pig-sticking. He joins her in the kind of joke a Bournehills insider would make, and she recognizes his efforts to enter their reality. At the same time, she recognizes a level of interiority to him that both separates him from, and creates a connection with Bournehills. "Poor fellow," she notes, "you've been through a lot and you're only now coming to yourself" (263). This time, she admits to him that she knows her recovery requires her to restore the severed maternal relation by reuniting with her own daughter; she also insists that he not comment. It is as if with him she has a small space in which to practice acknowledging her shadow without being punished further for it.

The scene of their full mutual revelation is, significantly, at Sugar's bar after the Carnival parade has ended. They have returned to the site that best symbolizes the historical origins of the New World, where in the context of its detritus they sort through the detritus of their own lives for an enabling narrative. Each reveals to the other the authoritative narrative they distrust yet have internalized and half-believe, enough to devote considerable psychic energies to avoiding. In Merle's case, it is the narrative of her un-womanness, her degendering in Robyn Wiegman's terms, an ancestral history of New World womanhood under enslavement and patriarchy that makes the Black mother disposable outside of biological reproduction. This ungendering is part of Merle's social history and her personal history. As a child, she witnessed her mother's murder, rumored to be at the hands of her father's white wife

and which went unpunished. Like slavery itself, Merle doesn't remember the event, but its shadowy presence and the meaning she has assigned to her participation in it determine her choices. This unredeemed disruption of maternal relations and abandonment is reproduced in her relationship with her nationalist African husband, who takes her child and deserts her for, in his patriarchal heterosexist vision, not being a woman either. Her childhood experience has left her caught between the normalization of disrupted black maternal relations, and outrage at such mistreatment. That one experience and its meanings underlie the other is revealed in the order in which she tells these events to Saul, beginning with the incident with her husband, and subsequently about her mother.

Saul's hidden wound is also related to disrupted maternal relations: he blames himself for the death of his first wife and their child during field research. Or, more specifically, he has internalized his dying wife's blame. Both Saul and Merle have accepted individual responsibility for tragedies that exceed what they could actually be responsible for. In the course of the novel, Marshall has demonstrated what enables them to participate in their own imprisonment, their own "arrested" states.

Part of the reason they have avoided facing their personal shadow-histories is their allegiance to notions of totalizing narratives. The modern version of the diasporic epics they share, one Jewish, the other African, has normalized states of trauma: dislocation, dissociation, fear instead of hope, the likelihood of persecution over the possibility of liberation. In their modern form, they have become counter-narratives with no exit, compelling concession to the authoritative discourse of modern progress, or destruction. Yet Merle's and Saul's choices throughout the novel have also revealed

an internally-persuasive discourse of resistance, a competing narrative of possibility, although without human-size means of expression.

Carnival, and specifically the day-long participatory enactment of the masque of Cuffee Ned has opened a third space, outside of the authoritative discourse of the everyday, and the internally-persuasive discourse of generalized resistance. The narrative of resistance has had the day. In the night that follows, both Merle and Saul are freed to relax their usual vigilance against the authoritative discourse, and to remember themselves as human beings. In their conversation at Sugar's, they are able to be both self-reflexive and reflective of one another. Rather than representing the entire history of their peoples' survival, they are able to speak of their own personal losses, which reflect those histories and so are damaging at devastating levels, the way a bone once broken remains more vulnerable and recovers more slowly from each subsequent break.

What each recognizes in the other's narrative is the assumption of the unfair burden, and the need to speak the wound¹⁴. It is the recognition of this need in the beloved other that enables them to grant that grace to the self. That this occurs in mutuality also addresses directly the primary obstacle that has barred their way: the Western ideology of the pre-eminence of the individual.

Both Saul and Merle have accepted personal responsibility for events much larger than themselves. What each does for the other is offer the possibility that what they have accepted as near-total is perhaps only partially true. Merle should have told her husband about her pre-marital relationship with a rich English woman. Saul did have a larger-than-life Mosaic self-image that blinded him to the immediate needs of his

wife and child. But those choices are not the entirety of who they are, nor do they need to live the rest of their lives in thrall to past errors. They seek to replace all-or-nothing narratives with parts in negotiation, to destabilize fixed knowledges with possibilities. When Merle confesses her specific wounds of maternal disruption, and her anguish and self-judgment at her participation in them, Saul first offers simple recognition. He merely says her name with tenderness. He asks her to spend the night with him, and she agrees on the condition that it go no further. As Barbara Christian points out in her discussion of Marshall's next novel, Praisesong for the Widow, "Central to African ritual is the concept that the body and spirit are one. Thus sensuality is essential to the process of healing and rebirth of the spirit" (81). Merle and Saul comfort each other, and are comforted in turn, with no expectations. From the complexity of their lives and times, they offer each other sanctuary, but a sanctuary grounded in full knowledge of the other, rather than the fortress against knowledge that Saul and Harriet share.

In a subsequent rendezvous, Saul offers Merle, and himself, a way to recontextualize the painful events of their lives, and their allegiance to a disempowering self-blame:

You can't hold yourself responsible for what happened to your mother. Because you know as well as I do that her death, as well as her life, the way she was forced to live, her relationship with your father, even the way he treated you when you were little, all go back to the whole goddamn inhuman system that got started in this part of the world long before you were born -- the effects of which are still with us....You know that. So how can you blame yourself for her death? That's like blaming yourself for the entire history that brought it about. (358-359).

In effect, at the end of the novel, Saul is providing the Sankofa response to the proverb of failed reconciliation that opens the novel. He makes it explicit when he goes on to say:

And it's a good thing you're doing. More of us should try it. It's usually so painful though: looking back and into yourself; most people run from it. I know I did for a long time. But sometimes it's necessary to go back before you can go forward, really forward. And that's not only true for people -- individuals -- but nations as well. (359)

Joseph Skeritt echoes this point, although he emphasizes the synecdochal relationship of Merle to Bournehills, rather than that of Saul to the United States. At the end of the conversation, the gift Saul offers Merle and himself is that of hope, that they will indeed be capable of sorting through what belongs to them and what doesn't, what they can change and what they can't. Above all, they have restored to each other the sense of being part of humanity, rather than anomalous to it.

After Carnival: Communal Communitas

The final section of the novel defies the conventions of the denouement. A further crisis awaits all the characters, and many loose ends remain at the end. This open-ended finish is a characteristic of all the novels discussed in this study, and many more by contemporary writers. There is no single moment of resolution, or closing statement to suggest a recognizable continuation, in the "Dear reader, I married him" vein. Rather, as novels of liberation, the characters are left in a state of possibility, to translate new-found awarenesses into action, and empowered to revisit those choices in the Maroon process they have just undergone. One master narrative does not replace another; partial truths will remain in negotiation with each other and other new possibilities.

Marshall could have ended the work with Merle and Saul's realizations and their departure from one another. However, one of the themes of the work is communal responsibility, and the crisis that faces the community shortly after Carnival enables her to demonstrate the recursive nature of the process she is describing both for individuals and for communities. As Peter Nazareth points out, "Merle's and Saul's self-acceptance is linked with their recognition of exploitation and what must be done to change society in order to end exploitation" (123).

The local sugar mill, on which the small landholders of Bournehills depend to grind their canes, has broken down after finishing the large plantation canes and before grinding theirs. Merle responds in the fashion she has become accustomed to, flying into an apocalyptic rage and denouncing the sugar mill owners, their employees and, finally, Saul himself. She no longer sees him as a human being, but addresses him as a symbol, the white man who is supposed to be able to fix everything. In effect, she reproduces his first wife's accusations and her own self-aggrandizing self-blame.

After Merle retreats into depression, Saul works with the traditional leadership of Bournehills to organize convoys to a more distant sugar mill. This move represents both his and the community's steps towards healing: Saul is not disabled by Merle's accusations, and the community re-experiences itself as descendants of Cuffee Ned, not just on Carnival day, but in response to their own needs in the present, working cooperatively to ensure mutual survival.

Merle herself is carried by the Bournehills women to her house, where she retreats to her room. Her door is guarded by Carrington, the lifetime caretaker of the house, "towering, maternal and mute"(398). She allows Saul to pass into Merle's room,

barred from his and the reader's vision until this point. There he finds Merle in a catatonic state: "She had fled completely the surface of herself for someplace deep within where nothing could penetrate" (399). Merle's numbness is iconic for the suffering of Bournehills people, and her room is iconic for the jumbled history that combines oppression and repression to produce overwhelming pain: it contains prints of slavery as a pastoral idyll overwhelmed by a depiction of a slave ship in cross-section demonstrating how to pack human beings; large clumsy antique mahogany furniture; books from her university days; and African figures and fabrics. The room is in disorder, and Saul realizes that it reflects Merle's mental state, and that of the people of Bournehills, and that its role as repository of the hemisphere's history will continue until revolt and recreation on the scale of Cuffee Ned redeems all. Merle's room echoes the chaos of Sugar's, but she has the power to reclaim at least that space; Saul leaves to reclaim his own past, passing Carrington, "her chin fallen onto great breasts that had been used, it seemed, to suckle the world." (403), a silent maternal Yemaya guardian seeking to restore her peace.

When Merle emerges from her room, she has been able to grasp the possibility that Saul has offered her, the same one that the Thirty-Mile woman offers Sixo in Beloved: he takes the pieces of her mind and gives them back to her in the right order. Her willingness to replace the old order with the new one is solidified during this last retreat, when she realizes that her condemnation of Saul at the sugar mill betrays the human relationships she claims she wants to create. Merle's empathy with the people of Bournehills is deepened by its extension to herself and to potential allies. Marshall is demonstrating that the recognition of devastation is not the end-point of the encounter

with history; rather, each individual needs to recognize their participation in that devastation and, having grasped that, to change the mode of their participation in the present, the only moment when real change is possible.

Not everyone gets out of the novel with the same grace, however. Harriet refuses to give up her privilege and her ego-investment in it. Shattered by her powerlessness as one of the mass at Carnival, she attempts to re-assert her control by getting Saul removed from the project in Bourne Island through her connections to the project's funding agency, and attempts to end his relationship with Merle by buying her off. As at the end of Beloved, wounding incidents are repeated analogously, not identically; Merle, like Sethe, responds differently to this attempt by yet another white woman to buy her: she declares her independence from Harriet's machinations, and conflates gender, racial, and colonial oppression in her resistant response.¹⁵ Saul also refuses Harriet's manipulations, and declares that he will leave her if he finds out she had anything to do with his reassignment, which of course she does. He also identifies her willfulness with her class background: "What is it with you and your kind, anyway?....If you can't have things your way, if you can't run the show, there's to be no show, is that it?....You'd prefer to see everything, including yourselves, come down in ruins rather than 'take down,' rather than not have everything your way, is that it...?" (454). And, indeed, in Harriet's all-or-nothing vision, unacknowledged by her, and so unable to be renegotiated, she winds up repeating her parents' past, going for a swim and never returning, ultimately disempowered by her privilege.

Vere has also been destroyed by his commitment to modern technological progress. He has bought a discarded German car and rebuilt it from the ground up with

dedication and commitment and despite the disbelief of his community, who regard his project with the same disdain with which they greeted the jukebox and the television. However, when the car is completed, he becomes something of a local hero, particularly to the younger boys of his area. It is Leesy, the community's voice, who senses the ultimate outcome of his single-minded dedication. At the Whitmonday Car Race after Carnival, the car shatters as Vere is driving it at high speed, and he is killed. The destruction of the automobile, and Vere with it, symbolizes the inadequacy of the wholesale adaptation of the Western triumphalist narrative by those on whose backs it has been built. Marshall writes evocatively of the car's, and Vere's, end:

The collapse was so total it seemed deliberate, planned, personally intended. It was as if the Opel, though only a machine, had possessed a mind, an intelligence, that for some reason had remained unalterably opposed to Vere....Or perhaps it had nothing to do with Vere. The collapse taking place around him, which he was helpless to stop, flowed perhaps out of a profoundly self-destructive impulse within the machine itself, and Vere, in foolishly allowing himself to be taken in by what he had believed was its promise of power, was simply a hapless victim. (366-367)

Vere's rejection of his community's values, and adoption of the master stance, is also symbolized in his own pre-Carnival rite of preparation, when he goes to see the mother of his child who died, and beats her mercilessly. In beating her, he proclaims his own liberation from the grief and loss of her and the child, but misses the point of the pig-sticking in his own community. He, like Merle and Saul, has bought into the ideology of the aggrandized individual, and wreaks vengeance as an individual right, blinded to the possibilities of mutual recognition, responsibility, or reconciliation, and literally deaf to the cries of the woman he beats. He has abandoned his community of origin's

vision, and subscribed to imperialist notions of masculinity, which in the end destroy him.

The issue of masculinities raised vis-a-vis Allen at the beginning of the novel remains unresolved at the end as well. What has shifted is his own awareness of his own sexuality. Vere's demonstrated heterosexuality on Carnival night throws into stark relief Allen's desire for him, and his death closes off the possibility of its expression. Merle recognizes Allen's depression, but Allen indeed suffers from "the love that dare not speak its name" and Merle unconsciously adds insult to injury by suggesting heterosexual marriage as a resolution to Allen's malaise.¹⁶ She is perceptive in recognizing that it is passionate relationship he craves, but cruelly mistaken in its form. Allen is thus left in limbo at the end of the novel, choosing to remain on Bourne Island, aware but not yet able to act. His Maroon rite of passage awaits his willingness and a community of recognition.

Merle recovers from her collapse after the closing of the sugar mill to recognize both the unfinishedness of her healing and the parameters within which her choices can be made. She apologizes to Saul for objectifying him in her final outburst, and shares his grief over Harriet's loss. But she declines to take paralyzing responsibility for it. Instead, she, like Saul, admits that there is mystery to human existence, factors outside of individual control or even understanding, and within those limitations, chooses to go to Uganda to attempt a reunion with her daughter. She and Saul have been both humbled and empowered, a contradiction timelessly embodied by the people of Bournehills, and finally recognized by them and the reader. At the end of the novel, Saul and Merle are freed to pursue their futures. Merle sells the oppressive contents of

her room to buy a ticket to Africa via Recife, not London, signifying her reorientation away from the imperialist center and towards a decentered world. Where Saul and Merle have found mutual redemption, Bournehills remains in its timeless state, still waiting on its future. As Marshall puts it,

Only an act on the scale of Cuffee's could redeem them. And only then would Bournehills itself, its mission fulfilled, perhaps forgo that wounding past and take on the present, the future. But it would hold out until then, resisting, defying all efforts, all the halfway measures...to reclaim it; refusing to settle for anything less than what Cuffee had demanded in his time. (402)

But Bournehills' timelessness is no longer a pathology, a fault. Rather, it is "a testimony...a reminder...a memorial" to the disrupted maternal relations of a hemisphere and a millennium still waiting to be redeemed and reconciled. In The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, Marshall has created a quest across a fictional landscape that serves as a ritual of redemption for both its characters and its readers. She has outlined a rite of passage that explicitly draws on the historical fact of marronage as the source of alternative ontological ground for present choices, and has demonstrated its possibilities psychologically, interpersonally, and communally. Finally, she has demonstrated the possibility of renewed interconnection not through the erasure of shadows and margins, but through their recognition and incorporation. Through personal disruptions, and through the communal disruption of Carnival, Marshall points to openings in the canonical or authoritative discourse where the present can be revitalized by indexical or internally-persuasive elements, and the future opened to possibilities beyond the reproduction and globalization of the plantation. In Praisesong for the Widow, Marshall makes the role of community and ritual in personal and historical redemption even more explicit. However, in the following chapter, I will offer a reading of Maryse Conde's

Heremakhonon in which the maroon rite of passage is a submerged structure, both in the novel and for the protagonist, Veronica Mercier. The absence of that explicit awareness becomes part of the struggle she undergoes to recognize her situation and claim her possibilities.

¹ Marshall herself identifies this dilemma and offers the following response to it: "I have got my feet in both camps so that I am able to understand and respond to Black American culture as well as West Indian culture. And for me, I see similarities -- they are all the same culture with some variations on the theme....This is what my work is about -- to bring about a synthesis of the two cultures and in addition, to connect them up with the African experience" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 33-34).

² See Hortense Spillers for a close reading of the novel within the framework of myth, ritual, history and ontology.

³ Missy Dehn Kubitschek convincingly argues that "Marshall's works both reinforce and critique Campbell's universalist schema" of the heroic monomyth (44), and I would add that part of that critique is the insistence of the relationship between self, history, ritual and myth.

⁴ Adam Meyer points out that "memory is crucial for members of all ethnic and minority groups, not just for Blacks, since the same process of recovery is operable for all oppressed peoples....Marshall shows in this novel...that memory is equally important for the oppressors, but that grappling with it is more difficult and may not lead to regeneration" (101).

⁵ By neocolonialism, I mean "a conjuncture in which direct political and military control has given way to abstract, semi-direct, largely economic forms of control whose linchpin is a close alliance between foreign capital and the indigenous elite" (Stam and Shohat 17).

⁶ More succinctly, Sue Greene notes "Thus in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People the children of Zion -- the blacks and the Jews -- physically become one" (166).

⁷ Greene points out that it is Saul's identification with his Jewish heritage that has drawn him to anthropology, which aligns with the figure of the Wandering Jew as a profession of traveling and outsidership (164). For a discussion of Saul's relationship to his Jewish heritage, see Meyer.

⁸ Vere's absence from the cocktail party reflects his "belonging" to Bournehills and his Aunt Leesy, not to Lyle and his crowd. He may arrive on the same plane as Saul and company, but his "place" is elsewhere.

⁹ Harriet's rejection of the group outing to Sugar's foreshadows her rejection of full participation in Carnival. Her unwillingness to be affected by ritual -- to engage in the interplay of the canonical and the indexical -- reflects the absolutism of her vision, an absolutism that feeds an apocalyptic vision of all-or-nothing at all, which culminates in her suicide. I think Marshall is suggesting here that cultures that have obliterated ritual interplay risk forgetting ways of being that allow regeneration, and that those who are privileged in certain ways, primarily material, by blind allegiance to the canonical, are dangerous to themselves and others. It is perhaps an allusion to a gendered difference in the relationship to the power that privilege is associated with that Harriet's end is suicidal, rather than her first husband's version, which is global nuclear war. For a fuller discussion of Harriet's struggle with memory, see Meyer. For her struggle with power, see Pettis.

¹⁰ Lyle's name echoes that of the British sugar producers and processors, Tate and Lyle, funders of such British institutions as the Tate Gallery. The relationship between Lyle's and Sugar's then, can be read as a pun on the "crude" or "raw" foundation of Western "civilization." For a closer examination of the relationship of slavery to British high culture, see David Dabydeen's "Art of Darkness."

¹¹ I'd like to thank Leslie-Ann Pierre for discussing the cathartic and ritual aspects of the pig-sticking as a prelude to Carnival. See also Pettis for a description of the pig-sticking as communal sacrifice.

¹² For a fictional treatment of the conversion of Carnival from community renewal to income-generating activity, see Earl Lovelace's The Dragon Can't Dance.

¹³ References to war against the Jamaican Maroons date it as occurring between either 1655 and 1739, or the late 1700's.

¹⁴ See Pettis for a discussion of the role of talk in healing among African-American women.

¹⁵ For a more detailed reading of the specific interaction between women-as-worlds embodied by Harriet and Merle, see DeLamotte.

¹⁶ Timothy Chin includes The Chosen Place, the Timeless People in a trenchant critique of the deployment of homosexuality in Caribbean fictions as a way of "naturalizing" heterosexuality as an Afrocentric stance. He accurately points out Marshall's use of gay foreigners to demonstrate neo-colonial asymmetries of power; however, I think Marshall has done something more subtle in her portrayal of Allen and

his loneliness than merely reducing it to “a kind of arrested development -- i.e. the consequence of an unresolved castration anxiety” (Chin, “‘Bullers’ and ‘Battymen’” 133). I think that, in the inadequacy of Merle’s response, Marshall is demonstrating struggles that are yet to happen, and providing that rare moment that few writers dare to expose, the admission of a failure of imagination. Faulkner offers a similar demonstration in Go Down, Moses, when he has a white character walk past a black graveyard, and realize that he does not have access to the meanings behind the fragments that decorate the graves. However, in the Marshall work we have seen characters overcome states of “arrested development.” As readers, we do not necessarily lose hope for Allen. Stonewall is around the corner. The gay liberation movement will make its own connections of the personal to the political and soon offer him a wider range of possibilities than the neo-colonial.

CHAPTER 4: HEREMAKHONON: THE UNFINISHED JOURNEY

At first glance, Maryse Conde's debut novel, Heremakhonon, would seem an unlikely choice to select for a comparative study of marronage in Black women's fiction. Veronica Mercier, Conde's protagonist, is a modern woman, who, while Caribbean, specifically Guadeloupean, is also thoroughly bourgeois and removed from personal, folk-memory, or Carnival recollections of either enslavement or marronage. In terms of economic ability and educational achievement, she is in command of her quest in ways that neither Merle nor Sethe demonstrate, and most of her quest is not conducted in the context of her likeliest community, Guadeloupe, but rather in Africa itself. Since much of the novel is set in Africa, it would seem that the discourse of marronage, emerging specifically from the history of enslavement in the New World, would be irrelevant.

However, there are two significant reasons for affiliating this work with Morrison's Beloved and Marshall's The Chosen Place, the Timeless People. The first is that Veronica shares with Sethe and Merle the difficult position of being a displaced person in her community by virtue of being a black woman who won't "know her place," a place overdetermined by the same mythic, ritual, historical, and ontological discourses of the dominant subculture as theirs. Like Sethe and Merle, Veronica represents transgressive principles that violate the authoritative norms internalized by her community of Caribbean people of African descent. She suspects that there is a narrative in which she is not merely transgressive, but represents some creative potential. However, she does not know what that narrative is, and is uncertain about its existence.

Both Sethe and Merle find their way through the maze of obstacles that separate them from their inner selves and from participation in the world via confession, Sethe to Beloved, Merle to Saul. Each finds a dialogical partner who enables them to dive beneath the surface of authoritative discourse and their refusal of it, to a liminal space where they can remember what they have been forced to repress without being destroyed. Their quests enable them to recall their agency -- both participatory and resistant -- vis-a-vis authoritative discourse, and empower them to claim an internally-persuasive discourse that is a creative recombination of elements of the authoritative with the previously unknown. This process becomes complicated by multiplicity: multiple authoritative discourses, multiple internally-persuasive discourses in play on intra-psychic, inter-personal, and inter-cultural levels. In effect, Sethe and Merle arrive at a relationship to creolization as a necessary condition for their agency in the world.

Veronica, more empowered by class and education than either Sethe or Merle, and thus superficially already in a position of agency, resists confession by claiming an innocence neither Sethe nor Merle allow themselves. Eventually, in the course of the novel, Veronica too comes to realize that her need is also confessional, or discursive, and so she shares with Sethe and Merle the struggle to claim from authoritative discourse an internally-persuasive discourse that both restores her agency in the world and renders her "ordinary," not exaggeratedly debased or aggrandized. I argue that it is Veronica's quest for the reclamation of language and the ability to name herself that serves as an example of marronage.

There is, however, a second purpose for including Heremakhonon in this study, and that is for the purpose of both refining and expanding the use of marronage as a

metaphor for psycho-historical forces. Of the three novels discussed here, it is Conde's work that has elicited the most literary criticism focused on aspects of liminality and marronage.¹ Part of this stems from the more overt deployment of marronage in Francophone Caribbean literature and criticism than in the Anglophone, via the works of Aime Cesaire, Edouard Glissant, and others.² Part of it stems from retrospective analysis of her early works in light of her explicit description of marronage in later works like I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem. These parts add up to a larger recognition: that Conde, in her first novel, reconfigures the concept of marronage in contemporary experience by depicting it as a psycho-historical process as needed in the present as it was under the overt form of domination that was slavery. Sethe's literal status as a fugitive is reconfigured in Veronica's exile; Carnival is reconfigured as a direct uprising against authoritarian rule; the forces of the plantation discourse find parallels both in assertions of African patriarchal supremacy disguised as a counter-discourse, and in Caribbean class rigidities that reflect internalized Eurocentric supremacy. By demonstrating Veronica's experience of marronage in an African context, marronage is released from suggesting a lost African innocence, and recovered as a contemporary mode of struggle born out of plantation oppression and as capable of revitalization as the subsequent configurations of plantation capitalism have been. That Veronica fails to recognize this possibility until the end of the novel supports my assertion that the "Middle Passage back" to psycho-historical wounded sites is not a geographical adventure, but a psychological call enhanced or hindered by the response of one's cultural milieu. Veronica's struggle through known narratives to the unknown and the subjugated is unaided by folk recollections of other such attempts, either in forms like

Baby Suggs' call in the wilderness, or the Carnival re-telling of Cuffee Ned's uprising. Her cultural milieu not only disables her from clearing a space for herself in the world, it forbids it, thus offering her no guidance. That she eventually recognizes her own possibilities is testament to the evidence of marronage as psycho-historical oppositional and creative process. Veronica's journey through liminality is hindered by her allegiance to notions of power embedded in the authoritative discourse that she claims to resist. Her first struggle is to recognize her role in maintaining her own stasis.

The Liminal Process in *Heremakhonon*

In both The Chosen Place, the Timeless People and Beloved, the start of each protagonist's journey through liminality is a negative assertion: she refuses to accept given conditions as the ground of her being. These given conditions have been described as a structure: the normalized expectation and consent to one's location within authoritative discourse. Daryl Dance describes this state of refusal in psycho-historical terms:

[such a protagonist] becomes aware of color and class divisions in her family and in her community, recognizes the "shame" and "filth" and precariousness of being female....[which] adds up to more than our heroine can bear, and she suffers total psychic collapse. Her condition is sometimes described as a loss or lack of balance....We recognize that a lengthy series of events in her life and the life of her family and community created the malaise that affects her. We trace a series of efforts to define herself, escape herself, and give meaning to her life through sexual repression and sexual capitulation, through education, through involvement in idealistic programs designed to uplift the people. (Dance 170-171)

As Heremakhonon opens, the reader meets Veronica literally on a border, passing through airport Customs in the unnamed African country that is the setting for the real-time of the novel. She is making yet another effort to define herself, escape herself, and

give meaning to her life, this time by coming to teach in a newly-independent West African nation. She is caught, like Sethe and Merle, in the struggle to insert herself into history. And, like Sethe and Merle, she is already caught in history/ies, some of which she acknowledges, and others she attempts to avoid at all costs.

The account of her voyage through liminality, then, can hardly be linear. As readers, we meet Veronica crossing a national border, a geographic border, and entering a liminal zone of contested meanings that immediately throw her into the space of memory. Once extracted from the jumble of her recollections, aptly depicted as barely under her ironic control, her personal history resembles Dance's description above. She begins the novel embarking on a journey into the future where she is determined to discover a mythical, empowering past, but personal history and present events insist on disrupting her quest for greater authority in the world.

Like Sethe and Merle, Veronica is the offspring of problematic birthlines. Her parents are bourgeois, their children negresses rouges. She herself is born on Mardi Gras, under the sign of Carnival disruption. In a sardonic description of her family's, and by extension her culture's, obsession with skin color, Veronica describes seeing in church the family whose great-grandfather had fathered (illegitimately, of course) her grandmother, bringing lighter skin into the family line: "I'm sure they didn't know that a drop of their grandfather's sperm had started our family line. We, on the other hand, had mounted and embalmed it" (13).

Veronica has been exiled to Paris from Guadeloupe by her family for transgressing sexually with Jean-Marie, a member of an even lighter-skinned family. Sexual transgression is an abstract and clinical description for what she herself calls her

first love and is forced to defend, even to herself, as not a result of color envy. Her violation has alerted her family to the danger she is in from not knowing her place. In their eyes, and her own, she has two stories available to her, in her place: study hard and marry well -- meaning of her color and class -- or become a "Marilisse", a whore, which is the only relationship someone of her color can have with someone of her first love's color. This obsession with shades of darkness and their significance for relationships, both with herself and others, propel her first to France, where she has an affair with another Jean, Jean-Michel, a white man. In Paris, she and Jean-Michel are also not free to celebrate their relationship: they are judged through the lens of race by both the members of Veronica's family, and the Black Power militants at a Caribbean festival. Frustrated, Veronica propels herself once more to an unnamed, newly-independent Islamic African country as a visiting professor of philosophy. She has come to find her "nigger with ancestors" who is not living what she describes as the imitative life of her Guadeloupean people, "Grandsons of slaves dancing the minuet and despising those who did not have as much luck or skill in the race for 'humanity'" (25). She is blunt about the symbolic absence she has come to fill: "Had the Mandingo marabout [her epithet for her father] bounced me more often on his knee and called me his little pearl, like Aida and Jalla [her sisters], I would most likely not be here today. He is the one with whom I have an account to settle"(24). Her father, and her search for a better replacement father, represent allegiance to the patriarchal organizing principles she claims to have rejected because they have rejected her. She seeks to revitalize the discourse that has oppressed her without questioning whether there might be an alternative discourse available.

From within the structuring reflection of a Eurocentric patriarchal order, Veronica is seeking to be “free”. This is the quality she associates with her first love, Jean-Marie, more than any other. At this point, “freedom” represents for her spontaneity (running away from a baptism), the right to defy conventions that don’t express inner states (Jean-Marie’s refusal to attend church), and liberation from the obsession of proving one’s humanity to the same people who define one as not-human (piano recitals, celebrations of metropolitan accomplishments, Black “firsts”).

Veronica’s idea of freedom is embodied and practiced by male figures; the notion of female power doesn’t occur to her. Veronica’s experience of oppression is not through its direct enforcement by white French colonialists; it is as a structure of mind and psyche internalized by middle- and upper-class Guadeloupeans and carefully policed in the family and society against disruption by either working-class or internal dissension.

Veronica seeks out liminal spaces within this rigid structure. Her love for the mulatto, Jean-Marie, creates an uproar both within his family and her own. They meet at her Aunt Paula’s hotel. Aunt Paula is a marginalized member of the family, exiled within Guadeloupe for her defiant sexual mores. Veronica remembers that she resisted patriarchal Eurocentric authority by claiming a female, sexualized space with a partner who embodies Eurocentric patriarchy, but has no interest in its enforcement. However, she doesn’t seek to emulate Aunt Paula’s defiance; she wants freedom as she sees Jean-Marie practice it. What she refuses to realize is that Jean-Marie’s freedom is enabled by the very structures she claims to resist. She repeats this pattern, of desire and blindness, in Paris, with another Jean, Jean-Michel, a white Parisian who picks her up on the street. As Elizabeth Wilson notes,

The journey to France, like the journey to Africa in Maryse Conde's... novel,...becomes at once a physical and a psychological voyage, the journey of an alienated, homeless individual in search of the motherland, of a people in exile who have three potential "homelands": the Caribbean, Europe, and Africa; of a people deprived of their identity who have a triple heritage: African, European, and Antillean. (48)

But France is not far enough to fill the symbolic absence. Veronica's lover, Jean-Michel, finds her background amusing, and does not use her for political or other external ends. However, she remains a "Marilisse" in the eyes of her regularly visiting family and other Caribbean people she encounters, who have only one narrative for the relationship between a black woman and a white man, in which the woman is inevitably a whore. They all challenge her sense of her relationship with Jean-Michel by judging it as a repetition of the plantation relationship between the master and the female slave, only revised to blame the female by characterizing her as a whore for her participation. In Paris, preeminent source of her dislocation, she and the other Antilleans find that "by isolating themselves, by fleeing, they do not need to, and indeed cannot, rid themselves of their distorted values and point of view" (Wilson 48).

Veronica tries to believe in her own freedom through her affiliation with Jean-Michel's. While she seems to have accepted the unacceptability of her relationship with Jean-Michel, her passivity is challenged by the gaze of the African street-cleaner outside her apartment building, who refuses to feed her neurosis or self-deprecation. He is the only one who "would look at Jean-Michel and me, no hatred, no anger, no intolerance, no amazement" (14). Veronica projects onto the street-cleaner the possibility of a free space in which she, and her relationships, are ordinary, released from the histories of imperialism, colonialism and slavery that condemn her choices. She dreams about him

with increasing urgency until she decides to seek the place ~~he~~ ^{she} comes from, metaphorically and literally, for herself. Thus it is from liminal spaces in her own life - the margins of consciousness and an anonymous street-cleaner -- that Veronica finds the clues to her possible reconciliation with herself.

In response to the street-cleaner's call, Veronica accepts a position as a philosophy professor in the unnamed African country. More overtly than Sethe or Merle, Veronica has rejected the myth of a debased Africa that she has been given, and is searching for an Africa she can love unconditionally.

This Africa is equally as illusory as the image she is rejecting. It is the Africa of the Negritude movement, an idealization complementary to that of the Europe of imperialism. Negritude's strongest articulation emerged in the 1930's and 1940's through the intellectual productions of exiled Africans and Caribbean people of African descent who met in the metropolitan capitals of England and Europe and found common ground in their yearning for a decolonized identity. In response to the binary oppositions that assigned debased meanings to qualities associated with blackness -- intuition, artistic creativity, religious pantheism, emotion -- they assigned positive values and meanings to those qualities. The affirmative quality of Negritude was an important impetus in the historical moment of its articulation. It helped to provide the ideological ground for resistance to colonialism that resulted in the political independence of many African and Caribbean nations, and the dismantling of direct colonialism throughout the world. However, it was also soon critiqued as a relatively simplistic model of the distribution of qualities among human beings and cultures. Nigerian poet and playwright Wole Soyinka is recognized as a strong critical voice

against Negritude. He asserts that Negritude reinforces the false binary between people of European and African descent, and supports monolithic, if complementary, constructions of both. Soyinka's critique challenges simple binary models of culture by positing a model of complexity, where the analytic and the intuitive, the rational and the emotional, are in interactive relationships with one another within all human cultures (129).

Veronica, however, is seeking a Negritude version of Africa. She is explicit about what she both wants and wants to escape: "And that's why I chose this country, supposed to be untouched by the West, far from the din of the Caravelles" (20). Veronica's reference to the ships of Christopher Columbus affirms her desire to escape their historical consequences: imperialism, slavery, and colonialism. At the same time she is imagining an Africa where the qualities of greed, raw power, and domination do not exist.

Veronica seeks a "pure" past for herself in a country whose present conditions belie that possibility. She is particularly in search of the Mandingo marabout, an epithet that

links her family immediately and ironically with a mythical, non-slave African aristocracy to which Veronica believes Ibrahima Sory [Minister of Defense who becomes Veronica's lover] belongs -- and by association, her family as well. The repetition of this sobriquet aggrandizes M. Mercier [her father]....the epithet reifies the parent thereby absolving the daughter from remarking the similarity between parent and offspring. (Clark, "Diaspora Literacy" 307)

In short, Veronica is in search of a self-aggrandizing myth to compensate for the diminishing stories available to her as a black woman in colonized Guadeloupe. She is willing to ignore all aspects of the African present and past that do not correspond to her

desire. However, immediately on arrival she is offered guides to liminal spaces outside of patriarchal order in the forms of the remarkably ordinary Saliou and Birame III, the former the director and the latter a student at the Institute where Veronica is to teach. They attempt to initiate her in her present circumstances, by showing her the town, the conditions of the people, and the corruption of the hypocritical nation-state. Veronica's response is dismissive: "Don't they know I don't care a damn for their town? I'm not an ordinary tourist. I don't care a damn for the women lined up at the well with their babies on their backs" (9). She recognizes the parallels between African and Afro-Caribbean conditions : "Poverty and filth are nothing new to me. I've been looking at them ever since I was born, gazing through the half open window of my father's car" (9). She chooses to ignore the implication that if these conditions are comparable, then the conditions of the elite might be comparable as well.

Shortly after her arrival, Veronica becomes sexually involved with Ibrahima Sory, Minister of Defense and the Interior, colloquially referred to as "the assassin" by Saliou and Birame III. Veronica prefers to characterize him as her "nigger with ancestors". Veronica believes she has found her Mandingo marabout in Sory, but their affair is characterized by her self-diminishment in a recurring position of waiting for him to call her, to send for her, to come back to her. Their relationship is strictly sexual; if anything, this is the relationship in which she plays the "Marilisse," living in a villa that he has arranged for her, and at his beck and call. She recognizes that what she has found reflects the limits of what she was looking for:

Do I love this man or a certain idea I have to have of Africa? When you think about it, it's the same thing. Loving a man is the myth you create around him. Or with him in mind. In my case perhaps it's a bit more

serious because the idea I have is so vital and yet so vague, so blurred. What is this idea? That of an Africa, of a black world that Europe did not reduce to a caricature of itself. That might say: 'When the West was in a mess, we governed our peoples with wisdom, we created, we innovated.' (77-78)

Veronica is desperate to believe that her need can be resolved outside history, in bed, with this man. Yet almost every action she takes, for reasons she considers strictly personal, contains historical, political consequences that her lover himself warns her he cannot always remedy. She is "on a dangerous path, I know: I project my personal frustration onto the country and its people" (87). She consistently ignores Saliou's advice, claiming it will violate her "objectivity", a European value she is loathe to relinquish but, even more ironically, hardly ever successfully deploys. Having identified her search as a quest for a "nigger with ancestors," and considering it satisfied in the person of Ibrahima Sory, she can only express her dissatisfaction in self-degradation: "I'm telling you I'm fated. I touch a rose and it turns into a cactus. My fingers bleed....I'm a down-and-out traveler looking for her identity. Hooligans have stripped me of my papers. I'm lying in a stream, my dress pulled up over my belly" (88-89).

Because Veronica is so powerfully insistent on the terms of her quest, and has superimposed those terms over the possibilities available to her, she does not know whether to believe Sory or Saliou concerning the murder in prison of Birame III. Saliou insists on it; Sory denies it and laughs at her for believing Saliou. Her ambivalence echoes Bourne Island's reluctant participation at Carnival in the story of Cuffee Ned's rebellion, and Sethe's hesitant affirmation at the end of Beloved: "Me?" Veronica also has access to the means to validate reality for herself: Sory offers to take her to see for herself. But she refuses; she does not want to confront the possibility that her

investment in patriarchal power in the person of Sory implicates her in the murder of her young student-friend.

Caught between two male narratives of reality, between which she cannot choose, Veronica continues to seek liminal spaces in both her memory and her current circumstances. The structure of the novel reflects this quest. The first section reflects the separation stage of the rite of passage: Not only does the reader learn of Veronica's separation from Guadeloupe and her family, and from Paris and her lover, but also of Veronica's dissociation from herself and her present. Veve Clark has also noted this aspect of the novel's structure: "In part one, when Veronica should be assimilating a new present, she retreats repeatedly to the past" (Clark, "Diaspora Literacy" 305).

In part one, Veronica meets most of the characters who will guard the boundaries of her journey: the Frenchman Jean Lefevre and Adama, the hotel owner and his African companion; Saliou and his wife Omou Hawa; Omou Hawa's sister Ramatoulaye and brother Ibrahima Sory; and Birame III, her Marxist student. On arrival at the country's airport, passing through customs, she invokes the image of Legba, Vodoun keeper of the crossroads, to open the door for her to cross through, the traditional opening of Vodoun ceremonies (7). However, the only one she is interested in is Sory. He moves her from the hotel to a villa in the wealthy district of the town, and into his bed at his villa, Heremakhonon, the "Welcome House" of the novel's title. "Here, all is silence," Veronica notes. "Heremakhonon is an island, off the course of the Santa Maria -- no syphilis for the future Red Skins" (28). Again, she attempts to locate her escape off the route of Columbus' journey, here described as the beginning of the end for the indigenous peoples of the Americas. She also reverses the traditional

narrative that designates the Americas as the source of syphilis, rather than Europe, invoking the complex of sexual need, coercion, and risk that characterized both the encounter in the Americas and the relationship she forms with Sory.

Thus, in part one, Veronica has begun her journey, but it is, in effect, immediately arrested by her fixation with patriarchal power as it is embodied in Sory. Veronica recognizes in him her image of Oroonoko, British writer Aphra Behn's imprisoned African prince from her 17th century novel of the same name. Veronica identifies Oroonoko/Sory as her ideal confessor; she imagines that she will tell him of her life, and, like Sixo's Thirty-Mile Woman in Beloved, he will take the pieces of her mind and put them in the right order. But Sory refuses to be her interlocutor. He only wants her sexually. As Lemuel Johnson points out, "Caribbean Veronica's investment in an ancestral phallocentricity, as the means of getting through to the 'other side,' only results in a myth-making and myth-mocking copulation--in the course of which, once more, she must shake her arse if she is to save her soul"(134).

In the second section of the novel, Clark notes that Veronica "comes into the present, but is confused by virtue of her previous remoteness from current dilemmas." ("Diaspora Literacy" 305). Structure has collapsed around her: the Institute where she teaches has closed as the result of a series of small student uprisings, Sory is an unreliable yet demanding partner, Saliou learns of her affair and berates her for it, and she cannot decide what to believe about young Birame III's fate. She retreats into efforts to distract herself from the reality of the present through heavy drinking with Jean Lefevre and Adama, or lounging with Ramatoulaye. When those efforts fail, she attempts to remain neutral, yet participatory, by working with Dr. Yehogul at his

makeshift clinic for mothers and children. She imagines there is a non-aligned space available to her where she can remain an observer of her own life and the world around her through humanitarian work. When Yehogul tells her that he might be deported, she is once more awakened to her naiveté. "My revolt is a lure," Veronica admits. "In fact, I'm not escaping from anything. Through Ibrahima Sory I'm trying to get back to them on an idealized level" (105) where "them" is her own origins, which she now recognizes are in the Caribbean. At the end of this part two, Veronica finally recognizes her own displacement, and the impossibility of its resolution in Africa. "I'm an arum in a vase. I say arum because the plant is exotic like me. It doesn't grow here" (104).

Part three is Veronica's attempt at incorporation, the third stage of the rite of passage. But she is not attempting to incorporate a place. Rather, what she seeks to incorporate is a way of being in the world that allows for all of her past and the present situation. Her guide through this morass is Pierre-Gilles, an expatriate homosexual who also teaches at the Institute. The other expatriates have "clearcut opinions on things and people. Pierre-Gilles is the only one with whom I have any similarities" (107).

Veronica begins to recognize the value of liminality and reassigned meanings in her friendship with Pierre-Gilles who, as a privileged European male who is homosexual, has a complicated relationship to patriarchal power. Pierre-Gilles (finally, a man who is not a Jean!) serves as Veronica's bisexual, shape-shifting protector and guide, a few steps further down the path of blurred lines and thus able to support Veronica's anguish as a necessary stage of growth.

When Veronica attempts to insist that she, Pierre-Gilles, and Alfa, Pierre-Gilles' houseboy and reluctant lover are all victims, Alfa disabuses her of their unity. From his

perspective, she and Pierre-Gilles belong together: “The whites are crazy” (109). She amends his assertion to “The whites and their disciples. Or the whites and their creatures” (109). Alfa has other struggles, to feed, educate, and clothe himself, that Veronica has deliberately avoided taking into consideration.

Veronica begins to more actively seek out liminal spaces of her own choosing. She makes Pierre-Gilles take her to a nightclub, the Miami Club. Reminiscent of Sugar’s in The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, the Miami Club “is at the exit to the town at the end of a long gravel drive”(110). The patrons of the club are also betwixt and between: “They are somewhere between the masses lining up at the water tap or the dispensaries, for whom French is a totally foreign language and whose world is limited to the frontiers of the country, and the minority who lays down the laws or contests them”(110). The music is an “Africanized version of Rhythm n’ Blues” (110). She encounters a young prostitute she has met before, Kadidiatou, who attempts to procure Veronica for Bake, a powerful northerner. She flirts with a young shoe salesman, who takes her side when she refuses Bake. Her carelessness about consequences leads to a fight at the bar and to the arrest of Amar, the shoe salesman.

Her effort at escapism has failed. Even in the liminal, creolized environment of the Miami Club, patriarchal power relationships continue to prevail and determine her fate. The following day, she is summoned to Ibrahima Sory’s house, and he informs her that Bake has visited him, unaware of her relationship with him, to demand punishment for Amar, and that he will grant his wish. In punishing Amar, he is attempting to punish Veronica also, for transgressing beyond the limits he has assigned her. She half-heartedly seeks reassurance from Saliou, who is stunned that she could care so little for

Birame III's fate, and so much for a nightclub flirt. That she is concerned at all reflects that she is now trying to take responsibility for her actions. However, Saliou offers no reassurance, and so she withdraws again to cooperation with Sory. But now she notices flaws and begins searching for weak points in his image. She finds one in his failure to prevent his sister's marriage to Saliou. He boasts that he and two other men beat up Saliou to frighten him off. She only recognizes him as a bully. "Nothing to boast about! Three against one!"(124). The limits of patriarchal power are becoming apparent to her. So are the possibilities of feminine defiance.

The last liminal geographical location in the text is one of the small islands off the coast of Africa where Veronica goes to escape the public holiday celebrating the founding of the nation. The house on the island is lent to her by another liminal couple, Jean Lefevre the French hotel owner and his African partner Adama. She is finally willing to incorporate her present experience with her past, to see herself as the creator of her narrative, rather than seeking an authoritative discourse into which she can insert herself. She integrates past and present in her discussion during the boat ride to the small island: "Is it the present? Or is it the past?"(127). Her memories of being sent as a child to Marie Galante, off the coast of Guadeloupe, flow in and out of her experience off the coast of Africa. This element of her journey can be read as her "Middle Passage back" via a literal sea-journey. It is the analogous repetition of the boat ride to Marie-Galante that causes her to remember her "ground zero", in Hortense Spillers' words, the originating moment of her quest: "We did not exist. Out with it! Out with it! It was here that everything began"(129). On Marie-Galante, her Black family strove for

recognition from the mulattos, with stern, silent determination. Both her family and the mulattos shared class status; it was their color that distinguished them.

These were not my people. I could feel it. Pretending to ignore me they despised me with all their might. Why? Because their black blood was so diluted, even non-existent, whereas mine swelled in my veins and circulated underground, secretly yet ever-present, in my plump, well-fed, well-cared for little eight year old body. I observed. All the women seemed more beautiful than my mother, who was just as well dressed, however, in raw silk and a capeline. I can remember it as if it were yesterday. They appeared lovelier because of their slightly coppery, slightly tanned skin, their soft wavy hair spared by the straightener, heated over coals and dipped -- ssh! -- in petroleum jelly. They seemed more attractive because they were light-skinned, possessing therefore what my mother lacked to be perfectly beautiful and to be worthy of appearing in this light, square room with its pastel colors. A little girl recited a poem on the stage. Her light-brown ringlets glinted in the sun and I desperately wanted to resemble her. To be this little girl. To be. And yet I was ashamed. Ashamed of this desire that my whole education claimed to demolish. We have nothing to envy them, I was repeatedly told. Nothing? Then why imitate them? Imitate them up to a certain point? Imitate them, equal them, rival them, except on this point? It was beyond understanding. I was lost. In the midst of these gracious and despising faces. Gracious and hateful. To whom I was attracted, yet forced to hate. (129-130)

What Veronica realizes is that she has been searching for a gaze that recognizes her, and that it is not available from her family, from the mulattos, from any of those who she has both admired, desired, and despised in turn. Her invisibility has been overdetermined by mythical, historical, and psychological structures that she too has incorporated. With the recognition of the moment of invisibility, her rebellions with Jean-Marie in Guadeloupe, and Jean-Michel in Paris, become remarkably tame. She imagines a greater rebellion:

This doll's baptism was merely a personal revenge. The achievement of a dream buried under years of education and instruction, which turned out to be strong and alive. I found myself back at the Anne-Marie Javouhey hall, but no longer at the back....At the front. The chosen child, led up to the platform, decorated with a silver-starred blue cloth, by one of those little, green-eyed mulattos who had so cruelly ignored me years before....(130)

Veronica is ready to put herself center stage in her own life, to grant herself the recognition denied by her social milieu and psycho-historical forces.

It is on the island that Veronica grants herself permission to review her actions with herself as agent, rather than passive or covert participant. Her location on the island brings together both popular meanings of “maroon” -- abandonment in isolation and refuge in the wilderness. Asa Hilliard makes a useful distinction between escape and marronage: “Simple escape and simple freedom were liberty without aim. Maroonage, on the other hand, was freedom for the purpose of survival and cultural continuity” (54). Conde has Veronica explicitly de-romanticize her marronage and assign herself agency: “there are times when you are glad to get away from everything. It’s not the romantic idea of solitude -- silence -- far from city noises. No. But you’ve collected facts from the corners of your life, like a housewife picking up dust from under the furniture. And you want to get them out into the open” (131). Conde significantly uses a feminized image, the “housewife”, to represent Veronica’s active excavation of her experience and use of her liminal space. The image also reflects the available domains of action for Veronica as a black woman. The space of public discourse, the city, has not provided openings or opportunities for her active engagement with her history. There, where she is a professor in public life, she inhabits a patriarchal discourse as an empty vessel. In that context, she has sought her personal narrative in the designated feminine space of the bedroom, trying to demand recognition from the patriarchal gaze of Ibrahima Sory.

On the island, on the other hand, Veronica is only accompanied by the children of her (male) housekeeper. She has abandoned adult male interlocutors who might “seduce” her into giving up her search. In their absence, she both confronts and grants herself the recognition she has been waiting for. She recognizes those aspects of herself that she has sought to project on to her father as despised qualities and on Ibrahima Sory as desirable ones: cruelty and indifference disguised as subservience in the former and freedom in the latter. She recognizes their interrelatedness, and her internalization of them, in her behavior towards Cecilia Theodoros, the dark girl from the country who attended her school, and who she persecuted in the schoolyard. In the relative peace of the island, Veronica’s reflects that “Children load an object, an insignificant creature, with symbolism...That was me, me. The part of me I hated.” (132). I read the repetition of “me, me” as Veronica’s recognition that (a) Cecilia embodies her own despised blackness and that (b) her demonstration of arrogance and cruelty towards Cecilia is also self-imposed. “The part of me I hated,” then, is the interrelationship between subservience and cruelty inherited from the aspect of Caribbean history that reflects the meeting of African and European cruelties in the slave trade. These distortions have been reproduced during the struggle of the enslaved to become free people within an ongoing context of imperialism and neo-colonialism. She, in turn, has reproduced them in her entrapment in the authoritative discourse of “white/male=free” and “black/female=slave.” What she uncovers is that escaping the second term means remembering or creating new ways of being if it is not to recreate the oppressive terms that have constructed her dilemma from the beginning. She finally recognizes the failure of her attempt to create “black/female=free” through her affair with Ibrahima

Sory. As she puts it, "I'm the one who wants to blow the third affair out of all proportion. Me alone" (132). She has been looking for the recognition of her freedom from those she perceives (accurately) as withholding it, but she has believed (mistakenly) that a racial affinity will lead them to voluntarily relinquish the privilege that accrues to them as a result.

Veronica's reflections, on the island reminiscent of Marie-Galante, demonstrate Victor Turner's assertion that "there is analogy, not repetition," in personal and historical circumstances. As she reconciles herself to her own role in what she remembers, she is also able to make a psychic reconciliation with her relationship with Jean-Michel, her Paris lover. Literally afloat in the ocean off the coast of Africa -- "Naturally it's the reason I'm here, up to my neck in water, my feet brushing the sand" (132) -- she reflects that he was the one likeliest to be analogous to the slavemaster -- "it should count for more, symbolically"(132). But at the level of feeling in her own narrative of the relationship, he was the one who was "a lover, a friend as well as a companion" (132), a foreshadowing of her eventual return to Paris. Her sea-bath is also the conclusion of her sea-journey, and the chapter ends with maternal images: "The sea is blue like a child's drawing. And warm. Like a doe rabbit's belly....I climb out of the water" (132).

Pierre-Gilles, her expatriate neighbor, comes to visit her on the island and show her the next step. His lover Amar has left him to marry a village girl, and Veronica recognizes in Pierre-Gilles the simultaneity of both recognizing suffering and its end. She comments on the end of his affair, hers, and the failure of her efforts to discover the Africa of Negritude: "The terrible thing with these ends of affairs is that you know that

one day the suffering will come to an end. That you are surreptitiously imagining the next affair and already curious and impatient for it to happen” (134). Both the future and the present open up to Veronica, and she is able to think of Birame III and her parents with clarity and appreciation. She surrenders her ancestral quest: “I didn’t find my ancestors. Three and a half centuries have separated me from them. They didn’t recognize me any more than I recognized them. All I found was a man with ancestors who’s guarding them jealously for himself and wouldn’t dream of sharing them with me” (136). Her quest for pure origins has resulted in her reclamation of her Caribbean self:

I’m an ambiguous animal, half fish, half bird, a new style of bat. A false sister. A false foreigner. It would have to start all over again from the beginning. I got off to a bad start in this country. I should have become interested in what was going on around me. Try to understand...Could I? I could have perhaps, if I could have forgotten myself, but I couldn’t. (137)

Rather than forgetting herself, Veronica has remembered herself, like Merle, like Sethe.

Symbolically and psychically reborn, Veronica is portrayed as exercising her new-found agency in the last chapters of the novel. Arrested on her return to the mainland for not having her identity papers, rather than remaining passively afloat, she demands to be taken to Sory. He releases her, but advises her to stay at his villa, Heremakhonon. She is finally paying attention to current events: the previous day’s celebration of the dictatorship has been bombed, Saliou has been arrested, and the streets are filled with soldiers. She goes to Heremakhonon, where Sory surprises her and urges her to stay. He also surprises her by noting that he can’t order her, because he would expect her to defy an order. She is not accustomed to being viewed as independent-minded.

They go to bed. This time, Veronica is not attempting to lose herself in his embrace. Rather, she is confronted by unresolved pluralities: images of the detained Saliou, images of a man leaping out of a helicopter to devour her, interrupting and being interrupted by her physical pleasure. This time, the satisfaction she derives from sex with Sory is that she has delayed his meeting with the dictator: “I have inflicted a defeat on Mwalimwana in my fashion” (144). Veronica has moved from claiming her rights to using them for resistance. Rather than looking elsewhere for an interpretation of her feelings, she is assigning their meanings.

As the reality of the political dynamics of her situation become clearer to her, they also change. She confronts Sory for the murder of Birame III and he hits her. But he also attempts to justify himself in her eyes by arranging for her to visit the work camp where he claims Birame III is being held. Veronica briefly savors this taste of power, but capitulates on inquiring for Saliou, who has been briefly released, then rearrested. It is Dr. Yehogul, on the eve of his deportation, who urges her to use her connection to Sory to try to see Saliou. Instead, images of the imprisoned Saliou interrupt her lovemaking with Sory.

Throughout this section, Veronica is torn between past and present. She is beginning to recognize that the ancestors she first wanted, then surrendered to Sory, remain her ancestors, and demanding ones at that:

Yes, my ancestors are playing a dirty trick on me. They are laying a trap. They are making me choose between the past and the present. Take sides in this country's drama. As if they too are fed up with my objectivity....A pack of ancestors who are torturing me, that's what I've found. (161).

Veronica, having traveled through the liminal zone of her past and her consciousness, is beginning to recognize that the freedom she has sought is not freedom from choice, or the automatic entitlement of patriarchal power, but freedom to choose. However, her recognition comes too late. Saliou is killed in prison, although the official account is that he has committed suicide. Veronica recognizes the limits of her participation in the affairs of this country, and plans her departure. Before she leaves, though, she longs for her personal rebirth and her new-found choices to find allies in the resistance of the people:

I am convinced that if that night [after Saliou's murder] the town hadn't slept, if men, women and youngsters had come out of their huts, I would certainly have marched with them. Their determination would have given me strength. Is that what would have happened? I shall never know....And here I am. Face to face with myself. (175-176)

Veronica's call for revolution resonates with her birth at Mardi Gras. But what she also realizes is that she would have had to have been born differently to be a different person. Her reconciliation with her past is also her reconciliation with history and herself. Despite the efforts of the dictatorship to render Saliou's life meaningless, she knows that it was significant. The ironic ending of the novel: "One day I'll have to break the silence. I'll have to explain" (176) recursively locates her future actions in the novel the reader has just finished.

Both Veronica's and Saliou's attempted erasures are reversed by the novel. The Black woman and the revolutionary are allied and revealed to one another: "He had a following, an importance I never suspected, blinded as I was by the mediocrity of his mode of living and his insignificant personality" (170). He, too, has been her guide to the ancestors, but made invisible to her within authorized patriarchal discourse. To the

degree that he has been invisible to her, she has been invisible to herself. But now she needs no “proof”; “I feel it. Therefore I know” (170). Finally, too late, she longs to be a participant in the present, but she still needs a group to move with:

But the night is persistent. Thick....Perhaps it will generate courage. Perhaps it will generate strength. If they come out, I'll join them. I've hesitated too long. I've played my little doubting Thomas. I wanted proof, proof. Enough talk. I'll join them. I've lost enough time. (171)

But there is no mass action, that night. The proof she has been seeking has been continuously evident in the country she now leaves, in Guadeloupe, and in the Paris to which she returns. She may now be able to perceive it. She is no longer blinded by “men, leaders, [who] have climbed platforms and promised wonders to others” (155) or her “ancestors [who] led me on” (176). She returns to Paris open to complexity, a complexity the narrative skates across in its complicated allusionary technique, but which Veronica herself has not been able to connect with creatively until near the end.

Veronica, then, undergoes a rite of passage characterized by separation, liminality, and incorporation, at least on the psychic level, and at the end of the novel she is calling for a community with which to incorporate. A significant part of this process is concerned with naming and assigning meaning to past events. These events are presented chaotically at the beginning of the novel, but eventually incorporated into a narrative that enables Veronica's becoming, or active agency in the world. The next section will discuss more closely the contention between authoritative and internally-persuasive discourses in the course of Veronica's quest.

Authoritative and Internally-persuasive Discourses: Through Legba to Yemaya

The primary epistemological shift that I have been analyzing in this study has been from a state of “being,” in a fixed position within authoritative discourse, to a state of “becoming” that participates in the negotiation of authoritative and internally-persuasive discourses. I have argued that this move reflects a reorientation of consciousness from Western materialistic certainties towards an African cosmological perspective. I have noted the urgency of this reorientation for the positionality of women of African descent in the Americas, discursively trapped by race and gender as everyone else’s other and thus compelled to look outside of authoritative discourse for meaning and ways of being. I have described this process as one of ritual liminality, depicted in selected fictions as a quest that can be read through the lens of the distinct stages of a rite of passage: separation, liminality, and reincorporation. This process of ritual liminality has been described as analogous to marronage, the claiming of marginal space by self-emancipated men and women of African descent during the era of enslavement. In Beloved and The Chosen Place, the Timeless People, marronage has been depicted as both historical event and psychological process. However, in Heremakhonon there is no explicit reference to historical marronage. Rather, the protagonist, Veronica, undergoes a process of psychological change that is comparable to that of Sethe and Merle in the other novels, and is recognizable as marronage. Like maroons, Veronica learns to distinguish between what bell hooks calls “that marginality which is imposed by oppressive structures and that marginality one chooses as site of resistance -- as location of radical openness and possibility.” hooks also notes that “we come to this space through suffering and pain, through struggle” (“Choosing the

Margin" 153), an apt description of the journey through liminality that characterizes a rite of passage.

One of the elements of a maroon rite of passage is the reclamation of language and meaning. I have discussed this in terms of the shattering of authoritative discourses and the struggle for internally persuasive ones, based on the articulations of Mikhail Bakhtin. I have affiliated the authoritative discourse with the structure of the plantation and its assigned meanings that naturalize white supremacist patriarchal capitalism. Each protagonist in this study has been described as rejecting that discourse. Their struggle is to claim counter-hegemonic discourses that center themselves in their bodily, historical, and felt experience. For Sethe and Merle, this process has meant revisiting the dissociation of maternal relations -- relations of interconnectedness and mutual responsibility that exceed and contradict the needs of profit -- both in their own lives and in the larger historical events of the Middle Passage. In order to claim the space to face that history, both personally and communally, they have rejected authoritative discourse by deploying what I have called the Shango discourse, named after the Yoruba orisha of redistributive justice. The Shango discourse is characterized by (out)rage and judgment against the forces that instigate and normalize dissociation.

However, the Shango discourse is not an end in itself. It is a discourse that holds the border between the authoritative discourse and the liminal subject, so that the subject can repair that which has been severed, what I've called the Yemaya discourse. Yemaya is the Yoruba orisha of maternal relations. Identified with the river in West Africa, she has been translated to the mother of the ocean by the descendants of the Middle Passage. As the history of the Middle Passage and the lateral and historical

connections to Africa have been submerged in the authoritative plantation discourse and its reformations, so has the discourse of Yemaya. But submersion has not resulted in erasure. For each of these protagonists, then, the recovery of Yemaya or relations of female interconnectedness, has also resulted in reconnection with agency, the capacity to choose and act in the world reminiscent of the power of the orisha.

For each of these protagonists, this process occurs in the absence of a surrounding community of experienced elders to guide them. They must seize the means of their reconstruction from a sea of fragments -- words, memories, events, and narratives. This is an act of enormous will and creativity whose impulsive drive is desire. Having rejected authoritative discourse and its attendant erasure, they step into the unknown to attempt to find counter-hegemonic ontological ground. In other words, they are seeking internally-persuasive discourses that affirm their existence, their full humanity. This struggle is engaged through language.

bell hooks discusses this struggle in her essay "Choosing the Margin." In it, she cites the Freedom Charter of the African National Congress, which states repeatedly, "our struggle is the struggle of memory against forgetting." For Sethe, Merle, and Veronica, the struggle is to remember black female wholeness despite an authoritative regime of historical and cultural amnesia. For each, that remembering is enabled by others, but occurs intra-psychically. It is within each that prescribed and proscribed relationships must be renegotiated, and then those internally-persuasive relationships are sought in the world. This is a therapeutic process which takes the world as its healing arena.

That Veronica is seeking that healing in the world is clear from the narrative and discursive strategies of Heremakhonon. Veve Clark has articulated Veronica's quest as linguistic, or discursive, in her groundbreaking article on "Developing Diaspora Literacy: Allusion in Maryse Conde's Heremakhonon." Clark diagnoses Veronica's use of allusion as "a symptom of her inability to be present and accountable" (303) as well as evidence of her complexity. Clark defines Diaspora literacy as "the ability to read and comprehend the discourses of Africa, Afro-America and the Caribbean from an informed, indigenous perspective" (304) and notes that it is not merely an armchair exercise, but "a skill that requires social and political development generated by lived experiences"(304).

Significant to this study is Veronica's incompetence in one of the major formative discourses of Diaspora literacy: that of Africa. Seeking an alternative to the authoritative Eurocentric discourse as it is practiced by colonizer and colonized, Veronica has mistaken anteriority for alterity. She explicitly states that her goal in Africa is to discover her "nigger with ancestors," free of the infusion of modern Western patriarchal capitalism. However, her ignorance blinds her to the possibility of modern African patriarchal capitalism. Solving the racial term of the dominant equation does not automatically resolve the gendered one. Nor does solving the gendered term resolve the economic problem. Veronica needs a more complex set of lenses through which to view her own situation and the one she inhabits.

At the beginning of the novel, Saliou attempts to illuminate contemporary Africa for Veronica, and one of his tactics is linguistic. He suggests that Birame III will teach her Mande. Her response is to fall back into memory, imagining a mythic past where

she is listening to a griot render a genealogical account (17). Birame III also tries to orient her to contemporary perspectives, but she rejects his revolutionary language. “These children do have a vocabulary! It’s obvious they don’t read the right books” (24). To the degree that Birame III, Saliou, and others interfere with her quest for powerful African origins, she dismisses them. They do not correspond to the narrative she is seeking, and she doesn’t understand what lies beyond it.

It is after Birame III’s arrest that Veronica becomes aware of her ignorance. The students are compelled to publicly recant their resistance, and she attends the rally. However, she can’t understand a word of what is being said, but she can tell that Birame III has refused. She is devastated, not because she shares his politics, but because she has come to care about him. “I have to admit, I’m lost. They have their problems that I can no longer ignore. I need a guide, an interpreter, a chief linguist to make offerings and have the message from the oracle decoded” (48).

Veronica’s call for a linguist is reminiscent of Sethe’s disconnection from her mother’s and Nan’s language, and invokes another orisha, Eshu or Legba. She has earlier explicitly invoked Legba, Vodoun keeper of the crossroads, to open the door for her to cross through, the traditional opening of Vodoun ceremonies (7). Henry Louis Gates, Jr., in The Signifying Monkey, has located Legba/Eshu as a New World discursive practice. He draws on Fon and Yoruba mythology to articulate the qualities of this trickster figure who, like Shango and Yemaya, is a figure of Diaspora literacy. As Gates points out, the survival of Legba/Eshu and what he represents indicates that

there can be little doubt that certain fundamental terms for order that the black enslaved brought with them from Africa, and maintained through the mnemonic

devices peculiar to oral literature, continued to function both as meaningful units of New World belief systems and as traces of their origins. (4-5)

I would extend that assertion to Shango and Yemaya, and other orishas who have survived and been transformed by the Middle Passage and subsequent events. Their continued presence, and the possibility of recognizing their qualities in African American and Caribbean fictions, are eloquent testimony that their archetypal functions are

a sign of the disrupted wholeness of an African system of meaning and belief that black slaves recreated from memory, preserved by oral narration, improvised upon in ritual -- especially in the rituals of the repeated oral narrative -- and willed to their own subsequent generations, as hermetically sealed and encoded charts of cultural descent. (5)

Part of Veronica's problem is that she has not had access to these systems of meaning that center her as a woman of African descent in the Americas. In fact, she, like Sethe and Merle, has been actively deprived of access to this code, and disparaged for even believing it desirable. Hence her cry for Legba's assistance at the beginning of the novel, for Legba is "the divine linguist, he who speaks all languages, he who interprets the alphabet of Mawu to man and to the other gods" (Gates 7). It is Legba who communicates between the sacred and the profane, between god and human, and between opposites. He is the disrupter of binary oppositions and false unities. And above all, he is in command of the power of language to name, mis-name, and rename.

Legba is also the first god invoked in ceremonial practices. In his form of Esu, Gates notes that "Esu...represents power in terms of the agency of the will. But his ultimate power, of which even the will is a derivative, is the power of sheer plurality or multiplicity" (37). Veronica is seeking such power; in order to do that, she must

discover the principle of multiplicity that overrides the simple contradictions implied by Western binary oppositional thinking, which renders her very existence impossible.

Saliou is not the only character who invites Veronica to become her own linguist. The soldiers she visits with Sory assert that she should learn Fulani (51). Dr. Yehogul tells her to learn all of them (87). She both recognizes and resists the invitation to “be a polyglot in this country” (51), despite how her ignorance disables her. The disabling power of her ignorance of local languages is both literal and symbolic. Her invitations to linguistic multiplicity are not restricted to the study of formal languages. She is also unaware of Nkrumah and Fanon, and deliberately flees from efforts to initiate her into knowledge of the present. Instead, she displaces interpretive power to others, especially Sory.

Over the course of the novel, Veronica claims her own interpretive power over the events and circumstances of her life. While Gates privileges the role of the signifier over the signified, Veronica is concerned with both, and particularly the signified-upon female body. If she is to undo the precept that “Woman is a dark continent,” she must unpack both terms -- woman and Africa -- and define for herself her relationship to both. At the end of part one, answering a question about what she imagined Africa to be, she responds, “Actually, I never imagined anything. A great black hole. The Dark Continent” (56). Her ignorance is historically and socially constructed; it represents the disruption and debasement of women and people of African descent in the discourses in which she is educated. To recover this knowledge, and herself, she reflects on her own matrilineage.

All of the women Veronica remembers have deployed their female sexuality to affiliate with male power, whether as outright prostitutes, as mistresses, or as wives. The model of her family's origins is predicated on an illicit sexual relationship between a black female ancestress and a mulatto male ancestor. She is unaware of any women empowered in their own right, and suspicious of patriarchal affiliation as a trap. However, she relinquishes that suspicion for Ibrahima Sory. In him, she hopes to discover an interlocutor who, having claimed his own racial entitlement, will recognize hers. The failure of this relationship has already been discussed. But it is its failure that finally shatters Veronica's allegiance to authoritative patriarchal discourses and her efforts to find an empowering place for herself within them. As she turns away from Ibrahima Sory, her childhood nurse, Mabo Julie, a black Guadeloupean single woman, becomes the source of her connection to alterity.

Images of Mabo Julie, the maid in her parent's house, intrude more frequently and more richly from among the mosaic of memories that have flooded her in Africa. She notices first how little she either knew or cared to know about Mabo Julie, and how nurtured she was by her. Then she notices how she unconsciously hurt Mabo Julie by asking childhood questions that were naive to the circumstances Mabo Julie faced as a working-class black woman in Guadeloupe. Finally, she wants to know what she didn't know about Mabo Julie. She recognizes similarities between their entrapments, by gender, race, and colonial status, despite the differences in their class status. Like Sethe's Nan, Mabo Julie comes to be regarded as an adoptive mother, representing a connection to the submerged and oppressed Yemaya discourse within Guadeloupe and within Veronica's consciousness. Veronica's relationship to Mabo Julie reflects the

necessarily fragmented genealogies of peoples of African descent in the Americas, and claims the power of affiliation in defiance of either Western or African efforts to control inter-female power via narratives of heterosexual genealogical purity.

Arlette Smith notes the significance of both the presence and absence (sometimes simultaneous) of mothers in Conde's work. However, she asserts that the adoptive mother always remains inadequate, that true loyalty is reserved for the biological mother (384). However, there is no evidence in the text that Veronica even thinks about her biological mother after she realizes the role that Mabo Julie has played in her life. Veronica's reclamation of relationship with Mabo Julie is her reclamation of the debased, ignored, unheard Yemaya discourse: it is the repair of the Yemaya discourse through the adoption and adaptation of the adoptive and adaptive mother. It is manifested in Veronica's stay on the island off the coast, where she is in a maternal position vis-a-vis the children of her housekeeper, and experiences her own rebirth.

As Veronica reclaims her relationship to Mabo Julie from the liminal space of her upbringing and her memory, her relationship to Africa also shifts. As Jonathan Ngate points out,

As far as relationships with Africa are concerned, her position is...not really different from that assumed by Aime Cesaire or by Edouard Glissant....Cesaire had made it clear that he was not mistaking himself for an African but knew that Africa was essential to his Afro-Caribbean self-identity....it is difficult not to conclude that Maryse Conde has fully accepted and is usefully playing her role as an "adoptive daughter" of Africa. (18)

Veronica's shift in identification from the authoritative discourse of the biological family to the internally-persuasive one of felt connection to Mabo Julie shifts her desired affiliation away from the Ibrahima Sorys or Ramatoulayes, members of the

historical elite who are comparable in their arrogance and entitlement to the neo-colonial elite of Guadeloupe. Rather, she seeks to affiliate with “the people,” those from whom new ways of being in the world, ways that include her, can emerge. She has struggled through her rite of passage to distinguish “nostalgia, that longing for something to be as once it was, a kind of useless act, from that remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present” (hooks, “Choosing the Margin” 147). As with Sethe and Merle, Veronica’s story ends at the beginning of yet another journey. The open-endedness with which all three novels close indicates that unfinishedness has become the normative value, rather than fixedness or completeness. However, that unfinishedness is not a source of terror; rather, it contains the promise of possibility and ongoing movement, of an open future. For Veronica in particular, it signals the claiming of voice and language, for she anticipates breaking silence, a silence broken by the novel that has just ended.

Conclusion

In Heremakhonon, Maryse Conde has described an arc of recovery for her protagonist, Veronica Mercier, that offers a contemporary version of a Maroon rite of passage. Veronica passes through liminal chaos and draws on her memory for elders who can offer her ontological ground that she must adapt for her own survival and agency in the present. She must release herself from the discursive economy of the plantation and draw on a historical memory of survival that urges choosing the unknown over the known, despite the efforts of the dominant patriarchal subculture, whether Eurocentric or Afrocentric, at prohibition. In the end, she, too, like Sethe and Merle, as women of African descent, must claim the meanings of both race and gender

for themselves in such a way that they are restored to agency in the world as both actors and interpreters of their actions in the world. Veronica's route to the Yemaya discourse of reconnection and healing is via Legba, the polyglot messenger, rather than Shango of redistributive justice. But more significant than specific discourses is her learning of a method of interpretation that privileges consideration of the liminal and the marginalized, the empowered Maroon, as source of renewal and possibility. Like Sethe and Merle, Veronica ends her story at the beginning of yet another journey, but consciously empowered rather than merely reactive to the psycho-historical forces of white supremacist patriarchal capitalism that have sought to contain her. Her way has been through ontology, history, ritual, and myth, and she is now conscious of their interplay in both authoritative and internally-persuasive discourses, and her participatory role, whether as victim, mediator, and/or creator. Veronica joins Sethe and Merle in psychological marronage, gladly entering the unknown wilderness of her future as creative negotiator of multiplicity for the purpose of healing the wounds of history.

¹ Critics who consider the relationship of marronage and liminality to Conde's work include Becel, wa Nyatetu-Waigwa, and Rosello.

² See A. James Arnold's discussion of the problematic affiliation of marronage with masculinity.

CONCLUSION

Some ten years ago, I was staying at my grandmother's home near St. Ann's Bay when a Maroon friend dropped by on his way to Montego Bay from Moore Town, Maroon territory in the Blue Mountains of eastern Jamaica. He walked into the yard, dressed in vivid white, and carrying a boom box, from which the Talking Heads' "Burning Down the House" blared out to the neighborhood. We visited for a while, and agreed to meet in Port Antonio at a later date. After he left, I told my uncle, born and raised in the plantation-dominated coastal plain of St. Ann, that he was a Maroon. "What?" my uncle exclaimed. "You mean to tell me those people are still in the hills?" This project has been intended to remind myself, my uncle, and others either affiliated with or interested in African Diaspora culture that Maroons are indeed still in the hills and other long-claimed territories. Just as significantly, so long as the plantation remains a productive metaphor for contemporary Black experience, marronage as metaphor deserves to be revived for each generation. At the beginning of the 21st century, it is much more difficult to imagine claiming Maroon spaces as territorial identities; however, it seems to be just as urgent to claim them as psychological and communal terrains from which forms of resistance can be imagined and enacted. Becoming a Maroon, taking insurgent stances in territories, institutions, and discourses that remain firmly colonized and resistant in their turn, is still dangerous business five hundred years after the first African emancipated himself to the unknown on the island of Hispaniola.

The authors and works selected for this study demonstrate an awareness of both this danger and its necessity. Morrison's *Sethe* is historically located closer to actual

physical punishments for defiance; Marshall's Merle and Conde's Veronica suffer social and psychological isolation. All three authors describe recovering from bodily, intellectual, spiritual, communal, and psychological damage as dependent on discovering the resilience of the psyche. This resilience is recognized, rather than declared, and contingent on the recognition of another, whether individual or communal. In these narratives, the purpose of healing is to restore connection, not only to the wounded parts of the self but to the wounded aspects of one's community, and in restoring that connection to find the way, through shared sorrow, to the possibility of generativity. The history of marronage in the New World remains a significant communal memory of resistance to the violence of colonialism and enslavement in all its aspects, including the physical, the emotional and the epistemological. It is also a communal memory that is in danger of being erased as an actual event with each generation, as Merle's punishment for telling the Cuffee Ned story demonstrates.

While marronage is still not a given in history texts, its practices have been kept alive on the cultural level. Ways of carving out space for the transmission of the historically contingent counter-narrative continue to be re-invented with each generation. For example, the poet Ernesto Mercer uses Toni Morrison's line about Sixo, "That was when he stopped speaking English because there was no future in it" as the epigraph for his poem "Maroon." He uses marronage as a metaphor to represent the cultural and personal costs incurred in order to get a job, the modernist alienation that bell hooks argues has been transferred from people of African descent to all people, regardless of ethnic or class background, in this era of global capitalism. The narrative persona rebels, citing a famous Brazilian Maroon leader:

Filling in the application
at name you write: ZUMBI. address:
QUILOMBO DOS PALMARES. At
previous experience you
think about the machete again. (9)

At the end of the poem, Mercer's narrative persona is alone with his machete. But these novels remind us that becoming Maroon is a healing process, not an event, in which solitude or isolation play an important role in the wounded soul's recognition of the need for healing. However, it is the recognition of the wound by and in another that connects it back to shared human experience and makes individual and communal acceptance, healing, resistance, and creativity possible.

This study has focused on texts by women in order to view the development of Maroon consciousness through the lenses of race, class, and gender. It has concentrated on the images and contradictions that adhere to being a Black woman in the Americas, and their implications for subjectivity and intersubjectivity. Morrison, Marshall and Conde have continued to develop these themes throughout their works. Morrison's Paradise (1999) addresses the challenges of enabling internally-persuasive discourses, particularly those of women, in the reconstruction of an all-African American community following the Civil War. Conde imagines the protagonist of her novel, I, Tituba, Black Witch of Salem (1994), as a Maroon in the Caribbean who is betrayed into enslavement by the excessive self-interest of her Maroon lover, one of the consequences of marronage if those included in communal responsibility are too narrowly defined by race, ethnicity, gender, history, sexuality, class or any other marker of difference that is used to locate difference as inferiority. Marshall makes explicit the rite of passage to marronage in Praisesong for the Widow (1983), which portrays an

elderly African American widow on her journey to reconnect with personal and historical pasts through the assistance of a Diasporic community of recognition in the Caribbean. She revises the story of Cuffee Ned's rebellion in her subsequent novel, Daughters (1992), whose imagined Maroon rebels and companions, Will Cudjoe and Congo Jane, inspire collective, and female-allied, resistance in the intimate circle of family and in communities in the Caribbean and the United States.

Marshall, Morrison, and Conde have also shown that the intersubjective community of recognition can cross borders of race, gender, and class to include others. The white girl Amy Denver's assistance of Sethe in childbirth, Jewish Saul's relationship with Merle, and the many European Jews whose lives intersect with Veronica's all become guides and healers and are in turn affected by the protagonists' shifting states of being. Even those most visibly privileged by existing structures of domination can revise their relationships to self and other, although such revision is predicated on being sufficiently alienated within privilege to be willing to abdicate its rewards for maintaining barriers to *communitas*. Such intersubjective border-crossings resemble rites of passage, in which the participants must relinquish their existing structural locations or narratives of self to enter a liminal zone of possibility where they can affect their visions of self and other. They emerge from liminality simultaneously released from and in greater possession of their place in the world.

The repression, segregation and ghettoization of peoples of African descent in the Americas continues to reflect the dehumanizing effects of an economic system that has been internalized as a psychic structure, and forbids liminality. As the basic tenets of capitalism have shape-shifted over the centuries, so have the rituals of recovery of

those most punished by its reliance on inequality. Sixo's nighttime dancing becomes Baby Suggs' preaching in the hush-harbour, which finds its analogues in Carnival, and the contemporary dancehall or hip-hop performance. These rituals are not guaranteed to be transformative, and often are not. What they do offer is the possibility of re-empowerment, the possibility of finding, in the company of fellow sufferers, the spaces in the self where the rage and grief of Shango and the healing generosity of Yemaya wait to speak.

All three authors have focused increasingly on the struggle to revive communal memories and strategies of sustenance and resistance as peoples of the African Diaspora have been further fragmented by the ascension of small numbers into middle or ruling classes while the majority have fallen into deeper poverty. Their written work demonstrates the movement of recalled *communitas* from Maroon experience to oral legend to novel. In doing so, they also record the transformations of the meanings of marronage from communities of solidarity in armed resistance to intersubjective ritual liminality. While the form of marronage is historically contingent, the process is timeless. The development of marronage as intra and intersubjective process, communal resistance, and underlying myth in these novels mirrors its reproduction on the margins of contemporary life in the form of independent bookstores like Sisterspace and Books in Washington D.C. or the Shrine of the Black Madonna network in the United States; popular theater groups like Sistren Theatre Collective in Jamaica; Saturday and evening Afrocentric schools dedicated to the transmission of African Diaspora culture, some of which are being invited to re-shape public school curricula; the anti-incarceration movement; and more. Each of these activities began on ground

declared impossible by conventional wisdom. Each has been founded and furthered by people dedicated to the value of community as a necessary dimension of human life. That their efforts are marginalized in contemporary culture provides a continuing reflection of the marginality of people of African descent and of what they know about surviving the fragmenting pressures of capitalism in its most indifferent forms. However, there is no certainty that their efforts will be permanently marginalized. The willingness of Diaspora-centered educators to dialogue with public school systems indicates the possibility of subjugated knowledges retained by the margin being able to transform the traditional center. As Marshall has suggested by her description of the Bournehills peoples' relationship to repeated invitations to relinquish their ground for consumer capitalism, such a transformation depends on a negotiated relationship of reciprocity, not mere appropriation. Whether such coalitions can be built depends on how willing their participants are to perceive that they inhabit a shared crisis.

Through their recovery of marronage as a process, these novels participate in the reconstructive cultural work, the transmission and revision of stories that create common ground and a common future by renaming a shared past and present. In Philip Page's description,

The narrations enhance the interplay among multiple speaking and listening minds, including characters, narrators, readers, and authors. As they do so, they reproduce and further create the invisible threads of African-American culture. The two are inseparable: the narrative and temporal multiplicity formally re-creates the intersubjective web that characterizes both African-American culture and the novel as a genre....As the novels depict and enact the cultural web, they address cultural dislocations of space, time, community, and identity by mirroring the doubleness associated with these dislocations. They thus transform the doubleness into a positive vehicle for expressing temporal and psychological alienation and thereby move beyond such alienation to new harmonies. (32-33)

Page's study, Reclaiming Community in Contemporary African American Fiction, focuses on the works of Ernest Gaines, Gloria Naylor, Charles Johnson, Toni Cade Bambara, and John Edgar Wideman. While he does not use marronage as a defining term, his description of a process of individual and communal recovery, what he calls a "collective *bildung*" (34), resonates with the description of marronage in this study. The range of authors he considers reflects the prevalence of this theme in contemporary Black fictions, and other authors whose works lend themselves to a Maroon reading include Sherley Anne Williams, Alice Walker, Michelle Cliff, David Bradley, Gayl Jones, Ishmael Reed, Earl Lovelace, Wilson Harris, Simone Schwarz-Bart, Edouard Glissant, Ntozake Shange, August Wilson, and many more. Like the works of these authors, this project has been intended to offer an approach to reading Black literature and culture with an eye towards the Maroon spaces in the psyche and the world, where healing and resistance remember and sustain each other on the open ground of possibility.

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VITA

Randi Gray Kristensen is a student of African and African Diaspora literatures, and art as a force for social change. Born in Copenhagen, Denmark, and raised with her Jamaican family in Jamaica and the eastern United States, she has participated in and been shaped by the women's movement in the Americas, and the growing attention to Diasporic subjects in the last 15 years. Prior to returning to graduate school, she worked as an activist and cultural worker with local, national, and international organizations. A fiction writer and poet, she holds the Bachelor of Arts in Sociology from Georgetown University, and the Master in Fine Arts in Fiction from Louisiana State University. She has taught creative writing, American Literature, African Diaspora Literatures, Pan-African Women's Writing, and African and African Diaspora Mythologies at Louisiana State University, St. Lawrence University, and Pacifica Graduate Institute. She has published poetry, contributed bibliographic essays and book reviews to various publications, written introductions to classic American texts for a British publisher, and presented papers at numerous conferences in literature, women and development, multiculturalism in higher education, and cultural studies. She lives in Carpinteria, California, and Washington, DC.


DOCTORAL EXAMINATION AND DISSERTATION REPORT

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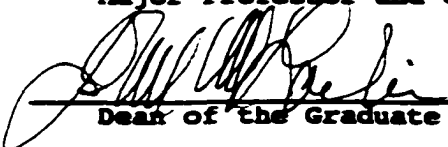
Major Field: English

Title of Dissertation: Rights of Passage: A Cross-Cultural Study of Maroon
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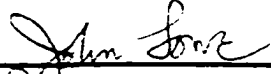


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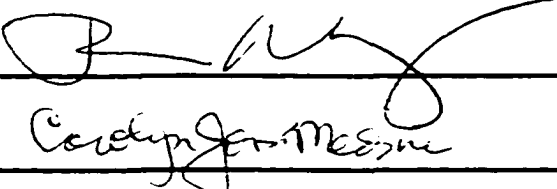


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