Chapter – 5

Conclusion
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

5.1. The fast and ever-changing societies in the post-colonial period present a new reality, and the Euro-centric modes and categories of the past in writing are found inadequate to describe this new reality. According to the changing needs, new literary theories had been emerging in the 1980s and 1990s; Post-colonial literary theory, a theory of representation for marginalized people, is one of them. Post-colonialism expresses the intersection of colonial Discourse Theory with Post-modernism, Post-structuralism, Feminism and Marxism; and it represents a dynamic movement capable of challenging modernist, patriarchal and imperialist frameworks. Therefore, Paule Marshall and other African-American writers, who attempt to present the history of black people from an insider’s point of view, have found a powerful strategy in post-colonial perspective to re-examine and rewrite the historical events and the lived experiences of people of African descent.

5.2. The re-examination and rewriting of the history of not only the black people, but also the rest of the Third World have become necessary because of the blurring of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ about these people in the canonical texts. The European colonizers’ political vision of reality constructed and reconstructed notions about the inferiority of the non-Europeans, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to justify their
own exploitative practices. Modern western science instead of decreasing the misrepresentation, strengthened it; it rather assisted in the construction of racist ways of thinking about people and the differences between them; the races were construed to be the expression of a biological hierarchy. An artificial sense of difference between ‘self’ and ‘other’ was created (Gilman 1985) and these stereotyped images were widely circulated in Europe. There was a close connection between the rendering of knowledge, and social and economic processes.

5.3. The close connection between the impact of colonialism on culture and economic processes made the colonized intellectuals raise questions about their cultures; seeing their cultures both as sites of colonial oppression and as vital tools for their resistance, they came out with their various views on capitalism, class, race, ethnicity, power, ideologies, language and subjectivity (Loomba 1998). Their views about language and ideology oppose any rigid demarcation of history and text. Foucaultian Discourse analysis shows the working of power through language, literature, culture and the institutions that regulate people’s lives. The colonial discourse analyses of Edward Said, Homi K. Bhabha and Gayatri C. Spivak indicate a new way of thinking; they question totalizing frameworks and speak of the possibility of social change.

5.4. Colonial discourse has later evolved into post-colonial studies. Even though post-colonialism is found fault with, for not including politics and economics (Parry 2002) and indigenous liberation struggles all over the world, there is no doubt about its centrality and uniqueness. Post-colonial studies ask the right questions; they can provide more informed histories
and theories; they enable the re-examination of the historical past and reconfiguration of world-wide cultural concerns; and they make possible the movement of power in all directions. Post-colonialism is never a specific moment but an ongoing struggle, and a continual emergence. The ever-broadening area of post-colonial studies has brought within its purview feminist, queer, indigene and aborigine studies.

5.4.1. Post-colonial theory, also known as theory of migrancy, rejects universalism of canonical literature; it explores the cultural differences and diversity; it celebrates hybridity; it considers 'otherness' as sources of energy and potential change (Barry 2002); it includes the traditional and sacred beliefs of the colonized, indigenized and marginalized people; and it brings in alternative reading practices. Post-colonial writing and literary theory intersect with Post-modernism, Post-structuralism, Feminism and Marxism. One theory informs the other and also gets informed by the other; their relationship is symbiotic. These twentieth century theories have challenged earlier epistemologies with their binaries.

5.5. According to Keith Green and Jill LeBihan (1996), the umbrella term 'post-colonial literature' includes, Third World Literatures, Commonwealth Literatures, New Literatures written in English, Migrant writing and Black Literatures. Major features of post-colonial literature are its concern with place and displacement and the consequent identity crisis. Post-colonial narratives, called 'smaller narratives' (Hulme 1994) reject the 'Universal', break 'binarism', appropriate the colonial language, that is English and its power, by using numerous strategies, and assert
perspectives of the ‘others’. ‘Black writing’ comes under ‘race-based models’ which is one among the four major models in post-colonial writings that have emerged so far (Ashcroft et al. 2002).

5.6. In African-American Fiction, the slaves’ ‘narratives’ and the masters’ ‘memoirs’ of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries gave way to the themes of ‘passing’ and black pride in Harlem Renaissance writings. ‘Negritude’ Movement of the 1930s and 1940s and the various radical Black movements of the 1960s inspired African quest for identity. Wright, Ellison and Baldwin wrote about their awareness of their invisibility, from the point of view of men. In 1970s, black women’s perspective of life came out in the form of autobiographies; assertion is the note in their writing. In the 1960s and 1970s, dissent was in the air and feminist texts would present a gynocentric vision of reality. African-American Women writers dominated the American fiction in the 1980s. Fiction written by Paule Marshall, Tony Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor and others show the impact of Second Wave Feminism; they combat the negative stereotypes by depicting black women as persons in their own right. The black women writers of 1980s and 1990s have utilised their writing as a very powerful weapon of revision.

5.7. Paule Marshall (1929-), a pioneering, prominent and innovative voice in contemporary American literature, is a champion of individual identity, an identity in relation to community. In her works, one can see the impact of American, Caribbean and African literary traditions. A winner of many awards and scholarships, Marshall has written about the
validity and worth of black American experience. Though her major themes are both significant and timely, she has been neglected for a long time (Pannill 1985). Marshall has given equal importance to both technique and themes. A major artistic goal of Marshall is to pass on the historical and cultural heritage of the people of African descent. This major artistic goal of hers has been achieved through her narrative technique, especially her constructive and highly imaginative use of memory and myth, colours, and songs, music and dance.

5.7.1. The role played by the three major black institutions, the black church, the educational institutions and the family, in providing the black people with a sense of self is limited by the racial climate in America. So, the black writers, who are image makers, have taken up that responsibility on their hands. Marshall, like the other women writers of her times, believes in the power of the past in providing lessons for the present struggle of the black people. The journey back is, in effect, a re-telling of the past; this retelling, with the gaps filled in the history of blacks, is made possible by the subversive use of memory and myth. Marshall has made an effective and creative use of memory and myth in her novels, to speak to the psycho-cultural situation of the black people.

5.7.2. Literate cultures consider memory as a rational and intellectual process; it is thought to be ‘objective’, ‘deliberate’ and ‘exact recall’ (Lock 1995). The Western linear conception of time does not allow the past to be reconfigured or transcended; whereas, Oral cultures conceive of time in cyclical terms. According to them the past can be recalled by memory, using creative and subjective construction; the art of memory allows for additions and deletions, and rearrangements (Sharad 1995).
Marshall, like Tony Morrison, uses this ‘re-memory’ in her fiction. Marshall and other black writers of the African diaspora utilize the process of memory, perceived in both oral and literate terms, as a powerful alternative means of negotiating with the past, to reconstruct and regenerate subjectively many kinds of hitherto-hidden truth.

5.7.3. Memory, in Marshall’s novels, comes in the form of both collective memory and personal memory. Collective memory—called in Toni Morrison’s Beloved (1987), ‘rememory’—is both personal and interpersonal. In Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), Marshall makes use of, besides collective memory, ‘dream memory’, a coinage of Alice Walker. The personal element of dreams in dream memory connects the individual with the collective. In the middle of a Caribbean cruise, in her dream, Avey is beckoned by her great-aunt Cuney to join her for their old, customary walk to the Ibo Landing in Tatem. This dream memory of an ancestral figure awakens Avey from a complacent middle class life; it triggers Avey’s memories about her childhood, which remind her of the strong communal feeling she felt, when young. The affluent widow of middle years has come a long way from her culture and community, in her attempt to get assimilated. Another ancestral figure, Lebert Joseph, guides her to take part in a collective memory, or re-memory, that is the Beg Pardon ceremony.

After the physical purging during the boat ride to Caribbean and the ritual bath given by Rosalie Parvay, Avey’s mind becomes a ‘tabula rasa’, a clean slate; the process of unlearning is over and she learns anew the wisdom of her forefathers. Her participation in the Nation Dances unites
her with her ancestors and reveals to her who actually she is and where she belongs. An analysis of the use of memory in Praisesong for the Widow shows that personal memory is painful and collective memory brings healing and joy.

In The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), collective memory comes alive during the Carnival, when Cuffee Ned’s slave revolt is enacted, year after year. This collective memory of an oppressed people empowers them by mapping out an alternative plan of political activism against the absentee neo-colonial masters and their representatives, both black and white, in the island; it presents before them the possibility of a New Order.

5.7.4. An analysis of Marshall’s novels shows that the strength of one’s memory as an individual as well as a member of a certain community is, especially important for the ‘others’, to make them whole. In Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), the role of memory in Selina’s struggle for self-discovery is significant. The memory of the white people who lived before her in their house makes Selina imagine herself to be ugly; the memory of her dead father makes her guilty. The memory of the lessons from the lives of people she moved with gives her strength to face her future in an alien land. Marshall uses flashes of memory to show why people are what they are at present.

In The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), the three main characters, Saul, Merle and Harriet are found to be troubled by their memories of their personal past. It is pointed out that Saul and Merle benefit by their confrontation with their past, because their history is as one
of the oppressed, and that Harriet is affected adversely, because her history is as one of the oppressors.

In *Daughters* (1991), both personal and communal memory help Marshall to trace the history of the blacks, in a short span of two months, to the days of slavery; they also help her to further the plot, to refer to female bonding, to cover long distances and periods of time, to discuss the problems of the blacks and to assert the underlying strength in African cultural heritage. The stories of the diverse ‘daughters’ are told in flashbacks and reminiscences. In *The Fisher King* (2000) also, by using memory, by weaving time back and forth within two weeks, Marshall covers three continents and four generations. The novel, which tells the rise and fall of a jazz musician, speaks in praise of black arts, especially music.

5.7.5. Marshall has subverted the existing myths or created new ones, to counter the racial myths which picture the black people as stereotypes. She uses the myth of Scylla of Greek in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), to show how a beautiful, young girl, Silla, when she comes to the United States as an immigrant, is turned into a monster, because of the demands of the racist country. In portraying Silla in all possible dimensions, Marshall has done away with the stereotype of the black woman as a mammy.

In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b), Marshall uses three myths, which show the links between the myths of African, African-American and African-Caribbean culture: (i) the myth of Ibos at Ibo Landing, based on the reminiscences of the Gullah people about their ancestors walking back to Africa on water, (ii) the myth of the Ghanaian spider-trickster, Kwaku Ananse (Aunt Nancy in America) and (iii) the Yoruban myth of Esu Legba, god of the cross roads and trickster par excellence (Benjamin 2005). The mythic figures of Legba and Aunt Nancy are combined within the character of Lebert Joseph. Avey’s memory of the Ibos and her great-aunt is a tell-tale sign of her nascent acknowledgement of her diaspora heritage; Lebert, as Legba, steers her through her spiritual crossroads, and Aunt Nancy enables her to get connected with her history. Reconciling herself with her ancestors, Avey leaves gross materialism behind and develops a correct perspective which is based on African values.

*Daughters* (1991) advocates cross gender political activism, through the mythical figures, Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe, the slave heroes. Marshall believes that black women and men should join hands in fighting against their oppression; only then it will be fruitful. Taking the clue from the slave rebel leaders, Ursa and her mother help the opposite candidate to defeat the corrupt incumbent Primus Mackenzie in the elections, in Triunion.

The title of *The Fisher King* (2000) is taken from the myth of the ‘fisher king’ in Arthurian Legends. As in the ancient myth, Sonny-Rett’s grandson, Sonny, seems to have the power to heal and protect. He is the symbol of hope in the novel; the possibility of bringing about the much-
needed intra-racial unity among the different strains of black diaspora is made brighter by Sonny’s presence. Marshall uses the universal myth of the Fisher King to tell a tale of reclamation, restoration and rebirth of black culture and music. The thesis points out that memory and myth play a significant role in the lives of Marshall’s fictional characters, by teaching them about the importance of the lessons from the past for their present struggle.

5.8. Besides memory and myth, another narrative technique appropriated by Marshall from canonical writings to suit her purpose is, the use of colours, black and white. Marshall’s novels examine the colourline, the problem of the twentieth century, in all its ramifications.

5.8.1. To paint in bright colours the nurturing strength of African culture, which lies at the centre of Marshall’s re-vision of the world, she uses various colours to achieve different ends; she uses brown, pink and red colours in an imaginative and symbolic way. But, her reversal of connotations given to black and white colours reveals her Afro-centric point of view. When Conrad considers whiteness to be good and darkness to be evil, Marshall inverts Conrad’s meaning of whiteness and darkness.

5.8.1.1. An examination of Marshall’s portrayal of the values of white people in her novels points out the fact that the adoption of excessive materialism of the white society, by the blacks, works against human relationships and values. Standing examples for this are Silla in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), and Avey and Jay in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b). Property ownership does not provide Marshall’s characters with happiness; this is exemplified in the cases of Lyle Hutson and Merle
Kinbona in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) and Avey. In *Daughters* (1991), Primus Mackenzie’s acquisitions prevent him from identifying with ordinary islanders. Ulene, one of the upwardly-mobile West Indian immigrants in Brooklyn, in *The Fisher King* (2000), is averse to her son Everett Payne’s abiding interest in Jazz music, because it does not promise material security; here, the American success theory works against black arts. A study of Marshall’s novels shows that she does not grudge the material success of the blacks; but, she is against it, only when it undermines cultural identity.

5.8.1.2. Technology, the pride of the Western world, and its impact on the Third World is depicted as destructive in Marshall’s novels. The war munitions factory in which Silla works, in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), causes noise and air pollution, and wears down even the iron-willed Silla. Deighton, who works in a mattress factory loses his arm. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), the sugar refinery, the main industry of Bourne Island, keeps the islanders in serfdom, even after their political freedom. The destruction by technology are many: the rollers of the factory have crushed Leesy’s husband to death; Vere’s car, an American-German crossbreed, has killed him; Allen Fuso has pledged his soul to the Almighty technology; and Harriet’s first husband is involved in the research of an atom bomb, a weapon of mind-boggling destruction. Symbols of death and destruction are ships with their aircraft carriers in *Daughters* (1991), and *The Fisher King* (2000) makes a reference to the gassing and killing that took place in the First World War. It refers to the white-on-white oppression; it implies the destructive tendency of the white people.
5.8.1.3. The discriminating racist attitude of white America, makes Marshall to paint the whites in black. Only very few white people appear in Marshall’s novels; of the few, only Saul is shown in a positive light, may be because he is a Jew, one of the oppressed peoples of the world. When racism looms large in the background in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), the race issue is subtly woven in the entire story in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969). The discriminating attitude of white America is hinted at in a few places in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), while Daughters (1991) speaks volumes about the secondary status experienced by the black citizenry both in the United States and in West Indies. In The Fisher King (2000), wherever the blacks are, be it West Indies, or the United States or Europe, they are subjected to racist treatment. The reading of Marshall’s works makes it clear that no black person is spared by the insidious racism. By portraying these legacies of the white world to its people – unlimited and unquestioning materialism, dangerous technology and discriminating racism – Marshall makes them look bad and evil and thus, reverses the connotations attached to the white colour.

5.8.1.4. On examination, Marshall’s fiction reveals that the positive traits found in black people, such as resilience, resistance and communal bond, are celebrated by her. The sufferings of the blacks have endowed them with a tough spirit and an understanding of life. Marshall’s works speak in praise of the black men and women who have survived and those who have worked for the communal survival. The resilient spirit is present in almost all her women and men; when compared to her women, her men show less resilience. In Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), not only Silla
and Selina, but also the entire community of Barbadian immigrants have proved their power to bounce back. The Bournehills people in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) are not broken by their suffering. The story of Ibos in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b) represents the will to survive and triumph. *Daughters* (1991) tells the survival and success stories of several women. In *The Fisher King* (2000), the strength that comes from suffering is mainly seen in the two old ladies, Ulene and Varina. Thus, Marshall’s fictional world is peopled with black men and women who are not broken, but made strong by their encounters with slavery, displacement and racism, and the concomitant evils and sufferings brought in their trail.

5.8.1.5. Marshall ardently speaks about resistance put up by the black people against oppression of all kinds. Her women’s attempt to define and redefine themselves as individuals in a racist and patriarchal society itself is a rebellious act. *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) is about individual rebels in search of identity; whereas, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) deals with the defiant spirit of the whole community of black people in Bournehills, shown in the face of post-colonial exploitation. Avey, in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b), turns against the oppressive society’s demand of one’s identity as a price for success. *Daughters* (1991) is pervaded by the spirit of resistance symbolized by the statues of Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe, the Triunion rebel leaders. Ursa Mackenzie rebels against paternal authority and succeeds, as Selina has done regarding maternal dominance. Members of black communities in both Caribbean and American cities are seen fighting against injustice done to them. When *Daughters* presents female warriors
against oppression, *The Fisher King* (2000) portrays a man who fights for his freedom to play the music he loves.

5.8.1.6. Another positive value found in African culture and written appreciatively about by Marshall is the communal bond. Solidarity among the black people are brought about by their shared heritage and colour. Marshall’s characters are after individuality, but, at the same time they understand that they cannot escape ethnicity. Selina comes to learn this lesson, at the end of the novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959). Communal bond is at work in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), binding together not only the black people but also all the suffering peoples of all times, at all places. Like Selina, Avey in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b), also resists the bonds of community, in the beginning; later, she is reconnected with her diasporic heritage and she becomes a *griot* for the collective whole. Communal bond is present in the form of female bonding in *Daughters* (1991); at the same time the novel speaks about the need for black men and women to come together in their fight against oppression. *The Fisher King* (2000) brings together the differing strains of diasporic blacks, in the person of Sonny; it talks about the need for finding unity among diversity. Thus, Marshall, by portraying the life-giving and life-sustaining values found in the African culture, provides black colour with positive connotations.

5.9. The fourth chapter of the thesis has tried to trace the intersections between Marshall’s use of the art forms from African oral tradition and her post-colonial perspective. The traditions of music, song and dance are vitally important in African cultures, as carriers of history
and meaning. These traditions have been given a boost in the arm, by the Black Aesthetic Movement of the 1960s. Marshall and her contemporaries have made use of these art forms, which give cultural authenticity, to portray the contemporary black experience and maintain the cultural continuum.

5.9.1. In Marshall’s novels, music, song and dance help her characters to forge an identity for themselves. Selina, a dancer in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), gets a new sense of belonging, when she becomes the star of the show, by performing a modern dance portraying the life cycle at the end-of-the-year recital at school. Soon she realizes that this new identity she has created for herself, leaving out her community, is a false one. A racist encounter with a white woman brings her back to her own community. Marshall uses dance, as a metaphor in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), to trace Avey’s journey back to herself and her Caribbean and African ancestry; it is her participation in the Nation Dance which makes her feel whole. In The Fisher King (2000), the black music Sonny-Rett plays and the songs he composes gain him a distinct identity for him.

5.9.2. A study of Marshall’s novels shows that playing or listening to black music, such as jazz and blues and dancing to rhythms, such as calypso are restorative and therapeutic. Suggie’s week-end indulgences in blues and dancing give her an outlet for her frustration, and also mental strength to work under her racist white employers, for another week. Selina dances with Suggie and finds relief from the thoughts of the death of her father, which was weighing her down. Jay considers the best of Jazz and blues as sacred; they heal and strengthen his work-worn body and
mind, at the end of each day, and play a vital role in the happy married life of Jay and Avey, in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b). Ursa, in *Daughters* (1991), too, finds music as a therapy. The thesis points out that Silla and Merle are incapable of surrendering themselves to the release of music or dance and so their state of the blues continues without an outlet.

5.9.3. In Marshall’s works, music, dance and song are charged with history and meaning and through them the black people express their feelings of resistance to oppression. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), the open defiance of the Bournehills people is shown in the enactment of Cuffee Ned Revolt, a composition made of music, dance and songs. The Carriacou Tramp is performed by the Out-islanders in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b), as a form of resistance against the materialistic values of the white dominant class.

5.9.4. It is shown in Marshall’s novels that music not only heals and inspires but also binds the members of the black communities together. The commemorative concert held at the end of the novel, *The Fisher King* (2000) assembles black people under one roof, to honour a black musician and his music; music has that power to bring about totality, the deep and binding sense of community. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), irrespective of their differences, the people of Bournehills join together to sing and dance and to prove that they have been a people. But sometimes, the performing arts are used to disconnect a member from the community, as in the case of Deighton in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959).

5.9.5. Marshall utilizes the rituals comprised of music, song and dance, in her novels, to trace the history of the black people and to preserve
it for the generations to come. In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b), the plangent note heard now and then in the Creole music of the Beg Pardon ceremony, speaks of the lingering memories of slavery and the Middle Passage. In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), the angrily roaring sea commemorates the memory of the millions of the African slaves drowned during the Middle Passage. The singing and dancing extravaganza, the staging of Cuffee Ned Revolt, gives the readers an idea of the untold sufferings undergone by the people of African descent, before and after the decolonization of the Caribbean Islands.

*Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) describes the demands of the materialistic America on the lives of the immigrants from the Caribbean. Most of them become victims to the American success theory and a few, such as Selina, resist it. *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983b) portrays the identity crisis that arises in the lives of the assimilated blacks, through the story of Avey. She comes to know who she really is, when she gets reconnected with her African heritage. *The Daughters* (1991) teaches the lesson that the blacks, who have found or retained their cultural identity, and for whom their music and dances are a source of solace and strength, have to come together, irrespective of their gender, to face and fight against the oppressors, whether they are white or black. *The Fisher King* (2000), a praisesong for the black musician Sonny-Rett, advocates inter-racial unity among the different branches of diasporic blacks. Through her imaginary and creative use of the performing art forms from the African oral tradition Marshall has written, rather, rewritten the history of the black people from the time of slavery to the present day. To write the extraordinary history of the ordinary black people and to assert her people's philosophy, Marshall
has created a new genre, mixing elements of fiction, history, music, song and dance together (Waxman 1994).

5.10. Marshall has created not only a new genre, but also a coherent universe in her works; her works can be seen as a part of a whole. Her novels penetrate society’s structures through illumination of a black person’s (mostly a black woman’s) experience, while extending her protagonist’s discovered truths to an entire community. The circle Marshall has started drawing by the writing of Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) is completed with that of The Fisher King (2000). The action starts and ends in Brooklyn. The ten-year-old Selina, an African-American who grows up in Brooklyn, plans to leave home and go to the Caribbean to search for her self. Merle in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) is the middle-aged woman who Selina might have become - a Caribbean woman who feels fragmented by her experience as an oppressed person in the West and yet retains some measure of her own vitality. Merle is also a foreshadowing of Avey in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b). She becomes Avey who lives in New York and who, as black and female, struggles against obstacles to become full and gets reconnected with her African heritage. Ursa Mackenzie, Viney and Mae Ryland in Daughters (1991) are younger versions of the enlightened Avey; they follow the model set by the slave rebels and fight against the oppressions the blacks are subjected to.

Sonny-Rett in The Fisher King (2000), in his determination and independence, resembles Ursa Mackenzie, who shuttles between the United States and West Indies. Sonny-Rett, who leaves for Paris to practise the
black music he loves, is brought home after fifteen years of his death, in the form of memories and given a fitting musical burial. His grandson, Sonny, an artist, with his healing touch, remains the beacon of hope. The last novel, The Fisher King, brings Sonny and the readers to the changed, yet the same Brooklyn, the setting of her first novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959). Marshall’s protagonists always come home, either literally or metaphorically, because home is where one makes it. They have a clear understanding that “Our worth is in our bodies, and our relationships…. the emphasis is on nurturing bonds so sacred they are beyond the realm of choice” (Brooks 2005: 11).

5.11. The coherent universe of Marshall is inhabited mostly by immigrants and migrants, who suffer from a sense of alienation due to displacement and racism. Marshall brings together psychoanalytic notions of alienation of the colonized with Marxist notions of economic and historical forces which have brought about that alienation. Marshall’s women, who are brought to the centre from the margin, map themselves by the knowledges of the past and find their selves. In the post-colonial world of Marshall, actually at the centre is, a post-modernist absence, an absence of slavery. The identity found by Marshall’s characters are in a post-structural flux. What seems to be the norm is hybridity, as in the case of Sonny in The Fisher King (2000). Thus, by using the various strategies appropriated – memory and myth, use of colours, and songs, music and dance – Marshall has addressed her major concerns: the recovery of self, and the reclamation of cultural past which gives guidelines to the beleaguered blacks in their battle against oppression.
5.12. Being a post-colonial intellectual, Marshall speaks for and on behalf of, not only the blacks but also all the lost, disenfranchised, oppressed and silenced people of the world. To do so, she uses the liberatory post-colonial mode, which simultaneously acknowledges and continues to resist the oppressions of past and present. This "Writer's Writer" (Reyes, 1992: 247) writes from a cosmological world view, but her socio-political consciousness makes her a people's writer; her works offer for prospective scholars such topics of common concern: disability, gender discourse, human rights, child welfare, corruption, ecology and nuclear proliferation.

5.13. Marshall has clearly understood that, to use Bhabha's words, "The condition of being wounded by history, or excluded, is not a negative one. An artist uses it to understand the world, to transcend the veil of sorrow, to transform that condition, and move beyond it" (Ramnarayan 2004: 4). In addition to that, Marshall seems to hold the same view as Bhaba; he says in an interview: "The fabric tears everyday, you stitch it back, and carry on" (Ibid.). She tells the black people, through her writings, what it means to survive their demeaning conditions with dignity and respect. Marshall, besides speaking for and about black people and their culture, and about general problems facing the world, gives blue prints for action, which are taken from a reinterpretation of the past; past offers instructions to the present that leads to the future.