

June 2017

Ghosts in the Posthuman Machine: Prostheses and Performance in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*

Justin Haynes

Randolph-Macon College, justinhaynes@rmc.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium>

Recommended Citation

Haynes, Justin (2017) "Ghosts in the Posthuman Machine: Prostheses and Performance in *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*," *Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal*: Vol. 14 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

Available at: <http://scholarlyrepository.miami.edu/anthurium/vol14/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by Scholarly Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Anthurium: A Caribbean Studies Journal by an authorized editor of Scholarly Repository. For more information, please contact repository.library@miami.edu.

Paule Marshall infuses her novel *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People* with various performances, including those that are human and interpersonal, human and stylized, and those between humans and machines. Such a statement may, at first blush, seem too apparent to bear mention, since the novel's primary setting is Bourne Island, a fictional Caribbean island that holds an annual carnival that evolved from parades attached to former slaveholding sites (as is the case with Barbados's Crop Over, the Bahamas' Junkanoo, and Trinidad Carnival). Bourne Island's carnival parade, which most closely parallels Barbados's Crop Over festival, becomes a central focus in the text. Marshall devotes significant textual real estate to individual carnival performances by characters, labels a pivotal section of the novel "Carnival," and highlights the carnival performance of Bournehills, a working class agricultural and subsistence section of the island that annually reenacts an historical and bloody uprising perpetrated by the slave Cuffee Ned. Another salient, yet understudied performance in the novel, occurs between Vere and his automobile; this performance highlights the turn toward posthumanism at the end of the twentieth and the start of the twenty-first century that, among other things, seems to underscore the increasing number of elements of technology with which people interact, sometimes through direct attachment to their bodies, and that they use to improve their lives.¹

Such focus on, and interaction with, machines is vital to the European Enlightenment project; machines underscore Enlightenment's pursuit of reason and the progress of science. The novel, determinedly, sets up a dialogue between European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries employed by European colonists in the Caribbean through their use of machines, and posthumanism in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.² This dialogue unconsciously reveals the reliance, development, and movement between one specific machine—the sugar cane rollers of the eighteenth century that became, as I will argue, through their rote and repetitive actions, symbolic of European Enlightenment in the Caribbean—and the automobile, a machine whose creativity and autonomy in the twenty-first century similarly serves as a byproduct of posthumanism with an important difference that its eventual autonomy supersedes man. To put it simply, the movement in the novel from the sugar cane rollers to the automobile highlights the movement from European Enlightenment to posthumanism. In her exploration of these machines' actions Marshall anticipates the twenty-first century's turn toward machines as posthuman addenda that bring

¹ Various scholars define posthumanism as the interaction of the human's organic body with inorganic technology. See N. Katharine Hayles, Jennifer Parker-Starbuck, and Chris Hables Gray.

² Antonio Benítez Rojo writes that the plantation "was a machine made up of a naval machine, a military machine, a bureaucratic machine, a commercial machine, an extractive machine, a political machine, a legal machine, a religious machine, that is, an entire huge assemblage of machines" (7-8)

about the posthuman form. For Marshall, the role of the sugar cane rollers in the past connects to their current role in the text as a mode of repression of contemporary descendants of slaves; their lack of evolution, unlike the automobile's evolution and development of agency, works to reinscribe the sovereignty of Enlightenment thought. In this essay I analyze the use of the sugar cane rollers and automobiles as machines that seek to reinforce the European Enlightenment mission as well as serve to bring about posthumanism. I further argue that the reenactment of Cuffee Ned's rebellion by the citizens of Bournehills works to embrace transhumanism, the step just before posthumanism. The costumed performance of reenactment further works as a mode of opposition to posthumanism. The reenactment of Cuffee Ned's rebellion resists the move toward complete posthumanism, seen by interactions with machines and technology, because such a movement paves the way for the machines' autonomy and the subjugation of the posthuman.

In thinking about the move from Enlightenment to posthumanism, I first consider the European Enlightenment project of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, whose thinkers pursued objective science through inner logic and extended the project's reach across the Atlantic in the development of plantations and the use of slaves. For this essay's purposes I consider the Enlightenment project through David Harvey's interpretation as one that "lauded human creativity, scientific discovery, and the pursuit of individual excellence in the name of human progress" (13). Harvey also notes that "the Enlightenment project was doomed to turn against itself and transform the quest for human emancipation into a system of universal oppression" (13). Slavery in the Atlantic world was one byproduct of such effected action even if not its central goal. The sugar cane rollers, as machines that required the use of slave bodies for their efficient functioning, worked to transform the slave body into a posthuman, specifically what N. Katherine Hales would call a cyborg, a fusion of "cybernetic device with biological organism" (84). These machines, in conjunction with the enslaved body, initiate the posthuman turn in the circum-Caribbean.

In its pursuit of human knowledge the Enlightenment project underscored a few humanist ideals and brought about the turn toward posthumanism. In thinking about this move from human to "post-human," I engage Robert Ranisch and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner's understanding of a move first to the transhuman: in Caribbean estate owners utilizing the slave body as an extension of machines such as sugar cane rollers, they enhanced such bodies:

Transhumanism can be seen as a stance that affirms the radical transformation of human's biological capacities and social conditions by means of technologies. These transformations are widely perceived as *human enhancement* or augmentation which

might be so fundamental that they bring about life forms with significantly different characteristics as to be perceived as other than human. The result of such technologically induced version of evolution is referred to as the *posthuman*” (7-8)

For Ranisch and Sorgner, and for the purposes of this article, such a transformation from human, through transhuman to posthuman “embraces and eventually amplifies central aspects of secular and Enlightenment humanist thought, such as belief in reason, individualism, science, progress, as well as self-perfection or cultivation” (8). The slave body, already transformed—and reduced—from “African” to “non-human,” becomes even more of a machine that fulfills Enlightenment’s vision of European progress. One issue with such a move to the posthuman is when the machine pursues its own agenda. In short, when the machine becomes autonomous, it switches its performance from engendering man’s goals to pursuing its own. In such an equation, the simple sugar cane rollers remain as participants in Enlightenment ideals while the automobile goes rogue in part because the rollers deploy repetition but no autonomy whereas the automobile attains agency.

The first instance in the novel in which a machine’s performance supersedes man’s occurs between Vere, a young Bourne Island citizen who migrates to the US for a few years as a temporary agricultural laborer then returns to resume a life on the island. The novel imagines Vere as a de facto “slave.” He works for minimal pay as a field laborer on Bourne Island and does the same thing upon migration to the United States. Vere’s fervent wish upon his repatriation is to rebuild and fine-tune an automobile, an Opel, to compete in Bourne Island’s Whitsun race. Vere’s relationship with his car renders him a posthuman shown in the joining, and interaction, of a human and machine. Through gaining its own agency and autonomy in its performance, the Opel features a goal apart from Vere’s as driver. Due to the Opel’s display of its own creativity and intelligence, rather than the Opel serving Vere, it gains agency and subverts Vere’s authority. Instead of working at the behest of Vere’s performance, it pursues its own performance. In a moment in which it gains independence, sentience, and authority, the automobile literally falls apart and kills Vere.

Before the Opel secures its agency and pursues a performance apart from Vere’s, it first serves at the pleasure of Vere’s performance. Here performance, for both Vere and the Opel, originally relates to its meaning of accomplishing a function efficiently, but such an understanding expands to include an additional definition that relates to the kind of performance that connects with play and carnival: “as the flag signaling the start of the race came down, and with a few expert motions of his hands, his feet *performing* a quick little dance on the pedals, [Vere] sent the Opel leaping cleanly forward” (Marshall 365, emphasis mine). As

the race unfolds, the focus shifts to Vere realizing his vision of winning the race, but slowly the text shifts its focus from his individual performance to a combined performance between him and the Opel. Finally the Opel's performance co-opts Vere's vision, and the Opel's self-determination marginalizes Vere's external pleasure. At this point, the automobile's agency supersedes Vere's: "As for the Opel, it was *outperforming* all the cars [Vere] had driven in dream. It responded to his slightest touch, obedient to his will; its *performance* was a reward" (Marshall 365, emphasis mine). The Opel, of course, represents not only the evolution of a machine but also the evolution of a machine that originally serves as an extension of man's desire for improved mobility. Like the sugar cane rollers, it was meant to expand man's ability and production. It represents not just a localized mobility, or the ability to move from one point in a country to another, but the ability to move from one terrestrial location to another, as well as the ability to move across continents and to extend one's agency transnationally. One sees this as Vere, while on a plane back from the U.S., contemplates his return to Bourne Island to repair the Opel, and not leaving the plane during its entire journey, but "instead, his head bent, he had continued to study a ragged well-thumbed manual on the repair and reconditioning of used cars while waiting for the flight to resume" (Marshall 12). Here the airplane as machine serves Vere's vision because of its lack of agency; its job is as a mode of transportation, and it performs its task singly. The issue arises when the machine chooses additional and self-determined action.

In an interview with Joyce Pettis, Marshall acknowledges that the Opel serves as a surrogate of European colonial power—and, for the purposes of this essay, European Enlightenment—and she consciously burnishes its symbolism. Marshall notes that the novel "reflects what is happening to all of us in the Diaspora in our encounter with these metropolitan powers, the power of Europe and the power of America. That's one of the reasons, for example...that the car in *Chosen Place* that kills is made by General Motors in Germany. This brings together what I saw as two major powers that reap such havoc on the world" (Pettis and Marshall 124). Marshall's use of the term "reap" seems purposeful, done to link the cane rollers with the car as machines that serve European visions rather than Diasporic ones. The word's use further highlights that, as surrogate, the Opel serves its European creators rather than Vere. In her description of the car's, and Vere's, performance during the race, Marshall finally assigns both intelligence and agency to the automobile's performance such that it takes precedence over Vere's performance and inverts their relationship: "it was as if the Opel, though only a machine, had possessed a mind, an intelligence, that for some reason had remained unalterably opposed to Vere, so that while doing his bidding and permitting him to think he was making it over into his own image, to express him, it had also at the same time been conspiring against him and waiting coolly for this moment to show its hand" (Pettis and Marshall 366). Such assigned yet shifting agency not only

speaks to the Opel's developing autonomy as machine, but its potential to evolve intellectually into its own level of sentience. Nicholas Negroponte argues, from the purview of architectural machines, that when a designer provides a machine with set instructions for problem solving, one attributes the solution to the designer's ingenuity. When the designer provides the machine with a means to solve the problem on its own, the situation then becomes murkier. In such a case, Negroponte argues, "the authorship of the answer probably belongs to the machine" (9). He concludes "eventually the machine's creativity will be...separable from the designer's initiative" (9). The idea of a machine's creativity stands out because it invites the suggestion, as with a Venn diagram, that a machine's intentionality can overlap with man's, but that there is also an area that serves the machine's individualism. Negroponte, in fact, posits such machine adaptability so that the machine may "learn to be relevant" (9). This kind of "environmental humanism," he argues, "might only be attainable in . . . devices that can intelligently respond to the tiny, individual, constantly changing bits of information that reflect the identity of each urbanite as well as the coherence of the city" (9-10). Such ambition may seem theoretically exciting, as it highlights man's ability to "create" intelligence that it can then infuse in other creations. Still, the continued evolution of the automobile in the twenty-first century, which now owns a kind of smart technology that allows for hands-free driving whereby the human, once the automobile's pilot, becomes entirely its passenger, previews exactly the kind of demise that Vere eventually experiences. Marshall's twentieth century view of the automobile's increased autonomy leading to man's demise seems to anticipate a twenty-first century that inches ever closer to a completely autonomous automobile in which the car serves not just as a mode of conveyance but the engineer of that conveyance as well. What such a move finally does is reinscribe a fear stated earlier, that of the Enlightenment project's eventual doomed mission to turn human emancipation into oppression.

Upon the death of a passenger in the Tesla Model S automobile in 2016 in which the automobile, which was in effect doing all the driving, failed to "see" a tractor-trailer that crossed its path and plowed into it, Elon Musk, the chief executive of Tesla Motors, argued in a *New York Times* article that "one death in . . . 140 million miles driven using Autopilot does not undermine" the company's vision. "The easy decision," Musk argues, "would be to delay [the car's production until Tesla perfects its collision avoidance system]. But if you wait for any point past the point that it's better than the cars that exist, you're making a decision to kill people with statistics." Such a statement brazenly links the Enlightenment mission of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries with the posthuman vision of the twenty-first: the extension and celebration of man's knowledge and ingenuity in developing a "smart" car takes precedence over the incidental loss of human life as a necessary casualty. In *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, Marshall frames

the automobile as an extension to the sugar cane rollers and their natural successors and posits that the automobile is, as the cane rollers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, a prosthetic extension of European Enlightenment's vision and goals in the twentieth century.

REPETITION AND SUGAR CANE ROLLERS; REENACTMENT AND AGENCY

Unlike the automobile that develops its own agency, the cane rollers, as machines, remain faithful servants of Enlightenment vision in a way that the automobile does not, in part because their efficiency remains at the level of ad infinitum repetition that does not loose itself from the grip of the tightly held reins of human intelligence. In *Crop-Over. An Old Barbadian Plantation Festival*, Flora Spencer discusses the shift from rollers to windmills in Barbados and underlines just how archaic the rollers are as machines used to extract juice from the cane. She notes

the first sugar mills were extremely primitive and consisted of three rollers in a vertical position with a shaft in the middle, one of which turned the other two. Horses and cattle connected by 'swepes' cause the rollers to rotate and the cane was crushed. This type of sugar work gave way to the windmill and by the year 1700 there were 1,309 estates with 485 sugar works and 400 windmills (1).

The sugar cane rollers in the text remain in use from the eighteenth century through the twentieth, and the novel anticipates their easy sabotage and destruction; but their long life also reveals that the rollers are valued because they only perform at the level of repetition. Their performance does not evolve.

Reenactment, which is a mode of performance that displays agency, is a troubling performative term because defining it often requires fine rhetorical hair splitting. Robert Blackson differentiates reenactment from simulation, reproduction, and repetition, other forms of performance with which it bears similar characteristics but that it differs by small degrees. Defining such differences usually depends upon how each form of performance regards, or operates within, time; it is defined by whether its action associates with past, present or future. Simulation, for example, although similar to reenactment, is "an artificial and prescribed projection often construed to facilitate the prediction of a *future* conclusion" (30). For reenactment, Blackson argues, there is an element of "distinct emancipatory agency" that is absent in repetition. Repetition is limited because it is "often stuck in the present. Its anticipatory action lends itself to habit and is rarely intended to inspire a keener sense of awareness or personal agency" (30). If the Opel exhibits emancipatory agency then, the rollers exhibit repetition.

The performance of the cane rollers thus encounters history as a stutter, and the rollers' actions—continuous repetition—remain perpetually in the present, keeping them in the service of the European colonial vision. They do not evolve into the intelligent machine that the Opel does because no person invests in the rollers' evolution as posthuman catalysts. The rollers remain vital to the locals' post-slavery subsistence, and upon the rollers' failure, Merle Kinbona, a radical Bournehills resident who resists the island's European history and tries to celebrate the island's slave descendants, becomes so distraught at what she deems to be the machine's betrayal that she suffers a mental break.

Although Merle tries to resist European history and its effect on contemporary Bournehills residents, she cannot, in part because the islanders depend upon the income provided by the resulting sugar cane produced by the rollers to process their meager sugar cane harvest. Here the rollers' role as a repetitive machine serves as colonial ghost that keeps the past in the present. Merle understands this and distrusts all the machines that she encounters whether they are capable of repetition or agency. At the start of the novel there are various descriptions of the poor condition of her own automobile, and there is the suggestion that she inflicted some of the damage because of the car's European lineage. The reader learns that Merle's automobile, a Bentley, had "once served as the state car of a colonial governor," but that it "had been badly used since then, and was now little more than a wreck. And it appeared to have been deliberately abused, willfully desecrated" (Marshall 4). Merle, who understands the role of the automobile as a direct extension of colonial authority in a way that Vere does not, hopes to ensure that the Bentley never supersedes her, since the car already demonstrates a characteristic of the living with its "labored breathing" (Marshall 5).

Where Merle fails is dismissing representations of such machines. The reader learns after Merle suffers a mental break as a result of the breakdown of the cane rollers that, in her bedroom, there are prints of slave images on the wall above her bed: "And there were other scenes as well, these mostly of black figures at work in the fields that looked deceptively pleasant in the old prints, and filing in long columns up the ramps to the sugar mills with the canes on their backs bending them double. There was even a print showing them bound to the millwheel along with the oxen used to turn the giant wheel wherever the wind fell" (Marshall 400-401). Merle's mental break comes in part because through these images she continually reminds herself of the posthuman transformation of her ancestors through their physical connection to machines. Among these images is the machine that serves as the spark that set ablaze the tinder of the slave trade: the slaver represented in Kinbona's bedroom is a "large, very old and probably quite valuable drawing of a three-masted Bristol slaver, the kind famous in its day. It had been meticulously rendered in cross-section to show how the cargo, the men, women and children, the

babies at breast, had been stowed away on the closely tiered decks to take up the least room on the journey” (Marshall 401). By working to strap down slaves below decks with manacles and fetters to restrict movement and revolts, ships’ restricted the slaves’ movement with manacles and fetters, these ships prefaced the slaves’ posthuman transformation through their physical connection and combination to the millwheel. Such slave ships precede the automobiles as an Enlightenment machine meant to expand European productivity, and it seems odd that Merle, who is shown to have a firm understanding of the past and the history of the island, chooses to have these images haunt her living space.

REENACTMENT’S ROLE IN THWARTING POSTHUMANISM

Earlier I suggested that one characteristic that separates the cane rollers from the automobile is that the cane rollers’ performance relies on repetition rather than reenactment, an important distinction because while reenactment provides space for possibility, repetition does not—its performance is limited and strictly compartmentalized. The reenactment of Cuffee Ned’s uprising that the residents of Bournehills perform annually succeeds as a mode of resistance, although there are elements of repetition in it because the residents’ reenactment. But while it may be similar to the performance from the previous year, is not identical to it. Additionally, as Blackson contends, reenactment provides “emancipatory agency.” In one of the passages in the novel that describes the reenactors—I choose this term because their performance, which includes characters and actions from previous performances, extends beyond the unstructured play of traditional Caribbean carnival revelers—the Bournehills residents remain silent at the start of their performance other than an action that recalls their connection to—and then emancipation from—the slave ship:

With each slurred step they would half-raise their arms and then, together, bring them sharply down, causing the heavy silver to fall to their wrists with a stunning clash...It conjured up in the bright afternoon sunshine dark alien images of legions marching bound together over a vast tract, iron fitted into dank stone walls, chains—like those to an anchor—rattling in the deep holds of ships, and exile in an unknown inhospitable land—an exile bitter and irreversible in which all memory of the former life and of the self as it had once been had been destroyed (Marshall 282).

Although the release from the ship of the ancestors of these reenactors leads to a different kind of imprisonment, the Bournehills residents instinctively understand

the emancipatory role that reenactment of such a manumission plays in their performance. Also important in the reenactment is making sure that each action, along with the physical details of the costumes, match narrative's memory: "It was Stinger enacting, as he did every year, the role of Cuffee Ned. He was dressed according to the description of Cuffee in the old accounts at the library...Everything had been done to detail" (Marshall 284). The reader learns that it is not just the physical details of the costumes that the reenactors simulate, but the physiological details as well: "Even Stinger's normally mild reflective face had taken on Cuffee's expression as described in the accounts and was suddenly shrewd, clenched and coldly purposeful as he crept up the float with the billhook" (Marshall 284). All of these details are necessary in the reenactment because together they work to limit the European effect on Diasporic history as well as underscore the agency of the Diasporic figure. Blackson notes "reenactment is distinctive in that it invites transformation through memory, theory, and history to generate unique and resonating results," and these results include keeping alive the flame of resistance that Cuffee Ned originally sparks (29). Also important is that the reenactors connect the European slave owner, Percy Bryam, played by a Bournehills resident named Ferguson, to the machine that Percy Bryam once attached Cuffee Ned to: "Even Ferguson's Percy Bryam was singing as he staggered along bare-headed under a heavy yoke which had been fitted to his shoulders to indicate how he had been shackled to the great horizontal ox-driven wheel at Cane Vale's old windmill, which had been used in those days to power the roller when the wind failed" (Marshall 286). Having the estate owner replace the slaves at the plantation machine marks the Bournehill residents' liberation from said machine and from European Enlightenment, but it also has a salutary effect—in reenacting the removal of the enslaved body from the machine the residents transform that body from posthuman to transhuman and, with that, there is a kind of healing that results. Joel Garreau makes the claim that in transhumanism, which he reads as a subset of posthumanism rather than the stage before it as Ranisch and Sorgner do, the "[t]ranshumanists are keen on the enhancement of human intellectual, physical and emotional capabilities, the elimination of disease and unnecessary suffering, and the dramatic extension of life span" (231). In such a move the reenactors reject posthumanism but also make a claim for moving back toward a human form.

The Cuffee Ned reenactment shows that reenactment can be successful when drawn upon as cultural history. Further, reenactment provides room for interpretation such that historical events and the past are not identical or synonyms. Blackson argues that "the scale of the past rests on two planes: that which can be described as a personal past—for which we rely on our memories for reassurance—and that past which is best described as history" (31). Such historically-influenced reenactments, although slavish to the past and sometimes pedantic in their

execution, succeed when the reenactors transform, based upon the costumes of their performance, into those people whom they set out to recall. This happens with Stinger as Cuffee Ned but also when Ferguson, who portrays the planter Percy Bryam, gets accosted by one of the spectators after the reenactment:

An old man, who had had more than his share to drink over the two-day holiday, staggered out to Ferguson as he passed bowed down under the yoke, and shaking a black finger in his face cried thinly, his voice trembling with age and a long-suppressed rage, 'It serve you right, Percy Bryam. It serve you right. You ain't had no business doing the peoples' bad.' His anger getting the better of him he swung at Ferguson, and the latter, forgetting himself, swung back, and they had to be parted (Marshall 289).

Mark Auslander acknowledges this effect in reenactment when he notes that reenactors can be "seen by others as undergoing a profound transformation while in intimate contact with this object. That visible interior transformation, which scrambled conventional distinctions between actor and role, was key to establishing the event as 'real' for those who beheld it" (163).

THE NEXT EVOLUTIONARY STEP FOR CARIBBEAN PEOPLE

In *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*, Marshall argues that when machines move into the realm of humanism, and then march past this into the space of the posthuman, colonized people will feel the brunt of the machine's successes or failure sooner, and more intensely, than any other group. The machines become an extension of what Marshall sees as both a European and a U.S. American colonial vision, which one sees clearly toward the end of the novel in interpersonal relationships when Harriet, the American wife of Saul Amron, an anthropologist who visits the island and with whom Merle has an affair, tries to buy off Merle and send her away in order to bring the affair to an end. Marshall, in her interview with Pettis, notes that it was vital that Harriet "reflect in an American way the same pattern of dominance and exploitation that the English woman represents in the novel. It was important that her background be such, but I always wanted to make the point of complicity that American women had in the slave trade" (Pettis and Marshall 125). Harriet, like the Opel and the sugar cane rollers, carries a heavy symbolic burden of being an embodiment and extension of slave owners, colonial authority, and European Enlightenment.

While Marshall's focus on the role of machines and their performance is a central aspect of the novel, she also seems to want the reader to consider the vicious

cycle of dependence on the machine that repeats generationally on Bourne Island and from which it becomes difficult for residents to extract themselves. The machines, as well as the colonial past, even work to increase the childhood mortality on the island. When Harriet attempts to purchase Merle's mobility by offering to provide her with money to travel as far away from the island as possible, and thus from Saul as well, Merle's incredulity at the offer is rendered through a comparison of a stillborn birth:

Her head arching back against the wooden slats that made up the backrest of the chair, bracing herself on the posts, she forced it out, sounding like a woman in labor with a stillborn child, who screams to rid herself of that dead weight. Merle might have also been trying to rid herself of something dead inside her, that face perhaps which had attached itself like an incubus to her mind, sapping her strength and purpose over the years, debauching her will. (Marshall 440).

Merle's anguished response comes when Harriet, after mentioning various locations to Merle for relocation, eventually suggests that she will pay to relocate Merle to England, which is not just the site of a historically torturous personal relationship in Merle's past, but also represents ground zero of colonialism as well as the central point of the triangular slave trade. In an inversion of the laborers who are not granted post-slavery movement, Merle chooses *not* to move (or, more accurately, not to be moved by Harriet), when she states "[n]o, I had best stay put until I can see my way to make a really big move. Besides . . . I don't like people ordering me about like I'm still the little colonial. I've had too much of that. So when they say gee now, I haw. When they say go, I stay. And stay I will" (Marshall 441-442). Merle does stay, but just long enough to prove her point. When she finally leaves Bourne Island she does so at her own desire and not at Harriet's behest. (Harriet, who has been discovered by Saul in her attempts to extricate him from the island, eventually commits suicide.) For Merle, who moves to Kenya to search for her lost daughter at the novel's end, the action works to break the cycle of generations of Bourne Island residents being figuratively tied to the cane rollers. She sells all the remnants of her colonial past to finance her migration, including her car, which is purchased by a "millionaire American over at the Crown Beach Colony [who] bought it off [her] when he heard it had belonged to the last English governor we had here" (Marshall 463). And when Merle finally travels to the African continent, she does not take the usual route "first flying north to London via New York and then down. Instead, she was going south to Trinidad, then on to Recife in Brazil, and from Recife, that city where the great arm of the hemisphere reaches out toward the massive shoulder of Africa. . . she would fly across to Dakar and, from there. . . to Kampala" (Marshall 471). In refusing to reverse the precise

locations of the Middle Passage, Merle attempts to repudiate a reenactment that gives credence to both it and its machines. She attempts to shrug off reenactment as a mode of performance, or if she does indulge in it, she will “go back, really back—to have a sense, an understanding of all that’s gone to make them—before [she] can go forward” (Marshall 468).

WORKS CITED

- Auslander, Mark. “Touching the Past: Materializing Time in Traumatic ‘Living History’ Reenactments.” *Signs and Society* 1.1 (2013): 161-83.
- Benítez-Rojo, Antonio. *The Repeating Island. The Caribbean and the Postmodern Perspective*. Trans James Maraniss. Durham: Duke University Press, 1992.
- Blackson, Robert. “Once More . . . With Feeling: Reenactment in Contemporary Art and Culture.” *Art Journal* 66.1 (2007): 28-40.
- Garreau, Joel. *Radical Evolution: The Promise and Peril of Enhancing Our Minds, Our Bodies—and What It Means to Be Human*. New York: Broadway Books, 2006.
- Gray, Chris Hables. *Cyborg Citizen. Politics in the Posthuman Age*. New York: Routledge, 2001.
- Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity. An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*. 1980. Cambridge: Basil Blackwell, 1989.
- Hayles, N. Katherine. *How We Became Posthuman. Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999.
- Marshall, Paule. *The Chosen Place, the Timeless People*. 1969. New York: Vintage Contemporaries, 1992.
- Negroponte, Nicholas. “Toward a Theory of Architecture Machines.” *Journal of Architectural Education (1947-1974)* 23.2 (1969): 9-12.
- Parker-Starbuck, Jennifer. “Becoming-Animate: On the Performed Limits of ‘Human’” *Theatre Journal* 58.4 (2006): 649-68.
- Pettis, Joyce, and Paule Marshall. “A MELUS Interview: Paule Marshall.” *MELUS* 17.4 (1991): 117-29.
- Ranisch, Robert and Stefan Lorenz Sorgner. “Introducing Post- and Transhumanism.” *Post- and Transhumanism: An Introduction*. Peter Lang GmbH, Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften. 2014.
- Richtel, Matt. *New York Times*. “Tesla’s Chief Sticks to Mission Despite a Series of Setbacks” Monday July 25, 2016.
- Spencer, Flora. *Crop-Over. An Old Barbadian Plantation Festival*. Archive. University of the West Indies, Cave Hill. Barbados.