

## Quest for Identity in the Select Novels of Paule Marshall

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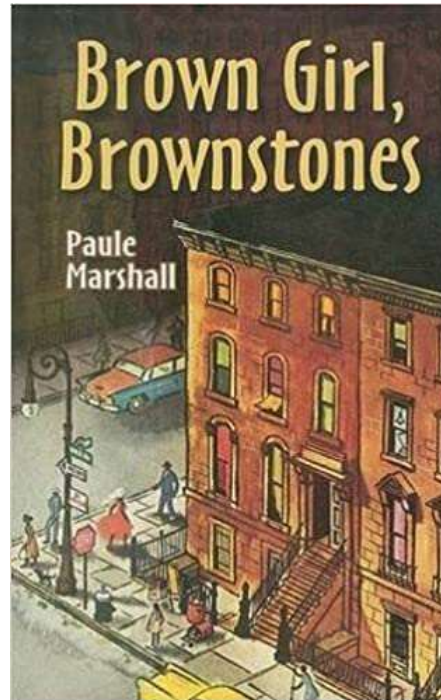
Paule Marshall (1929-2019)

Courtesy: <https://www.quotetab.com/quotes/by-paule-marshall>

Paule Marshall insists on the necessity for a journey back through her novels. In particular, her novels reveal her multicultural background of African-American-Caribbean. In American history, Black women faced many struggles and miseries. Problems confronted by them are exposed by the writers. The works done by Paule Marshall consist of memories of people who are in need of freedom and freedom from slavery. Her novels include identity crisis, need for searching the importance of tradition, blend and highlight the role of collective memory in identity building, and stress the necessity of creating the process of memorial recovery. In her novels the recurring theme is the journey into the past, moving closer to one's cultural background.

Women in Paule Marshall's works confront the world courageously as self-reliant individuals. They possess the inner strength, the strong sense of perception, the courage to fight the cruelty of real life and desire to achieve their dreams and hopes. Above all, search for identity plays a prominent role in all her novels.

In an interview for *Essence* magazine, Marshall says “Traditionally in most fiction men are the wheelers and dealers. They are the ones in whom power is invested. I wanted to turn that around. I wanted women to be the centres of power. My feminism takes its expression through my work. Women are central for me. They can as easily embody the power principles as a man.”



Courtesy: [https://www.amazon.com/Brown-Girl-Brownstones-Paule-Marshall/dp/0486468321/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?dchild=1&keywords=Paule+Marshall&qid=1620791254&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Brown-Girl-Brownstones-Paule-Marshall/dp/0486468321/ref=sr_1_1?dchild=1&keywords=Paule+Marshall&qid=1620791254&sr=8-1)

In her first novel *Brown girl, Brownstones* explores a Barbadian family living in Brooklyn, facing difficulty of adaptation to a new country and to a new culture. She faces Psychic fracture on her mother’s actions, father’s death, Clive’s negligence and by the Racial attack of Margaret’s mother.

At the end of the novel, the heroine, Selina Boyce, leaves from America to her native land Caribbean in search of identity and goes out as an independent person walking alone and tossing one of the silver bangles. Through Selina’s physical journey, Marshall asserts the need for Blacks to make the spiritual and psychological journey to their past.

Aruna Shantha Kumari says, “Paule Marshall’s insistence in this novel on the relationship of women as self and as a part of a community reminded the reader of Zora Neale Hurston’s *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) or Gwendolen Brooks’ *Maud Martha* (1953), but it also prefigured the major themes of Tony Morrison’s and Alice Walker’s works.”

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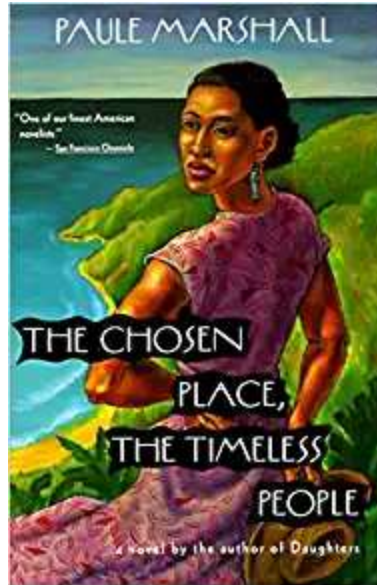


Courtesy: [https://www.amazon.com/Praisesong-Widow-Paule-Marshall/dp/0452267110/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=1P7DCAPZHRIHC&dchild=1&keywords=paule+marshall%2C+praisesong+for+the+widow&qid=1620791644&srefix=Paule+Marshall%2Caps%2C782&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Praisesong-Widow-Paule-Marshall/dp/0452267110/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1P7DCAPZHRIHC&dchild=1&keywords=paule+marshall%2C+praisesong+for+the+widow&qid=1620791644&srefix=Paule+Marshall%2Caps%2C782&sr=8-1)

In the novel, *Praisesong for the Widow*, Avey Avatara Johnson makes the mythic return to the Caribbean island where people make contact with their ethnic origins. The novel takes Avey from New York to South Carolina, to Grenada then Carriacou where she learns to have herself, forgive past wrongs and rediscover her cultural root. She can reach her culture doing the external and internal journey. In Ceremonial dances they honour their ancestors through the Big Drum Ceremony and the Beg Pardon Song.

On Carriacou, Avey discovers her link and own bondage to the native land. She resolves to renew her ties with her own ancestral and spiritual home. Finally Avey has been able to make an emotional journey that has resorted her awareness of her Cultural Inheritance.

Pauline Amy De La Breteque says, “Marshall's novel therefore highlights the role of collective and subaltern memory in identity building, and it particularly stresses the necessity of creating relations in the process of memorial recovery. Marshall's writing can be seen as rhizomatic, creating link between different times and spaces. The real and imagined continuities between African and American cultures allow the construction of creolized identities that resist again exclusivism.”



Courtesy: [https://www.amazon.com/Chosen-Place-Timeless-People/dp/0394726332/ref=sr\\_1\\_1?crid=1UV5PIGJIO66Y&dchild=1&keywords=the+chosen+place%2C+the+timeless+people&qid=1620791759&srefix=The+Chosen+Place%2C+The+Timeless+People%2Caps%2C240&sr=8-1](https://www.amazon.com/Chosen-Place-Timeless-People/dp/0394726332/ref=sr_1_1?crid=1UV5PIGJIO66Y&dchild=1&keywords=the+chosen+place%2C+the+timeless+people&qid=1620791759&srefix=The+Chosen+Place%2C+The+Timeless+People%2Caps%2C240&sr=8-1)

In her novel, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, the heroine Merle Kinbona, a mulatto who seems to be the voice of voiceless people, who are the people of Bournehills. The novel addresses the mistreatment of the natives by British Colonies. This novel concern how blacks must confront the future by creating unity with their fragmented Diaspora Identity to build a better future for them.

Merle is the hope of two opposing camps. She completes the voyage to the Caribbean only to depart later to Africa. Saul returns to the U.S. to find out what he can do among his people to fight the system and Merle goes to Uganda to search her Black roots. According to Marshall, the people must not forget their history.

Mary Jane Schenck says, “The novel depicts the crippling legacy of economic exploitation and slavery that threatens to defeat everyone involved expect Merle, a troubled but very strong island woman who sets off for Africa at the end to reclaim a portion of her past.”

Paule Marshall’s women characters reveal the cultural knowledge and passion for narrative. Considering the significant history of travel to the Caribbean, she constructs characters that travel to their native land frequently. Her identification with the Caribbean is symbolized in her novel through travel.

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