



## Gender concerns in Paule Marshall's novel 'Brown Girl, Brownstones' and 'Prisesong for the Widow'

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Gender issues include women's lives is a projecting situation in the society. unequal gender can create struggle and violence. women's active contribution brings to peace and flexibility. All difficulties and concerns related to women's lives in the society is the way they connect, their differences in contact to and use of resources, their activities, and how they react to changes, involvements and policies.

Black women struggled against racial and sexual discrimination. Their identity was denied because of sexism. The history of the Black women is a description of self-empowerment in a fight against the forces that tried to quiet them. Their feelings reflected in many revolutionary female writers.

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."

Some gender inequalities created by men are; women are more educated than men, Sexual harassment and Racism are the factors that causing gender issues. The importance of gender inequality is to prevent violence against women and girls. Economic richness is also essential to prevent gender issues. Societies that treat women and men as equal are harmless and healthier. Gender equality is an essential human right. Oppressed by whites and abandoned by their own black men, they find new approaches to survive in male-controlled society. The brutal treatment that they suffered during slavery made them stronger than the Black males.

Marshall portrayed the Black women's life and broke the false image of the Black women projected by the white people in the society.

According to Joyce Ladner, Black writer and sociologist, the black women were viewed as loose and immoral in society. The labelled the image was that of a loose, immoral, rude, pleasure seeking and sinful

woman. Marshall turned as a voice overthrows these negative images. She thought that making a positive image was necessary for Black women, by reconstructing history and bring about a cultural revolution.

Marshall shows in her novels that black women are sufferers of gender oppression. The black female immigrants faced powerlessness, because of white dominance and due to male dominance. She particularly focuses on the black women's struggle, their migration, and their condition in the new land.

By sharing their innermost griefs and desires with their fellow women, they seek emotional fulfilment and female frustration gain more wisdom and courage from their oppressive experience. Marshall captures the strengths and weaknesses of the Black women harassed for survival, overcoming obstacles to grasp goals, and searching for identity.

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."

In *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Marshall reveals gender concerns by discovering the individual challenges of womanhood. For example, Selina is trapped between her mother, who wants to buy her new home and make the American dream come true, and her father, who desires to go back to their homeland, Barbados. Then Selina's secret relationship with her boyfriend, bursts the internal conflicts within the African American community. Both Silla and Selina Frustrated with their male partners, the oppressed women form a community and actively search for self-sufficiency. By confessing their inner feelings and agony to one another, they are relieved of their pain and thus they heal themselves.

she confers the details of female sexual maturation. she shows the social burdens and fused emotions women face as their bodies change. Through the protagonist Selina's experiences, Marshall highlights the crossing roles of gender and race in identity variation. It shows the strange experience of African American women, which is parallel in the life of Marshall.

Marshall reveals Selina and her mother Silla's character in a similar way. Silla falls in love with her husband Deighton, who is a dreamer does not work to reach his dreams. On the other hand, Selina falls in love with Clive, her lover who is unable to fulfill his dreams because he is knotted to his mother. Selina understood the importance of her native culture, she changes her appearance, character and begins her journey towards her West Indian roots.

Marshall reveals her heroine initiate as the sole survivor amid the wreckage ready to chart a new life. Selina's story opens new opportunities for framing the meaning of home and identity creation.

Marian A Davis, “Throughout *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Silla is continually referred to as a hard-working woman. Her religious views seem to indicate a heavy emphasis on works. She initially appears to possess an unbreakable will, always bearing a constant look of determination.”

In *Praisesong for the Widow*, Marshall’s searches regarding the broken female West Indian soul. The characters, Avatara and Jerome Johnson remind the Silla and Deighton Boyce, the parents of Selina in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*. Likewise, the couple in the earlier novel, Avatara and Jerome are caught up in chasing commercial comforts. As Deighton, Jerome dies without understanding that there may be a different way of survival. Unlike Silla, Avatara sees the opportunity to return with the custom of the cultures of African origin when traveling to a Caribbean Island.

Though the male characters are weak in her novels, they created fracture in the minds of female characters. Deighton Boyce, Clive in the novel *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, Jerome Johnson in the novel *Praisesong for the Widow*, they left their pairs in the middle and the females survived with their own efforts and searched their own identity in the dominant world.

In Marshall’s novels, searching into the fractured soul in black female, we come to know the conclusion that the critical situations in the life of her protagonists is responsible for their fractured soul. In settled White America, their condition, both physical and psychological was extremely hurtful. Marshall determined to make women particularly black women are important characters in her stories when she started writing. She wanted them to be centre stage because of the rejection in the society, the negligence, the disrespect and the biases.

Marshall’s women protagonists, as showed by her in her novels, with a view to understand and gain their struggle for survival without searching deeply into the feministic aspects. She is a pioneer in the encounter of themes such as ageism, sexual harassment and nuclear production. Marshall’s novels have remarkable variety of characters responding to their situations of life in different ways. The main focus of her novels is on the different roles black women are recognized, either in their efforts to help other women find their identities or in search of their own identities.

In the novel ‘*The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*’, As for Merle, her wounds have left some scars that repeatedly remind her the past and the present situation in male-controlled society. Her trip to Africa tells her to continue with strong determination for the battle of life. She often takes to bed in a depressed setting of mind for a few days, usually following to an emotional explosion on behalf of her people.

Paule Marshall’s black people journey is going back through their history. Her Afro-American female characters take the journey back to their familial African roots, to collect the strength to recognize the history of their race and to accept the present, so they might be able to survive in a society with dignity and pride.

But always an emotional space, home is among the most emotionally complex and resonant concepts in our psychic vocabularies, given its associations with the most influential, and often most ambivalent, elements of our earliest physical environment and psychological experiences as well as their ripple effect throughout our lives. (Rubenstein, 2001, p. 1-2)

As Toni Cade Bambara's sayings in her, *The Black Woman* (1970) 'The black woman is a college graduate. A drop-out. A student. A wife. A divorcee. A mother. A lover. A child of the ghetto. A product of the bourgeoisie. A professional writer. A person who never dreamed of publication. A solitary individual. A member of the Movement. A gentle humanist. A violent revolutionary. She is angry and tender, loving and hating. She is all these things—and more'.

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