

Paule Marshall's Critique of Contemporary Neo-Imperialisms Through the Trope of Travel

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PAULE MARSHALL'S CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY NEO-IMPERIALISMS
THROUGH THE TROPE OF TRAVEL

by

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ABSTRACT
PAULE MARSHALL'S CRITIQUE OF CONTEMPORARY NEOIMPERIALISMS
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Michelle Miesen Felix

Marquette University, 2011

This study examines Marshall's use of the trope of travel within and between the United States and the Caribbean to critique ideologies of Development, tourism, and globalization as neo-imperial. This examination of travel in Marshall's "To Da-Duh, In Memoriam"; *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; *Praisesong for the Widow*; and *Daughters* exposes the asymmetrical structures of power that exist between the two regions. In so doing, my study locates Marshall's concern about the imposition of power in the post-colonial period rather than exclusively in the Caribbean's colonial past. My close reading of these texts draws upon the vexed tradition of travel to the Caribbean including colonization, Development initiatives, tourism, and globalization.

The trajectory of this study follows Marshall's concerns about the growing influence of the United States on the Caribbean as the 20th century unfolds. Chapter One looks at "To Da-Duh, In Memoriam" to show how a young girl's travel to see her maternal grandmother in Barbados reveals the formidable presence of the United States as an emblem of modernity—and a potential antagonist to Barbadian sovereignty--on the eve of Barbados' independence. Chapter Two examines the travel of Development practitioners in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* to challenge the efficacy of Development practice in the Caribbean. Chapter Three considers how Marshall uses the travel of tourism in *Praisesong for the Widow* to question unambiguous representations of nationalism. Chapter Four looks at the travel by a bi-national, transnational elite protagonist in *Daughters* to show, on one level, how Marshall ultimately recognizes the inevitability of the United States' influence in the Caribbean, and, in turn, how she exposes the perpetuation of inequality that frames the seeming borderless-ness of globalization.

By analyzing what may appear to be a rather simplistic trope of travel in Marshall's fiction within the vexed history of human interaction through travel between the United States and the Caribbean, this study shows how Marshall locates the later 20th century encounter between the United States and the Caribbean on a continuum of hegemony against the Caribbean from colonialism to the present.

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It's never the change that you expect that changes everything.

Junot Diaz, speaking at UW-Milwaukee, Fall 2008

for Esther

and

for Andrew

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Introduction

I and I, I wanna rule my destiny.

-Buju Banton, "Destiny"

It is not farfetched to conceptualize black struggles of the long civil rights era in the U.S. as a central part of the wider, more ambiguous legacy of post-World War II decolonization. Indeed, one of the greatest limitations of the civic mythology of American's exceptional universality is that it obscures this link by denying that U.S. history is part of the genealogy of domination and resistance produced by the expansion of colonial (and neocolonial) capitalism.

-Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country*

Stephanie Black's 2001 documentary *Life and Debt* exposes the ways in which the late 20th century global economic machinery ties the hands of developing nations. Black does this through the example of Jamaica's unsuccessful attempt to be autonomous from the Global Bank and the International Monetary Fund during Michael Manley's 1970s turn as Prime Minister and beyond. Black's interest is in showing how these global financial institutions interfere with a sovereign nation's ability to determine for itself how to grow its economy and develop infrastructure through the International Monetary Fund's severe restrictions on the use of borrowed funds. Black looks at, for example, how these restrictions and policies decimated Jamaica's self-sustaining dairy and banana industries.

Jamaica's thriving tourist industry is the backdrop to Black's critique. Throughout the film, Black uses Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* as a framing narration. *A Small Place* is Kincaid's scathing indictment of tourism as a reenactment of the colonial

encounter between the Global North and the Global South.¹ After Black's film chronicles how International Monetary Fund policy has sabotaged Jamaica's self-sustaining industries, the narrator notes their suggestion that the nation maximize its tourism industry; "You've always got tourism." Over camera work that follows tourists from their arrival at the airport to their Jamaican-national led entertainment at inclusive resort compounds, the *Life and Debt* narrator highlights the discrepancy between the touristic experience of Jamaica and the material reality of Jamaican economic conditions. Images of primarily white tourists in pristine locations are disrupted with images of civil unrest and Black Jamaicans in Kingston. Black means to point out the contrast between the touristic experience of Jamaica and the reality of local life in Jamaica being manipulated by hegemonic economic organizations like the International Monetary Fund and Global Bank. The effect of the juxtaposition of tourism with the material consequences of foreign economic hegemony is to show how both enact neo-imperial conditions on Jamaica.

I begin with *Life and Debt* because it illustrates the problematic relationship between the United States and the Caribbean that Paule Marshall confronts through her use of the trope of travel in her fiction. *Life and Debt*, like my project, is about the sovereignty and self-determination of the Caribbean within the frame of neo-imperialism in the late 20th century. As the narrator in *Life and Debt* says about the stronghold the International Monetary Fund has on Jamaica's economy and, in turn, on its citizens, "When we imagined independence from Great Britain, this is not what we imagined."

¹ North/South, as well as the alternative One-Third/Two-Third Worlds – captures the unequal power and quality of life issues that separate these two regions of the world, but avoids the pejorative suggestions of First and Third Worlds. Chandra Mohanty's *Feminism without Borders* informs my decisions regarding terminology.

Independence thrust young nations into a global economic landscape that was developed without them in mind.² *Life and Debt* points out that the economies of the new nations in the Caribbean, in particular, then grew to rely increasingly upon tourism, another form of foreign control. The Global North's control of international development, trade, and travel necessitated that these newly independent nations became dependent upon the nations that control the international financial landscape. The United States played and continues to play an instrumental role in the oversight and implementation of these programs. Marshall stages her critique of these impositions on sovereign nations through the trope of travel.

Throughout this study, I will use the term “neo-imperial” to characterize a relationship between the Global North and the Global South in which the North imposes nearly inescapable economic and cultural pressure on the South. I use “neo-imperial” as opposed to “neocolonial” because the contemporary relationship I address is not one of official governmentality as was the colonial relationship. In addition, I do not wish to homogenize the vast region of the Caribbean through my use of the term “Caribbean” in a potentially universalizing way. I use this general term throughout my study because Marshall's deployment of the travel trope in the four works of literature that I examine is not exclusive to one Caribbean nation or another; rather, she uses three actual Caribbean locations – Barbados, Grenada, and Carriacou – and creates two fictional Caribbean locations – Bourne Island and Triunion. Thus, Marshall's deployment of the travel trope

² As Manley explains in *Life and Debt*, the Global Bank and the International Monetary Fund were developed to restore Europe following World War II. These programs were developed without the interests of developing nations in mind because at the time, these nations did not yet exist in vast numbers. A majority of the nations to later rely on these programs were still under colonial rule. The Global Bank and the International Monetary Fund later expanded their programs to newly independent former colonies.

and her assertion of neo-imperialism in the encounter between the United States-based travelers and their Caribbean destinations are not specific to any one nation but to the Caribbean region in general.

The trajectory of this study follows Marshall's concerns about the growing influence of the United States on the Caribbean as the 20th century unfolds. Marshall recognizes the centrality of travel to the story of the Caribbean, and her characters travel to the Caribbean very frequently. However, scholarship on Marshall has substantially overlooked her preoccupation with travel. Critical readings of Marshall's work that involves the Caribbean very often emphasize the need for Afro-descendants to reconnect with their histories as a way of overcoming contemporary oppression.³ These readings concentrate on the Caribbean's colonial past and less on the contemporary oppressions that continue to impact the Caribbean. My focus on travel pays less attention to the colonial past and more on the contemporary relationship between the United States and the Caribbean. My project, then, seeks to relocate discussions of Marshall's work as contemporary socio-political commentary.

Considering the significant history of travel to the Caribbean and the frequency with which Marshall constructs characters that travel, this trope warrants attention. My project seeks to fill what I see to be a gap in the scholarship on Marshall. By analyzing what may appear to be a rather simplistic trope of travel in Marshall's fiction within the vexed history of human interaction through travel between the United States and the Caribbean, this study shows how Marshall uses travel to progressively critique the encounter between the United States and the Caribbean, whether the encounter takes the

³ See, for example, Brathwaite, Christian, Japtok, Meyer, Nazareth, Olmsted, Pettis, Sandiford, Scarboro, Schneck, and Storhoff.

form of Development, tourism, or globalization, as neo-imperial oppressions from the 1960s to the present.

Travel: History, Imperialism, and Nationalism

Marshall's short story and the novels that I analyze are not works of the travel writing genre; however, the history and conventions of the genre are important in order to establish the conversation in which Marshall's construction of travel takes place. In particular, the history of travel to the Caribbean establishes the richness of Marshall's use of the trope. Also, the genre's relationship to imperialism with its attendant association with nationalism contextualizes how Marshall deploys the trope to critique the United States as a neo-imperial power.

The trope of travel is a particularly resonant tool with which Marshall interrogates the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean. One reason is that travel is central to Caribbean history and mythology. For too long, Caribbean history was said to "begin" with Columbus's infamous travel to the Caribbean. A variety of forms of travel to the Caribbean were initiated by this encounter. Colonial expansion is one. Travel writing played an integral role in bolstering the ideology of colonialism. Many imperial travel writers sought to quell the home nation's anxiety over the dispersal of its identity in the colonies through these characterizations; imperial travel writers identified the Caribbean in terms that secured the colonizers' superiority and the natives' savagery and/or moral and intellectual inferiority.

As a consequence of colonialism, the triangle trade of slavery indelibly marked the Caribbean with its influx of thousands of African and Asian slaves and indentured

servants who were forced to travel the Middle Passage. Slavery then initiated travel to the Caribbean by commercial interests in the global North. In addition, throughout Caribbean history, from the Arawaks and Caribs to today, intra-Caribbean migration contributes to Caribbean culture and identity. Most recently, many from the Global North know the Caribbean exclusively through tourism and Development efforts. This rife history of travel to the Caribbean has led to volumes of narratives chronicling travelers' encounters with the Caribbean and its inhabitants.

The traveler and his relationship to the destination other he encounters are central to travel narratives. When I use the term "destination other" rather than "local" or "national," I mean to emphasize the relationship of alterity marked through the encounter. Many scholars of the genre find this dynamic the linchpin on which the genre turns and argue that it is the reason that travel writing remains so compelling for readers. Simon Gikandi articulates how compelling is the dynamic in travel between home and away, between self and other, when he explains, "My focus in [*Maps of Englishness*] is on the function of narratives of identity and alterity in the constitution of English identities in the imperial and postimperial age. Like many other scholars in the field of postcolonial studies, I draw many of my illustrations from narratives of travel and novels informed by the notion of journeys into the space of the other. My premise here is that the trope of travel generates narratives that are acutely concerned with self-realization in the spaces of the other, that the European excursion (and incursion) into the colonial space is one of the most important vehicles by which, to paraphrase Nick Dirks, Europe and its others are re-created" (7-8). This relationship traditionally relies upon alterity; the traveler identifies

herself in contrast to the destination other. Similarly, she identifies the travel destination in terms of how it differs from the nation of her departure.⁴

Colonial travel narratives maximized the convention of identification through alterity to bolster domestic support for the colonial enterprise. The audience for colonial travel narratives was readers at home in the colonizing nation. Colonial travelers exoticized the Caribbean to these readers, characterizing the land as wild and untamed and its inhabitants as godless, savage, and erotic, thus in need of colonial control.⁵ The hegemony inherent in the imperial traveler's construction of the identities of the place and its people is integral to these readings. The imperial traveler's writing reified the superiority of the home nation through its identification of the destination and its other through alterity. Mary Louise Pratt's *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* is a seminal text in the investigation of travel writing as imbedded in the ideology of imperialism. Pratt situates her book within the critical momentum to "decolonize knowledge." The book investigates how travel writing fashions both the self and the other in the service of Euro-imperialism. *Imperial Eyes* contributes to the academy's discussion of travel writing seminal vocabulary which I will use in subsequent chapters. This includes "contact zone" (6). The contact zone is where travel occurs and where traveler and native collide in typically asymmetrical relationship. Pratt and other

⁴ Casey Blanton's historical overview of the genre in *Travel Writing: the Self and the World* makes this argument about the centrality of the relationship between traveler and Other to the genre. Blanton's reading of the genre, however, normalizes the position of the traveler and characterizes the other as strange and exotic without recognizing a hegemony in this relationship, a hegemony on which many postcolonial readers of the genre focus and to which, I argue, Marshall responds.

⁵ Characteristic examples include James Anthony Froude's *The English in the West Indies or The Bow of Ulysses* (1888) and Anthony Trollope's *The West Indies and the Spanish Main* (1859).

scholars argue that the travel writing genre since the colonial era remains inescapably linked to the colonial enterprise and its imperial ideology.⁶

The intersection of the travel writing genre with imperial ideology helps to explain the genre's relationship to nationalist discourses. The individual relationship of alterity between the traveler and destination other is projected either explicitly or implicitly onto a similar relationship between the home nation and the destination. Terry Caesar, in *Forgiving the Boundaries: Home as Abroad in American Travel Writing*, argues that US-Americans travel abroad in order to better imagine themselves as United States nationals.⁷ Home, for Caesar, is associated distinctly with national identity, and "abroad" is a space against which to define what it means to be American. He writes that "... the textual production of abroad in travel writing has enabled the representation of home; moreover, enabling this domestic representation has finally been the purpose of the travel" (5). This is true of Avey, the traveling protagonist in *Praisesong for the Widow*, in particular. When she travels as a tourist, she enables the liberalism of identifying as American to the subordination of her identification as Black. In effect, the traveler operates as emblem of his or her departure-nation's identity of itself.

Contemporary tourism literature functions similarly to imperial travel narratives in its distorted depictions of self and other.⁸ Tourism narratives construct the Caribbean

⁶ See Steve Clark, ed., *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* and Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference*.

⁷ I use the term "US-Americans" to identify people from the United States rather than the widely used "Americans" because I believe that the latter term homogenizes the entire region from South through Central to North America. It also linguistically "colonizes" regions of the greater Americas outside of the United States.

⁸ Many critics of contemporary tourism assert this connection. See, for example, Berghoff Harmut, et al, eds. *The Making of Modern Tourism* and Michael C. Hall and Hazel Tucker. *Tourism and Postcolonialism: Contested Discourses, Identities and Representations*.

monolithically as a paradise and the local as a novelty; thus, the material reality of local Caribbean life is subordinated to the perpetuation of the tourist's fantasy of life in the Caribbean.⁹ I use the verbage "local" here rather than the more empowering and respectful "Caribbean national" because tourist narratives do not recognize the inhabitants of the Caribbean as citizens of a nation but as ambassadors of exotic or quaint local culture.

In tourism narratives, both the destination and its people become products for consumption. These narratives subordinate the complexities of Caribbean life that do not support the mythology of paradise. This is one of the commentaries that *Life and Debt* offers. Tourism narratives, like Development narratives, normalize the place of departure and exoticize the destination and its inhabitants. Further, distinct Caribbean national identities are homogenized in the propagation of the myth that the Caribbean region is a homogenous paradise. Carol Boyce Davies, a literary critic of Caribbean descent, demonstrates the insidiousness of tourism's presence in the Caribbean when she writes,

So, if we are clear that tourism never really brings economic prosperity, that multinational corporations who own the industries take their made-money away, that tourist installations often destroy the environment and displace many people, that people are denied some of the most beautiful areas of their countries because of tourism, that the local people are constructed perpetually in positions of service, then the link between tourism and invasion is not far-fetched (26).

Jane Bryce's collection, *Caribbean Dispatches: Beyond the Tourist Dream*, attests to the centrality of tourism to the identity of the Caribbean from the global North's perspective. Bryce's aim is to counter the mythology of the Caribbean perpetuated by the

⁹ I use the verbage "local" here rather than the more empowering and respectful "Caribbean national" because tourist narratives do not recognize the inhabitants of the Caribbean as citizens of a nation but as ambassadors of exotic or quaint local culture.

tourist industry. Bryce collects works by a variety of writers from the Caribbean and decidedly situates her volume in response to the discourse of travel guides and promotional literature for tourists. Bryce purports to provide “a *well-written* and idiosyncratic collection of *personal* views of Caribbean life by writers of mainly *Caribbean origin*, or who know it well, for readers who want to get *beyond the exotic surface of the tourist experience*” (xii) [my emphasis]. I find this language telling; it decidedly confronts the façade of the Caribbean constructed by tourism. Bryce identifies tourist literature as *not well-written, impersonal, originating outside of the Caribbean, and superficial*. Bryce’s introduction to the collection establishes oppositions between the tourist experience of the Caribbean and what she argues is lived reality. She makes great effort to emphasize the multiple points of view presented in the volume, critiquing what she perceives to be the univocal perspective of tourism discourse.

Bryce locates her discussion in relationship to non-fiction texts, and very little work on travel and tourism in the post-colonial era considers fictional texts. Only one chapter, in fact, found in Ian Strachan’s *Paradise and Plantation* does so. Strachan specifically explores the ways in which Marshall, Kincaid and Michelle Cliff confront the tourism discourse’s ideal of “paradise.” Strachan argues that while these authors critique tourism discourse in selected fictional works, they ironically also echo the “paradise” myth by situating the Caribbean as a place out of space and time. Strachan’s limited look at these authors’ work explores the specific image of the plantation-come-hotel as a contemporary metaphor of slavery and does not more broadly investigate these authors’ frequent constructions of travel and preoccupation with tourism in their writing. My

study will provide a more comprehensive investigation of the complex constructions of travel and tourism in Marshall's writing.

It is ironic that mass market tourism developed in the 1960s partly in response to United States Americans desire to escape the pace and trappings of modernity.¹⁰ Travelers from the United States sought to "escape" modernity through touristic travel to the Caribbean at the same time that the United States seeks to develop the Caribbean in its own democratic, capitalistic, industrial image. One of the vehicles of this influence is Development programs enacted throughout the Caribbean. Thus, the Caribbean is in a conundrum: how to preserve the cultural and "pre-modern" characteristics of the Caribbean that tourists seek in order to capitalize on tourist dollars while developing industrially and technologically in order to compete economically throughout the Americas? The question remains: What are local Caribbean-nationals' quality of life concerns within this conundrum, and who champions those concerns? Marshall's construction of characters that travel to the Caribbean exposes the asymmetry of the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean around this question.

Paule Marshall

This section will contextualize Marshall's interest in confronting United States hegemony that is directed internationally and domestically by examining both her biographical connection to the Caribbean and her political and social activism. I mean to show that the position from which Marshall stages her critique is complicated of United

¹⁰ Sharon Bohn Gmelch, *Tourists and Tourism: A Reader*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004. Print.

States neo-imperialism is complicated. Her biography decidedly locates her in relationship to the Caribbean as well as to the United States. While this dual-location identifies Marshall with those historically oppressed through colonialism and today through the hegemony of the United States and other powers in the Global North, Marshall herself is one of the Global North elite whose status enables her mobility throughout the Americas.

Using travel to confront the asymmetrical relationship between the United States and the Caribbean is important to Marshall because of her identification with the Caribbean. Marshall is a first-generation United States-born citizen of Barbadian immigrant parents. As such, she knows intimately both the metropolitan center from which travel narratives traditionally emanate and the destination periphery to which they reach. Her parents were part of the first wave of immigration from the Caribbean, which took place between 1900 and 1930. She began visiting Barbados in 1938 at the age of nine and lived there for a year, an experience that she fictionalized in “To Da-duh, In Memoriam.” As an adult, Marshall periodically chose to live and write in the Caribbean with fellowship money she received. In the early 1960s, for example, she spent a year living in Grenada researching Caribbean life for what would eventually become *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* and *Praisesong for the Widow*.¹¹ Her own peripatetic life movement back and forth between the United States and the Caribbean positions her uniquely as an insider to both United States and Caribbean culture. Barbadian scholar Edward Brathwaite recognizes the significance of this subject position. He writes about *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, “Had Paule Marshall been a

¹¹ See Marshall’s memoir *Triangular Road* for her narration about this time.

West Indian, she probably would not have written this book. Had she not been an Afro-American of West Indian parentage, she possibly could not have written it either” (226) Brathwaite’s comments illuminate how Marshall’s biography positions her to offer her critique of the contemporary encounter between the United States and the Caribbean. I argue that Marshall’s sensitivity to the Caribbean’s colonial past positions her to recognize the neo-imperial effects of this current encounter.

Marshall makes clear that she identifies herself with the Caribbean and not just exclusively as a US-American.¹² Her widely read “Shaping the World of My Art” (1973) and “Poets in the Kitchen” (1983) address the influence on her of the constant presence of the Caribbean in her life while growing up in the United States. Both essays identify her mother’s kitchen table conversations with her friends, fellow émigrés from Barbados, as formative influences on Marshall. Marshall calls the women “poets” in recognition of the lyrical sound of their voices and the beauty and creativity with which they used language. Marshall recalls that the women’s discussions centered on the complexity of their racial, national, and gender identifications. Frequent topics of conversation included oppression by current employers, nostalgia for Barbados, exploitation in Barbados, Marcus Garvey, and “this man country” where they found themselves isolated from both whites and United States born Blacks.¹³ The Caribbean was present daily to young,

¹² See Heather Hathaway’s *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall* and Myriam Chancy’s *Searching for Safe Spaces: Afro-Caribbean Women Writers in Exile* for their arguments that Marshall must be considered in the context of her Caribbean background and not exclusively within the context of African American literature. In her study of Marshall and Claude McKay, Hathaway identifies Marshall and McKay as, “two African Caribbean writers in the United States whose work has too often been mono-dimensionally read within the canon of either African American or Caribbean letters (9). Hathaway asserts that Marshall’s work should be read through a cross-cultural, cross-national lens.

¹³ See “‘A Special Issue’: Blacks in Harlem During the First Wave of Immigration” in Hathaway’s *Caribbean Waves* for her examination of the experience of Caribbean-born Blacks in Harlem during this period.

listening Marshall through these women's voices and their recollections of Barbados. In turn, Marshall's political sensibility was shaped by these women. Because of these stories and her own travel to the Caribbean, afforded her by her relative transnational elite status through the Global North, Marshall is poised to recognize that the constructions of the Caribbean in typical travel narratives like Development and tourism do not represent the genuine complexity of Caribbean culture and identity.

The influence of Marshall's mother and the other "poets" from the kitchen helps to explain Marshall's commitment to civil rights as an adult. In the 1950s and 60s, Marshall associated with fellow artists and writers who challenged the prevailing United States mythology that democracy assured equal rights and opportunity for all.¹⁴ Marshall and her African American contemporaries such as Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Malcolm X, Richard Wright, and Amiri Baraka viewed the problematic post-Cold War United States race struggle through an international, pan-African lens. This positioned Marshall and her contemporaries in solidarity with those who had been subjugated under colonialism and were now potentially oppressed by the United States' belief in its international manifest destiny.¹⁵ These authors recognized that the United States' message that democracy and capitalism are the means to racial equality was propaganda intended to make a United States-based model of development, instead of Communism, appealing to newly independent nations. They saw that this liberal, nationalist claim of

¹⁴ See James C. Hall's *Mercy, Mercy Me* and Lisa D McGill "'All o' We Is One': Paule Marshall, Black Radicalism, and the African Diaspora in *Praisesong for the Widow*." *Constructing Black Selves: Caribbean American Narratives and the Second Generation*. Both detail Marshall's activism during this time.

¹⁵ I am indebted to Jodi Melamed's forthcoming *Represent and Destroy* for the phrase "international manifest destiny." I use it to indicate the extension of the 19th century belief in the divine destiny of the United States' Westward expansion to include late 20th century belief that the United States was ordained to wield its political and cultural influence to thwart the spread of Communism.

antiracism downplayed the failure of democracy or capitalism at home to achieve racial equality. Nikhil Pal Singh explores the nexus of race, capitalism, and neo-imperialism in his *Black Is a Country*. Singh points out how the mythology of equal and civil rights became so fundamental to the construct of United States nationalism following World War II that counter narratives have become considered “un-American.”¹⁶ Singh points out how this universalizing of nationalism pits racial identification against national identification. This is one of the tensions Marshall’s deployment of the travel trope evidences.

In their work, Marshall and her contemporaries aspired to articulate an adequate theory of emancipation, for both African-Americans and the formerly colonized, in contrast to the inadequate liberal, nationalist paradigm of emancipation. This paradigm sought to address racism by changing the hearts and minds of oppressive whites.¹⁷ Marshall and her fellow writers, however, envision an emancipation that is not dependent on white sympathy. Their vision does not recognize economic opportunity as the means to equality.¹⁸ Their vision demands not simply political independence but rather, cultural and economic self-determination, as well. In “Shaping the World of My Art,” which closely followed the publication of *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Marshall describes the genuine emancipation invoked in the novel:

¹⁶ Examples include how race-based guidelines in selection processes are now labeled reverse discrimination. Singh uses the, he argues, misrepresented legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King as an example of the universalization of nationalism and the subordination or race to nationalism. Singh argues that toward the end of his life, King moved away from a sense that economic opportunity equated equal rights to a position that the United States as nation-state, given its neo-imperial intrusion in Vietnam, King argued, was not the vehicle through which blacks domestic and international would gain full equality. Singh explains that while the early American national narrative was about religious tolerance and lack of feudalism, the contemporary mythology is about racial and ethnic inclusion.

¹⁷ See Melamed’s *Represent and Destroy*.

¹⁸ See Singh and Melamed for their critiques of liberal nationalism’s projection of capitalism as the means to racial equality.

In it there is a conscious attempt to project the view of the future to which I am personally committed. Stated simply it is a view...which sees the rise through revolutionary struggle of the darker peoples of the world and, as a necessary corollary, the decline and eclipse of America and the West. The two phenomena, the emergence of the oppressed and the fall of the powerful, I mention together because to my mind one is not really possible without the other, i.e., for the new world of African, Asian and Afro-American dimensions to come into being, the present world order which Fanon has described as 'swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration' must be swept from center stage (108).

I cite Marshall here to indicate how radical is her dissent from the then prevailing mythology of the United States' ability to secure equality for the oppressed. This commitment to confronting the machinations of power that continue to oppress is not exclusive to *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; rather, throughout Marshall's deployment of the travel trope she confronts the imperial potential of the United States both domestically and internationally.

Overview

I locate my study of Marshall's deployment of the trope of travel within the vexed history of travel to the Caribbean with its associations with imperialism and in the context of Marshall's personal commitment to "the emergence of the oppressed and the fall of the powerful." Critical readings of Marshall's work that engages the Caribbean consistently emphasize the historical past both in terms of Marshall's characters' needing to overcome a colonial past and in terms of her celebration of ancestral identification.¹⁹ My reading, however, focuses on what Marshall says about the contemporary Caribbean and United States. Carol Boyce Davies claims "Critical thinkers have been slow to acknowledge that,

¹⁹ See, for example, Dorothy Hamer Denniston, Adam Meyer, Jane Olmsted, Joyce Owens Pettis, Mary Jane Schenck, and Gary Storhoff.

in the latter half of this century, it is the United States which is the colonial power, not Europe as a generation of writers alleged” (25). I argue that Marshall does, in fact, use the trope of travel to expose the United States as the 20th century’s imperial power in regards to the Caribbean. Of nearly equal importance is the consequence of this imperial ideology domestically for African-Americans.

Travel is a useful trope for Marshall because it contains the colonial history and its aftermath between powerful nations and less powerful. As a Caribbean American, Marshall’s interest is in the ongoing relationship between the powerful United States and the less powerful in both the Caribbean and the United States. Travel allows her to reveal the mechanisms by which these imbalances of power are sustained. In particular, travel by her female protagonists allows a gloss on critique of patriarchy. The machinations of the “highly asymmetrical relationships” of the contact zone are exposed in Marshall’s fiction, be it the Development field, carnival, a cruise ship port, or a globalized Americas. Marshall illustrates how the dominant culture seeks to impose its will in the contact zone and how the Caribbean other resists.

I will show how Marshall confronts the neo-imperialism of the United States toward the Caribbean through her strategic use of travel as a plot structuring device by examining one short story and three of Marshall’s novels. Chapter One examines “To Da-duh, In Memoriam” (1967) to show how a young girl’s travel to see her maternal grandmother in Barbados reveals the formidable presence of the United States as an emblem of modernity -- and a potential antagonist to Barbadian sovereignty -- on the eve of Barbados’ independence. This chapter anticipates the United States to be the formidable antagonist to Barbados’ sovereignty following colonialism.

In Chapter Two, I consider *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* (1969). In this novel, the travelers are not Black United States-nationals as they are in the other works examined here. They are white United States-nationals. This fact provides Marshall's most overt critique of white imperialism. Later chapters will examine how Black travelers from the United States can enact neo-imperialism, as well. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Marshall casts the travelers as Development agents. Development ideology leads to a contemporary form of travel that can echo the imperial travel narrative. Both similarly identify the Caribbean as in need of intervention by the global North and establish the metropolis as the standard of modernity. Like she does in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam," Marshall creates relationships of alterity between the travelers and their destination in order to expose the hegemony of the encounter between the United States-based travelers and their Caribbean destination. This relationship of alterity marks the antagonism between the Development agenda of purported "progress" and the local insistence on maintaining a culture and identity rooted in and sustained by history. The Bourne Island nationals' sense of identity is represented by their devotion to the legacy of Cuffee Ned, a slave who revolted and led his fellow slaves as "a nation apart" for a short time. Marshall does not naively simplify the Bournehills' ideal of true emancipation, however. Local characters like Lyle Hutson illustrate the ruling elite's sometimes complicity with neo-imperial systems while Merle Kinbona and Ferguson depict the difficulty of living up to the Cuffee Ned ideal.

Chapter Three examines *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983). I demonstrate that in the novel Marshall seeks to expose tourism as potentially re-enacting the imperial encounter between the Global North and the Caribbean. Marshall does this by shifting the

perspective of the protagonist, Avey Johnson, away from that of a tourist. Avey's perception of her ideological and national superiority is subverted through her seeing the Caribbean through the lens of the Caribbean-national rather than of the tourist. Avey's dreams while traveling are the mechanisms by which Avey comes to see the falsehoods of American ideological superiority. This chapter considers how Marshall uses the travel of tourism to question unambiguous representations of nationalism. In *Praisesong for the Widow* and *Daughters*, Marshall subverts the convention of alterity and constructs travelers who ultimately identify with the Caribbean more through association than alterity in order to challenge the paradigms of nationalism that are bolstered through alterity. This is not unambiguous identification with the oppressed, however, as the travel of these protagonists is enabled by their status as relatively elite in a transnational context.

In Chapter Four on *Daughters* (1991), I look at the travel by a bi-national protagonist to show, on one level, how Marshall ultimately resigns herself to the inevitability of the United States' influence in the Caribbean, but, on the other, how she exposes the perpetuation of inequality that accompanies the seeming borderlessness of globalization. While bi-national Ursa MacKenzie seemingly effortlessly navigates between the United States and fictional Triunion, the counter-narrative offered by two Triunion-national narrators suggests that Ursa enjoys status as a transnational elite that they, without equivalent value to Triunion or the United States, do not similarly enjoy. Parallels that Marshall creates between Triunion and Midland City, New Jersey, show how the economically oppressed in the United States, like the Triunion-national narrators Astral and Celestine, are also de-valued and disempowered citizens.

The trajectory of this study, then, begins with the waning of colonialism and the waxing of the United States' presence in the development and cultures of these newly independent Caribbean nations. I then examine two of most prevalent forms of travel to the Caribbean in the post-colonial era – Development and tourism – and show how Marshall constructs the Caribbean to resist the imposition of the United States through these encounters. Ultimately, however, Marshall recognizes the inevitability of the United States' intrusion into the Caribbean and turns her attention then to the unequal value assigned to nationals and transnationals in a globalized landscape.

Chapter One
 “To Da-duh, In Memoriam”

The hour of the barbarian is at hand. The modern barbarian. The American hour.
 Aime Cesaire, *Discourse on Colonialism*

I begin my study of Paule Marshall’s deployment of the travel trope with her 1967 short story “To Da-duh, In Memoriam.” “To Da-duh” is a fitting beginning because Marshall establishes in the story many of the concerns that she will continue to explore through travel in her upcoming novels. Travel in this short story functions to forecast the increasingly adamant influence of the United States on the Caribbean as the 20th century unfolds and as colonialism officially comes to an end in much of the Caribbean. It forecasts how Marshall will cast the United States as antagonist to the Caribbean’s genuine independence. “To Da-duh” tells of a nine-year-old Brooklyn born girl’s trip to Barbados in the 1930s to visit her maternal grandmother. Marshall based the story on her own year-long stay with her grandmother in Barbados as a young girl. The child and her grandmother have an affectionate yet competitive relationship that maps the tension between modernity and tradition. During the child’s stay, the pair repeatedly compete over whose nation contains the greatest wonders. This rivalry pits Barbados’ majestic landscape against the United States’ technological wonders. The story’s plot clearly builds toward Da-duh’s seeming defeat in the face of her beloved Barbados’ inevitable modernization. Shortly after the child leaves Barbados, British planes, “in a show of force,” fly low over the island, frightening villagers and flattening the cane fields (105-6). Da-duh dies during the air raid. The story is more than just a lamentation about a traditional past being subsumed by an inevitably industrialized future; rather, through the

first-person retrospective narration from the United States born granddaughter's point of view, Marshall clearly focuses our attention on the consequences of the 20th century United States/Caribbean encounter to the generations of United States born Caribbean descendants. Marshall shows through the story's protagonist how tenuously connected to their Afro-Caribbean ancestry they are and anticipates this generation's difficulty managing to remain Caribbean-identified within the powerful cultural framework of the United States.

“To Da-duh” is set in 1930s English colonial Barbados. This is important in contextualizing the United States/Caribbean contact in the story. Barbados is still under colonial rule, and Marshall positions the United States to be the next powerful influence in Barbados' development. The colonial setting allows Marshall to describe the Caribbean before the post World War II United States Development efforts in the Caribbean and before the mass-market tourism encounter between the United States and the Caribbean. In the decades following the setting of the story, the United States will seek to wield its influence throughout the newly independent Caribbean in the hopes of securing democratic neighbors and homes for its exports. At the time of the story, though, the United States was known to the Caribbean through the Caribbean descendants, like the narrator and her mother, who lived in the United States and wrote and occasionally traveled back to the Caribbean.²⁰ Thus, the short story enacts how the United States was most present to the Caribbean in the early 20th century, through these émigrés. This is

²⁰ Thousands of Caribbean men were employed in the construction of the Panama Canal, and their earnings funded a wave of emigration from the Caribbean to the United States. In fact, Marshall's parents immigrated to the United States with Panama money. The narrator's mother is of the generation whose immigration was financed with Panama money. These émigrés' letters and trips home to the Caribbean, prior to the eras of television and the Internet, provided Caribbean nationals with their predominant impressions of the United States. See Hathaway pages 14-16.

useful to my examination of the travel trope in Marshall's work because it allows me to show how in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" Marshall anticipates the hegemony of the United States/Caribbean encounter and then explicates that hegemony in her later novels.

Colonialism's marginal place in the story allows Marshall to focus the reader's attention on the upcoming neoimperial encounter between the Caribbean and the United States rather than on the historical colonial encounter. Marshall does not confront colonialism's pervasive mark on the Caribbean directly. Rather, she constructs a Barbadian identity necessarily complicated by the byproducts of colonialism but of which Da-duh is staunchly proud. Marshall evokes colonialism subtly through the grandmother's disparaging remarks about her relatives' behavior. Da-duh says about their over-eager greeting of the United States travelers, "But oh Christ, why you all got to get on like you never saw people from 'Away' before? ... That's why I don't like to go anyplace with you St. Andrew's people, you know. You all ain't been colonized" (98). Da-duh's insult reiterates the colonial rhetoric that credits colonization with bringing civilization and refinement to the Caribbean. Marshall shows through Da-duh's comment the colonial subject's internalization of those ideas. Colonial oppression is also implied in the story through the British military's show of air assault strength during which Da-duh dies.²¹ Despite the colonial oppression Da-duh has experienced, though, she is proud of the Barbados she knows. The subtle presence of colonialism is significant because through it Marshall makes the story's point less about colonialism and more about the challenge of passing traditional Barbadian life and culture to the Caribbean diaspora.

²¹ The air raid corresponds to the 1937 strike by Black laborers in Barbados and throughout the Caribbean. They struck in response to white plantation owners who collectively lowered wages. The English air raid was intended as a display of the Empire's continued strength.

The subtle presence of colonialism in the story speaks to the complicated notion of “tradition” in my argument. Much has been written about the vexed reality of history and tradition for the African diaspora in the Caribbean. I mean “traditional” to mark the Caribbean-identified lifestyle and experiences of those descended from slavery and indentured servitude. This tradition includes the culture and lifestyle that grew from the ambivalent mixture of colonial oppression, the beauty and bounty of the landscape, passed on African and indigenous culture, and the resilience of the African diaspora. In turn, I mean the modernity that the child emblemizes to mean a state of development that values technology, industry, and competition.²²

Tradition Confronted with Modernity

Marshall constructs the young granddaughter to be emblematic of her United States home and constructs her grandmother to be emblematic of Barbados still under colonial rule. Although the relationship between the young narrator and Da-duh is loving and familial, it is also decidedly competitive. Their competitive relationship shows the threat that Marshall believes a United States-centric modernization poses to the traditional ways and mores of the Caribbean. Marshall says about her real-life relationship with her Da-duh, “It was as if we both knew, at a level beyond words, that I had come into the world not only to love her and to continue her line but to take her very life in order that I might live.”²³ Marshall establishes her characters’ rivalrous relationship in the story’s early pages when the two first meet. The grandmother first

²² In upcoming works like *Praisesong for the Widow* and *Daughters*, Marshall will increasingly associate consumerism with the United States model of modernity.

²³ See preface to “To Da-duh, In Memoriam” in Marshall’s *Reena and Other Stories*.

addresses the child's sister, whom she recognizes as pretty and whom she predicts will be lucky because she favors her father. Then Da-duh turns to the narrator. They lock in a gaze that both are too stubborn to break. Da-duh looks away first. She identifies the narrator as "fierce" and declares, "You must be one of those New York terrors you hear so much about" (98). In this way, Marshall associates the narrator with New York, the emblem of the United States for many West Indians. The sister resembles her Barbados born father, suggesting her similarity to and ascension from Barbados. The narrator, though, does not resemble either of her Barbadian parents. The sister, in fact, disappears from the story after this brief mention, and the dissimilar looking narrator is clearly the story's protagonist. This helps to create the relationship of alterity between her and her grandmother. Marshall emphasizes the differences between tradition and modernity through the protagonist's dissimilar appearance to her Barbadian relatives. Although their relationship as granddaughter and grandmother creates a continuum between them, the child's appearance also works to highlight the different "look" a Barbadian descendant takes when transplanted in the United States.

This "New York terror" is the voice of the United States in Marshall's story. She remains unnamed throughout the narrative. This serves to generalize her experience to those next-generation children, like Marshall, of the Caribbean diaspora. Marshall uses the girl's youth to suggest the naïveté and bravado of the ideology she embodies. In the eyes of her colonial-seeped Da-duh, the girl is unimaginable as she describes beating up a white girl, and she is precocious as she sings and dances the music of Tin Pan Alley (102-3). The young traveler carries the phenomenon of the metropolis into Da-duh's rural landscape, "...recreating," she says, "my towering world of steel and concrete and

machines for her, building the city out of words” (110). The traveling granddaughter stages the energy and confidence of the United States model of development, a model which Marshall constructs to be the antagonist of the life Da-duh has always known.

As the young traveler represents the future and modernity in their rivalrous relationship, Da-duh represents past and present colonial Barbados. When the young girl first sees her grandmother in the disembarkation shed, she is struck by her appearance:

... [Da-duh] was caught in the sunlight at her end of the building and the darkness inside – and for a moment she appeared to contain them both: the light in the long severe old-fashioned white dress she wore which brought the sense of the past that was still alive into our bustling present and in the snatch of white in her eye; the darkness in her black high-top shoes and in her face which was visible now that she was closer. It was as stark and fleshless as a death mask, that face (96).

Marshall’s decided description of Da-duh as liminal positions the Barbados she represents to be in a state of transition. As the girl sees both the past and present in her grandmother, the reader intuits that the child marks the future. Marshall creates a scenario in which it is inevitable that the grandmother must die by the story’s end in the sense that the past and present must pass away in order for the future/granddaughter to grow. Marshall’s greater interest is in what shape that future will take and who has agency to determine progress’s path.

It is noteworthy that Marshall associates the United States in this first work in my study with someone with ancestral ties to Barbados. In this way, Marshall examines the implications of this encounter in a more personal and less political way than in her future work. In “To Da-duh,” the United States’ threat to traditional Barbadian culture and identity does not come from the impersonal systems of Development and tourism, as it will in Marshall’s future work; rather, the formidability of the United States is carried to

the Caribbean through the voice of the United States born nine-year-old granddaughter. Their familial relationship suggests the inevitability of development. Their rivalrous relationship, though, shows Marshall's anxiety about the potential loss or abandonment of tradition in the Caribbean's adopting a Global North construction of "modern." Marshall shows through the girl's dis-location from Barbados and her dissimilar appearance the disruption in development that occurs from the Barbados Da-duh emblemizes to the United States model of the future that the girl represents.²⁴

The natural landscape and agriculture are fundamental to the Barbados that Da-duh shares with the narrator. This is another way in which Marshall emphasizes a Barbadian identity not exclusively associated with colonialism and an identity worth passing on. After the travelers arrive at the port in Bridgetown, they then spend the rest of the story in the grandmother's home parish, St. Thomas. St. Thomas is decidedly rural. Da-duh's house does not have electricity. The young traveler and her grandmother take daily walks through the surrounding countryside where they see guava, mango, sugar apple, and lime trees. The grandmother speaks the names of the trees "as though they were those of her gods" (100). This speaks to the centrality of the natural world to the traditional Barbadian life the grandmother seeks to pass on to her granddaughter.²⁵ They go through the thick, dense bush, which the young girl finds frightening and violent but sweet smelling and peaceful within. Marshall reminds readers through the girl's ambivalence of the complicated colonial history that the grandmother seeks to pass to the

²⁴ Simon Gikandi's discussion of the Caribbean's anxiety over euro-centric constructions of modernity is relevant here. See *Writing in Limbo: Modernism and Caribbean Literature* (1992).

²⁵ Marshall's description of the natural world that surrounds Da-duh, with its majestically tall trees, various fruits, and unlandscaped growing patterns provides an antidote to how the tourism industry will commodify the Caribbean landscape.

child, a history that is fraught with violence but sweetened with beauty and survival. In each place they visit, the grandmother asks if the girl has anything like it in New York. This frames the contrast between the story's actual setting and the industrial, technological New York that is evoked through the child's descriptions of her home. The contrast between the natural world of Barbados and the technological, industrial world of New York the young girl describes is more than just a lament over the rise of industrialization. Rather, Marshall uses these differences to stage the real challenge for the Afro-Caribbean diaspora to remain connected to the foundations of Afro-Caribbean identity.

In particular, cane fields are an important part of Marshall's description of the Barbadian landscape.²⁶ The cane field is resonant with symbolism for Da-duh's Barbados. The ambivalent notion of history I discuss earlier is symbolized in the canes. It is a colonial plantation crop, first brought to the Caribbean by Columbus. Cane produced significant wealth for the colonizers, and the fields were worked by slaves.²⁷ For Da-duh, though, the height and strength of cane are a source of pride. To the young girl, however, the canes appear threatening. Their close proximity to the lorry on which the group travels to St. Thomas provokes the girl's longing for the familiar back in Brooklyn. While Da-duh views the canes and says admiringly, "The canes this side are pretty enough," the narrator recalls thinking,

²⁶ See Martin Japtok's "Sugarcane as History in Paule Marshall's 'To Da-duh, In Memoriam.'" Japtok examines the Caribbean landscape, in particular, cane cultivation, as the literalization of colonial history in the Caribbean.

²⁷ Cane is also significant in Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969). She writes dramatically about the back breaking work it takes to harvest a field of cane. See pages blank of this dissertation for my examination of a scene in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* in which a cane field plays an integral role.

They were too much for me. I thought of them as giant weeds that had overrun the island, leaving scarcely any room for the small tottering houses of sunbleached pine we passed... I suddenly feared that we were journeying, unaware that we were, toward some dangerous place where the canes, grown as high and thick as a forest, would close in on us and run us through with their stiletto blades (99).

Significantly, her granddaughter does not share Da-duh's appreciation for the cane.

Despite its associations with the Caribbean's colonial and slave-owning history, Da-duh admires the strength and beauty of the cane. Through their different reactions to the cane, Marshall acknowledges the problematic passage of the history and tradition represented in the cane. The child's descriptions of the cane evoke its colonial associations: a giant weed that had overrun the island, dangerous, violent, and suffocating. Da-duh's admiration for the cane evidences the complexity of colonial history for the Afro-Caribbean. Cane is, at the same time, a colonial byproduct and a valued, to Da-duh, beautiful marker of Barbadian identity. For Da-duh, they represent the island and her inhabitants' strength, beauty, and virility. Marshall writes Da-duh's appreciation of the cane to overlook its colonial associations. This suggests the Afro-Caribbean's ambiguous relationship to Caribbean history. The child's reaction to the cane evidences the difficult passage of this history as she fears this vexed symbol.

Marshall does not suggest, however, that through the young girl's rejection of her grandmother's feelings for the cane the family escapes the legacy of colonization. Rather, Marshall locates neoimperial threat in the United States. She uses the Empire State Building to symbolize the strength and formidability of the nation's achievement. It is amazing and impressive, the tallest building in the world at the time, and a technological contrast to Da-duh's natural world. Its name suggests the neoimperial potential of the United States' influence when enacted on other countries. Near the end of the girl's stay

in Barbados, Da-duh takes her through particularly dense bush to a clearing they had not previously visited. Da-duh hopes to finally claim Barbados' superiority over the United States by showing her granddaughter the tallest palm tree in the area. The young narrator describes, "It appeared to be touching the blue dome of sky, to be flaunting its dark crown of fronds right in the blinding white face of the late morning sun" (103). Her description evidences her admiration for the palm tree, but when Da-Dah confidently demands that the girl tell her if she has seen anything that tall in New York, the girl responds with hesitation as she "almost wished, seeing [Da-duh's] face, that I could have said no" (103). In answer to Da-duh's question, she describes the Empire State Building, hundreds of times taller than the tree. The fact of the Empire State Building crushes Da-duh. She has challenged New York's alleged superiority with all that the Barbadian natural landscape offered her. The industrial might of the United States, though, seems to defeat her through the image of the Empire State Building. Marshall describes,

All the fight went out of her after that. The hand poised to strike me fell limp to her side, and as she stared at me, seeing not me but the building that was taller than the highest hill she knew, the small stubborn light in her eyes... began to fail. Finally, with a vague gesture that even in the midst of her defeat still tried to dismiss me and my world, she turned and started back through the gully, walking slowly, her steps groping and uncertain, as if she were suddenly no longer sure of the way, while I followed triumphantly yet strangely saddened behind (104).

Marshall uses Da-duh's fear of the girl's descriptions of New York, realized in the specter of the Empire State Building to portend the coming industrialization of the Caribbean. In the face of this achievement, Da-duh seems to resign herself to the future that the technological wonder implies. In Da-duh's stumbling back home through landscape that suddenly seems unfamiliar, Marshall infers the passing of the way of life that Da-duh has always known in Barbados; the changes to come in Da-duh's Barbados

that will accompany United States dominance in the Americas, Marshall implies, result in an unrecognizable Barbados. The granddaughter's ambivalence about her seeming victory reminds readers that Marshall locates the implications of these forthcoming changes with the Afro-Caribbean diaspora. Marshall knows that it will be difficult for those of the diaspora to retrieve the sense of identity that is lost in the historical moment dramatized by the scene.

Marshall uses Da-duh and her granddaughter's competitive relationship with each other to illustrate the difficult passage of a traditional life's values to an industrialized, competition-based culture characterized by New York City. The last lines of the story place the narrator as an adult in mid-20th century New York. Marshall writes that she went to live alone "as one doing penance" (106). The granddaughter's guilt about Da-duh's death reinforces the reading that the United States modeled modernization that the girl emblemized in her visit to Barbados defeated a way of life staged through Da-duh. In tribute to her grandmother, the narrator paints canvasses of her Da-duh's Barbadian landscape in her loft above the noise of the factory below. She has grown to recognize that, for Da-duh, the cane fields represented the strength and tenacity of those transplanted to the Caribbean through slavery who took root and managed to flourish in the same way as the cane that was also transplanted to the Caribbean. The adult narrator pays homage to Da-duh by trying to immortalize the cane through her painting. Just as her childhood travel predicted through her competitive relationship with her Da-duh, though, she has difficulty harmoniously paying reverence to tradition and the past with the disruptive and onerous presence of the factory below. The "jarring" and "thunderous" presence of the factory below shows that the modern and industrial is suffocating the

continuation of the traditional. Through this ending in mid-century New York City, Marshall locates the competition between old and new within the United States and, specifically, within those United States Americans who descend from the Caribbean. As Marshall goes on to deploy the travel trope in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; *Praisesong for the Widow*; and *Daughters*, this will remain her concern: how do those of the African and Caribbean diasporas resist the profound neo-imperial potential of an increasingly adamant United States socio-political and cultural force?

The Trope of Travel After “To Da-duh, In Memoriam”

Marshall establishes in “To Da-duh, In Memoriam” themes and tensions that she pulls through in characters’ travel in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, Praisesong for the Widow*; and *Daughters*. Fore among these is the formidable presence of the United States in the Caribbean’s development following independence. The Da-duh figure is a related thread Marshall weaves through these novels. Da-duh will appear frequently in Marshall’s future work as an antidote to the United States-centric model of development. In my study, she appears in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* as Leesy Walkes. She is Aunt Cuney in *Praisesong for the Widow*, and in *Daughters* Mae Rylands. Each of these women is a revered elder in her community. These women mark an ancestral sense of home for travelers in the novels in which they appear. *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* locates this woman in the Caribbean as a matriarch of the Bournehills community. In *Praisesong for the Widow* and *Daughters*, she resides in the United States. Aunt Cuney and Mae Rylands function to remind the traveler protagonists in the novels in which they appear of the need to resist the dominant culture and instead

remain centered by community. Marshall says about the Da-duh figures who populate her work, “She’s an ancestry figure, symbolic for me of the long line of black women and men – African and New World – who made my being possible, and whose spirit I believe continues to animate my life and work. I wish to acknowledge and celebrate them. I am, in a word, an unabashed ancestor worshipper.”²⁸ While Marshall clearly acknowledges and celebrates ancestors, this is less easy for her characters as this study will show. She writes of the Caribbean and the United States to show how difficult it is for the Caribbean to assert its autonomy in the face of United States influence throughout the Americas. Marshall depicts the difficulty of much of the Caribbean to chart its own course of development and to become autonomous in a world not of its making.²⁹ First, colonialism usurped control from the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean; then, following independence, the consolidation of financial power within the Global North continues to shape Caribbean development and culture. Marshall confronts the mechanisms of this Global North power in her upcoming novels through how she constructs travel for Development and for tourism.

²⁸ See Marshall’s commentary before “To Da-duh, In Memoriam” in *Reena* page 95.

²⁹ Stephanie Black’s documentary *Life and Debt* chronicles well Jamaica’s difficulty determining its own course of development given the stronghold the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund have on the economies of Global South nations.

Chapter Two

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People

Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) challenges the efficacy of Development practice in the Caribbean.³⁰ In Chapter One, I demonstrate how Marshall anticipates in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" the waxing influence of the United States as a neo-imperial influence on the Caribbean. Chapter Two will examine one specific iteration of that influence – Development. While "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" enacts the waning of colonialism, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* presents the historic moment of independence and the pressure upon newly independent nations to "modernize" along a United States-based model.

Development ideology, in this study, is construed as a way of thinking that constructs a narrative of travel that normalizes the United States and presents the Caribbean to be deficient. In Marshall's novel, three US-Americans travel to fictional Bourne Island with the intention of designing and implementing a Development scheme for the island's most remote and least Westernized region, Bournehills.³¹ Marshall uses the behavior and attitudes of each of the Americans to offer a different critique of Development. Young quantitative researcher Allen Fuso enacts Marshall's critique of the homogenization of difference inherent in Cold War era Development. Project leader and

³⁰ I capitalize Development here to indicate reference to the specific ideological and socio-political system of intervention by a powerful nation on a less powerful nation that the novel critiques. See pages two and three of this essay for a brief history of this system. The uppercase distinguishes this system from the interest a nation can have in its own autonomous development. I will use the term developer to indicate the agent of Development and the term Development other to indicate recipient of Development efforts.

³¹ I use the term "US-Americans" to identify people from the United States rather than the widely used "Americans" because I believe that the latter term homogenizes the entire region from South through Central to North America. It also linguistically "colonizes" regions of the greater Americas outside of the United States.

anthropologist Saul Amron reveals the insufficiency of empathy to affect genuine change, and Saul's wife, Harriet, embodies the white privilege and global, corporate interests that bolster Development.³² If these US-Americans were to be successful in "developing" Bournehills, the constructions of United States' superiority and Caribbean insufficiency that are perpetuated through Development ideologies would be affirmed. Their success would suggest the positive potential of Development to affect change for newly independent Caribbean nations in the Cold War era. Instead, however, Marshall wishes to expose Development as an insufficient substitute for the Caribbean's autonomy and agency. To do so, through both devices of plot and symbol, she constructs a travel narrative in which the US Americans' attempt to launch a Development scheme in Bournehills is doomed to failure.

My focus on the traveling US-Americans is not only central to this particular project but it is also important because scholarship on the novel has overlooked the US-Americans' distinct presence on the island as travelers and as agents of Development ideology. Most studies narrowly situate the influence of the Global North and of colonialism on the Caribbean in the past. They disregard the *ongoing* dominion of the Global North through neoimperial ideologies and practice or focus on the recovery of the post-colonial's history and culture through spotlighting Merle Kinbona, a native of Bourne Island who is the US-American travelers' landlady in Bournehills. Kinbona is

³² This chapter's focus is Cold War era Development ideology and practice. In this era, the US used Development as a means of securing democracy's dominance against the threat posed by Communism. Many of the criticisms leveled by Marshall apply to contemporary Development, as well; however, in the over 40 years that have passed since the novel's publication, many in Development have worked to make Development practice more respectful of the local and less wedded to Global North normalization. See Marshall's *Daughters* (1993) for a more contemporary examination of Development in the Caribbean. In *Daughters*, Marshall still disparages the presence of Development efforts in the Caribbean; however, the protagonist Ursa's work as a social researcher in what amounts to domestic Development work complicates Marshall's critique.

situated as representative not only of the Bournehills region but also, more broadly, of the postcolonial subject.³³ Joseph Skerrett's analysis is characteristic of this approach. As he argues, "Merle's unresolved problems of ego identity are clearly symbolically related to the maturational problems of Bourne Island. Merle's long and painful process of outgrowing her haunted past parallels her nation's long and equally painful process of realizing a meaningful independence from British colonial power and its cultural and economic influences." The postcolonial subject's past is the focus of Skerrett's critical stance, as it also is for Adam Meyer and Mary Jane Schenck. They both look at ways in which a broken individual or community can regain wholeness through the recovery of memory. With similar interest in community wholeness, Gary Storhoff believes Marshall to be an artist "whose main concern is social life, the communal knowledge of the collective, of the accumulated experience of a social group." These approaches largely ignore the need for political and economic change in the novel's present and focus on the psycho-social aspects of the post-colonial condition. In so doing, they suggest that recuperating memory and celebrating community will make the Bournehillsians "feel better" about themselves.³⁴

My reading of *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, however, differs from these approaches in that it gives prominence to the distinct presence of the US-American

³³ While Edward Brathwaite minimally acknowledges the presence of a critique of Development in the novel, he feels that it remains "marginal" (229). Also, Gary Storhoff's focus on "communitas" does critique the American's Development project as cultural hegemony, viewing the project as a means of disseminating a Western conceptualization of self in conflict with the Bournehillsians traditionally communal way of life, but his critique is limited in its development.

³⁴ Ian Strachan's *Paradise and Plantation* argues about the novel that Marshall depicts Bournehills as a place out of space and time, and in doing so she inadvertently reifies the tourism discourse's construction of the Caribbean as a timeless, Edenic paradise. I argue, however, that for the US American travelers, Bournehills is not a traveler's paradise; rather, their travel reveals inescapable, unambiguous criticisms of Development ideology from which they are unable to extricate themselves.

travelers as Development practitioners. Allen, Saul, and his blue blood wife, Harriet, travel from the United States to Bourne Island explicitly to begin work on a Development project for Bournehills. Bourne Island was selected as the site of the Development project partly because contributors to the agency funding the project have ancestral ties to the slave trade in the English-speaking West Indies.³⁵ Marshall uses this plot device to create an historical continuum between colonial and Development incursions into the Caribbean. She wants to show that the discourse of Development perpetuates the mythology of the imperial travel narrative which depicts the Caribbean as lacking the wherewithal, intelligence, and ingenuity to manage its own resources and direct its own progress.³⁶ I argue that the travel by the US-American characters for Development purposes is not incidental; rather, it is the means by which Marshall makes the link between past and contemporary subjugation.

The ideology and practice of Development by the United States grew out of the Cold War, which coincides with the historical setting of the novel. Marshall confronts the widely accepted Cold War historiography which maintains that with “First World” economic aid and guidance, “Third World” nations could “modernize” along a Western model.³⁷ In the United States, Development ideology toward newly independent nations had its roots in the George C. Marshall Plan which was designed to stabilize and

³⁵ The narrator explains, “And there was also some small measure of sentiment involved in the choice born of the close commercial ties with the islands in the beginning. An early forbear of Harriet Shippen’s, for example, the widow Susan Harbin, 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” (37).

³⁶ See, for example, James Anthony Froude’s *The English in the West Indies, or, the Bow of Ulysses*. 1888. This is a classic example of the travel writing that postcolonialists view as in service to the imperial cause. Froude’s narrative privileges the metropolitan center over the colonial periphery and endorses the ideology of the racial superiority of the English as an explanation for the vast Empire.

³⁷ This vocabulary is considered pejorative, but I use it here because it is the vocabulary used as the discourse of Development developed.

restructure postwar Europe and Japan with export credits and financial aid. Through Bretton Woods, the conference that founded the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, the ideology of the Marshall Plan grew to encompass formerly colonized nations as well.³⁸ As these former colonies rapidly gained independence following World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union competed for their loyalty. The United States was motivated to involve itself in the “modernization” of former colonies by two main objectives: to promote democracy over Communism and to secure export destinations for its products. Development, as practiced by the United States, normalizes the United States model of modernity and infers United States national superiority while subordinating the Caribbean. Philip McMichael chronicles the history of Development in *Development and Social Change: a Global Perspective*. He explains how the United States model of modernization proved to be alluring to newly independent nations: “In the postwar era, the United States was the most powerful state – economically, militarily, and ideologically. Its superior standard of living, its anti-colonial heritage, and its commitment to liberal domestic and international relations lent it the trappings of an ideal society on the world stage.”³⁹ Thus, McMichael argues, the United States standard and model of modernization became naturalized as inevitable and inescapable, and the Development project served as the narrative through which this ideology was disseminated. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, however, Marshall offers a

³⁸ Philip McMichael explains how colonialism had stripped these newly independent nations of their autonomy, making them susceptible to Development discourse. He explains, “In a *postcolonial* world, non-European cultures had been either destroyed or irrevocably changed through colonial histories. Newly independent states emerged, and political leaders had to operate in an international framework that was not of their making, but through which they needed political legitimacy” (4).

³⁹ See McMichael page 21.

competing story about the Caribbean and the Global North's intervention through her construction of Alan, Saul, and Harriet as travelling agents of Development.

The trope of travel provides Marshall the opportunity to examine Development within the contact zone, giving voice to the Development other.⁴⁰ This equivocal examination of Development exposes the reality of its impact on the Caribbean rather than perpetuating the mythology of Development as an altruistic ideology. Marshall uses the trope of travel to position Bournehills as the site of confrontation between Development and the locals' own narrative of emancipation. The Bournehillsians continue to venerate Cuffee Ned, a colonial slave who revolted against his white plantation owner and led Bournehills as "a nation apart" for several months while they defended themselves against the British. Cuffee Ned's repeated presence in the novel alongside the Development story is Marshall's clear statement of Development's potential to repeat the colonial oppression of the past and of the Caribbean's imperative to resist. At stake are the Caribbean's autonomy and its agency to determine the course of its own progress and development. The US-American travelers' and the Development project's collective failure reveals the inability of Development ideology to effect genuine emancipation for oppressed peoples. The confrontation between Development and the Cuffee Ned legacy reveals the capacity of Development to be a further means of subjugation for the formerly colonized and an impediment to true emancipation.

Allen Fusco: the Consequences of Homogenization

⁴⁰ Mary Louise Pratt in *Imperial Eyes* describes contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermath as they are lived out across the globe today" (4). In addition, I use the term "Development other" similar to how I use "destination other" in other instances in this study. I mean to emphasize the relationship of alterity that is established between the Development practitioner and the Development subject through this term.

US-American Allen Fuso embodies Marshall's critique of Development's features that homogenize difference and universalize one model of development. Allen's memories of the United States while traveling in Bourne Island reveal that he is a product of the United States "melting pot" mentality which subordinates difference in the celebration of assimilation. Marshall constructs Allen's homogenization to parallel how Cold War era Development rejected alternative modernities and normalized a United States-based model of development. Marshall suggests through Allen that in the repression of difference, the subject is rendered impotent. Allen's relationships with Bournehills residents Vere and Merle bear out how the consequences of homogenization inhibit his ability to engage with them in a meaningful way.

Descriptions of Allen underscore how he is a product of United States homogenization and assimilation. His various Euro-ethnic backgrounds combine to effect the negation of their distinct features. Marshall describes his multi-ethnic background:

But this strength, all the force and passion hinted at in his build and in his strong Mediterranean coloring, lay unused... It was as though there had been a concerted campaign from the time he was born to subdue this part of him...All the various strains that had gone into making him... might have been thrown into one of those high-speed American blenders, a giant Mixmaster perhaps, which reduces everything to the same bland amalgam beneath its whirring blades (17).

Allen's various Euro backgrounds lose differentiation in the United States Mixmaster of assimilation. His potential "force and passion" are subdued. Through this description, Allen embodies Marshall's critique of the United States ideology contemporaneous to the novel that promoted assimilation as the means to national unity and that normalized the

American model of modernity as the ideal. These are paradigms out of which Development grows. Marshall means to argue through Allen that homogenization extinguishes that which makes the subject distinct and vigorous. These traits, she suggests through Allen, are necessary for the subject's agency. Just as homogenization denies Allen agency, so, too, does the homogenization of Development practice deny newly independent nations the agency that independence implies.

A significant memory that Allen has about his life in the United States reveals the value that the United States places on homogenization and Allen's lack of agency that is a consequence of homogenization. Marshall emphasizes the importance of this memory to Allen's characterization by placing it early in her descriptions of Allen. Allen considers himself to be lacking some essential element that would give him a coherent, distinguishable identity; however, Marshall constructs Allen to lack the fortitude to confront the Mixmaster despite his dissatisfaction with what it has done to him.⁴¹ For example, on the airplane as he descends toward Bourne Island he has a memory that "he had hoped he had forgotten" (16). This hope demonstrates how Allen continues to be haunted by the memory. He recalls being on a freeway overpass with his only childhood friend when the friend shouts anti-Semitic epithets at a passing car, suspecting that the car carries Jews. Allen remembers joining his friend's shouts with his own, despite his nervousness and uncertainty. Recalling this memory, Allen continues to feel the unease he felt then about going along with his friend. The nature of the taunt, to degrade an ethnic other, shows the value placed on homogenization and the corresponding fear of difference. Fear of difference is also shown through Allen's reluctant participation in the

⁴¹ The narrator describes that he remains "curiously undefined." See page 18.

taunting; he does not want to appear different to his friend and so he jeers the difference of Jewishness. Allen's hope that he had forgotten the memory shows his continued struggle with his participation. Through travel to Bournehills, Allen hopes to retrieve the defining characteristic of himself that the United States Mixmaster erased, which may have given him the efficacy to resist his friend and, in turn, the lure of homogenization. His frustrated attempts at relationships with Vere and Merle, though, evidence the lasting emasculation of homogenization. The prevailing narrative of Development maintains that the "developing" nation lacks something that the "developed" nation can provide; however, Marshall suggests through Allen that the homogenized "developed" nation seeks to remediate its lack through the encounter with the Development subject. Allen's failed relationships with Vere and Merle, then, map this critique.

Marshall sexualizes her critique of Development's engagement with the Development other most obviously in the carnival scene. This pivotal scene of Allen and Vere's friendship demonstrates Allen's lack of efficacy and his inability to engage. Conversely, Vere shows great vitality. Structurally, carnival is situated in the middle of the novel and functions as a rite-of-passage for the American characters. Marshall describes Allen as participating in the festivities, but he protects himself "behind the one-way screen of his glasses" (301). After the conclusion of the carnival parade, Allen finds Vere in the crowd. Vere has brought along two women, Milly and Elvita. In the rush of people, Allen's eye glasses fly off and are lost. The glasses were tools in Allen's gaze on the Development other. Their "one way screen" provided the barrier between him and others that he prefers. With glasses off, Allen is disarmed of his protection and exposed

to his vulnerability. As the foursome drives to Milly's apartment, the narrator reports about Allen,

He didn't dare open his eyes... because without his glasses, the background – that is, everything at a distance – dropped out of his vision, and as it did, those things close to hand: objects and people, the whole bewildering welter of life, would come rushing in at him, everything blown out of proportion, distorted, inescapable; and he would be unable then to deal with the world in the way he preferred, in the abstract, at a remove (305-6).

Allen's preference for maintaining a distance between himself and others suggests the dispassionate engagement between Development and its "other." He is overwhelmed by that which is "close to hand" and fears his loss of control. Allen's frustration over losing his glasses is expected. Marshall's description of his despair, though, suggests Development's limited ability to manage outside of its own hermeneutic paradigm. Allen finds things "bewildering, "blown out of proportion" and "distorted" outside of that paradigm.

Marshall interrogates Development's interest in the Development other through Allen's ambiguous sexuality. She draws sharp contrast between Allen's response to his potential sexual liaison with Elvita and Vere's confidence with and attention to Milly. Once the foursome arrives at Milly's small apartment, Vere and Milly disappear to her bed behind a curtain. Elvita tries to seduce Allen, but he does not respond, and she curses him: "...he's like somebody born without natural feelings. Or if he had any, something or somebody took them away...No feelings a-tall...But I wonder if all them in America is like him" (311). Elvita conflates Allen with all Americans suggesting that Allen's impotence characterizes something uniquely American. Her suggestion that if Allen once had feelings, "something or somebody took them away" echoes the description of how

Allen is a product of the United States Mixmaster. After Elvita leaves, Allen is left to the sounds of Vere and Milly's lovemaking, and he cannot escape the image of Vere in his mind. Allen then masturbates alone on the settee. Marshall uses Allen's potential, though suppressed, homosexuality to comment on how homogenization demands the suppression of difference.⁴² As a consequence of this suppressed difference, he is unable to achieve genuine intimacy with either Vere or Merle. Marshall also implies through Allen's masturbation that there is something narcissistic about the developer's interest in the Development other. Preferring images of Vere to Elvita's presence suggests a futility in the relationship between developer and Development other, as Allen will never achieve the intimacy with Vere he seeks. It also suggests a fundamental sterility, as opposed to procreative potential, in the Developmental agenda.

Allen and Merle's friendship has the potential to salvage Allen's ability to engage in a genuine relationship. Prior to this trip to Bourne Island, Allen spent several months in Bournehills conducting research, and he developed a friendship with Merle. He calls Merle his first real friend since childhood (19). Merle's misreading of Allen in a scene that could illustrate their intimacy, however, secures Marshall's skepticism about the level of genuine engagement possible in the Development paradigm. Vere's death in a car accident shortly after carnival prompts Allen to become introspective. He chooses to talk with Merle and, in their conversation, he voices his discontent with his life in the United States. He shares with Merle that "something is missing" from him that would enable

⁴² The first suggestions of his homosexuality come in Marshall's description of Allen and Vere swimming together. She writes, "Allen was the first to tire, and stumbling back onto the beach he sat in the surf, breathing heavily, the black hair matted on his body, his gaze on Vere. Watching him. His body as he strongly rode the waves... The next morning, and every morning thereafter, [Allen] could be heard singing in the garden at dawn" (152). Allen's interest in Vere's body and Marshall's emphasis on Allen's elevated mood following the swim suggest that Allen's interest in Vere is homoerotic. Allen himself alludes to his potential homosexuality in a conversation with Merle to be discussed later in this chapter.

him to take risks; instead, he realizes, he sticks with what comes naturally and easily (378). His comment alludes to the metaphor of the United States Mixmaster eliminating from an individual that which would distinguish him. He explains to Merle, “What I’m trying to say is that I’ve never done anything that was a real challenge, that didn’t come easy like the stuff here. And I’d like to. Just for once I’d like to try my hand at something that would really test me” (378). These comments are telling in the context of how the novel consistently conflates Allen with the United States. Here Marshall critiques the United States ideology behind Development suggesting that the United States is unwilling and unable to function outside of a world of its making.

Through Allen, then, Marshall provides a critique of the homogenizing and repressive aspects of development ideology. Suppression of difference, in this context, leads to lassitude, inauthenticity, and impotence in a manner that ensures not growth or “development” but rather stagnation and sterility.

Saul Amron: The Insufficiency of Empathy

Marshall uses project leader Saul Amron to comment on the limited potential of empathy to effect change for others. She constructs Saul’s Jewishness to be integral to his character so as to portray Saul as able to empathize with the Diaspora, rootlessness and exile experienced by the Bournehillsians.⁴³ Marshall gives Saul further empathy with the Bournehills residents through his moderate skepticism, as an anthropologist, of the Development scheme’s ability to succeed. In constructing Saul explicitly as an anthropologist, Marshall echoes Arturo Escobar’s critique of anthropology for its

⁴³ See Adam Meyer “Memory and Identity for Black, White and Jew in Paule Marshall’s *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*,” *MELUS* 10.3 1995 for more on this observation.

relationship with Development. Citing Talal Asad, Escobar questions, “Does not Development today, as colonialism did in the former epoch, make possible ‘the kind of human intimacy on which anthropological fieldwork is based, but insure(s) that intimacy should be one-sided and provisional’?”⁴⁴ Though, as I have shown, Allen seems blind to this possibility, Saul is not. He demonstrates the ability to question Development ideology when he addresses the Bournehills community about his project’s intentions. Marshall writes, “...he felt suddenly uncertain (for he might well fail), and presumptuous: for who was he to be talking about transforming their lives?” (140). Marshall’s sympathetic construction of Saul tempers her critique of Development overall; however, Saul’s participation in the Development project confronts the limits of his empathy and of outsiders’ agency to effect change for Bournehills. The inefficacy of the Development project that Saul supports, despite his empathetic approach to Bournehills, is revealed in significant scenes depicting his interaction with the Bournehillsians.

While the text does not entirely indict Saul, the fact remains that his Development money provides him the leisure of “getting to know the people” instead of laboring as hard and unjustly as they, evidencing the disparity between developer and Development other. In a pivotal scene that betrays this relationship, Saul goes with Stinger, a Bournehillsian cane field overseer, and Stinger’s small crew into the cane fields. On previous short observations, Saul felt “...almost like a voyeur looking on from the immunity of his peephole at another’s debasement” (160). The current scene Saul witnesses invokes the slavery of Bournehills’ past as Stinger and his crew labor up and down the hillside with the hot sun beating down. The white estate manager watches.

⁴⁴ See page 14 in Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development*, 1995.

Early descriptions of this scene suggest Saul's admiration for the crew's strength and skill balancing the cane. However, Saul eventually recognizes the inhuman labor conditions under which the crew works. Marshall describes Stinger's efforts as Saul watches: "And still Stinger pressed the assault, his drenched shirt cleaving to his back like a second skin under which you could see the play of his smallest muscles and the almost matte finish to his blackness. Although his pace did not slacken, Saul saw him undergo as the noon hour passed a transformation that left [Saul] shaken and set in motion his own collapse" (162). In the morning, Stinger works with a strength and precision that impress Saul. By the early afternoon, though, Stinger seems nearly defeated by the heat and the labor. The description of Stinger then contrasts significantly to the man whose skill cutting cane impressed Saul earlier:

Stinger's essentially slight, small-built body appeared to be gradually shrinking... By early afternoon, all that was left to him it appeared were the shriveled bones and muscles within the drawn sac of skin and the one arm flailing away with a mind and will of its own... But most telling of all was that the low private grunt of triumph which Stinger uttered whenever he sent one of the cane plants toppling had ceased and the only sound issuing from him was the labored wheeze which came in short desperate gasps (162).

The description Of Stinger and his crew's work echoes the working conditions of slaves in order to assert that, for the post-colonial subject, independence has not equaled emancipation. Saul's admiration for the laborers' strength and skill is replaced by his recognition of their unreasonable physical burden and the danger of carrying the heavy bundles down the steep hill. Saul's presence invokes the complicit role of Development in the post-colonial's continued subjugation.

Similarly, his subsequent "collapse" over what he witnesses provokes memories that speak to the source of Saul's empathetic approach to Development. Two memories,

in particular, ultimately reveal the inability of Saul's empathy to atone for the Bournehillsians' suffering through his Development project. Broken by what he has seen, Saul flees the scene and is "struck then, in that moment, there on the road to Spiretown, by a double memory that had about it the quality of a vision" (163). Saul recalls formative memories from his youth involving his Sephardic mother and an old Jewish man in a window in Saul's childhood neighborhood. The memories again privilege Saul's Jewishness as integral to his relationship to Bournehills; the visions prove instrumental in defining Saul's relationship to others, the lens through which he has constructed his place in the world, and his role as an anthropologist within the Development framework. He recalls first his mother's likely embellished story of her Sephardic ancestors' flight and exile through South America and the Caribbean. It was a story that she repeated with pride throughout his childhood, "as though it were the one outstanding example of all the suffering known to man" (164). Saul's mother's Sephardic heritage was something that set her apart from the largely Ashkenazi New York Jewish community. Her story for him came to embody "...all that any other people had had to endure. It became the means by which he understood the suffering of others... It had even, suddenly, reached across the years to include within its wide meaning what he had just witnessed on the hill" (164). This memory illustrates Saul's belief that he can empathize with the Bournehillsians; just as his mother's ancestors were exiled from their homeland and she became relatively "rootless" in New York, so, too, the Bournehillsians are exiled from their African ancestry and are rootless given colonialism's social and cultural domination.

The other memory that comes back to Saul after he flees from Stinger is of an old senile man in Saul's neighborhood who sat all day at his window beating his chest. The man's appearance to Saul after fleeing from Stinger in the cane fields invokes the question of atonement. After the man dies, Saul recalls him often and wonders, "...who [would] do daily penance for the host of crimes committed by man against man? Who would redeem and reconcile them now that he was gone?" (165). These two visions, of Saul's mother and of the old man, couple to form a world view that privileges empathy and atonement. Their appearance to Saul following what he witnesses of Stinger and his crew in the cane field begs the question, "Can Saul atone for Stinger's suffering?" It is no surprise, given these two formative memories, that Saul views the Development project as a way to right the historical wrongs that have been committed to persons in developing nations. He is motivated by his empathy for those who are severed from their cultural and historical origins and for those who have suffered. While this is perhaps a sympathetic intention, one cannot forget that Saul and the others in his neighborhood viewed the man in the window as insane. His chest beating was a futile attempt to redress "the host of crimes committed by man against man." This correlation between the man's chest beating and Development suggests the futility of both to atone for the suffering of others. Saul's epiphany experience on the road outside of Spiretown echoes the Christian story of the Apostle Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus.⁴⁵ This similarity suggests that Saul needs to be converted through these visions away from an errant ideology, just as Paul is converted following his vision of Christ. Ultimately, Marshall argues through Saul that the Global North cannot make amends for the wrongs

⁴⁵ See Acts 9:1-31.

of colonization with neocolonial systems like Development that continue to perpetuate the hegemony of the Global North and subordinate the agency of the Global South.

Saul's inability to right the wrongs suffered by those in Bournehills is illustrated when the main roller breaks at the cane processing factory that serves the Bournehills area. Cane is the region's livelihood, and without the Cane Vale factory, owned by British Kingsley and Sons, the locals may not be able to salvage the rest of the year's sugar cane crop. The factory represents the continued capital infiltration by foreigners under supposed national independence. The scene reveals the locals' real, material needs; their continued dependence rather than self-determination; and the fact that Saul and his Development scheme are impotent to help. Throughout the novel, the factory inside has been likened to the hold of a slave ship, affirming the idea that the Bournehillsians live in a neocolonial state of subservience.⁴⁶ The factory is forced to shut down when the roller breaks, and many from the community gather outside of the factory grounds' fence as if keeping vigil with the broken roller. Merle disappears from the crowd into the vacant factory, and, after a time, Saul follows her inside. She unleashes her contempt for her people's continued subjugation under Global North control when she shouts,

Can't you maybe try to fix this thing? You said you came to help, didn't you? That's the reason you're in Bournehills, isn't it? All right, here's your chance. And you don't have to do anything big. We're not asking for any million-dollar schemes just now, no big projects. You don't have to play God and transform the whole place into paradise overnight. All we're asking is that you fix one little machine. That'll be enough for now.

⁴⁶Marshall writes, "The first time Saul entered the factory...he was reminded of the deep hold of a ship. There was the noise, for one... There was the heat for another... Moreover, because of the dimness and the cane chaff which came flying up from the roller pit to whirl like a sandstorm through the air, the men working there appeared almost disembodied forms: ghosts they might have been from some long sea voyage taken centuries ago" (154).

And that shouldn't be difficult for you. After all, you're from a place where the machine's next to God, where it even thinks for you, so I'm sure you know how to repair something as simple as a roller (389).

As Merle continues, she invokes the economic hegemony imposed by the West when she entreats Saul to spend the Development project money to fix the roller. She likens Saul to the factory's indifferent British owners and the British woman in England who "kept" Merle during Merle's student days in England. These associations conflate the island's current and historic forces of economic hegemony. Thus, to Merle, Development is just another form of neocolonial oppression. Saul has the money from the Development project to do what Merle asks, to fix the cane roller, but fixing the roller does not fall within the scope of the project's parameters. Marshall constructs the cane roller failure to illustrate the disconnect between the locals' stated need and the Development project's intentions.

Just as the old man in the window beat his chest in order to redeem the world for its sins, Saul seeks out "developing nations" in "need" in order to make amends for the historic wrongs committed against them. Marshall constructs Saul rather sympathetically and without an overtly neocolonial attitude toward Bournehills; however, his travel through the contact zone of the Development project demonstrates that his empathy cannot beget real emancipation for Bournehills.

Harriet Amron: the Global Corporate and Racialized Systems That Support Development

In Harriet, Marshall mounts her most unforgiving critique of United States intervention into the Caribbean. Harriet is the only US-American character not

functionally involved with the Development project. She travels to Bournehills only to remain with Saul, her husband. Marshall uses Harriet, then, not to critique individual agents of Development as was the case with Allen and Saul; instead, she uses Harriet to comment on the ideologies that sustain Development, both philosophically and financially. Harriet embodies the liberal nationalist paradigm of race relations contemporary to the novel's setting.⁴⁷ This view positions white sympathy as the agent of change regarding racial inequality. It privileges the benevolence of the powerful rather than the rights and agency of the less powerful, a dynamic potentially echoed in Development practice. Marshall's early descriptions of Harriet in the novel invoke Harriet's need for power in the form of "doing" for the other; the narrator explains, "Love with Harriet was more intimately bound up with the need to *do* for the beloved...to wield some small power" (39). Thus, Marshall exposes through Harriet the self-serving ideological foundation of Development.

Harriet's complicity with the ideologies that bolster Development is evidenced in manifestations of her white privilege during her travel. Marshall situates Harriet's white privilege on an historical and international continuum. Throughout the novel, Harriet frequently recalls her family's Black servant employed in the family home while Harriet was a child. This memory, in the context of her being in Bournehills, links the domestic liberal national race paradigm to international Development practice toward formerly colonized Blacks. Contributing to the international reading of race and ideology in the novel is Harriet's relationship to the fictional United Corporation of America (Unicor).

⁴⁷ Liberal nationalism believes that racism can be confronted by changing the hearts and minds of oppressive whites. It does not confront systemic racism and it privileges white sympathy over Black agency.

An ancestor of Harriet's held stock in slave trading through Unicorn. Her family continued to generate wealth through Unicorn operations in the cod fish trade to the West Indies. Unicorn is the largest contributor to the Center for Applied Social Research, which is the Development project sponsor for whom Allen and Saul work. In addition, Unicorn's international trading and industrial connections include Kingsley and Sons, Ltd., the British owners of Cane Vale, the cane factory in Bournehills. Marshall explains, "Thus, Unicorn was now part of that giant commercial complex which, like some elaborate rail or root system, endlessly crisscrosses the world, binding it up" (37). Harriet's connection to Unicorn, and thus to the Center for Applied Research and Kingsley & Sons, stages a complex configuration of Global North corporate and philanthropic interests. These connections indict Development ideology as embedded with corporate capitalism. This concentration of capital literally binds up and restricts the developing world in its own interests.⁴⁸

Travel to Bourne Island provokes memories of the United States for Harriet as it does also for Saul and Allen. As the US-American travelers' airplane approaches Bourne Island, the sprawling green of the island reminds Harriet of the large family home in which she grew up, surrounded by wide lawns. She likens living in that home to being marooned, remembering how she and her brothers once fashioned a makeshift flag that

⁴⁸ Stephanie Black's documentary film *Life and Debt* (2001) presents clearly how concentrated financial hegemony in forms such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank tie the hands of developing nations through their loan systems. In the film, Black reveals the devastation to Jamaica brought about by Development ideology and practice. Through interviews with former Prime Minister Michael Manley and with ordinary Jamaicans, the film exposes how World Bank and International Monetary Fund policy bound the hands of Jamaica and restricted its development in areas of education and health, instead dictating that the nation fund manufacturing and infrastructure instead. Manley echoes McMichael when he explains how Jamaica tried to avoid taking loans from the IMF and World Bank, but in order to function in a world not of its own making, it needed the money. Black describes as an example how trade policy which enabled inexpensive imports of U.S. powdered milk in effect ruined a thriving Jamaican dairy industry.

they flew as a distress signal, hoping to be rescued. This memory sets context for the ambivalence Harriet displays throughout the novel as she seeks to escape the guilt she feels about her life of privilege, while also maintaining the status and power that life affords her. She decidedly does not want to be held accountable for her slave-trading Shippen ancestors, yet she maintains a fierce hold on the privilege that her race and her wealth afford her.⁴⁹ Once in Bournehills, she goes to great lengths to secure private domestic space for her and Saul, first at Merle's boarding house and then in their own dwelling, "separate and apart" from life in Bournehills (167). Her limited interest in Bournehills is stated clearly when she writes in a letter, "I sometimes have to remind [Saul]...that this place isn't home, after all, or these people, as likable as some of them are, the kind we would normally be associating with, and that once the project's over we'll be returning home to the life and people we know" (235). Harriet's memory of being "marooned" in her family's large state suggests that she resents the isolation that resulted from her family's wealth, yet when travelling to Bourne Island she recreates the isolation which she says she wants to escape. White privilege explains how Harriet can both dismiss her family's wealth and status and continue to enjoy their elevated economic and social standing.

Harriet's interaction with the people of Bournehills demonstrates how the paradigm that privileges white sympathy perpetuates the unequal power distribution that Bournehills has inherited from its colonial past. In one scene, Harriet makes a visit to a local Bournehills family's home to find only the children. They appear desperately hungry to Harriet who knows that they have not eaten since their modest midday meal.

⁴⁹ Harriet asks Saul the night before they are to marry, "Must I really be held liable for them?...For all those Harbins and Shippens and what they did and didn't do?"

She prowls the small home in search of food and finds half a dozen eggs, recruits the eldest daughter to help, and makes an omelet for the children. Harriet “felt an immense relief. She had done her part” (178). The scene invokes Harriet’s need to be in power through “doing.” What Harriet does not realize is that the mother Gwen saves the eggs in order to sell them to the Postmaster. The profit buys the family’s weekly supply of staples. Later in her and Saul’s home, Saul tells her of this arrangement, and he comments about her, “There’s this thing in you which makes you want to take over and manage everything and everybody on your own terms” (180-1). When Harriet protests that Gwen’s arrangement does not make sense, Saul responds, “Everybody doesn’t live by your standards. Your values aren’t necessarily the world’s.” This scene echoes Robert J. C. Young’s critique of Development’s inability to recognize an alternative modernity and its hegemonic insistence on imposing the Global North’s values and practices upon developing nations.⁵⁰ Harriet imposes her will with the eggs on the family’s young daughter, forcing her to be complicit with the disregard for her mother’s arrangement. Harriet’s imposition on the daughter and her family evidences the imposition of power inherent in Development. Harriet stages what Chandra Talpade Mohanty describes as the “feminist as tourist” model.⁵¹ In this model, the West retains a monolithic image of the ThirdWorld/South woman that continues to privilege a Euro-

⁵⁰ Robert J. C. Young offers a revisionist reading of Development in *Postcolonialism: an Historical Introduction*. He writes about the hegemonic presumption of Development, describing Development ideology as, “the assumed necessity of incorporating the rest of the world into the realm of modernity, that is, the western economic system, in which capitalism produces progressive economic growth (49). Thus, this economic policy assumes a Western paradigm of modernity that rejects any alternative paradigm, evidencing the neocolonial nature of Development discourse and ideology.

⁵¹ See Chandra Talpade Mohanty *Feminism without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Mohanty employs “feminist as tourist” to describe the types of women’s studies courses that examine women’s diverse experiences only superficially and as novelty in the fashion of a tourist’s superficial engagement with the destination.

centric viewpoint. I do not mean to suggest that Harriet defines herself as a feminist; Harriet plays out the feminist as tourist model through her assumption of Gwen's need for Western intervention via Harriet. This assumption privileges the Western lens through which Harriet views Gwen's situation. The Development discourse's monolithic construction of newly independent nations in need of Western modernization echoes the work of Western feminists that Mohanty critiques in "Under Western Eyes." Mohanty argues against the totalizing constructions of third world women by Western feminists and contends that this process "colonizes" the differences that constitute local reality. In fact, Mohanty finds that the best examples of this universalization are found in "Women in Development" literature.

Harriet's participation in the Bourne Island carnival parade also illustrates the potential white privilege blindness that occurs through Development. The novel idealizes carnival as a paradigm of "all o' we is one."⁵² Marshall constructs the event to invoke the ideal of a true national and cultural emancipation that aspires to transcend the binaries of "self" and "other" intrinsic to the Development ideology. Carnival functions as a rite of passage for Harriet, just as it does for Allen and Saul.⁵³ Her status changes dramatically for her in this liminal space, and her response to the change characterizes the neocolonial potential that Marshall argues is intrinsic to Development. Harriet has been invited to march in the Bournehills band which annually recreates the Cuffee Ned rebellion. With her characteristic condescension, she agrees to participate, believing that it would be "a

⁵² The idea of "all o' we is one" is used throughout the Caribbean to characterize its pluralistic society. Consider, for example, Jamaica's motto "Out of Many, One People." See the chapter "'All O' We is One': Paule Marshall's *Daughters*" in Heather Hathaway's *Caribbean Waves: Relocating Claude McKay and Paule Marshall* for further examination of this concept in Marshall's work.

⁵³ I discussed this point for Allen earlier in the chapter. Carnival is also when Saul and Merle begin an affair. This is further evidence of Marshall's sympathetic treatment of Saul, but it is not integral to the argument I make about Saul within this chapter.

feather in their cap to have ‘a white lady’” like herself in the band (232). After completing the march with the Bournehills band, she wants nothing more than the “civilized” taste of a martini, but gets swept along in the momentum of another band rushing through the streets (293). Harriet tries desperately to push her way to the side of the band and into the shelter of a doorway, but the marchers’ momentum proves too much to penetrate, and she gets pulled along. Marshall suggests through Harriet’s inability to escape the band’s momentum that the power dynamic, which typically privileges Harriet, shifts. Harriet becomes consumed with terror and disgust and violently lashes out at the marchers. Their numbers seem unending to her. In the midst of this shift in power during the carnival parade, Harriet is for once subordinate, and her resistance to the “other’s” autonomy reveals itself. She shouts orders to the group about their direction and is stunned at their ignoring her. One young marcher heads in what Harriet determines to be the wrong direction, and Harriet resists the impulse to slap her the way that one would scold a child, “to remind an impertinent child of its *status*” [my emphasis] (295). Not coincidentally, this band is dressed as guerillas complete with toy guns. The entire scene invokes a revolution against the white privilege Harriet embodies.

Ultimately, Harriet illustrates how the liberal nationalist ideology that bolsters Development ideology operates in self interest when the status quo is challenged. Upon returning from carnival to Bournehills, Harriet recreates her childhood and maroons herself in her domestic space; she no longer receives visitors or makes visits as she had done before. In addition, she writes a letter to the Development project’s sponsor that gets Saul removed from the project. Mary Jane Schenck explains about Harriet, “Even ‘ceremonies of reconciliation’ such as liberalism...are stripped of their refined façade

when her personal interests are threatened. She reveals its/her latent racism, superficiality, and potential for abuses of power when she writes a single letter that changes the course of her husband's career and jeopardizes the future of everyone in Bournehills" (Schenck 57). Without Harriet's sympathy for Bournehills, the Development project is removed. This illustrates the power of Harriet's white privilege. It reveals the level of her influence considering her ties to the global capital machinery that drives Development. Harriet's actions demonstrate the level of control garnered by white sympathy in the liberal national paradigm. Through Harriet, Marshall exposes the fickle nature of sympathy and the vulnerability of change when it is tethered to white sympathy.⁵⁴

Cuffee Ned and the Ideal of Emancipation: "A Nation Apart"

Marshall's indictment of the Development scheme as incapable of genuinely affecting change in Bournehills is clear. Her close identification with both the newly decolonized Caribbean (her parents' own Barbados gained independence November 30, 1966) and African American race activism in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s position her to write the novel's critique that United States Development ideology functioned as a barrier and not a means to true emancipation.⁵⁵ Marshall and African American contemporaries such as Lorraine Hansberry, James Baldwin, Malcolm X,

⁵⁴ See Jodi Melamed's forthcoming *Killing Sympathies: U.S. Literature and the New Racism*. Melamed describes how white sympathy reifies existing racial constructions that empower whites and subordinate people of color.

⁵⁵ Edward Brathwaite writes about *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, "Had Paule Marshall been a West Indian, she probably would not have written this book. Had she not been an Afro-American of West Indian parentage, she possibly could not have written it either; for in it we find a West Indies facing the metropolitan West on the one hand, and clinging to a memorial past on the other" (226). See "West Indian History and Society in the Art of Paule Marshall's Novel." *Journal of Black Studies* 1:2 (Dec., 1970): 225-238.

Richard Wright, and Amiri Baraka recognized as propaganda the United States message to newly independent nations that democracy is the means to racial equality. This message was intended to promote democracy around the world, but it downplayed the failure of democracy in the United States to achieve racial equality. Marshall and her contemporaries rejected the liberal, nationalist paradigm associated with United States democracy. They struggled in their work to articulate an adequate theory of emancipation for both African-Americans and the formerly colonized that is not simple political independence, but includes cultural and economic self determination, as well. Marshall describes the genuine emancipation invoked by *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* in her essay “Shaping the World of My Art,” which closely followed the novel’s publication:

In [*The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*] there is a conscious attempt to project the view of the future to which I am personally committed. Stated simply it is a view...which sees the rise through revolutionary struggle of the darker peoples of the world and, as a necessary corollary, the decline and eclipse of America and the West. The two phenomena, the emergence of the oppressed and the fall of the powerful, I mention together because to my mind one is not really possible without the other, i.e., for the new world of African, Asian and Afro-American dimensions to come into being, the present world order which Fanon has described as ‘swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration’ must be swept from center stage.⁵⁶

Thus, the alternative modernity born of true emancipation involves, for developing nations, not only political independence but also a subversion of status quo power relationships that could lead to economic and cultural freedom from invasive Global North interventions.

⁵⁶ Page 108. Marshall reiterates these ideas in a 1970 interview with Hiram Haydn. See James C. Hall and Heather Hathaway’s *Conversations with Paule Marshall*, University Press of Mississippi, 2010.

Marshall situates this emancipation in the Bournhillsian's commitment to the legacy of Cuffee Ned. Marshall suggests through Harriet's experience in carnival with the guerilla-clad band that full-scale revolution is needed to confront the hegemony Harriet embodies. The Bournehills' yearly carnival recreation of the Cuffee Ned revolt illustrates that this is the paradigm of emancipation they seek. In "Shaping the World of My Art," Marshall explains the significance of the Bournehills Carnival band's yearly recreation of the Cuffee Ned revolt:

It becomes apparent to those few who can penetrate to the meaning of their pageant that the villagers will continue to refuse the kind of superficial change being offered them by the neo-colonial government on the island and the various visiting aid missions. Without being able to put it into words they see this as nothing more than the old system in modern dress. Tough, stubborn, sustained by their sense of history, they will hold out until the sweeping revolutionary change initiated by Cuffee Ned long ago can be achieved (112).

The idea of recreating the Cuffee Ned revolution, of being "a nation apart," characterizes emancipation as autonomy without interventions such as foreign capital infiltration or Development projects. Marshall remains unclear about what this will look like for Bournehills, however. For example, Ferguson is a Bournehillsian who is Cuffee Ned's greatest historian. He is a foreman at Cane Vale. When the British factory owners make their yearly visit, Ferguson has rehearsed a speech to them about the cane factory roller's deterioration. He remains mute, however, when given the chance to address the owner (221). He could describe the deterioration that eventually leads to the main roller breaking, but he does not summon the courage to speak up. Ferguson's silence complicates a naïve reading of the ease with which a Cuffee Ned inspired revolution will take place. Marshall recognizes that the Caribbean itself has progress to make in decolonizing its collective psyche and so she remains ambiguous about the form of the

revolution to take place. She is clear, though, that there is no role for Development in this process of revolution toward emancipation. Bournehills' idealization of the Cuffee Ned revolt dismisses Development as neither necessary nor desirable.⁵⁷

By using the trope travel in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Marshall makes clear that Development does not offer a paradigm for change in the Caribbean. Through the travel of characters Allen, Saul, and Harriet, as US-American ambassadors of Development, Marshall exposes the multiple ways in which Development ideology extends colonial forms of oppression and power. Marshall describes through Allen's weakness and emasculation the consequences of the homogenization that occurs through Development's normalization of one model for development. Saul's travel to the island and eventual inability to improve Stinger's slave-like working conditions or to fix the cane roller illustrate the limitations of empathy to confront oppression. Harriet's historical connection to colonial West Indies and the white privilege in which she cloaks herself confront the neocolonial ideologies that support Development. By employing travel to take her characters out of the United States and into the contact zone, Marshall clearly stages the "fall of the powerful" metaphorically since, at the novel's conclusion, Saul and Allen are required to return to the United States and Harriet has killed herself.

Development by the United States is one mechanism by which Marshall structures the travel of United States nationals to the Caribbean. Development grows out of official national policy toward other nations. Tourism is another mechanism of travel that carries United States nationals to the Caribbean and one which also interests

⁵⁷ Gretchen Whalen asks, "The question that remains unanswered behind the surface of the book is when and how the pattern of Cuffee Ned's revolt can repeat itself" (669). See "The Long Search for Coherence and Vision."

Marshall. While tourism is not an official national policy as is Development, Marshall will expose that it has similar nationalist implications.

Chapter Three Praisesong for the Widow

“People who can’t call their nation. For one reason or another they just don’ know. Is a hard thing. I don’ even like to think about it.”

Lebert Joseph in *Praisesong for the Widow*

Whereas, in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Marshall used the trope of travel to expose limitations of United States development ideology, in her next novel, *Praisesong for the Widow*, she employs travel as the mechanism through which to examine underlying assumptions of tourism. Imperial travel narratives from the Second Empire of primarily the 18th and 19th centuries constructed the traveler and the Caribbean in ways that are echoed in how tourism depicts the Caribbean today. These imperial travel narratives identified the traveler and the destination through alterity, using the constructed inferiority of the Caribbean natives to assert the Empire’s superiority. These narratives relied upon a symbiotic relationship between the traveler and his or her home nation; the traveler and his or her narrative reified the prevailing nationalist discourse about Empire’s inevitability. Imperial travel writers often followed several conventions to achieve their pejorative constructions of the Caribbean. The Caribbean landscape was constructed to be an exotic beauty rich in resources but wild and untamed, thus in need of modern intervention. Caribbean natives were depicted as any combination of savage, immoral, and unintelligent. Respectable natives appeared in these narratives primarily to corroborate the observations of the imperial traveler. Another convention of imperial travel narratives was that the traveler resisted the feeling of being displaced in a foreign land by asserting his superiority over the conditions of the Caribbean and recreating there

a British lifestyle. These narratives secured support for imperial expansion from the readers at home, support the traveler needed for continued financing. Readers believed it to be important to civilize and Christianize the Caribbean natives and to put their land and resources to profitable use. Imperial travel narratives thus bolstered the perception of Empire's inevitability by purporting a civilized, stable construction of the traveler's home nation in contrast to the depicted underdevelopment and disorder of the destination. Importantly, Marshall seeks to revise this narrative in *Praisesong for the Widow*. Here, she creates a protagonist Avey Johnson, an African-American widow, who travels as an agent who undermines the imperial tradition of travel writing. By constructing Avey's travel this way, Marshall challenges the unambiguous presentation of nationalism perpetuated through imperial travel narratives and exposes as incoherent the United States nationalism contemporary to the novel's setting.

Avey's travel begins as a tourist on a cruise ship through the Caribbean. She decides to leave mid-trip, disembarking in Grenada. United States nationalism contemporary to the novel is mapped through the different homes in the United States that Avey recalls as she travels. The differences among these homes illustrate Marshall's confrontation with United States national identity contemporary to the novel's setting, spanning from the 1940s to the 1970s. The homes identify a prevailing United States nationalist discourse that venerated consumer culture and that promoted democracy as securing equal opportunity for people of color. The significant homes about which Avey dreams while traveling stage conflicting allegiances for Avey between the consumer culture of the post World War II era and her African ancestral identity. Her memories expose her and her husband Jay's unequal experience with opportunity and the

universalizing effects of material success. Avey's subsequent travel, once she leaves the cruise, subverts the imperial travel narrative conventions related to the landscape, the destination other, and the traveler's displacement. As a result, Marshall recasts Avey from a tourist, with its imperial implications, to a traveler. Through Avey's transformation, Marshall is then able to refashion the relationship of the traveler to nationalism.

Imperial Travel and Tourism

I read the novel through the lens of travel writing because Avey remains a traveler throughout the entire novel. While *Praisesong* cannot be said to be technically a work of travel writing, the novel's main thrust is to narrate Avey's travel. Many travel writing scholars assert that there remains an irrevocable connection between imperial travel and travel writing broadly.⁵⁸ Two seemingly benign references early in the novel collectively invoke the imperial history of travel specifically. In this way the novel invites a reading of Avey's tourism through the imperial lens. For example, when Avey's daughter Marion sifts through Avey's travel brochures before the cruise, Marion notes that one of the ship's dining rooms is named the Versailles. She laments, "Do you know how many treaties were signed there, in that infamous Hall of Mirrors, divvying up India, the West Indies, the world!" (47). Also, the ship itself is named Bianca Pride, white pride. Racialized notions of intelligence were fundamental to justifying the intrusion of the Empire into autonomous spaces. These details placed strategically early in the novel

⁵⁸ Steve Clark *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit*. Mary Louise Pratt *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, and Sara Mills *Discourses of Difference*.

allude to past colonial, racially motivated, travel to the Caribbean in service of the imperial project; they situate the novel in relationship to the imperial past of travel to the Caribbean.

Avey travels as a tourist to the Caribbean, and many scholars of contemporary tourism studies characterize mass-produced tourism typified in the cruise ship as neocolonial.⁵⁹ Tourism echoes imperial travel in how the destination is constructed primarily for consumption by the traveler. Touristic notions such as “paradise” and “quaint local culture” subordinate the lived local experience of the Caribbean to the tourist’s need for escape.⁶⁰ Tourism is extremely relevant here because Avey is the only traveling protagonist in Marshall’s oeuvre who is characterized decidedly as a tourist. For example, throughout Avey’s short time in Grenada, she is often mistaken for a local. When she insists, “I’m a visitor, a tourist,” Avey emphatically associates herself with the affluence and the material culture that supports mass market tourism. She situates herself in opposition to others of the African Diaspora, the locals (167). Further, the name of the tourist ship on which Avey travels, the *Bianca Pride*, alludes to imperialism and through its name as cruise ship associates tourism with that ideology. Mary Louise Pratt writes about travel writing as imbedded in the ideology of imperialism in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*. In *Imperial Eyes*, she describes contact zones as “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly

⁵⁹ Harmut Berghoff, et al, eds. *The Making of Modern Tourism*, C Michael Hall and Hazel Tucker *Tourism and Postcolonialism: Contested Discourses, Identities and Representations*, and Ian Gregory Strachan *Paradise and Plantation: Tourism and Culture in the Anglophone Caribbean*.

⁶⁰ Jamaica Kincaid’s *A Small Place* develops the connection between tourism and imperialism. Kincaid critiques the material and psychic conditions of tourism to mimic imperialism. The traveler’s displacement figures significantly into the tourism experience for Kincaid. In *A Small Place*, the tourist uses this position to enable a fantasy of his identity in the face of the Other and of the Antiguans complicity with his fantasy. Kincaid constructs tourism as a scripted escape from the banality of ordinary life.

asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermath as they are lived out across the globe today” (4). Tourism can be regarded as Pratt’s “aftermath” and considered another “highly asymmetrical relationship” between self and other. Marshall changes Avey from a tourist to a traveler in order to suggest Avey’s removal from the asymmetry between tourist and destination other.

Avey’s travel in the novel, however, is often too narrowly read metaphorically and thematically as Avey’s spiritual and emotional journey.⁶¹ While these readings recognize the significance of Avey’s personal transformation, the literal fact of her travel is subordinated. Joyce Owens Pettis’ argument in *Toward Wholeness in Paule Marshall’s Fiction* does recognize that Avey’s internal journey is “buttressed by several literal voyages” (125). Pettis understands the literal travel to invite a reading of the novel through the traditional lens of a quest narrative, which looks for individual transformation and reentry into community, rather than through the imperial tradition of travel. Focusing only on transformation, however, results in a misreading of the novel’s conclusion which, I argue, is more ambivalent than these readings suggest. Reading Avey’s travel through the lens of imperial travel is consistent with the novel’s critique of United States nationalism contemporary to the novel’s setting.

Identity in Conflict: Home, Ancestry and Consumer Culture

Marshall constructs the three homes that Avey recalls while traveling to articulate how Avey’s ancestral identification as an African-American is in conflict with the United States nationalism contemporary to the novel. In so doing, Marshall rejects the

⁶¹ See Scarborough, Pettis, Christian, Sandiford, and Thorsson.

traditional role of the travel narrative to bolster the home nation's prevailing narrative of nationalism. Instead, the narrative of Avey's travel reveals the fragmentations of her identity related to the nation state. Literal homes conflate with nationalist ideologies in Avey's memories of her homes while she travels. Avey recalls her ancestral home in Tatem, SC; her current suburban home in affluent North White Plains, NY; and her home on Halsey Street in Brooklyn which became a battleground between ancestry and material success. The three different homes Avey recalls articulate how Avey's African-American ancestral identity is under siege from the United States national discourse of unqualified optimism and material success. Marshall depicts consumer culture with its glorification of the material as the linchpin of American national identity contemporary to the novel's setting, and the significant role of the North White Plains home in a dream Avey has while traveling dramatizes the centrality of that "code" for adult Avey. In the conflict between homes that becomes apparent in Avey's memories, Marshall asks, "Can material success function to homogenize and stabilize American national identity in the face of historically unprecedented rights struggles by people of color?"⁶² Marshall's

⁶² An insecure national identity particularly demands the support of the travel narrative in the attempt to repair the instability and fragmentation that threatens a coherent nationalist discourse. See Simon Gikandi's *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism*. New York: Columbia Univ. Press, 1996. Gikandi's examination of Victorian era travel writing shows how travel narratives bolstered a volatile national identity for the English. Gikandi's primary example is James Anthony Froude's *The English in the West Indies* (1888), written soon after Emancipation in the colonies and at a time when English identity suffered the anxiety of its dispersal throughout the colonies. Froude's travel account evidences his disquietude about the stability of Englishness as it is played out in the post-Emancipation Caribbean despite his attempts to naturalize its dominance. Gikandi asks about Froude's narrative, "Can travel provide the evidence that confirms the necessity of empire as part of England's destiny and the symbol that unifies different cultures and traditions, classes and interests at a time when the domestic space seems to be under threat from the forces of historical change? Can empire be read as the singular code that explains the meaning of Englishness at a time when rapid historical and cultural change has undermined the authority of tradition?" (88-9). The Victorian travel narrative, then, aspired to totalize the fragmentation of national identity taking place throughout the colonies. To paraphrase Gikandi above, can Avey's travel evidence the necessity and inevitability of a material nationalist discourse to unify the disparate experiences of the US contemporary to the novel's setting?

construction of Avey's travel resists offering a totalizing and coherent solution to this national fragmentation.

Tatem and the Call of Ancestry

Avey has a significant dream while on the cruise ship that pits her aunt's ancestral home in Tatem, SC, on the Atlantic Ocean, against Avey's current suburban North White Plains, NY, home. The dream disturbs Avey so much that it leads her to leave the cruise mid-trip. The homes function as conflicting emblems of Avey's identity. This dream's central role in propelling the plot forward makes the distinctions drawn between the homes of great significance. In the dream, Avey fights with her great-aunt Cuney, about whom she had not thought for years. Cuney urges Avey to walk with her to the Landing, an historic site in Tatem to which slave ships arrived in the United States. The Avey of the dream, however, is not the child who made annual summer visits to Cuney; rather, she is the 64 year old resident of North White Plains dressed in her new spring suit with hat, gloves, and fur stole. Cuney patiently waves for Avey to join her while Avey's irritation grows over the absurdity of crossing muddy fields in her patent leather pumps. Through the figure of Cuney, Avey's ancestral past calls to her, while Avey's husband waiting in the fine car represents the call to status quo and the security of affluence that their North White Plains home symbolizes. As Avey readies herself to join her husband, Cuney charges toward her to clasp Avey's wrist and drag her toward the Landing. The women fight, with Avey's clothes, emblems of the North White Plains life, torn to tatters. The dream positions her home and life in North White Plains in direct conflict with

ancestral life. Avey is so disturbed by her dream of Aunt Cuney that she decides to leave the cruise and fly back from Grenada to New York.

Avey's dream and memories of home in Tatem foreground the importance of ancestral identification in the novel. The Tatem home is literally and figuratively an ancestral home. It functions to mark Avey's departure from her roots that becomes obvious with the North White Plains home. As a child, Avey used to visit her great-aunt in Tatem during summer vacations. The story of the Ibos that Cuney repeatedly recounts to Avey is central to Avey's construction of ancestral identity. The Ibos had been transported from Africa in the hold of a ship. When they disembarked at the Landing, they looked around at what they saw, rejected it, and turned around to walk back to Africa on top of the Atlantic. Avey recalls that after a long trek through the countryside and a surrounding forest, she and her aunt would arrive at Ibo Landing. Despite Avey's familiarity with the story, with each visit Cuney would again tell the child the story of the Ibo would-be slaves. The Ibo story's centrality in Avey's memories of Tatem positions the Middle Passage and its attendant formation of the African Diaspora as key to the novel's re-inscription of national identity. Keith A. Sandiford views Ibo Landing as the site of a battle between African myth and Western historicity (373). He argues that *Praisesong* dramatizes the antagonism for African-Americans between the claims to identity of African mythology and of Euro-centric historicity. This reading plays out through the conflict staged in Avey's dreams between her homes in Tatem, in Brooklyn, and in North White Plains.

North White Plains: Materialism, Whiteness, and Nationalism

Avey's North White Plains home is emblematic of the nationalist discourse contemporary to the novel that valorizes the material success that Avey and her husband Jay/Jerome literally buy into. This discourse homogenizes difference in its claims of equal opportunity and access for all.⁶³ It subordinates the legitimate rights struggles of people of color in its designation of economic acquisition as the hallmark of success. Disenfranchised African Americans contemporary to the novel's setting were fed a nationalist discourse about the superiority of democracy over competing national discourses to secure equal rights and opportunity for people of color. This agenda is similar to the nationalist agenda generated through imperial travel narratives meant to corroborate national superiority. Avey's travel, in this paradigm, should function to reify the United States contemporary nationalist discourse. However, Marshall recognizes that the benefits of the post-war nationalist discourse accrued "mainly to the very few," so she constructs Avey's travel to complicate the relationships between travel narrative and home nation.⁶⁴ The North White Plains home evidences Avey and Jay's success within the contemporary nationalist paradigm. The dream in which Avey fights with Cuney evidences the incongruity for Marshall of ancestral identification with materialism. The struggle between ancestral and material culture is a theme that recurs in Marshall's work, first on an individual level and later on a more political, societal scale. Her first novel,

⁶³ See Nikhil Pal Singh *Black is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy*, 2004. Singh examines how the universalizing ideology within US nationalism has historically excluded and after World War II subsumed black difference. Can have more from Singh but have to get my copy of book back to law library and then recall Raynor copy.

⁶⁴ Mary Louise Pratt's examination in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* of travel discourse's relationship to the citizen at home is useful here. Pratt's project is to investigate "how travel books by Europeans about non-European parts of the world went (and go) about creating the 'domestic subject' of Euroimperialism; how they have engaged the metropolitan reading publics with (or to) expansionist enterprises whose material benefits accrued mainly to the very few" (4). In other words, domestic subjects for whom little material gain is realized continue to support the efforts of Empire if the travel narrative succeeds in reifying national moral and cultural superiority.

Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), dramatizes the threat to traditional Afro-centric culture posed by compelling consumer culture through the individual lens of protagonist Selina.

Marshall writes in “Shaping the World of My Art” (1973) about *Brown Girl*,

Brownstones:

The novel was an attempt to articulate feelings I had long held about the acquisitive nature of the society and what I feel to be its devastating impact on human relationships. I wanted to express through the story of this one Black family how over-emphasis on the material which is one with the national ethic often destroys the ability of people to feel and care for each other (108-9).

The threat of material culture to ancestral, relationship-based cultures remains an interest of Marshall’s in *Praisesong*, evidenced by Avey’s dream in which she is dressed in her North White Plains best and fights with the ancestral figure of Aunt Cuney. This critique of material culture sets the context for the North White Plains home. Marshall published *Praisesong* ten years after “Shaping the World of My Art,” and those ten years provide Marshall with the perspective to track and to comment on what happened to the Aveys and the Jays who bought into the material vision of success that she warned against in 1973.

Marshall conflates material-based nationalism with whiteness in her naming the suburb with the home of Avey and Jay’s dreams North White Plains. Whiteness is a totalizing and naturalized discourse. Naming Avey and Jay’s home North White Plains locates the affluence valorized by the dominant national discourse within whiteness. The suburb is designated by the qualification “North” that situates the suburb as not quite *the* White Plains, but close. This qualification suggests that African Americans like Avey and Jay can get close to the quality of life implied in *White* Plains but not exactly in it. I recognize, however, that “North” is a loaded designation in African-American history,

signifying the free North versus the slave-holding South. North, then, implies freedom. This suggests why Avey and Jay would be so eager to move “North.” However, the promise of a free North was not always realized for escaped or newly freed slaves, and so for Avey and Jay. The narrator refers to North White Plains having some white residents, and the implication is that as African-Americans moved in, they moved out. Thus, *North White Plains* suggests a continued segregation, separate and likely unequal.

It is from her North White Plains home that Avey embarks on cruise tourism. The novel associates tourism with whiteness, not unlike how whiteness discourse bolstered imperial ideology in the past. Marion’s comment to Avey about going on “some meaningless cruise with a bunch of white folks” suggests this association between tourism and whiteness (13). Marion also implies that Avey performs whiteness by going on the cruise. Marshall secures the association between tourism and whiteness in naming the cruise carrier *Bianca Pride*. The *Bianca Pride*, then, becomes the consolidation of material culture, whiteness and tourism. Avey’s description of the ship itself suggests the profound power this coalition holds over her. The ship’s “dazzling white steel” awes Avey. She is overwhelmed by the ship’s size and impressed by its “precision and power.” Avey stands “awestruck and reverent” before the ship’s controls, suggesting the normalization and pervasiveness of material culture and whiteness. In fact, she recognizes about the ship’s allure that, “There’s no resisting it” (15). The tourism ship is literally a carrier of affluence and whiteness.⁶⁵ It stands in sharp contrast to what Avey perceives as the dark unknown suggested in Marion’s plea for Avey to travel to Ghana

⁶⁵ Whiteness is valorized in additional ways once Avey leaves the *Bianca Pride*. For example, the taxi driver who carries Avey toward what he considers the nicest hotel on the beach says that mostly white tourists stay there, as if his comment adds prestige to the hotel.

and Brazil with her, invitations that Avey rejects. Tourism is situated in the white material culture that Marshall critiques through its association with the luxury liner. Avey's attraction to the cruise ship evidences the extent to which the values of whiteness have been normalized. Tourism in *Praisesong*, then, is the contemporary form of imperial travel and is emboldened through its association with the discourse of whiteness. Avey's performance of whiteness in her choosing cruise tourism indicates to a degree how class and race are intrinsically linked.

Halsey Street: Battleground between Ancestry and Material Culture

The Halsey Street home that Avey recalls when she is in Grenada is the site where the antagonism between ancestral and material identification plays out in Avey and Jay's life. The Halsey Street home is emblematic for Marshall of an experience of some African-Americans following World War II, when the United States projected unqualified optimism to the rest of the world while many African-Americans continued to suffer from institutionalized racism. "Sleeper's Wake," the section of the novel in which Avey recalls the Halsey Street home in Brooklyn, confronts the mythology of equal opportunity. Contradiction characterizes Avey and Jay's days on Halsey Street; the home was at once the site of their greatest happiness and their most difficult challenges and defeats.⁶⁶ African-American art fills their lives during the happy times. They listen to Blues and Jazz greats like Coleman Hawkins, Duke Ellington, Ella Fitzgerald, Lady Day, Ma Rainey and Mamie Smith. They recite Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence

⁶⁶ See Christian. Christian points out how Marshall's depiction of the African-American home, symbolized here by the Halsey Street apartment, is necessarily complex, identifying both the good and the bad. Use Marshall's "beautiful ugly" from *Poets in the Kitchen*

Dunbar poetry to each other, celebrating their ancestry and the racial identity that unifies their neighborhood. However, the financial poverty and hopelessness of Halsey Street is symbolized for Avey in an unnamed woman who lives in the flat below theirs. The woman repeatedly drags her drunken husband home every Saturday morning and “sent her grievances echoing up and down the deserted street” (107). The narrator explains about the woman, “Her rage those dark mornings spoke not only for herself but for the thousands like her for blocks around, lying sleepless in the cold-water flats and one-room kitchenettes, the railroad apartments you could run a rat through and the firetraps above the stores on busy Fulton Street and Broadway” (108). For Avey, the woman embodies the desperation and loneliness she feels in their Halsey Street home while Jay works long hours, struggling against institutionalized racism in his quest for the post-World War II American dream - material success.

During the night that Avey spends in the hotel in Grenada, a dream returns her to a watershed moment in her and Jay’s lives. It was 1947 when Avey screamed at Jay and resembled to him the desperate woman downstairs. Both Avey and Jay despair the poverty they cannot seem to escape. Avey is pregnant with another child while raising a toddler and a four year old. As Jay works longer hours to provide for them, Avey becomes suspicious of his time away. His work hours grow longer, and her paranoia increases until she accuses him of being unfaithful. Night after night Jay explains his long hours away until finally, eight months pregnant, Avey meets him at the door when he returns and launches into an uncharacteristic tirade. Avey’s thoughts following her dream of the argument show clearly that this argument marked a turning point in Jay. After this, he worked tirelessly to move them out of Halsey Street. Halsey Street stages

again the tension between ancestral and material identification for Avey, and here the material wins. The narrator reports that Jay stopped listening to his beloved Blues and Jazz after the argument and he no longer recited African-American poetry to her. Ten years later, in 1957, he succeeded in moving them to North White Plains. The move from Halsey Street to North White Plains rendered the material paradigm instead of the ancestral predominant in their lives.⁶⁷

Avey and Jay's life on Halsey Street is informed by Marshall's social and political activism of the 1950s and 60s. Marshall's activism during that time with groups such as Harlem Writers' Guild and the Association of Artists for Freedom is chronicled by James C. Hall and Lisa D. McGill. Artists in these groups, Hall argues, continued a practice by African-American intellectuals of the 1950s of challenging the post-World War II national discourse of unqualified optimism that characterized the United States at the time; they instead called attention to the racism and unequal opportunity that still characterized the United States. Hall argues that in the 1960s, African American artists such as Marshall, Robert Hayden and John Coltrane went beyond calling attention to racism. They extended the previous decade's critique of post-World War II United States to conceptualize alternatives to the status quo—an alternative which Marshall most dramatically envisions in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People's* celebration of revolution. Marshall's activism during this period establishes a context in which to understand her perspective a decade later when she begins to envision and then write *Praisesong*. Marshall uses the Halsey Street home to stage her challenge to the United States public discourse of optimism.

⁶⁷ See Keith Sandiford's "Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*: The Reluctant Heiress, or Whose Life is it Anyway?" He refers to the Western paradigm versus the African paradigm.

Avey and Jay's turn away from Halsey Street and toward North White Plains with all that the homes represent is shown by the novel's lack of references to the sociopolitical details of its setting. Marshall's high level of engagement with the sociopolitical climate of the time during which Avey and Jay would have lived on Halsey Street, deep within an African-American community, is evidenced by Hall and McGill's work. It is noteworthy, then, that few specific references to the external political and social world appear in "Sleeper's Wake" and in *Praisesong* itself. The Civil Rights movement, for example, appears only briefly. The absence of socio/political references is explained when Avey reflects on her life in North White Plains:

Hadn't she lived through most of the sixties and the early seventies as if Watts and Selma and the tanks and Stoner guns in the streets of Detroit somehow did not pertain to her, denying her rage, and carefully effacing any dream that might have come to her during the night by the time she awoke the next morning. Years! – she had spent nearly a decade avoiding the headlines and pictures on the front pages of the newspapers and the nightly television newscasts (140).

"Denying," "effacing," and "avoiding" from Avey's thoughts above characterize the level of repression required by Avey to live comfortably in North White Plains with the Civil Rights struggle raging around her. In fact, Avey bemoans the realization that she and Jay sacrificed their Afro-centric cultural life to material success. She asks, "Couldn't we have had both?" However, when Avey remembers Halsey Street prior to the "Sleeper's Wake" section, she is embarrassed to recall herself from those times. Her embarrassment is evidence of her transformation with the move to North White Plains. Avey's repression of Halsey Street after moving to North White Plains is clear when the narrator describes, "When [Avey] had long purged her thoughts and feelings of the place, and had come to regard the years there as having been lived by someone other than herself, it

continued to haunt [Jerome], and to figure in some way in nearly everything he did” (88). As Jay’s aspirations for material success and recognition grow, he and Avey discontinue their habits with African American poetry and music. His material ambitions sever him from the community even prior to his and Avey’s official move to North White Plains. It is in the North White Plains home that Jay shaves his moustache and becomes Jerome, physically marking a separation from their past Afro-centric identity.⁶⁸ The unhappiness with which Avey looks back on her North White Plains life following her fitful night’s sleep maps Marshall’s critique of consumer culture and its threat to an ancestral-based identity.

Avey’s travel results in her ruminating on her significant homes – Tatem, Halsey Street, and North White Plains. Given the symbiotic relationship between home/nation and travel, Avey’s memories about home have interrogated her experience of nation. Tatem and Halsey Street with their ancestral affiliation are situated in opposition to North White Plains and its concurrence of material culture and whiteness. The cumulative effect of Avey’s recollections of these homes is to render her firmly disoriented and homeless. Re-identifying herself with the African Diaspora becomes the focus of the

⁶⁸ Marshall’s critique of Jay is not unsympathetic, however. In the scene in which Avey transforms to him into the desperate woman from the flat below, Marshall describes Jay’s impulse to turn his back on his wife and children and escape down the apartment building stairs. However, he fought against himself to remain. He then collapsed into tears under the weight of their poverty and of his ambition. Marshall uses the difficulty of Jay’s decision to stay as representative of African-American ambiguity in the supposedly optimistic space of post-World War II US. Where Marshall becomes critical of Jay is in his total embrace of material culture and his rejection of traditions of African-American culture as the solution to their problems, illustrated in his no longer listening to music or enjoying poetry and in his quest to move from Halsey Street to North White Plains. Avey’s dream about Halsey Street embodies the cultural suicide that Emory Elliot alludes to. Elliot writes, “*Praisesong* explores the stifling social constraints that most nonwhite Americans face in the United States and presents a telling allegory that exposes the psychological damage, physical pain, and early death that can result from years of intimidation, discouragement, and disappointment imposed by a dominant culture that drives people to repress their own cultural heritage and deny their own individualism” (11-12).

remainder of Avey's travel and of the novel. In this way, travel in the novel remains concerned with national identity, but Marshall rejects the imperial tradition so does not substitute one totalizing construction of nation for another.

From Tourist to Traveler: Subverted Imperial Travel Conventions

The difference between Avey as a tourist and Avey as a traveler is important to Marshall's subversion of the travel narrative. Avey's departure from the cruise ship initiates this change in Avey. The fact that Avey has missed the one daily flight from Grenada to New York is evidence of her movement away from the highly orchestrated experience of mass tourism.⁶⁹ Avey's transition from tourism echoes what several contemporary travel theorists argue to be a difference between tourism and more legitimate travel. James Clifford in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* argues that travel produces genuine knowledge for the traveler while tourism does not. Similarly, Jamaica Kincaid in her "Introduction" to the 2005 edition of *The Best American Travel Writing* argues that it is curiosity and displacement that distinguish the imperial-like traveler from the "genuine" traveler; both travelers experience displacement, she explains, but the genuinely curious traveler remains in a space of displacement while the imperial traveler asserts the privilege of the metropolitan center to close the space of displacement. Marion articulates a similar ethos of travel in *Praisesong*. She criticizes her mother's choice of a cruise as travel when she asks, "Why

⁶⁹ When Avey was on board making her plans to leave the *Bianca Pride*, she imagined that she would find arrangements exactly as she would need them: "There would be a taxi waiting for her on the wharf of the little pastel town. Or one would arrive the moment she stepped off the launch. The driver would inform her that, yes, there was a plane to New York today, a nonstop flight scheduled to leave shortly" (23). This evidences the security Avey feels within the confines of the tourist experience.

can't you be a little imaginative, for God's sake, a little independent, and go off on your own somewhere? Learn something!" (15). By subverting the imperial travel narrative conventions related to displacement, the landscape, and the role of the destination other, Marshall writes Avey to change from a tourist to a traveler in the sense articulated by Clifford, Kincaid and Marian.

The traveler's response to feeling displaced is one of the conventions of the imperial travel narrative that Marshall subverts to mark Avey's eventual transformation from tourist to traveler. While in Grenada, displacement is integral to Avey's experience. The mass market tourism that Avey has left staves off the unsettling feelings of displacement by highly orchestrating the traveler's experience. Having walked away from the highly orchestrated cruise tourism, Avey is extremely disoriented as she stands on the wharf looking for a taxi after disembarking from the *Bianca Pride*. The narrator explains that this feeling is new to Avey. Marshall writes about Avey, "For the first time in the three years that she had been coming to the islands, she experienced that special panic of the traveler who finds himself sealed-off, stranded in the sea of incomprehensible sound" (70). In Pratt's lexicon, Avey enters a contact zone. Avey's feelings of displacement continue throughout her short time in Grenada. In the imperial tradition, the traveler rejects this displacement by invoking the center/periphery binary which positions the destination as a subordinate, peculiar other. The traveler does not learn anything in the sense articulated by Clifford, Kincaid and Marion. The novel suggests that this is what Avey has done in the past, considering that the level of her displacement in Grenada is new to her. Following Avey's leaving the *Bianca Pride*, however, Avey remains in the space of displacement, unable or unwilling to stave off her

discomfort by virtue of asserting a nationalistic superiority. Avey's response to her displacement remains an important marker of her transition from tourist to traveler as she travels in Grenada and Carriacou.

The narrator's depiction of the landscape is another subverted imperial travel narrative convention that further evidences Avey's transition from tourist to traveler. The tenor of Pratt's critique of the imperial traveler's relationship to the landscape is articulated as "The Monarch of All I Survey," the title she gives to the chapter of *Imperial Eyes* devoted to landscape. Pratt explains that for the imperial traveler, the landscape is an object of discovery that the traveler captures and "frames" like a painting (204). This depiction predicates a relationship of mastery between seer and seen. The metaphor of a painting further suggests that the landscape is static and awaiting discovery by the traveler. The narrator's description of the landscape in *Praisesong* avoids the tone of "Monarch of All I Survey." For example, Avey learns from a taxi driver that the one flight scheduled to New York the day she leaves the Bianca Pride has already left. She will need to spend the night in Grenada. Avey views Grand Anse beach from a bluff on which the taxi travels to her hotel. The narrator repeatedly describes the landscape in theatrical terms. As Avey views the long expanse of beach below her, the narrator observes, "The beach was like a vast stage that curved inward, with the sky its proscenium arch and the sun a single huge spot that illuminated it from end to end" (79). The theater imagery invokes performance as a dynamic, creative alternative to the relationship of mastery suggested in the image of a painting. The theater imagery also challenges the binary construction of identity that fixes self and other in static positions. In Avey's vision of landscape, the beach is a stage upon which travelers interact with

each other and the destination. The invocation of theater identifies a different relationship between traveler and landscape than the imperial painting image.

Deficiency in the landscape that warrants the traveler or her nation's intervention is another characteristic of the imperial depiction of landscape. The *Praisesong* narrator does not describe the landscape as deficient in itself; rather, what Avey views as deficiency in the landscape is, in fact, a product of her nation's intervention – Miami-beach-style hotels for tourists. Following the line of the beach as the taxi takes her to her hotel, Avey sees that the southern end is densely populated with hotels. Although she had been impressed with the Bianca Pride, she is now not impressed with this display of achievement and modernity. Avey “took one look at the tall exaggerated shapes of concrete and glass behind her, and the garish blue water in the long line of swimming pools, and was filled with dismay” (80). This dismay functions with the revision of the landscape trope to illustrate how Avey is transitioning from the tourist mentality to traveler, despite the over determination of whiteness discourse and its valorization of consumer culture embodied in the North White Plains home and the Bianca Pride. In fact, when Avey views the long expanse of beach that is likened to a theater, the Bianca Pride is hidden behind a high ridge on the other side, suggesting Avey's literal and figurative movement away from all that the ship suggests.⁷⁰

⁷⁰ Marshall's depiction of the landscape as theater with its emphasis on performance is not entirely benign, however. In *A Small Place*, Jamaica Kincaid berates the tourist who arrives in the Caribbean in order to enact a fantasy of himself, removed from his “banal” existence at home. She repeats the refrain “You see yourself...” (i.e., lying on the beach, taking a walk on the beach, eating delicious locally grown food) to emphasize the ability of the tourist, through travel, to place himself in a fantasy of his construction.⁷⁰ The tourist “performs” this fantasy in the Caribbean. For Avey, however, the “fantasy” of her identity is enacted not in the Caribbean, the novel suggests, but in the affluence and comfort in which she lives in North White Plains.

Avey's continued travel also subverts the imperial convention of constructing the destination other. Marshall achieves this through Lebert Joseph, the local rum shop owner whom Avey meets the morning after she arrives in Grenada. The imperial traveler's relationship to the destination other is fundamental to her perceived hegemony. The local's alleged savagery, moral inferiority, and infantile intellectualism are used as evidence of the traveler and thus her home nation's superiority; in turn, the imperial traveler further demonstrates the home nation's superiority through its willingness to "civilize" and colonize the destination. Without the depraved or ignorant local, there is no superior traveler identified through alterity. *Praisesong* subverts this convention of the imperial travel narrative through Avey's relationship with Joseph. Joseph is identified by many critics as the mythical African griot figure, which certainly he is; however, these readings do not consider Joseph in the context of the traditional role of destination local in travel writing. The traveler in the imperial travel narrative corroborates her observations with the agreement of the locals; this, Pratt says, "assigns them the task of carrying their masters' emotional baggage" (204). In *Praisesong*, however, Joseph does not corroborate observations Avey asserts; rather, he functions as the stabilizing presence for her Avey when she is disoriented and confused in Joseph's company. In this way, Marshall shows with both disorientation and the role of the destination other that Avey is transitioning from tourist to traveler. Another reversal of the destination other convention is that ultimately Avey secures a sense of identity in relationship to Joseph, not by positioning herself in opposition to him. She comes to recognize the part of herself that she left on Halsey Street in his reverence for his ancestors and in his commitment to maintaining tradition. Marshall's subversion of the

disorientation, landscape, and destination conventions of the imperial travel narrative locates Avey outside of the tourist model of travel, with its imperial associations, and situates Avey ready to “learn something” as a genuine traveler.

Avey’s opportunity to “learn something” stems from Joseph’s challenge to Avey to “call her nation.” This invitation to Avey is the novel’s strongest response to the imperial travel narrative’s relationship to nationalism. For Joseph, nation equates to ancestral identification, not nation-state affiliation. Avey stumbles into Joseph’s sea-side rum shop after walking along the beach quite a distance and feeling the effects of the sun and heat. Joseph at first mistakes Avey for a local, which establishes the erasure of the potentially asymmetrical relationship between traveler and local. He asks her from what nation she comes. Avey replies that she is a tourist. This response again situates tourist identification with national identification as tourism here is emblematic of the United States consumer culture that Avey bought into as a tourist. When Joseph remains confused by her answer, she then invokes her nationality explaining that she is from the States, New York. It is clear that Joseph rejects this nationalism as authentic to Avey when he berates its lack of commitment to ancestry. He shouts, “I has grands and great-grands born in that place I has never seen... Josephs who has never gone on the excursion... Who don’ know nothing ‘bout the nation dance!” (168). Rather than corroborating Avey’s United States national identity, Joseph challenges its veracity. His response to Avey articulates the novel’s critique of a national identity exclusive of ancestral identification. The epigraph to this chapter identifies the profound sense of loss Joseph feels on behalf of those like Avey who have denied their ancestral affiliation.

Each year, the people like Joseph from nearby Carriacou who now live in Grenada return to Carriacou to pay tribute to the Old Parents, their ancestors. This excursion offers Avey “real travel” in the sense articulated by Marion in the novel and as theorized by Clifford and Kincaid. Avey’s participation evidences her transformation from tourist to genuine traveler. In Joseph’s rum shop, Avey is, in effect, nationless, beginning to be untethered from material cultural but not yet reconnected to an ancestral identity. She has come to decry her and Jay’s once unquenchable thirst for material satisfaction. Joseph’s invitation for her to join him on the excursion and to “call her nation” offers Avey a means of reconnection. In the ceremonial Beg Pardon of the excursion, the participants seek forgiveness from the ancestors for the wrongs they have done to them throughout the year. The ceremony includes ritual dance and rum offerings. Cuney’s anger at Avey in the first dream invokes the “wrongs” that Avey has done her ancestors for which she needs to atone. During the Big Drum, participants dance their Nation in a celebration of ancestral and national affiliation. Avey’s loss of her own ancestral identification has been mapped by the homes she has recalled while traveling.

In the rum shop with Joseph, Avey surprises herself by disclosing to Joseph the trauma of her dream onboard the *Bianca Pride* and her subsequent decision to leave the cruise. Joseph recognizes in Avey’s pain the loss of affiliation she feels, and his solution is for her to join him on the excursion. Avey at first resists Joseph’s invitation and argues, “I plan on being home tonight, in my own house,” invoking her North White Plains home (181). Avey mistakes her affluence for meaningful identification and affiliation. However, Avey’s transformation from tourist to traveler is suggested when the narrator reports, “And suddenly, at the thought of the dining room and the house in

North White Plains, there it was again: the peculiar clogged and bloated feeling in her stomach and under her heart which could not be accounted for” (181). Prior to this moment, invoking her suburban dining room stabilized Avey in her feelings of displacement. Earlier in the novel, Avey recalled the comfort of her dining room to reinforce her decision to leave the Bianca Pride, when, in fact, she actually felt compelled to leave the cruise because her dreams had confronted the fallacy emblemized by the dining room. In Avey’s transitioning from tourist to traveler, the image of the dining room does not now function to stave off her feeling displaced. It causes the same sick feeling that the dream about her Aunt Cuney did. In the rum shop with Joseph, she becomes again acutely aware of her feelings of displacement, feeling a “dangerous confusion” (182). Instead of seeking to assert her superiority to dispel her feelings, Avey agrees to join Joseph on the excursion. Avey’s transformation and the magnitude of the conversation between Avey and Joseph are evident when they finally exchange names. The narrator reports, “And taking his hand, she had told him [her name] – but only after having to pause for a long moment to think about it. When it did come to her and she said it aloud, it sounded strange, almost like someone else’s name” (186). The rum shop scene, potentially a contact zone of asymmetrical relationships, establishes Avey and Joseph’s common membership in the African Diaspora. Avey’s encounter with the destination other, then, does not reinforce her material-culture, tourist identity but becomes a point of departure from which Avey reclaims a past, ancestral sense of identity.

The level of Avey’s displacement remains an important marker of her transitioning from tourist to traveler. Accepting her displacement allows Avey to find

common ground with the others on the excursion despite their nationality differences. The narrator reports, “She was feeling more dazed and confused than ever, yet there now seemed to be a small clear space in her mind; looking out from it she found the scene on the wharf less overwhelming today, less strange” (187). The wharf is where just a day before Avey had been overwhelmed by the sights and sounds of difference. Her lack of anxiety about her displacement evidences the shift taking place in Avey. Her past travel related to the excursion comes to Avey’s mind. In one example, the scene on the wharf reminds Avey of a home movie that Marion made of her last trip to Ghana. Avey vaguely recalls that the movie includes reference to an ancestral tribute similar to the excursion. In another example, she correlates the wharf with the excursions up the Hudson River that she took as a child with her family and their friends. Avey recalls the sense of community she then felt, “As more people arrived to throng the area beside the river and the cool morning air warmed to the greetings and talk, she would feel what seemed to be hundreds of slender threads streaming out from her navel and from the place where her heart was to enter those around her” (190). Adult Avey recognizes that the threads did not emanate out of her but from the others into her; she recalls, “While the impression lasted she would cease being herself...; instead, for those moments, she became part of, indeed the center of, a huge wide confraternity” (191). These associations of the Carriacou excursion with Marion’s trip to Ghana and Avey’s childhood trips up the Hudson are important to Avey’s growing identification with the African Diaspora. The excursion will lead her back to the Afro-centric sensibility of home that she had as a child before the dominant national discourse subsumed it.

Avey cannot fully realize and celebrate her membership in the African Diaspora without recognizing the Middle Passage, particularly given the centrality of Ibo Landing, to her ancestral identity. The crossing from Grenada to Carriacou resurrects the Middle Passage in Avey's consciousness, and her thoughts return to Tatem, the place that she associates with the Ibo narrative. The women of the excursion on either side of her conflate with the old church mothers from Tatem in a "shock of recognition" for Avey (195). Cuney's significance finally comes to Avey as she settles into the journey: "[Cuney] had stood there large as life in the middle of her dream, and as a result there was a hole the size of a crater where her life of the past three decades had been" (196). The absence in which formerly existed Avey's last three decades in North White Plains evidences that she now rejects the material-based nationalism associated with the move from Halsey Street to North White Plains. That space, though, has not been refilled. Avey becomes extremely seasick during the crossing, vomiting repeatedly and losing her bowels under the care of the women around her. They take her to lie down in the deckhouse. Without disrespect to the totality of the Middle Passage, Marshall places Avey in the position of a slave in the hold of a ship, sick with the stench of her own feces. Marshall writes,

She was alone on the deckhouse. That much she was certain of. Yet she had the impression as her mind flickered on briefly of other bodies lying crowded in with her in the hot, airless dark. A multitude it felt like lay packed around her in the filth and stench of themselves, just as she was. Their moans, rising and falling with each rise and plunge of the schooner, enlarged upon the one filling her head. Their suffering – the depth of it, the weight of it in the cramped space – made hers of no consequence (209).

This passage illustrates how integral the African Diaspora has become to the sense of identity Avey is recovering. Unlike the imperial traveler who seeks to secure her

superiority through alterity, Avey recognizes herself in Joseph and in the imagined multitude below deck.

Avey's travel has resulted in a paradigm shift in her consciousness from a universalizing nationalist discourse to an Afro-centric, ancestral paradigm of identity. Avey's being able to proudly "call her nation" as Joseph implores has been the momentum of the novel, yet by the novel's conclusion she is not able to do that in the tangible way Joseph imagines. In fact, Marshall remains ambivalent about Avey's ability to "call her nation" throughout the remainder of her travel. Her inability to do so in the rum shop led to her participation on the excursion, the purpose of which is to celebrate ancestral identification and to "call your nation" in the Big Drum Dance. The Big Drum ceremony, then, is the climax of the novel, and in my reading, anticlimactic. Marshall's ambivalence about the traditional function of nation as a totalizing discourse is clear here. Marshall's ambivalence about nationalist affiliation is also evidenced in Avey's reaction to the ceremony. Avey's response to the simplicity of the ceremonial space and of the dances evidences the twin forces that exists in her between her Tatem, ancestral, and North White Plains, modern, selves. She reflects, "She should have been disappointed, and she had felt a momentary twinge of disappointment when she first entered the yard and had seen what little was there. She should be silently accusing Lebert Joseph of having deceived her again. Had she risked her life on the decrepit boat, disgraced herself to her permanent shame for this?" (240). These thoughts demonstrate the potential air of superiority that lies within Avey; however, in Avey's continued thoughts she recognizes that, in fact, she is witnessing something remarkable. She finds, "It was the essence of something rather than the thing itself she was witnessing," the "bare bones" of the

ceremony as it once probably existed, and she wants it to remain with her (240). Avey's liminal role at the Big Drum, not fully a participant yet not solely a spectator, is made more obvious by the presence of a servant, Milda, to attend to Avey. In addition, the participants in the Beg Pardon bow to Avey one by one at the ceremony's conclusion. One could argue that these details evidence respect being paid to Avey as a guest; however, in the context of her presence as foreign tourist in their eyes, they also suggest an ongoing servitude by the global South to the global North. Milda is the one who suggests that Avey join in the Creole dance, the dance not associated with a specific nation but available for anyone. Her participation in this particular dance along with Joseph's inability to pin a nation on her demonstrate the ambivalence the novel has for reifying specific national identification. Avey is not able to dance a nation, but she can join the "Diaspora" dance, as Lisa McGill points out. Instead of the type of totalizing nation-state discourse that potentially supports homogeneity, the novel offers a "Creole" hybridized nation-based identity. Thus, African Diaspora and Creole become Marshall's substitutes for the modern iteration of nation that she rejects.

Avey's planned return to the United States retains the ambivalence of the Big Drum ceremony. In the imperial traveler's return, the traveler shares with the home audience the "knowledge" gained about the destination and its inhabitant other, all in the service of reifying the prevailing dominant discourse about nationalism. Marshall challenges the stability of the nation-state construct through Avey's planned return to the United States. The level to which its material culture has compromised her ancestral identification, the identification that has become most meaningful to her through her travel, has become apparent in Avey's recollections of her homes. Avey identifies more

with a Pan-African, diasporic nation than with the unqualified optimism and consumerism projected by the United States. Avey does not plan to return home to the dining room in North White Plains, the emblem of her affluence that once stabilized her during her displaced feelings aboard the *Bianca Pride*. Instead, she plans to go to Tatem to live, returning to her ancestral home.

Like *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, however, *Praisesong* concludes on a note of decided ambiguity. Avey's evangelical enthusiasm at the close of the novel undermines the closure many critical readings of the novel find in Avey's recognition and celebration of her African diasporic identity. Leaving Carriacou the morning after the Big Drum, Avey's reflections on the experience echo the superficiality of the tourist's experience. This demonstrates the powerful and pervasive grip that imperial ideology holds over travel. Avey views the small island from the plane and comments, "Everything fleeting and ephemeral. The island was more a mirage rather than an actual place. Something conjured up perhaps to satisfy a longing and need" (254).

Surprisingly, Avey subordinates the realities of the local life of Carriacou to her brief intervention in their midst. The stability of Avey's transformation is further complicated by her anticipation of again seeing the cab driver who two days earlier brought her to her hotel. He had ridiculed the excursion, but Avey zealously plans to explain to him the depth of her experience. Readers of the novel know well the skepticism with which he viewed the excursion and know, as Avey even recognizes, that he will simply view her as crazy. In fact, the final two pages of the novel are a rush of Avey's plans to evangelize to everyone about her experience, the nature of which remains unclear. Marion again surfaces to represent Avey's ancestral conscience when Avey plans, "She would enlist

Marion in her cause... Of her three children, Marion alone would understand about the excursion and help her spread the word” (255). In Avey’s enthusiastic but premature celebration of her return to ancestral-centered identity, Marshall anticipates the explosion of heritage tourism of the late 20th century. Marshall recognizes that heritage tourist-ing is not without risks. Avey’s experience on the excursion, while intense, was also brief, and she participated mostly as a respected observer. The Big Drum ceremony plays out largely as a performance for Avey as audience member. In *Culture on Tour*, Edward M. Bruner chronicles how the profitability of heritage tourism has led to the superficial consumption of heritage sites and experiences.⁷¹ He also describes how culture is sometimes fabricated for the purpose of consumption by tourists. For example, travelers to Bali can attend a traditional Balinese frog dance at the home of a princess. Bruner explains, however, that the dance was choreographed in 1970 to be performed for tourists. Marshall suggests that the excursion Avey participates in is uncorrupted from external influences such as tourism, but Avey’s evangelical zeal following her experience portends the influx of curiosity seekers interested in quaint ancestral rituals. Marshall contrasts Avey’s somewhat superficial zeal with Marion. The reader knows that for Marion the excursion would be no new revelation. Marion has been “spreading the word” already. Avey’s transformation, then, is romanticized in the novel’s conclusion. It echoes a bit the tourist’s enthusiasm, marking the transformation suspect. Pettis argues that *Praisesong* “...brings full circle the novelist’s exploration of the fractured psyche, the regeneration of wholeness, and the proper mental distancing necessary to retain

⁷¹ See Edward M. Bruner *Culture on Tour: Ethnographies of Travel*. Bruner describes how because of his ethnography experience he was hired to lead tour groups through Bali. When he attempts to break down the façade between the tourists and the heritage performers, he is discouraged by the tour company owner and eventually fired.

psychological equilibrium” (17). I argue, rather, that Avey’s evangelical enthusiasm does not suggest “psychological equilibrium.” Where Avey perhaps naively feels that she has achieved wholeness through her diasporic identification, Marshall seems to be more skeptical.

Avey’s daughter Marion provides the best example of what it might look like to maintain ancestral pride concurrently with material stability. Although not substantially drawn, Marshall depicts Marion as living in tribute to African-American tradition. Marion is the only one of Avey’s children who receives even limited development in the novel. In fact, the novel both begins and ends with Avey’s recalling or imagining a conversation with Marion. At the beginning of the novel, Avey recalls how it is Marion who rejects the fantasy of the Bianca Pride and who presses Avey to travel with her to Brazil or Ghana. At the novel’s conclusion, Avey anticipates with enthusiasm telling Marion about her experience on the excursion and her plans to return to Tatem. In this way, Marshall constructs Marion to be the answer to Avey’s question about whether or not she and Jay could have stayed true to Halsey Street. Following the troubling dream about Halsey Street, Avey repeatedly asks herself, “Couldn’t they have done it differently?,” wondering if there was some way in which she and Jay could have preserved the ritual and the happiness of their lives on Halsey Street while securing financial comfort and stability. She asks, “Would it have been possible to have done both?” Avey aspires to honor the best of Halsey Street but escape its worst parts (139). It is Afro-centric Marion with her natural hair and beads from Togo who offers Avey an alternative to the material culture/whiteness to which Avey buys in and performs.

Marshall's "transculturation" of the imperial tradition of the travel narrative through Avey's travel offers a challenge to the prevailing ideology of the role of nation for individuals and communities.⁷² Marshall constructs Avey's travel to "call out" her nation for its materialism and disingenuous projection of democracy; however, it is too simple to read Marshall as substituting one nationalism- Afro-centric Diaspora- for another. Rather, Marshall recognizes the centrality of ancestral identification for some African-Americans without condoning the type of unreflective nationalism that corroborated the post World War II optimism projected by the United States. In Avey's unadulterated enthusiasm at the end of the novel, Marshall complicates the reading of Avey as achieving wholeness and illustrates the individual's complicated relationship to nationality.

In *Praisesong for the Widow*, Marshall creates a protagonist who experiences conflict over her dual-identity as United States national and member of the African diaspora. Avey experiences this dual-location as tension between ancestry and dominant nationalism. In *Daughters*, Marshall creates another dual-identified traveling protagonist, Ursa Mackenzie. Like Avey, Ursa is a Black diasporan traveling from the United States to the Caribbean. Unlike Avey, though, Ursa is both a United States and a Caribbean national. Through this bi-nationalism, Marshall is able to locate her critique of contemporary neo-imperialism in a transnational, globalized context.

⁷² Pratt defines transculturation as "how subordinated or marginal groups select and invent from materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture. While subjugated peoples cannot readily control what emanates from the dominant culture, they do determine to varying extents what they absorb into their own and what they use it for. Transculturation is a phenomenon of the contact zone" (6).

Chapter Four
Daughters

Daughters (1991) provides a compelling conclusion to my examination of how Paule Marshall uses the trope of travel to interrogate the often asymmetrical post-Cold War relationship between the United States and the Caribbean. This study begins with “To Da-duh, In Memoriam” which depicts the tremendous sense of distance between the main characters and between the United States and Barbados. Chapters Two and Three on *The Chosen Place*, *The Timeless People* and *Praisesong for the Widow* chronicle the penetration of the United States into the Caribbean via travel for Development and tourism, respectively. These previous chapters established the cultural, national, and even identity-based binaries between the Caribbean and the United States that are integral to traditional travel and its attendant hegemony: constructions of "First" and "Third" world; "development" or "progress" vs. tradition and an historical past; indeed, even most simply between racialized notions of self and other. *Daughters*, though, evidences a penetration through globalization by the United States into the Caribbean that is so complete that the distance characterized in the earlier works examined seems to have fallen away. Marshall emblemizes the seeming collapse of the binaries that characterize Marshall's earlier work most dramatically through *Daughters'* protagonist Ursa Mackenzie.

In Ursa Mackenzie, Marshall constructs a transnational elite subject who enjoys the freedoms and choices afforded her via her status as valued citizen in a global context. Ursa is bi-national and bi-cultural. Her father is Primus Mackenzie, or the PM, as his political constituents in the fictional Caribbean nation of Triunion call him, and her

mother is United States born Estelle. Ursa is in her early 30s in the novel and lived the first half of her life in Triunion and the latter half in the United States. She also regularly travels between the two locations, thus making her both perpetually at home and perpetually away when she is in either Triunion or the United States. This mobility and the choices that she is empowered to make during the course of the novel identify her as valuable subject in both places, a transnational elite in the global context. Consequently, Marshall uses the trope of travel, through the character of Ursa, not to portray the types of unambiguous experiences that I have examined in Marshall's other works; rather, she uses Ursa's travel to examine the implication that borderless-ness seems to result in a sort of independence.

In *Daughters*, Marshall remains concerned about confronting the machinations of power that perpetuate dependency. Independence operates at two levels in the novel – individual and societal. Ursa's ability to sabotage her father's re-election at the novel's close and to assert her independence from him lends itself to a narrative that the transnational landscape that Ursa personifies is somehow empowering to its subjects. However, the individual independence that Ursa achieves is not, I argue, universally realized in the novel. The novel's polyvocal narration offers contradictory narratives about personal and societal independence. Marshall shows the continuation of the asymmetrical relationships between the powerful and the less powerful through comparisons that she makes between the United States and Triunion and through Estelle and Triunion-nationals Astral and Celestine's narrations. These narrations challenge the reading of the novel that looks at Ursa's experience as an emblem of greater societal ability to escape dependency. These counter narratives are important because Marshall

shows through them the “differentiated citizenship” that accompanies globalization.⁷³

These counter narratives evidence that the need persists to confront entrenched structures of power that Marshall called out in her 1973 “Shaping the World of My Art.” To show this, I will examine the Ursa narrative to show how the transnational elite subject suggests one narrative of globalization as liberatory. Then I will show the similarities that Marshall constructs between Triunion and the United States to evidence the continuation of the machinations of power against the powerless in the global age. Finally, I will examine Estelle, Astral and Celestine’s narrations in order to reveal the extent to which their stories evidence the continued vulnerability and disposability assigned those found less valuable within the circuits of power.

Ursa Beatrice Mackenzie: Transnational Elite Traveler

Ursa’s transnational elite status is evidenced by her location outside of the binaries between home and away and between self and other that support the unambiguous types of travel that occurs in Marshall’s earlier works. Ursa’s travel in *Daughters* is essentially between her two homes. Indeed, Ursa is welcomed “home” in both Triunion and the United States. Marshall writes Ursa to inhabit the betwixt and between space that is outside of the over-determined identifications created by binary paradigms of identity. Through Ursa’s eventual ability to assert independence from her father, Marshall seems to suggest that this bi-national, bi-cultural space that characterizes a transnational landscape, as opposed to the binary locations of earlier texts, may engender liberation from dependency.

⁷³ I borrow the notion of “differentiated citizenship” from Aihwa Ong. I use it to draw attention to the different rights and opportunities afforded to people who hold similar citizenship.

Marshall foregrounds Ursa's identity as a traveler even though Ursa does not travel from New York to Triunion until the final quarter of the novel. Indeed, Ursa's ability to travel effortlessly between the United States and Triunion is one marker of her valued status in both places. Marshall establishes in *Daughters'* early pages that the plot hinges upon whether or not Ursa will travel to Triunion for her father's re-election campaign after a four year absence. Ursa's previous frequent travel between the United States and Triunion is described substantially in the novel's first section. Marshall presents Ursa as a different kind of traveler from those in her earlier works, however, through the arrival scene. One convention of the travel writing genre is the detailed description of the traveler's arrival to the destination, which captures the traveler's first impressions of the destination and typically establishes the relationship of alterity between the traveler and his or her nation and the destination. "To Da-Duh – In Memoriam," *The Chosen Place*, *The Timeless People*, and *Praisesong for the Widow* all include these scenes early in their stories.⁷⁴ When Ursa does choose to travel back to Triunion, Marshall constructs her arrival very differently from the other traveling characters included in this study. Where the other travelers identified difference, Ursa's remark upon arriving is, "Nothing's changed" (349). Her father has arranged, as usual, for her expedited passage through the arrival formalities. In this way, Ursa's arrival is marked by familiarity, belonging, and elite status rather than by difference. This signals an important difference in Marshall's deployment of the travel trope in *Daughters*.

⁷⁴ "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" begins with the child arriving in Barbados and feeling disoriented in the disembarkment shed. *The Chosen Place*, *the Timeless People* similarly introduces readers to the four U.S.American travelers through their arrivals by plane to Bourne Island. In *Praisesong for the Widow*, Avey's arrival on the dock in Grenada after disembarking from the cruise ship clearly marks her disorientation as a traveler.

Marshall means to mark Ursa as a traveler who is able to navigate between the United State and Triunion seamlessly. She does so in order to identify Ursa as a fundamentally different kind of traveler from those examined in earlier chapters. Ursa's experience of travel is marked by similarity rather than by difference, suggesting the absence of the binaries of home and away, of self and other that so characterize the forms of travel to the Caribbean that occur in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam"; *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; and *Praisesong for the Widow*.

Marshall constructs Ursa to disrupt master narratives of gender and nationality in order to reiterate Ursa's identity as a traveler outside of the binary locations that often accompany travel discourse. The master narratives of gender and nationality rely upon binary identifications of belonging and exclusion. Marshall constructs Ursa to confound these identifications. In this way, creates Ursa to escape restrictive binary-based identifications. Marshall's characterization of Ursa challenges the master narrative of gender through Ursa's embodying non-traditional norms of femininity and through her rejection of the imperative to procreate. Ursa confounds the feminine in her non-feminine body type. Her mother's genes had "seen to it that she barely reached five feet, and they never got around to supplying her with a pair of decent hips, a discernible waistline and breasts that were more than just two nubs. A body that belongs on some prepubescent ten-year-old! It has taken her years to reconcile herself to it" (56). Ursa's difficulty reconciling herself to her body type shows the intensity with which master narratives are internalized. Ursa struggled to identify herself as feminine when her body did not meet the normalized narrative of the feminine. Her ability to indeed reconcile herself to her body type evidences how Marshall locates Ursa outside of the binaries of exclusion and

inclusion inherent in the prevailing master narrative about femininity. Just as significantly, *Daughters* opens with Ursa preparing to leave a clinic following an abortion. In Ursa's choosing abortion, Marshall further disrupts, through Ursa, notions of the feminine that identify motherhood as a feminine ideal. Motherhood and its concomitant, childhood, are clearly central concerns in a novel titled *Daughters* with four female narrators. Heather Hathaway argues that, in *Daughters*, Marshall imagines dependence through motherhood and its various permutations. This reading is consistent with the femininity master narrative that locates female achievement with the ability to properly care for a dependent. Ursa's rejection of this responsibility, then, demonstrates Marshall's disruption of the master narrative about female gender. In addition, Ursa's ability to choose to terminate her pregnancy and to secure a safe, clinical setting for the abortion evidences her privileged status.

Ursa also challenges the constructs on which the United States nationalism master narrative is based. This master narrative is exemplified in the current Oath of Allegiance that one takes to become a United States citizen. It reads in part, "I hereby declare, on oath, that I absolutely and entirely renounce and abjure all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty of whom or which I have heretofore been a subject or citizen;..." The United States national master narrative does not account for a citizen like Ursa who was born into dual citizenship. There is no formal procedure in place that demands that a dual-citizen by birth like Ursa denounce her non-United States citizenship, but the implications of the oath are clear: a United States national pledges allegiance exclusively to the United States. Ursa is, by parentage, bi-national. Her affiliation, identity, and loyalty are not exclusively with the United States. She is the first

of Marshall's traveling characters since the protagonist in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" who is inherently both U.S. American and Caribbean. This is important to Marshall's interest in *Daughters* in examining the implications of the appearance of borderless-ness that characterizes the Americas in the late 20th century. Ursa embodies that borderless-ness.

Marshall constructs Ursa to seemingly not suffer any type of identity crisis over her bi-national, bi-cultural identity. She does not seem to recognize her status as transnational elite. Others, however, particularly African-American characters in the novel, do problematize this aspect of her identity. When Ursa is at her best friend Viney's home after Ursa's abortion, Viney is upset with Ursa for having been out of communication with her for several days. The narrator explains that whenever Viney disagrees with Ursa, Viney attributes it to Ursa's being from Triunion.

Whatever Viney doesn't understand about her, whatever she sees as her defects, shortcomings, failings, she blames on the first fourteen years of her life spent in Triunion... That's the only side of her she chooses to see then. And she's not the only one. Others you would call Folks with a capital F would catch the island lilt in her voice she couldn't even hear anymore and without stopping to listen to the strains of New England, New York and the mean streets of Hartford's North End would immediately color her immigrant, alien, islander without a green card, not realizing they were lopping off more than half her life. People who were supposed to be Folks thinking pushy, arrogant, different, difficult (86).

Significantly, the focus here is on others' difficulty with Ursa's bi-national, bi-cultural identity, not on Ursa's problematizing her identity. Ursa does not describe her own feelings of difference; rather, she feels that she is "othered" by others. This passage shows how deeply rooted are the binaries between belonging and foreigner that anchor the United States nationality master narrative of native and foreigner that Ursa undermines. Where Ursa seems to navigate the apparent borderless-ness between the

United States and the Caribbean, Viney and other Folks' heightened awareness of Ursa's Triunion background evidence that beneath the appearance of borderless-ness through Marshall's characterization of Ursa, very fixed notions of place and identity remain.⁷⁵

As I have shown, Marshall decidedly locates Ursa outside of the binaries and their master narratives that characterize the worlds of travel in Marshall's previous work. These include the binaries of home/away, self/other, and national/foreigner. Ursa's location outside of these binaries in the position of transnational elite seems to empower her to liberate herself from the machinations of power that oppress her. Throughout the novel, Ursa grows in her ability to reject and resist these oppressions. Marshall imagines power in *Daughters* through the male/female relationship, through material success, and through patriarchy. For Ursa, her dependence is most manifest through her relationship with her charismatic father, whom she has avoided visiting for four years. The male/female relationship is idealized in *Daughters* in the legacy of Will Cudjoe and Congo Jane. They were slave lovers, friends, and co-conspirators who led a slave revolt and who are immortalized in the monument that stands above the beach at Government Lands. Marshall characterizes their relationship as the egalitarian ideal. Ursa shows her developing independence by breaking up with her boyfriend Lowell, a relationship that bore no resemblance to the Will Cudjoe and Congo Jane ideal in its absence of partnership and passion. In addition, she quits a lucrative, prestigious job in which she directed market research that led, for example, to more effective marketing of cigarettes

⁷⁵ It is interesting that in a novel in which Marshall disrupts entrenched binaries, the Caribbean location she creates, Triunion, highlights a triad. Triunion is named for the three colonial governments that shaped the island: French, Spanish, and English. Triunion is still significantly impacted, though, by binaries such as metropolitan center and colonial periphery and First World and Third World. Triunion's three colonizers would be located collectively in the metropolitan center and First World positions of these binaries.

to African-Americans. She rejects the prevailing material notion of success by leaving the National Consumer Research Corporation to instead return to freelance social science work that she believes can genuinely affect positive change for African-Americans.⁷⁶ Despite these successful liberations from power, Ursa spends much of the novel avoiding a confrontation with the machinations of power embodied as patriarchy through her father. It is this confrontation with power that motivates Ursa to travel. She chooses to return to Triunion on the eve of her father's re-election because of his complicity with plans to develop Morlands' Government Lands into an exclusive tourist resort.

Government Lands function emblematically as a site of contestation between the oppressed and the powerful. The area is located in the Morlands district that the PM represents in Triunion government. Morlands is the nation's poorest district. Also, the monument to Will Cudjoe and Congo Jane stands above Government Lands. The monument is a reminder of the historical contestation between colonizers and the enslaved in Triunion. It is a testament to the temporarily successful resistance to oppression staged by the band of slaves. The monument's significance to Ursa also indicates its role as a reminder of the ongoing need to resist neo-imperial manifestations of oppression. Indeed, the monument sits above the beach on Government Lands that United States American investors hope to develop into a luxury resort. Not only does the monument hold value for Ursa, but she holds the beach on Government Lands sacred.

The beach is an important marker of Ursa's transnational elite status. Ursa recognizes its local value to nearby Triunion nationals, yet it is her difference from them as an insider to government affairs that enables her to act on their behalf to save the

⁷⁶ The forcefulness with which material based consumer culture dominates the United States construction of success is discussed in greater detail in Chapter Three about Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*.

beach from resort development. Marshall imbues the beach with symbolic value for Ursa. She considers the beach “one of her two havens,” along with her friend Viney’s home in Brooklyn (82). At the risk of echoing tourism discourse’s characterization of the Caribbean beach as a paradise, Marshall describes the beach as Ursa arrives to it:

And there it all is as she emerges from the trees: the wide white-sand beach that follows unerringly the curve of the bay, the over arching sky that is absolutely clear except for a ridge of clouds...; and there’s the wide, wide sea spread before her. It still contains traces of the night so that it’s a deeper, richer blue than the sky. The scales of morning sunlight on its surface are like a fleet of paper boats a child might have fashioned from the pages of a notebook and set adrift (378).

This description indeed captures the sense of the Caribbean as an Edenic escape on which tourism capitalizes. But Marshall goes on to characterize the beach in terms of the Morlands residents’ relationship to it. Here, Marshall departs from the touristic idealization of a Caribbean beach. Marshall reminds readers that the beach does not exist solely for tourists’ pleasure. While the beach is empty when Ursa arrives, she knows that this is not the case throughout the day and throughout the week:

She’s too late for the fisherman who left at dawn and too early for the women who will come later in the morning to help with the catch when the first boats return around noon. Tomorrow, Sunday, will be another matter. Sunday is seabath day at Government Lands beach. People like peas on the beach from the time God’s sun rises... The children running and flinging themselves half naked into the surf, and the grown-ups – the small farmers, the cane-cutters on the big estates, the coffee growers from up Gran’ Morne, the men and women who work the rice fields in the wide valley below Bush Mountain – all of them performing a careful ritual before actually going for a swim. They will stand waist-deep in the breaking waves, scoop up water in their cupped hands and splash it over their arms and shoulders and chests, and in great handfuls over their heads...(378-9).

I present that passage in full because what Marshall achieves through it is significant.

She reclaims the sea and its beach for the Caribbean nationals who live on its shores.

Tourism discourse suggests that the empty beach waits for the overworked Global North traveler who seeks rejuvenation from its sun and sea. Marshall offers that rejuvenation to the Morlands residents to whom the beach is sacred. She humanizes the contestation over space by vividly depicting the children, the farmers, the cane-cutters, and all who gather at the beach for recreation and re-creation. Marshall captures the sacredness of the beach by making ritual of the weekly baptismal sea bath. These are images of the Caribbean beach that tourism neglects. Through this depiction, Marshall shows the necessity at this resonant site of Triunion's ongoing resistance to the powerful external forces that seek to oppress. The fact that Ursa and not a full-time Triunion resident stages the intervention into the resort development speaks to the differentiated citizenship that the oppressed face in a transnational, globalized landscape.

Ursa's final assertive act, after leaving her dysfunctional relationship and her corporate job, is to save Government Lands by leaking the resort plans to the PM's opponent in the upcoming election. This fact lends credibility to the reading of *Daughters* that focuses on Ursa's quest for independence. Ursa's location outside of binary paradigms seems to enable her to confront power in this way. Binaries restrict a subject's agency by dictating narrow identities and roles. For example, the traditional binaries of feminine and masculine restrict a person's ability to navigate between stereotypically masculine and feminine roles. The appearance is that Ursa has agency because Marshall constructs her to escape binary entrenched identity, at least in terms of gender and nationality. Thus, one could mistakenly argue that through Ursa, Marshall stages the oppressed's ability to confront patriarchy and sever dependence. However, Marshall makes clear that despite Ursa's ability to elude the constraints of binary paradigms, those

constraints do indeed persist. Ursa herself identifies a series of “double-exposures” between Triunion and Midland City, New Jersey which expose the perpetuation of asymmetrical relationships of power in an age of globalization. In addition, Estelle, Celestine and Astral’s narrations, characters that inhabit Triunion to a greater extent than Ursa, also expose the continued vulnerability and disposability assigned to those who are deemed less valuable within the constructs of power.

The United States and Triunion: “The Same Things Repeated Everywhere”

Marshall sets *Daughters*’ narration nearly equally in the United States and in the fictional Caribbean nation of Triunion. In so doing, she is able to create similarities between the United States and the Caribbean. These parallel situations and characters illustrate the ongoing and similar struggles of people of color against the prevailing political and economic machinations of power. They offer a narrative that complicates readings of *Daughters* that universalize Ursa’s assertion of independence at the novel’s close to include others who are oppressed.

Marshall constructs Midland City, New Jersey, and Triunion to be similar in the ongoing subordination of their needs to the desires of dominant structures of power. Ursa is the link between the two places. Four years prior to the present setting of the novel, Ursa worked as a freelance social scientist on a study of the mayoral race in mostly Black Midland City. The coalition she worked with was successful in getting the first Black mayor, Sandy Lawson, elected. Four years later, she is hired to help plan and coordinate the research of a follow-up study on Midland City. Marshall constructs Midland City and Triunion to be similar. She characterizes both places by their poverty and by the people’s

lack of influence over the politics and economics that direct their development. After Ursa's first trip back to Midland City in four years, she is discouraged by the similarities she sees between Midland City and Triunion. She tells her friend Viney,

How she'd been overwhelmed – being back in Midland City again – by a sense of her life being a series of double exposures. Everything – elections, roads, the South Ward, Armory Hill, the PM, the Do-Nothings, Sandy Lawson, the white people – them! still running things in both places – everything superimposed on everything else. Inseparable. Inescapable. The same things repeated everywhere she turned. 'It's like I keep running, Viney, but I can't hide...' (332-3).

Marshall's aim is to point out through Ursa's observation, "the white people – them! still running things in both places" the continuity of racialized assertions of power from colonialism to present neo-imperial hegemony. The parallel oppression in Midland City and Triunion exposes that the concentration of power in the hands of the few continues to disenfranchise people of color. Similar social and development problems related to representation, infrastructure, and access plague both Triunion and Midland City. Ursa observes that the problems of Midland City and Triunion are "inseparable," and the reality of their common struggle against oppression is "inescapable." In this, Marshall critiques the assumption that the influence of the United States via democracy throughout the Americas has resulted in prosperity and opportunity.⁷⁷ Ursa's recognition that she cannot hide from these dualities between the two regions foreshadows her sabotage of her father's re-election and her subsequent independence from him. The parallels between Midland City and Triunion, however, reveal that significant barriers to independence remain for those not recognized as Ursa is as valuable transnational capital.

⁷⁷ See Chapter Two on Marshall's *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* for a more detailed explication of Marshall's critique of the United States' position that newly independent nations that modernize along a United States based model will achieve racial equality and prosperity.

Sandy Lawson and Primus Mackenzie

Within the broad comparison between Midland City and Triunion, Marshall creates specific “double exposures.” One of these is between Sandy Lawson, the first Black mayor of Midland City, and the PM, elected representative of the Morlands district in Triunion. Through Sandy and the PM, Marshall shows the difficulty of affecting change within prevailing structures of power. Their ambition to reform oppressive governments in order to better represent the needs of the oppressed and their subsequent capitulation to the status quo contradicts the Ursa narrative of severing dependence.

Marshall constructs both Sandy and the PM to be charismatic, empathetic leaders who are elected to represent the poor and underserved. She describes each one as starting his political career very idealistically but eventually submitting to the political machinery that runs both places. In fact, Marshall evidences their capitulation through their agreement to develop similar projects that serve the needs of the wealthy while subordinating the needs of the under-served. Sandy agrees to an expressway that bypasses the largely African-American South Ward, his home district. The expressway will ease the travel of mostly white suburbanites in and out of the city while allowing them to largely avoid the South Ward. Likewise, the PM agrees with U.S. American investors to develop an exclusive tourist resort on Government Lands’ beach in Morlands. The public beach traditionally hosts Morlands families on weekends and holidays. The PM does not intend to reveal these plans for the beach to the people of Morlands until after his reelection. Ursa’s objection to the project is what prompts her to return to Triunion after a four year’s absence. These projects similarly subordinate the

needs of their constituents to the desires of outsiders. This duality between Sandy and the PM reveals that just as a mayor of a mid-size New Jersey city is vulnerable to the moneyed influence at the expense of his constituents, so, too, is the Caribbean vulnerable to the moneyed influence of the United States at the expense of citizens like those in Morlands.

The similarities between Sandy and the PM show the great difficulty of affecting change for underrepresented people within prevailing structures of power. Both are elected to political office by hopeful voters who are “behind God’s back (375)”.⁷⁸ Sandy and the PM’s similar capitulations to power contrasts with Ursa’s ability to assert independence from her father. This difference illustrates that the asymmetrical distribution of power continues to prevail even within the allegation that in a globalized world, binaries are dismantled. Marshall describes both Sandy and the PM as very idealistic in their early political careers. She does so in order to highlight their fall from idealism after confronting the concentration of power they find in politics. In a speech to his South Ward constituents, Sandy says about his campaign, “...They don’t know what to make of it downtown ‘cause it’s no big-money, fat-cat, party-run campaign. It’s no slick, high tech TV and radio campaign. It’s strictly The People – with a capital T and capital P – of the South Ward’s campaign (279).” Midland City’s South Ward is the parallel to the PM’s district of Morlands in Triunion. Sandy’s election is a real source of pride for his constituents and they have high hopes for the neighborhood under his leadership.

⁷⁸ This is a description used in the Eastern Caribbean in particular to characterize remote places. It also implies those who are left behind progress and development.

Marshall constructs the PM very similarly. He is the “favorite son” of the Morlands district who makes the district proud by returning from studies in England a barrister. As a young man, the PM, along with other promising Caribbean attorneys, was invited by the Carnegie Endowment on International Relations to see the United States: “The tour was part of the endowment’s policy of offering young professionals from countries that might soon be independent a chance to see America, those who might one day be high-level civil servants, development planners, government officials, even presidents and prime ministers (27).” Marshall here alludes to the intentionality of the United States late 20th century intervention into the Caribbean. The PM makes the trip and for several weeks is shown grand-scale agricultural and manufacturing enterprises. His rejection of political trappings at this point in his career is seen through his recognition of Carnegie’s intentions. He writes to Estelle from Triunion after the United States visit:

Of course, the point of the show wasn’t lost on us. We were to take heed and think ‘free enterprise’ rather than any socialist nonsense we might have picked up while we were away studying, and perhaps something close to what we saw might be ours when we take over our little atolls. But is it too presumptuous to ask how we’re to achieve this miracle with only a few bananas, a little coffee and rice and some sugarcane that we can’t even get a decent price for anymore? Never mind, when the time comes we’re still to model ourselves on Big Brother to the north and not give trouble...(144).

This letter to Estelle evidences the PM’s independence from the ideologies of United States capitalism and liberalism as Triunion moved toward independence and as his political career began. His skepticism about the Caribbean’s ability to compete economically with “a few bananas, a little coffee and rice and some sugarcane” anticipates the unequal playing field post-War agencies like the International Monetary

Fund and the Global Bank create through their lending and trade policies.⁷⁹ The “double exposure” between him and Sandy, though, exposes the unfulfilled promise of the Carnegie Foundation trip claims. Marshall makes clear the near irresistibility of prevailing structures of power through both Sandy and the PM’s eventual support of projects that subordinate the needs of their constituents – the freeway and the resort.

Sandy and the PM is each called out by one of the women in another Midland City/Triunion “double exposure”: Mae Ryland, an African-American elder in the South Ward community, and Estelle Harrison Mackenzie, the PM’s wife and Ursa’s mother. Marshall uses Mae and Estelle to voice skepticism about the consolidation of power in the hands of the few and of Sandy and the PM’s ability to effect change working within the prevailing paradigms of power. While Ursa’s liberating act at the novel’s close results in her individual independence, Marshall stages the great difficulty of societal independence through Mae and Estelle. They are both African-American women of the generation preceding Ursa’s. They both recognize that the men they support seem to abandon their idealism as their political careers are overtaken by the entrenched structures of power, and the women react against it. Mae recognizes Sandy’s capitulation to the political status quo after he gains office, and she vacates the office in city hall he created for her as community liaison. While Sandy prioritizes building the expressway that will expedite suburban travel in and out of the city, Mae continues her grassroots work with community youth. Estelle is drawn to the PM by his ambition to confront the political status quo like Mae originally was to Sandy. Estelle and the PM meet when he is on the Carnegie Foundation trip to the United States. She shares the PM’s early

⁷⁹ See Stephanie Black’s *Life and Debt* for an examination of how IMF and Global Bank policy and practice crippled Jamaica’s economy.

political career with him when he maintained the ideals they shared. In fact, she and the PM spend their honeymoon running his first campaign to be elected representative of Morlands, a district which at that time had no surfaced roads or electricity. Like Mae and the expressway, Estelle's greatest discord with the PM comes over his support of the proposed development of the tourist resort on Moorlands' Government Lands.

The Mae/Estelle "double exposure" directly exposes the similar need for equity and justice for oppressed people in both Triunion and in the United States. The presence in *Daughters* of the United States Civil Rights movement and the late 1980s struggle in NJ alongside the fight for post-colonial independence in Triunion directly confront the notion that the United States is the standard bearer regarding equality and opportunity for people of color. In this way, Marshall exposes the myth of capitalism affording equal opportunity for people of color, a myth that *Praisesong for the Widow* also challenges. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Merle makes quick mention that the U.S. American travelers choose to confront inequity in Bourne Island rather than confront similar inequity at home in the United States. In *Daughters*, though, Marshall makes much more of the similar rights struggles of people of color in the United States and the Caribbean. Estelle observes after she first arrives in Triunion, "But I've really come to see things here and in the States in pretty much the same light. There's the same work to be done. I drive past Armory Hill, the big slum we have here, and I could be driving through all the Harlems in the States" (224). One of those "Harlems" is the South Ward. Collectively, the "double exposures" of oppression that Ursa's assertion of independence will not affect offer a competing discourse to Ursa's. Ursa's narration suggests that transnational subjects can confront patriarchy and sever dependency, while the "double

exposures” evidence that Ursa’s access and choices are not reflective of those who globalization leaves behind.

Estelle Harrison Mackenzie

Marshall uses Estelle’s very ambiguous identity in Triunion to contrast to Ursa’s clear belonging. This difference underscores the differing value assigned to Ursa and her mother in the transnational landscape and, thus, their differing potential to extricate themselves from binary constructs of identity and, in turn, dependency. Ursa is able to fluidly inhabit the space between belonging and foreigner while Estelle remains firmly identified as a foreigner. Although Estelle eventually lives a majority of her life in Triunion, she never enjoys the transnational elite status there that Ursa does. This is ironic considering that her value in Triunion remains as the “token American.” For example, when her husband the PM campaigns, she is ritually brought to the stage and touted as “The wife the PM went and find in America” (128). Later, she is reluctantly included in Planning and Development Board functions for the benefit of visiting US-American investors. However, Estelle is never afforded a status in Triunion that does not marginalize her. Marshall makes clear Estelle’s affection for and commitment to Triunion, but the native Triunion narrators, Celestine and Astral, the PM’s mistress, continue to view her position in Triunion with scorn. In fact, Marshall does not create any characters in Triunion with whom Estelle forms friendships except for the doctor, Roy, who attends her following her miscarriages. His advice to her is to just go along with the status quo. Instead, Marshall constructs Estelle to repeatedly clash with her fellow members of the Arts council, and she is alone as she confronts the island’s

complicity with outside development. Despite having lived a majority of her life in Triunion, she remains stamped a foreigner. Celestine, for example, calls her “blanche neg’” although Estelle is African American. In this way, Celestine conflates United States nationality with whiteness, and Estelle’s nationality trumps her racial similarity to those in Triunion. Thus, Estelle’s United States nationality both marks her place of belonging in Triunion while it explains her continued marginalization. Marshall means to show that the seeming borderless-ness that Ursa embodies and through which she asserts her independence does not universally characterize the age of globalization.

Marshall most problematizes the presence of the United States in the Caribbean through Estelle’s narration. Estelle writes in a letter to her family in the United States that when the Triunion party in power recognized that its opposition would win many seats in the upcoming election, the ruling party secured United States military presence for reinforcements. She refers to the U.S.S. Woodrow Wilson battleship and an aircraft carrier anchored offshore with their guns aimed at Triunion (221). Marshall alludes to the real-life United States invasion in Grenada through the appearance of the war craft offshore in Triunion. Estelle writes, “People got the message. They remembered what happened to our neighbor just a couple of islands away when the same two friends paid it a visit a few years ago to help out the same kind of do-nothing government there. That time the guns actually went off, the Marines landed, and as we know they’re still there” (221). Marshall corroborates Estelle’s observations through Estelle’s friend Roy who observes that Triunion is not genuinely independent but a “puppet show,” now with the United States pulling the strings rather than England (222). In this way, Marshall articulates the inter-penetration of the United States into the Caribbean.

Marshall's criticism of United States intrusion into Triunion is also seen in Estelle's objection to the Planning and Development Board on which the PM serves. Marshall depicts the board as the type of consolidation of power that perpetuates dependency.⁸⁰ This board approves the resort project around which the plot turns. An argument between Estelle and the PM dramatizes the question of whether Triunion is independent to chart the course of its own development or whether it is dependent on United States approval.⁸¹ Estelle refuses to attend a Planning and Development board reception. She explains,

The P and D Board must spend nearly half the national budget wining and dining visiting [investors]. And I have to ask myself if it's paying off. With all the money spent entertaining them and the really big money spent building a new main road, new airport, big new industrial park and what all to entice them, I still don't see that many of them rushing in to do business here... And the few who do come, try to make as big a killing as fast as they can and move on somewhere else (226-7).

Here Marshall critiques bodies in which power is concentrated for their self-serving interests. In this case, Marshall questions whether outside interests doing business in the Caribbean have any concern for the nationals' needs. It is ironic that Estelle, who herself remains a Triunion "outsider," voices this skepticism. The PM hopes to convince the United States investors at the reception to support his idea of a cannery in Morlands, but Estelle knows that they will have the same worn objection: invest in infrastructure like highways and a deep water port first. These are projects that serve their investment interests over the Triunion nationals' needs. The parallel to the Midland City expressway is noteworthy. Both projects transport the wealthy quickly past the poor without too

⁸⁰ The parallel body representing the consolidation of power for Mae is the "suits" with whom Sandy surrounds himself.

⁸¹ Stephanie Black's documentary *Life and Debt* dramatizes this tension in Jamaica.

much of an encounter between the two. The argument over project development comes down to the question of who has the power to determine how Triunion is going to develop, the Triunion nationals or the United States. Through these two projects, the resort and the New Jersey expressway, Marshall characterizes the dependency from which the powerless must wrest themselves. Estelle recognizes this contemporary form of dependency, yet Marshall does not construct her to be empowered enough to herself stage a resistance to dependency.

Marshall constructs Estelle and Ursa to share many characteristics regarding individual and societal struggles against dependency, yet they are empowered to resist dependency differently. Both are strong women who struggle to identify themselves in relationship to the imposing presence of the PM. In addition, both Estelle and Ursa confront inequity and injustice where they see it, whether in Triunion or the United States. Collectively, they assure that the plans for the tourist resort development get in the hands of Morlands voters before the election. What is curious, then, is that Marshall constructs Estelle to feel that she alone does not have the courage to expose her husband's plans to develop Government Lands into a resort. Estelle enlists Ursa to deliver the prospectus to the PM's competition. With all of their similarities, it is Ursa who is able to take the steps to foil the resort scheme at the price of her father's re-election. Marshall suggests that this difference is because Estelle – like the travelers in the earlier works examined in this study - remains part of a paradigm in which the binaries remain intact. Marshall constructs Estelle to remain beholden of traditional binary identifications of self and other, of native and foreigner. Estelle, then, does not enjoy the access afforded by the appearance of borderless-ness that Ursa does; thus, she

remains a Triunion outsider. Ursa, though, inhabits a space beyond those binaries. Estelle's role in Triunion, then, is complicated for the reader. Marshall appears sympathetic to the legitimacy of the justice issues Estelle sees on the island. However, because of Astral and Celestine's feelings toward Estelle the reader is also sensitive to the appearance of Estelle as the know-it-all US-American interfering in Triunion affairs.

Astral Dolores Forde and Celestine Mari-Claire Bellegarde: Subservice Voices

Marshall very clearly creates Ursa as *Daughters'* protagonist. In many senses, Ursa's development toward independence from her father would be a complete story without Astral and Celestine's narrations. Astral, the PM's lover or "keep miss," and Celestine, his long-time domestic help, narrate stories that counter Ursa's story of liberation. Their narrations complicate the reading of Ursa's achieving independence from patriarchy to be an individual achievement meant to emblemize a community and a nation's similar struggle for genuine independence. Their narrations evidence the "differentiated citizenship" that affords subjects differentiated access and choices despite their actual citizenship. Astral and Celestine are Triunion nationals, but neither enjoys the access and choices afforded to Ursa and Estelle. Their value to the community is ascribed through the labor they offer the patriarchy, actualized for them in the PM. Astral's value is as a sexual commodity. Celestine's value is in her servitude to the PM. She "knows what he needs before he speaks it." In other words, their value and status are dependent upon their connections to the PM.

In addition, Astral and Celestine's narrations strike discord with the optimism of Ursa's climactic sabotage of the resort development scheme and her assertion of

independence from the PM. Astral and Celestine do not share Estelle and Ursa's objections to the resort development. Astral's interest in the resort project is based on her fear that with the resort's development, the PM would need to sell Mile Trees Colony Hotel, the hotel she manages for him. Hers is not an ideological objection to the cooptation of public land for foreign private development. It is a material, practical concern. Celestine's only stated concern is the PM's happiness. He is the lens through which she assesses any situation. Marshall means to draw attention through Astral and Celestine to the real, material dependencies that continue within a globalized North America. Marshall uses Astral and Celestine's lack of concern for United States intrusion to indicate that for the formerly colonized, the late 20th century United States presence in the Caribbean is nothing new to be remarked upon but rather a perpetuation of the dependency that has characterized their lives.

Astral's narration subverts the reading of *Daughters* that extends Ursa's assertion of independence to societal and national struggles with dependency. Her narration evidences the extent to which the less valuable in a society and in a nation remain tethered to the powerful with limited access and limited choices. Like she introduces Ursa, Marshall introduces Astra through her seeking an abortion. While Ursa chooses to terminate the pregnancy that resulted from her relationship with her boyfriend, Astral was raped and became pregnant. Also, while Ursa's abortion takes place in a clinic resembling a "fancy hair design salon" (4), Astral's abortion takes place in the hidden back room of a pharmacy with a "smell like somebody hadn't washed under herself in I-don't-know-when." She lies on a surgical table covered in brown paper: "Brown. The sheet brown so you can't see he don't bother to wipe it off each time" (120). Astral's

abortion is both a financial burden and a health risk, neither of which is the case for Ursa. These differences highlight the material reality for women who remain vulnerable and disenfranchised in a post-colonial landscape.

The abortion scene is a significant introduction to Astral because her value in Triunion is achieved exclusively through her sexual relationships with men. Thus, Astral's rape and subsequent abortion remind readers of the vulnerability of women commodified exclusively as sexual objects. Astral achieves a relative status in Fort Lord Nelson, the city in Triunion, through her sexual relationships with men in power and eventually through her relationship with the PM. Her looks are an important aspect of that value. Malvern, her only friend urges her shortly after Astral arrives in Fort Lord Nelson, "...somebody looking like you, with that color you got and that Spanish Bay hair long down your back, could easy find somebody that's in a position to help you... I keep telling you you's not some little dark spot like m'self that's gon have to take the first thing in a pair of pants to come along and ask her a question" (121). Malvern, however, characterizes herself as "some little dark spot... that's gon have to take the first thing in a pair of pants to come along" (121). The circumstances of their lives later bear out this difference in appearance. While Astral goes from one influential lover to the next, Malvern has child after child with her bus driver husband, limiting her options with each child. Eventually, Malvern and her family live in the Lord Fort Nelson slums while Astral becomes a hotel manager for the PM. Astral proves herself to be a capable manager of Mile Trees, but she only had access to the position through her sexual relationship with the PM.

Celestine is the narrator about whom Marshall provides least information. The chapters from her point of view do not explicate her life after the brief history provided that explains how she came to the Mackenzie family.⁸² These chapters, rather, focus on the PM, Estelle, and Ursa from her perspective. In this way, Marshall renders Celestine's life of lesser value than the others. This trait of her narration is one reminder that her value rests with her servitude to the others. Her dominant frame of reference is her loyalty to and affection for the PM. Thus, she does not care that the PM has a mistress or that he is willing to develop Government Lands' beach into an exclusive resort.

Another trait of the narration from Celestine's point of view is that she speaks for the status quo in Triunion, neo/colonial implications and all. She voices the internalized colonialism that accepts status identifications based on color, class, and gender. She is grateful that Miss Mack, the PM's mother, accepted her into the household help as a child. Her promotion of the status quo frequently takes the form of her antagonism toward Estelle, who she calls "blanche neg'." In particular, she objects to how Estelle raises Ursa to associate with the Morlands children of a lower class. She also derides Estelle for her angry response upon learning that the PM has a mistress. Celestine's adherence to the status quo functions in the novel in at least two significant ways. One, it evidences the continuation of dependency for marginalized, de-valued subjects in a post-colonial, globalized environment. Secondly, it highlights Ursa and Estelle's different subjectivity as trans-national figures. Celestine and Astral's narrations as Triunion-nationals stage substantially different interests in Triunion from either Ursa or Estelle's narration.

⁸² She is taken in by the PM's mother as an eight-year-old orphan and immediately works for them. She becomes the PM's personal domestic help.

Another way in which Marshall marks Astral and Celestine's subversion of Ursa's narrative of independence is through travel. Marshall does not identify Astral or Celestine in any way as a traveler. Their lack of travel is in dramatic contrast to Ursa's ease of travel, and it identifies their different value in a transnational context. They are assigned value exclusively for their labor, be it sexual or as a household domestic. Given migratory patterns within the Caribbean and late 20th century travel from the Caribbean to see émigré family members in the United States or Canada, Marshall clearly could have given either of these characters travel histories. Considering Marshall's consistent use of travel as a trope and specifically the way in which she deploys the trope in *Daughters*, I find this lack of travel noteworthy. In the sense that Ursa embodies the fluidity of borders in a globalized North American, Astral and Celestine's lack of travel functions to highlight their fixed position in the binaries of a pre-globalized society. In the binary of the powerful and the powerless, Astral and Celestine serve to remind *Daughters'* readers of the often limited options for the powerless, in particular, for women in the Global South.

Marshall clearly means for Ursa to become able to confront the machinery of power at *Daughters'* conclusion. Marshall does not now cast the United States in its entirety as the powerful; rather, it is specifically "the white people – them" (332). Here Marshall condemns the consolidation of power that from colonialism through Development to globalization has maintained power in the hands of the few. Ursa's ability to choose to travel to Triunion and to confront the patriarchy by sabotaging the resort development plans, thus thwarting her father's re-election, without material consequence to herself, suggests one narrative of dependency. Ursa's story suggests that

dependency can be broken. Marshall shows through the “double exposures” and through Estelle, Astral and Celestine’s narrations, however, the material reality of dependency continues to operate. She shows through these counter-narratives how entrenched dependency remains and that the need persists to confront entrenched structures of power. The end of the resort scheme may satisfy Estelle, but it will do nothing to extricate Midland City, Astral and Celestine from their dependency on neo-imperial manifestations of power.

Conclusion

My dissertation began as a project to investigate how a variety of Caribbean-identified women writers in the United States write travel in both their fiction and non-fiction. These included Jamaica Kincaid, Edwidge Danticat, June Jordan, Michelle Cliff, Audre Lord, and Paule Marshall. Given the integral role of travel in the Caribbean's past and present, I could understand why these writers would be drawn to narratives of travel; however, I wondered to what end they use this narrative device with its very real imperial associations. Ultimately, I found the most consistent and compelling use of travel in Marshall's fiction, and I narrowed my dissertation's focus to her work.

Marshall's use of the trope of travel in her fiction is significant to studies of American literature as it relates to the conception of and projection abroad of United States nationalism and national identity. As I lay out the trajectory from "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" to *Daughters*, this study begins with travel from the United States to see family in the Caribbean and ends again with travel from the United States to see family in the Caribbean. This is important as it relates to Marshall's critique of the United States as nation-state. Marshall's interest is in the manifestations of United States nationalism as they impact the Caribbean. She locates Caribbean family in the United States to moderate this critique. Instead of emphasizing a broad relationship of alterity between the United States and the Caribbean, the travel of Caribbean descendants from the United States back to the Caribbean implicates those descendants in Marshall's critique. Chapters One, Three and Four of this study on "To Da-duh, In Memoriam," *Praisesong for the Widow* and *Daughters* ask, "What does it mean to participate in a neo-imperial oppression when you are an inheritor of a legacy of oppression?" Marshall's work studied here and my

analysis of them, in the context of late 20th century American literature, contribute to an ambiguous and complicated notion of national identity.

When I began my close readings of Marshall's construction of travel in the short story and three novels investigated here, I expected to find that identity would be Marshall's primary concern. Much of the scholarship on Caribbean-identified writers located outside of the Caribbean locates them as displaced or in exile. I suspected that I might find Marshall using travel to address this betwixt and between-ness and to negotiate a stable identity. That line of inquiry did not bear fruit. I did not find Marshall to be concerned with displacement or exile. Rather, I found in Marshall's deployment of the trope of travel the sense that the Caribbean's sovereignty is threatened by the power of the nearby United States. Marshall stages that threat through the United States-originating travelers. This difference from what I expected to find to what I did find is significant for varied reasons. For one, it disrupts one of the main critical threads in the discussion of Caribbean women's writing, that of displacement and exile. My reading, then, illuminates a different line of inquiry, hegemony toward the Caribbean following the end of colonialism. Marshall uses travel to create a continuum between past and present forms of oppression. Another reason the difference between what I expected to find and what I did find is significant is because it casts attention on Marshall as a Caribbean-American subject. Her lack of concern with identity, be it displacement or exile, evidences Marshall's firm footing in the U.S. American tradition. She launches her critique of the United States' late 20th century influence over the Caribbean from the position of U.S. American herself.

My study of Marshall's construction of traveling U.S. American characters in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam;" *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; *Praisesong for the Widow*; and *Daughters* also traces the trajectory of the relationship between the United States and the Caribbean from one of real distance and difference to a seemingly borderless, transnational Americas. This is important because it tracks the geo-political reality between the Caribbean and the United States at the close of the 20th century. Marshall shows through the United States-based characters travel to the Caribbean the interpenetration of United States-centric political and economic practices into that region. Throughout this trajectory of interpenetration, Marshall constructs legacies of resistance to domination. She explains the need for this resistance in her 1973 "Shaping the World of My Art,"

In [*The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*] there is a conscious attempt to project the view of the future to which I am personally committed. Stated simply, it is a view...which sees the rise through revolutionary struggle of the darker peoples of the world and, as a necessary corollary, the decline and eclipse of America and the West. The two phenomena, the emergence of the oppress and the fall of the powerful, I mention together because to my mind one is not really possible without the other, i.e., for the new world of African, Asian and Afro-American dimensions to come into being, the present world order which Fanon has described as 'swaying between atomic and spiritual disintegration' must be swept from center state (108).

It is telling that in both *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* and in *Daughters*, the Afro-Caribbean characters celebrate the legacy of slaves who revolted. This legacy brought into the late 20th century through the memorialization of these revolutionaries in the context of Marshall's critique of United States neo-imperialism suggests that revolution on that scale is needed again. However, none of the Afro-Caribbean nationals in the works studied here stage that revolution. In fact, Ursa's major "revolution" in

Daughters is that she intervenes in the democratic process of an election. This intervention differs dramatically from what it seems that Marshall envisioned more than two decades before *Daughters* when she wrote “Shaping the World of My Art.” In *Daughters*, Marshall constructs “the fall of the powerful” through the PM’s lost re-election; however, Marshall makes clear in the novel that the PM struggled as many did against the machinations of power that excluded Morlands, the district he represents. In this way, I find Marshall to be more ambivalent about her hopes for “the new world of African, Asian, and Afro-American dimensions to come into being” than other critics of her work.

One of the important results of my study is that it finds Marshall to be more ambiguous than critics and readers give her credit for. As I point out in Chapters Three and Four on *Praisesong for the Widow* and *Daughters* particularly, readers often find romanticized closure at the end of Marshall’s novels. I find more complication and uncertainty than they do. My close readings suggest that where Marshall offers a seemingly “happy” ending – Avey reconnects with her ancestral past and Ursa severs her dependence on her father and assures that Government Lands beach remains free from development – she also offers a counter reading. Avey’s evangelical zeal at the end of *Praisesong for the Widow* smacks of the superficiality of some forms of heritage tourism. Similarly, Astral and Celestine’s narrations in *Daughters* remind readers that Ursa’s location as transnational elite affords her liberties and empowerment not available to those citizens deemed less valuable. These counter-readings warrant more attention in future study of Marshall’s work.

Implications for Further Study

Another of Marshall's supposed "happy" ending regards the African diasporic subject's return to Africa. At the end of *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Merle plans to return to Africa to reunite with her daughter. *Praisesong for the Widow* celebrates Avey's recognition of Afro-centric ancestral identification, and Marshall writes Avey's experience crossing from Grenada to Carriacou as a reverse Middle Passage. At the close of *Daughters*, Ursa sits on Government Lands beach having stood up to the neo-imperial patriarchy her father represents. She faces Africa. Marshall writes about her own travel to Africa in her memoir *Triangular Road*, in which she celebrates the trip as a homecoming. Thus, Marshall identifies Africa as a site of ancestral/familial reconnection. She writes Afro-centric, ancestral identification as the antidote to the consumerism, ongoing racism, and liberalism that can characterize the United States. Interestingly, though, thus far in Marshall's oeuvre, she has not created a character that does travel back to Africa during the course of the text.

Saidiya Hartman's *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route* is an example of a travel narrative that does what Marshall romanticizes. Hartman traveled to Ghana as a research-fellow from the United States interested in the slave route in Africa. Her book chronicles her travel to Ghana in the hope of satisfying her need to find a place of belonging, a feeling that escapes her as an African-American in the United States. Marshall's idealization of the African-American's homecoming in the Mother country of modern Africa is challenged by Hartman's experience. *Lose Your Mother* recounts Hartman's loss of this dream. Hartman found a Ghana whose narrative of the African slave trade and the diaspora it created differed dramatically from her own

narrative of displacement. What Hartman learned was that from the Ghanaian perspective, her national identity superseded her racial identity; thus, she was received as a foreigner in Ghana as much as a white American traveler would be. The reality of Hartman's experience leads me to wonder whether more careful attention to Marshall's mythologizing of the African return would find a counter narrative to her seeming to romanticize the return.

My examination of Marshall's interest in the African return and Hartman's contradictory experience leads me to an implication of my project for further study of Marshall's work. That is the diasporic travel narrative. The traveling characters in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam"; *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; *Praisesong for the Widow*; and *Daughters* are all members of the African diaspora and, many of them, of the Caribbean diaspora. I read the travel in these works through the lens of the imperial tradition of travel to the Caribbean. This reading reveals Marshall's attention to the United States as a neo-imperial power in the Caribbean in the late 20th century. A next step in examining the travel Marshall writes her characters to embark upon could be to identify what the tropes are of this diasporic travel. When chosen travel has so often involved asymmetrical relationships of power between the traveler and those of the destination, what does it mean as a diasporic subject to choose to travel?⁸³ Marshall's Black travelers -- the young narrator in "To Da-duh, In Memoriam," Avey in *Praisesong for the Widow*, and Ursa in *Daughters* -- travel purposefully. They are all transformed in one way or another by their travel. In addition, each comes to an understanding of the United States as a neo-imperial power of the late 20th century. Who is this Black

⁸³ I use the phrase "chosen travel" to differentiate the travel I refer to here from forced travel like that of the Atlantic slave trade, indentured servitude, or even reluctant migration.

diasporic traveler? What does it mean to be dual-located as racially identified with the oppressed yet a class and national elite? Marshall's Black traveling characters must negotiate this difference as they establish relationships to the Caribbean nationals they encounter through travel. Do they successfully avoid re-creating the asymmetrical relationships that characterize imperial travel? My cursory observation is that, no, they do not, yet they seek to identify primarily with the oppressed. What, then, are the tropes of this diasporic travel narrative? How do Marshall's and other fictitious travel by Black characters correspond to non-fiction diasporic travel narratives like Hartman's *Lose Your Mother*? Answering these questions and further exploring the travel of Marshall's Black characters as diasporic travel is compelling further study.

Another compelling line of inquiry to grow out of this study is the role of the mother/daughter relationship in Marshall's critique of neo-imperialism.⁸⁴ I examine neo-imperialism through the trope of travel. The mother/daughter relationship is just as consistently a part of Marshall's critique as is travel. In "To Da-duh, In Memoriam," this relationship takes the shape of a young girl and her grandmother. This rivalrous relationship stages the decline of colonialism through the inevitable death of the grandmother. Correspondingly, it also suggests the rise of the United States as the next imperial power through the young girl's precocious and confident competition with her grandmother. Why does Marshall show the waning of colonialism and the waxing of United States neo-imperialism through this matrilineal relationship? What are the implications of the Mother Country language that accompanies colonial rhetoric?

⁸⁴ Thanks to Jodi Melamed, Krista Ratcliffe, and Heather Hathaway of Marquette University for exploring this idea with me.

Similarly, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*; *Praisesong for the Widow*, and *Daughters* all include significant mother/daughter relationships. At the end of *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, Merle plans to leave for Africa to reunite with her daughter who lives there with the child's African father. Merle and the father met while both were students in England. Marshall seems here to revise the colonial Mother Country language to Mother Africa. Throughout *Praisesong for the Widow*, Avey recalls her daughter Marion who challenged Avey before her cruise, saying, "I don't know why you would want to go on some meaningless cruise with a bunch of white folks, anyway" (13). Marion encourages her mother to join her on her travel to Brazil and Ghana. When Avey feels that she has been enlightened by the excursion, she is eager to tell Marion, believing that she alone of her children would understand the significance of the trip. Is Mother African embodied for Avey in her own daughter? What of this reversal of relationship, and how does it relate to Avey's recognition that the materialism and liberalism of the United States have distracted her from the ancestral connections that give meaning to her life?

Finally, *Daughters* warrants significant consideration of the mother/daughter relationship's role in Marshall's critique of asymmetrical power pairs. The unity of Estelle and Ursa's mother/daughter relationship leads to the eventual dismantling of power that puts the resort development plans in the hands of voters. However, theirs is a non-traditional relationship. Ursa calls her mother by her name rather than by the Caribbean's traditional "mummy" or Estelle's native "mommy" or "mom." Estelle decidedly raises Ursa from young to leave her parents as a teen-ager to live in the United States. The relationship revises concepts of dependency in the mother/daughter

relationship. In addition, there is more intentional and unintentional termination of pregnancy in the novel than actualized pregnancies. Estelle suffers multiple miscarriages before successfully delivering Ursa. Also, both Ursa and Astral are introduced to readers as they seek abortions. In a novel that is clearly about dependency, what do these mother/daughter relationships say about asymmetrical structures of power and those oppressed by them? Examining *Daughters* and Marshall's other works studied here to look at the role of the mother/daughter relationship in critiquing systems of power would be a fruitful extension of what I present here. Certainly this study would include Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, as well.

Finally, I return to my original dissertation idea: the trope of travel as deployed by Caribbean-identified women writing from the United States. I still believe that this original line of inquiry merits attention. This project would decidedly look at *female* Caribbean-identified writers who are writing from the United States at the cusp of and beyond decolonization. Though many Caribbean-born male authors also write about travel (e.g. Samuel Selvon, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, Kamau Brathwaite, etc.), two important differences distinguish this group from the women writers on whom this study would focus. First, the difference between migrating to England, the former "Mother country," and the United States, regardless of its neo-imperial present, is significant. As Jamaica Kincaid has said, "I think the major thing for me was that I came to America... When you are in America you can invent yourself. I was able to figure out a voice for myself that had nothing to do with where I went to school, or with what I was born to, or where I came from. That I came from a colony was of no interest to

Americans.”⁸⁵ Kincaid articulates how the confluence of biography, history, and nationality position the writers included in this potential project differently from those who immigrated to the United Kingdom. Second, the writers I would consider face the double oppressions of race⁸⁶ and gender amidst the interestingly complex realities of post-WWII United States race and gender equality movements. Writers Paule Marshall (b. 1929), Audre Lorde (b. 1934) and June Jordan (b. 1936) engaged with the struggles of Civil Rights and feminism of the post-WWII United States while a next “generation” of female Caribbean-American writers such as Jamaica Kincaid (b. 1949), Michelle Cliff (b. 1946), and, even later, Edwidge Danticat (b. 1969) engage with the “post-ethnic” and third wave feminist United States.

Marshall’s work examined in the dissertation presented here is prevalent among the fictional pieces. An examination of Caribbean-identified women writers’ fictional constructions of travel could also include Jamaica Kincaid’s *Lucy* as an interesting study of fictionalized travel. Although Lucy eventually immigrates to the United States through her travel, the family with whom she lives refers to her as “the Visitor,” thus suggesting the temporary nature of her visit like that of a traveler. Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* could also be included.

Perhaps more noteworthy than the fictional constructions of travel by these authors is the tremendous amount of non-fiction travel writing they have generated. These non-fiction texts have in common the frequent desire by the writer to reconcile her

⁸⁵ Birbalsingh, Frank. *Frontiers of Caribbean Literature in English*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996.

⁸⁶ All of the writers included in this potential project are Black with the exception of Michelle Cliff. Race also plays an integral role in Cliff’s biographical and fictional works, though, as she is a Creole from Jamaica. While not experiencing the same oppression as Caribbean Blacks, the Creole inhabits a complicated not-White, not-Black experience in the Caribbean. In literary history, this position is most famously articulated in the Antoinette character in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

dual-location as Black and class-/national-elite through her affiliation with the United States. This collection includes Edwidge Danticat's *After the Dance: A Walk Through Carnival in Jacmel, Haiti*; Audre Lorde's "Grenada Revisited: An Interim Report"; and June Jordan's "Report from the Bahamas" and "Nicaragua: Why I Had to Go There." Danticat and Lorde both travel back to their countries of birth. Danticat returns to Haiti to explore her identity as a Haitian through the emblematic experience of carnival, which she never attended as a child in Haiti. Lorde travels to her native Grenada in order to pay witness to the military intrusion of the United States on Grenada. Both accounts consider the writers' dual-location as Caribbean and American. Although not from Barbados, Jordan's "Report from the Bahamas" chronicles her experience as a Black person traveling from the United States through a highly touristic experience of the Bahamas. Her essay addresses her dual-location as Black and class-elite in relationship to the Bahamians she encounters through her travel. Her "Nicaragua" follows Jordan's travel to Nicaragua in an attempt to reconcile her identification with the United States considering its then-recent intervention into Nicaraguan sovereignty.

Jamaica Kincaid's collection of fiction and non-fiction regarding travel warrants study, as well, whether included in the collection described above or on its own. In addition to *Lucy*, Kincaid's work addressing travel includes *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*, *A Small Place*, and "Introduction" to *The Best American Travel Writing 2005*. Her unforgiving critique of tourism in *A Small Place* is well known. In "Introduction," Kincaid contrasts the legitimate travel writer with Hooker and Lewis and Clark, and their "Imperial Acts of Conquest." Her suggestion is that "travel" is different from the tourism that she conflates with colonialism. She argues that a powerful travel

narrative is characterized by curiosity and displacement. In this introduction, Kincaid indirectly articulates how the experience of displacement to which she refers here differs from the experience of displacement of the tourist in *A Small Place* that leads the tourist to identify herself in a fantasy, a paradise, as a means of stabilizing identity. Seemingly, for Kincaid the travel writer's displacement is a space of being in itself, not one to be closed by fantasy.

Lesser known is Kincaid's *Among Flowers*. This book chronicles Kincaid's trip hiking and camping for several days in the mountains of Nepal with fellow gardeners and friends. They seek flower seeds to take back with them to their home gardens. Kincaid's narrative of her travel through the Himalaya in search of flower seeds complicates the indictment of the style of travel/tourism she so infamously pronounces in *A Small Place* and "Introduction." While she remains very self-conscious of her critique from *A Small*, her narrative ironically maintains a sense of the privilege of the traveler and the subordination of the local. For example, she consistently refers to the hired Nepali man who carries the travelers' dining table from camp to camp as "Table." She does so, she writes, because his real name is too complicated to remember.

Lose Your Paradise

To close this project, I would like to consider who I am as a frequent traveler to the Caribbean in light of what I have learned about travel and tourism through this dissertation. My husband is from St. Lucia, one of Windward Islands in the West Indies. We and our two children travel back to St. Lucia each year to see my husband's family. We stay in his family home and our time in St. Lucia is characterized by part family

reunion and part tourism. I am not someone whose experience of St. Lucia ends with the scenic beauty and the isolation of the resort experience. Our experience is not one of escape from our “real lives” but another place in which our real lives with relatives and household responsibilities play out. We are, though, on vacation when we are there. In addition, my whiteness in this largely Black nation further suggests that I am a tourist from the Global North. Thus, my subjectivity in St. Lucia is filled with ambiguity and sometimes contradiction considering that I am always a foreign traveler but immersed in the daily life of St. Lucia beyond tourism.

I share an anecdote of travel to St. Lucia to illustrate this ambiguity. My father-in-law’s home is only minutes from several beaches. My children, husband, and I spend part of nearly each day of our visit on a beach. This fact alone differentiates us from the St. Lucians who spend those days at work or wishing that they had work or working in their homes. Just as in *Daughters*, the beach is a real site of contestation between the tourism industry and St. Lucian nationals. One of the beaches we frequent, Reduit Beach, is approximately half a mile long and enclosed in a bay. Until recently the north and south ends of the beach were not developed with hotels. St. Lucian families and visitors to the island who want to avoid the beach-chair-and-umbrella manicured beach experience choose to bathe on the north and south edges of the beach, spreading their belongings in the shade of the almond trees. Within the past few years, a local family developed a beach resort on the north end. Now, beach chairs and umbrellas dot that stretch of the beach along with the almond trees. Still, locals and some tourists (which of these is my family?) spread their belongings beneath the almond trees. We are among them.

One of the lures of this end of the beach is that on busy days, Miss Grace and her daughter Sabrina bring their coal pots and coolers to the make-shift kitchen constructed against the side of a permanent structure of the sailing club. Miss Grace makes fried chicken, bakes (the St. Lucian version of fried bread), and a stewed chicken or fish meal accompanied by the local ground provisions. Tourists and native St. Lucians would gather under the shade of the tree near the make-shift kitchen to buy and enjoy Miss Grace's fresh meals and cold drinks.

On our first day in St. Lucia, for I am in St. Lucia now, I walked to the location of the make-shift kitchen to see if Miss Grace would be making lunch that day. The structure was gone, the shady branches of the tree chopped off. A local vendor explained that later that morning Miss Grace would arrive and set up collapsible tables and small canopies, temporary structures in which she now cooks. When I saw Miss Grace later, she explained to me that without any warning to her, one night the police chopped into the tree and demolished her lean-to kitchen. At the same time, they severely trimmed back the shady branches of the almond trees lining the north stretch of beach next to Miss Grace's kitchen. She explains that the local owners of the beach resort next to which she operated were behind the demolition. A few days later on that same beach, we met my husband's cousin Peter, who holds a post with one of the ministry offices, and we all despaired the way in which the beach is growing less and less hospitable to locals. "Well, I guess this is progress," Peter lamented.

Where am I located in the contestation over this beach? A locally-owned resort seems to be pushing out local vendors and local beach goers. I am clearly not a local in this configuration. Yet, I miss the undeveloped north end of Reduit Beach with its mix of

St. Lucians, visitors from neighboring Caribbean islands, and European expatriates with their coolers and radios, Miss Grace's kitchen just a few steps away. Am I, though, harboring a nostalgia for a less-developed St. Lucia, a nostalgia that corroborates the island paradise mythology? Did the international, not mass-market tourism population that I remember on the beach bolster my desire to identify myself in opposition to the United States cruise ship and all-inclusive tourists who populate the middle of the beach? Isn't mine a fantasy of identification akin to the tourist's construction of herself in a paradise? Miss Grace and Sabrina recognize my family each year when we return. Doesn't this fact contribute to my fantasy of belonging and differentiation from mass-market tourists?

My experience in St. Lucia extends beyond the touristic fantasy, yet I must always recognize that my and my husband's family's class-elite position allows us to have a car to drive, a large home for my father-in-law to share with us, and money to travel here in the first place. I am conscious of this status as I consider my objections to the expansion of tourism operation on the island, an expansion that impacts Miss Grace and others like her. Yet I am implicated in that expansion. Grocery stores stock their shelves with imported products to accommodate Global North travelers like me. After Hurricane Tomas struck St. Lucia last November, Government officials selected to repair first the roadways between the airports and hotel dense areas so that foreign visitors like me would not be discouraged from traveling. I am like Estelle in *Daughters*, feeling a genuine affinity for St. Lucia and those who live there. But I, like Estelle, remain an outsider, and I wrestle with the recognition of that fact and the reality of my strong

opinions about what happens in St. Lucia. The story of my travel to the Caribbean, then, like the endings in Marshall's novels, comes to no uncomplicated conclusions.

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