Chapter – 1

Introduction
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. MOTIVATION FOR THE THESIS

The present thesis is motivated by this researcher’s view that the nexus that exists between the narrative technique used by Paule Marshall and her post-colonial perception needs a broader and deeper study. Many articles have been written and papers have been read and published on the recurring themes in her fiction. The themes that recur are the developing strength of black women, their self-consciousness, African / Caribbean / American cultural continuity in the African-American society, the history and legacies of slavery and colonial exploitation (remembrance, guilt, forgiveness and reconciliation). Themes of alienation, national longing, and transnationalism underscore her work. Such post-colonial themes have been taken up for study by many scholars and critics. But only a few articles are published on the techniques used by Marshall in her fiction; even these articles deal with just one or two novels of Marshall. So an in-depth study of her narrative technique is very much needed. Hence, the present thesis proposes to study the nexus between the fictional techniques used by Marshall and her post-colonial perception.
1.2. OBJECTIVE

The objective of the present thesis is to show through analysis of the novels of Paule Marshall, how she appropriates several strategies of post-colonialism to rewrite and revise the history of black people. The perception here is to consider how the post-colonial mode of narration is an ideal tool in the hands of Marshall, whose major concern is the recovery of self and reclamation of cultural past and to show how Marshall uses the new mode of narration and depiction to assert her people’s philosophy. This mode, which allows her to exploit the nuances of language and to make it bear the burden of African-American’s cultural experience is closely studied. The present study using post-colonialism as a framework shows how Marshall’s novels present a new perception of black life and history.

1.3. SITUATING POST-COLONIAL STUDIES

Post-colonial period is the time of rapid and radical changes. Terms like ‘diaspora’, ‘heterogeneity’, ‘hybridity’, ‘syncreticity’, ‘ambivalence’, ‘binarism’ ‘otherness’, ‘centre’, ‘marginality’, ‘subalternity’, ‘metropole’, ‘authenticity’ speak of the new reality of the global village, our world. Modes and categories of the past, in writing, do not seem to fit the new reality. So the black women writers, like Marshall, use certain themes, narrative strategies, images, symbols and sources of language to express their understanding about themselves. To understand the significance of liberation of post-colonial writing, such as Marshall’s, knowledge about various discourses and their overlapping is helpful.
1.3.1. Colonialism and Colonial Discourse

1.3.1.1. Definition

Ania Loomba defines ‘colonialism’ as “the conquest and control of other people’s land and goods” (1998:2). Colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably. Loomba’s definition for ‘imperialism’ is “the phenomenon that originates in the metropolis, the process which leads to domination and control” (6-7). Loomba further says that the “imperial country is the ‘metropole’ from which power flows, and the colony or neo-colony is the place which it penetrates and controls” (7). Without formal colonies, imperialism can function but colonialism cannot.

1.3.1.2. The Colonizer and the Colonized

Forming colonies has been a recurrent and wide-spread feature of human history. Modern colonialism marks the expansion of various European powers into Asia, Africa or the Americas from the sixteenth century onwards. These colonizing countries not only extracted goods and wealth from the colonies but also restructured their economies. There was a complex relationship between the colonized and the colonizing countries. The colonies provided slaves and indentured labour, raw materials to manufacture goods. They also provided captive markets for European goods. The profit always went to the conquerors. Settlements and plantations, trade between nations, global shifts of population, and capitalism of Europe came into existence. Plunder, negotiation, warfare, genocide, enslavement and rebellions followed. Modern European colonialism is an integral part of capitalist development. "As capitalism
advances”, as in the words of Loomba, “money and commodities increasingly displace, stand in for, and are mistaken for human values” (26).

1.3.1.3. Colonialism and Knowledge

Many nineteenth and twentieth century writers viewed the advance of European colonization as the triumph of science and reason over the forces of superstition. Many colonized peoples also took the same view. Various ideologies were developed to understand the colonized for a better control over them. ‘Ideology’ refers to one’s beliefs, concepts, and ways of expressing one’s relationship to the world. The European political vision of reality promoted a binary opposition between the familiar and the strange. In agreement with Edward Said, Loomba says that the binary opposition is crucial to European self-conception: if colonised people are irrational, Europeans are rational; if the former are barbaric, sensual, and lazy, Europe is civilization itself, with its sexual appetites under control and its dominant ethic that of hard work; if the Orient [is] static, Europe can be seen as developing and marching ahead; the Orient has to be feminine so that Europe can be masculine.(47)

The same colonial attributes can be traced towards Africans, Native Americans, and other Non-European peoples. As Homi K. Bhabha points out, “When the West was developing its cities, economy, democracy, liberalism and bourgeois freedom, the Third World was losing
everything. Enlightenment for one half of the globe was imprisonment for the other half” (Ramnarayan 2004: 4).

Loomba remarks that “Colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge”(57). The images of the ‘other’ were moulded and remoulded through histories of contfact; colonialism has reconstructed them, in order to adjust images to specific colonial practices. Such constructed and reconstructed notions about the inferiority of the non-Europeans provided a justification for European settlements, trading practices, religious missions and military activities. The definition of civilization and barbarism are based on an irreconcilable difference between ‘black’ and ‘white’, self and other. This stereotyping involves a reduction of images and ideas to a simple and manageable form. Its function is to perpetuate an artificial sense of difference between “self” and “other” (Gilman 1985:18). These stereotyped images were widely circulated in Europe.

The blurring of ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ in the old texts was strengthened by modern Western science. Instead of decreasing the misrepresentation, it rather helped in the construction of racist ways of thinking about human beings and the differences between them. (Stepan 1982; Gould 1996). According to Richard H.Grove, Western science developed an impulse to master the globe; it learnt from other knowledge systems and incorporated them; at the same time, it aggressively displaced them (Grove 1995). The races were seen to be the expression of a biological hierarchy. Over time, colour and features of people were taken up by scientific discourses as the most accurate index of racial differences. Intelligence was connected to
natural or genetic causes; natural inferiority was linked to the continuing cycle of poverty; women’s instinct was opposed to men’s rationality. Biases with respect to both gender and race were presented as objective truths. One can clearly see the connections between the reordering of knowledge, and social and economic processes.

1.3.1.4. Colonial Discourse

The impact of colonialism on culture is closely connected with its economic processes. Colonized intellectuals raised questions of their cultures. They saw their cultures as sites of colonial oppression and also as vital tools for their own resistance. They wanted the categories developed for understanding capitalism to be revised. They also wanted the relation between the realm of ideology and the sphere of material reality to be examined. Marx, Engels, the Italian communist, Antonio Gramsci, the Russian critic, Volosinov, the Hungarian theoretician, Georg Lukacs, the French communist theorist, Louis Althusser and Stuart Hall came out with their various views on capitalism, class, race, ethnicity, power, ideologies, language and subjectivity (Loomba 1998:25–34).

The various ways of thinking about language and ideology challenge any rigid demarcation of history and text. The Swiss linguist, Ferdinand de Saussure, has pointed out that the relation between the ‘signifier’ (a sound image) and the ‘signified’ (the concept to which it refers) is arbitrary. He views language as a system of signs, whose meaning is rational. Levi-Strauss attempts to systematize Saussure’s ideas. The French Marxist, Pierre Macherey, objects to it saying that no single system of meaning can work in every place and at every time. Althusser’s student, Michel
Foucault, pronounces the death of the author, because no single individual is the sole source of any utterance. Jacques Derrida suggests that no sign is identical with what it signifies; there is always a gap between the two. The slippage between words or signs and their meanings is evident in every utterance. Meaning is not self-present in the sign, or in the text; it is the result of this gap, slippage or 'différance'. Lacanian psychoanalysis speaks about how a child learns to see itself as distinct from the rest of the world by regarding its own mirror image: Lacan says that the child becomes a full subject only when it enters the world of language. All these interrelated but different ways of thinking about language show that no human utterance is innocent. Behind any set of words, a historical consciousness is at work. So, for an analysis of historical processes such as colonialism, words and images become fundamental (Loomba 1998: 35-7).

According to Foucault all ideas are ordered through "some material medium" (1970:100). This ordering imposes a pattern on them. Foucault calls this pattern, 'discourse'. Discourse is a whole field or domain within which language is used in particular ways. The domain is rooted in human practices, institutions and actions. Said in Orientalism (1978) uses the concept of discourse to re-order the study of colonialism. Said argues that Europeans' 'knowledge' about non-Europeans was part of the process of maintaining power over them. According to him, the 'study' of the Orient was not objective but "a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them')" (45). Said's Orientalism has become a foundational text for 'colonial discourse'.
Discourse analysis shows how power works through language, literature, culture and the institutions that regulate the lives of people. Foucault asserts that "Power is everywhere; not because it embraces everything, but because it comes from everywhere" (1990:93). Power does not come down from some central or hierarchical structure, it flows through society in a sort of capillary action. But Homi K.Bhabha feels that "colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the colonizer" (1983:200). Gayatri Spivak is cautious about too easy a 'recovery' of the 'voice' or 'agency' of colonized peoples or 'subaltern' subjects (1985:120–130). Spivak adopts the term 'subaltern' from Gramsci, an Italian communist writer, as a short-hand for any oppressed person.

The colonial discourse analysis of these theorists and critics indicate a new way of thinking. Such studies show that cultural, intellectual, economic or political processes are at work together in the formation, perpetuation and dismantling of colonialism. Such developments in the intellectual and academic sphere have to be viewed along with the growth of certain political movements like feminism or anti-colonial struggles. All these intellectuals and activists have questioned totalizing frameworks and worked toward the possibility of social change. Colonial discourse has later evolved into post-colonial studies.

1.3.2. Post-colonialism and Post-colonial Discourse

1.3.2.1. Emergence of the Term ‘Post-colonial’

After the World War II, the term ‘post-colonialism’ was used by historians and political scientists as in ‘post-colonial state’. ‘Post-colonial’
then had a clearly chronological meaning; it referred to the post-independence period. In the late 1970s a few literary critics used the term to characterize the various cultural effects of colonization (Ashcroft, Docker, Cotter and Nandan 1977). It was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles. But it was still not in general currency with this specific focus on cultural studies. Even in the early studies of colonial discourse theory the actual term ‘post-colonial’ was not used. There was a troubled relationship between ‘post-colonial’ theorists and ‘post-colonialism’. In the 1990s Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak seemed to have rejected the term ‘post-colonial’. Said has an aversion to any systematic theory and Spivak prefers the term ‘subaltern’, which she regards to be more inclusive.

1.3.2.2. Post-colonial or Postcolonial

The term ‘post-colonial’ is used both with and without hyphen. Ashcroft et al. say that “In recent times the hyphen in ‘post-colonial’ has come to represent an increasingly diverging set of assumptions, emphases, strategies and practices in reading and writing”(2002:197–98). The use of hyphen, according to Ashcroft et al., seems to put an emphasis on the discursive and material effects of the historical ‘fact’ of colonialism....the hyphen is a statement about the particularity, the historically and culturally grounded nature of the experience it represents.(198)

The present researcher uses the hyphen for the same reasons.
1.3.2.3. Defining ‘Post-colonial’

What the term ‘post-colonial’ means is a highly contested issue amongst contemporary theorists. The term does not have a stable definition. Post-colonialism, like post-modernism and post-structuralism, designates critical practice that is highly eclectic and difficult to define. This difficulty is partly due to the inter-disciplinary nature of post-colonial studies. A possible working definition for post-colonialism, according to Quayson,

involves a studied engagement with the experience of colonialism and its past and present effects, both at the local level of ex-colonial societies, as well as at the level of more general global developments thought to be the after-effects of empire.(2005:93-4)

Helen Tiffin’s definition of post-colonialism reads: “...writing and reading practices grounded in some form of colonial experience occurring outside Europe but as a consequence of European expansion into and exploitation of ‘the other’ worlds” (1988:170). The word ‘post-colonial’ is useful in indicating a general process with some shared features across the globe. Krishnaswamy et al. seem to prefer the term ‘neocolonialism’ to ‘postcolonialism’. They write: “Exploitation and power politics are innate human tendencies and to represent the different manifestations of the power dynamics, it is better to use the word ‘neocolonialism’ to talk about what is meant by 'postcolonialism’” (2001:90). There has never been a consensus on what post-colonialism is. But there is no doubt about its centrality or its uniqueness.
1.3.2.4. What Does ‘Post’ Mean?

Scholars continue to argue about what the ‘post’ in post-colonial means. For many, ‘post’ refers to the period after the departure of the colonizers. For example, Stuart Hall, a leading force in cultural studies, thinks that the term has a limited temporal scope. He says that ‘post-colonial’ truly represents a time after colonialism - the time of post independence of the former colonial world (1996:247). But Dawn Duncan argues that

The after reference for post-colonial more fittingly applies to after the onset of colonization, when the identity conflicts originate and shape the contributing cultural identities for years to come.(2002:325)

Duncan continues his argument saying that the “post must mean after colonization has begun. Defining post in this way broadens the dialogue but in no way weakens it” (327). Ann Brooks believes that “the concept of ‘post’ implies a process of ongoing transformation and change” (1997:1). For Ashcroft et al. the term ‘post-colonial’ covers the period that ranges “from the moment of colonization to the present day” (2002:2). Anne McClintock also holds the same view. She associates the post with “everything that has happened from the very beginning of colonialism” (1994:293). The present researcher holds the same view. The scholarly debate continues till date.
1.3.2.5. The Inclusion of the USA

Post-colonialism is widely seen as a Third World phenomenon. The post-colonial nature of the USA has not been generally recognized because of its current position of power and neo-colonial policies. American culture is absent from the early post-colonial study of the empires. Regarding this, Jenny Sharpe comments: “Given its history of imported slave and contract labor, continental expansion, and overseas imperialism, an implication of the United States in postcolonial studies is perhaps long overdue” (2005:122). Robert Blauner, a sociologist, refers to the US policies toward racial minorities and immigrants as evidence of its internal colonialism (1972). Donald E. Pease is of the view that in the cold war era, US neocolonialism was justified as a necessary means of combating imperialism; now, in the name of globalization, US colonization continues (2005:218–19). Such critical remarks reveal the fact that throughout most of its history, the US has participated in the imperial world system. As post-colonial studies have expanded their scope, the United States has been included.

1.3.2.6. Commissions and Omissions in the Post-colonial Approach

Post-colonialism, generally, refers to a process of disengagement from the whole colonial syndrome. It opens up the possibility of the movement of power in all directions. It is one of the powerful means of re-examining the historical past and reconfiguring world-wide cultural concerns. It has helped to disturb the Eurocentric dominance of academic debate. In the words of Spivak “postcoloniality queers the norm” (2005:XVI). It has empowered the post-colonial intellectuals to ‘speak’ on
behalf of the people of the non-Western world. Yet, as Spivak says, “The best of postcolonialism is autocritical” (XV). Post-colonial studies have been asking the right questions. It can provide more informed histories and theories. Yet, critics feel that cultural studies have mainly been given prominence, and the new ways in which global capitalism works are not given importance. Post-colonialism is accused of dismissing politics and economics. Benita Parry insists that a “return to a politics grounded in the material, social and existential, now appears urgent” (2002:77). Henry Schwarz also insists that “From the psychic constitution of the individual subject to the immensity of the 'global economy', all European inventions must be 'subjected to a deep and thorough-going critique” (2005:7).

Krishnaswamy et al. make a suggestion about what will make post-colonial studies meaningful. They suggest that “a distinction between settlers, their literature and their impact, on the one hand, and colonisers, their literature and its impact on the other, must be made to make these studies meaningful” (2001:92). Jace Weaver echoes the belief of some critics about some of the omissions in post-colonial discourse:

With its geographic and linguistic limitations, postcolonial discourse says little about indigenous liberation struggles in Africa, Palestine, Central America, Scandinavia, or Japan – to select only a few examples. Nor does it truly say much about movements among Native Americans in the United States, Aborigines in Australia or Maoris in New Zealand. (2005:224)
Weaver points out that “postcolonial theories deal with the Third World [developing non-European countries] but say nothing to or about the Fourth World [indigenous peoples]” (Ibid.). Post-colonial studies have to be concerned with the Fourth World, because the indigenous peoples are the victims of internal colonialism. Ato Quayson expresses the same view when he says that

A growing concern among postcolonial critics has also been with racial minorities in the West, embracing native and African Americans in the US, British Asians and African Caribbeans in the UK, and Aborigines in Australia among others. (2005:94)

Post-colonialism is never a specific moment. It is an ongoing struggle. It is a continual emergence. According to Comaroff, the past history of post-colonialism can be divided into two broad phases. The first can be said to have begun with the decolonization of India in 1947 and subsequently most of the nations of the Third World. It was an age of high colonialism. The second phase can be presumed to have begun in 1989 at the end of the Cold War. It was a period of neoliberal capitalism, democratization movements and post-revolutionary societies (Bhabha and Comaroff 2002:15). Post-colonial studies is an ever-broadening area; it has started including feminist, queer, indigene and aborigine studies in its purview. New patterns are emerging; hitherto mute voices are becoming audible.
1.3.2.7. Post-colonial Discourse - Origin

Post-colonial period is a witness to fast and ever-changing societies. Modes and categories of the past in writing do not seem to fit the new reality. Academic study has changed according to the changing needs and developed a new set of discourses. Post-colonial literary theory was an invention of literary study, given particular importance by the development of English as a vehicle of cultural propaganda. The post-colonial theory of the 1980s emerged mainly from English Departments in the First World Academy. Although there was the influence of Francophone African intellectuals such as Aime Cesaire, Leopald Senghor and Frantz Fanon, it was primarily concerned with literatures in English. After its inception, other disciplines such as politics and sociology, anthropology and economic theory have adopted it rapidly. Post-colonial theory proves to be “one of the most diverse and contentious fields in literary and cultural studies” (Ashcroft et al. 2002:193). Post-colonial theory is often referred to as the theory of migrancy. Its beginnings can be located in Fanon’s The Wretched of the Earth (1961), its theorizing in Edward Said’s Orientalism (1978) and critical assessment in Ashcroft et al.’s The Empire Writes Back (2002). Now, post-colonial studies is gaining currency in Third World nations.

1.3.2.8. What Do the Post-colonial Critics Do?

Post-colonial critics reject the claims to Universalism of Canonical Western literature; examine the representation of other cultures in literature; show how the canonical texts are silent on matters about colonialism and imperialism; explore the cultural differences and diversity
found in post-colonial literary works; celebrate hybridity and ‘cultural polyvalency’; and perceive states of marginality, plurality and ‘otherness’ as sources of energy and potential change (Barry 2002:199).

Ashcroft et al. find the post-colonial literary theory to be “the servant of literary and other cultural production rather than its master” (2002:211). It is deployed to investigate political relations, relations of different cultures, cultural diversity, ethnic, racial and cultural differences and power relations within them, black diaspora scattered by centuries of slavery, Indian diaspora in Africa, the Pacific and the Caribbean etc. (201–202). Many thematic parallels have been found across the different post-colonial literatures by post-colonial critics: celebration of independence struggle, influence of foreign culture on the life of contemporary post-colonial societies, construction or destruction of houses in post-colonial locations symbolizing the post-colonial identity and the journey motif (26–27). Post-colonial theory provides “important models for understanding the place of the local in an increasing globalized world” (222).

Debates over traditional and sacred beliefs of colonized, indigenous and marginalized people have increased in importance. As Bhabha puts it, the sacred has entered the dominant discourse, following the trajectory of other “denied knowledges” (1994: 114). On entering the Western discourse, it has estranged “the basis of its authority – its rules of recognition” (Ibid.). Since the Enlightenment, the Western thinking has been dominated by the concept of secularity, economic rationalism and progressivism. The sacred has very often been relegated to primitivism and the archaic (Chakrabarty 2000). Ashcroft et al’s. opinion is that
The sacred has been an empowering feature of post-colonial experience in two ways: on one hand, indigenous concepts of the sacred have been able to interpolate dominant conceptions of cultural identity; and on the other, western forms of the sacred have often been appropriated and transformed as a means of local empowerment.(2002:212)

The subversion of canon can be done not only by replacing one set of texts with another, but also by replacing the old set of reading practices with a new, post-colonial set of reading practices. Such practices involve subversion of innumerable individual and common assumptions present in education curricula and publishing networks about genre, about literature and even about writing. The new set of reading practices will de-colonize the mind, change the mind-set and bring in a mind-shift. The canonical text can be reconstructed by the alternative reading practices. Shakespeare’s The Tempest (1611), which has been subjected to many post-colonial readings, can be taken as an example. George Lamming, the Barbados writer’s famous reading of The Tempest in his The Pleasures of Exile (1960) is a founding text of White oppression in the Americas. He dismantles the hierarchy of Prospero, Ariel and Caliban. He sees Caliban as a human being and as a West-Indian while Caliban’s status as a subject is denied by European perceptions. In this way, post-colonial criticism re-reads canonical texts in the light of post-colonial practices; it also reads specific social and historical contexts that make them possible.
There is tremendous growth in post-colonial scholarship in recent times. But, still it is a field very much in the making. A comprehensive survey of post-colonial studies seems impossible, because of the plurality due to various local articulations of the post-colonial in different global contexts.

1.3.2.9. Relevance of Post-colonial Theory

After 9/11 event, and the subsequent invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, post-colonial theory’s failure to take stock of the designs such as cultural purity, religion, a profound disenchantment etc. has been much criticized. But Sangeeta Ray argues that “analysis of 'troubling alienation' is the hallmark of postcolonial theoretical scholarship especially in its literary mode” (2005:578). Ray speaks in favour of post-colonial studies:

It seems to me that the current backlash against postcolonial studies should remind us of all that there is to value in the preoccupation with and of postcolonial scholarship. Postcolonial theory is not just manifested in the teaching of contemporary postcolonial literature or in area studies. It appears in globalization studies; it has fueled thoughtful and productive changes in more traditionally oriented fields in English and American studies: its relevance for feminism, queer, ethnic and cultural studies is indisputable.(2005:579)

New criticism claims to be objective and it asserts the autonomy of literary work. It has retarded the development of indigenous literary theories. But
the growth of comparative and post-colonial studies has revealed the common condition of post-coloniality.

1.3.2.10. Critics and Theorists - “The Holy Trinity”

Robert Young describes Edward W. Said, Gayatri C. Spivak and Homi K. Bhabha as “the Holy Trinity” of post-colonial critics who have achieved greatest eminence in their field (1995:163). They have made the Third World presence felt in the Western Academy. They stand for hybridity in theory and culture. They ‘speak’ for the subaltern from the bastions of the First World Academy.

Said’s Orientalism (1978) is considered to be the hallmark text of post-colonial studies as a field. The concept of discourse in Althusser, Foucault and Said has been useful in identifying the rules that determine post-coloniality. In Foucaultian sense a discourse is a firmly bounded area of social knowledge. Said’s Orientalism as a discourse, analyses how the world was constructed in the European mind. The East is the ‘Other’ and inferior to the West. The East becomes synonymous with the exotic, the mystical and the seductive. The Orientals are thought to be ruled by instinctive emotions, not by conscious choices or decisions. They are looked upon as either asiatics or blacks or orientals but not as individuals. Thus, the orient was produced as a figment of imagination for consumption in the West and to maintain power over the orientals. It was also a means of subverting the ultimate project of imperial domination. Colonial discourse analysis gained coherence mainly because of Said’s Orientalism. It provides a useful starting point for defining the field of post-colonial studies.
Orientalism situates literary texts as a colonial battlefield. Said has adopted a Foucaultian view of colonial power as all-pervasive. Foucault says: “We cannot exercise power except through the production of truth” (1977:12). So the post-colonial discourse is based on a struggle for power; power over the metropolitan language. Power is viewed by Foucault as part of daily action, speech and everyday life. Such a conception of power comes handy to post-colonial writers. Foucaultian methodology is at work in Orientalism. Said’s work cleared the space for a new field of study, colonial discourse. It later evolved into post-colonial studies. Spivak calls Orientalism “the source book in our discipline” (1993:56). Bhabha assumes that Orientalism “inaugurated the postcolonial field” (1992:465). But, Said is generally criticized for not having included the perspectives of women and feminist analyses in his critique of colonialism and imperialism.

While Said’s Orientalism acknowledges the masculinist nature of colonial discourse, Spivak’s writings show her interest in specificities of women’s experience. Like Said, Spivak is trained in comparative literature. She is fluent in diverse range of contemporary critical theories. She is a feminist, a Marxist and a deconstructivist. She has introduced into the US academy the writings of the subaltern studies group, a collective of intellectuals in Britain, India and Australia. Spivak and Bhabha have shifted the centre of colonial discourse analysis from Europe to its colonies.

Spivak’s “Can the subaltern speak?” (1985) is considered to be another founding text of post-colonial theory, along with Orientalism (1978). Spivak’s work is fundamentally concerned with the position of the doubly oppressed native woman. To her, the native is voiceless, especially
the native female is mute. Spivak strongly feels that "there is no space from where the subaltern [gendered] subject can speak" (1985:122). She says so about the helpless subaltern, native women. By implication, this silencing extends to the whole of the colonial world. She sees the post-colonial subject as powerless. She is cautious about too easy a recovery of the voice of subaltern subjects. So, she insists that it is the post-colonial intellectual who is to highlight oppression and to give the perspective of oppressed people. In this regard she writes:

> The subaltern cannot speak. There is no virtue in global laundry lists with 'woman' as a pious item. Representation has not withered away. The female intellectual as intellectual has a circumscribed task which she must not disown with a flourish.(1988:308)

But, Spivak is not for romanticizing or homogenizing the subaltern subject.

Homi K.Bhabha, the third in “the Holy Trinity” of post-colonial critics, is a critic of Commonwealth literary studies in Britain. For reworking Said’s paradigm he turned to the writing of Frantz Fanon, an Antillean psychoanalyst and a guerilla-activist. One can see the overlapping of the radical Western theory and post-colonial issues in Bhabha, as in Spivak. Bhabha feels that colonial discourses have failed to produce stable and fixed identities. He projects culture as hybrid from the side of migrant and subaltern. Bhabha’s concept of hybridity goes back to Fanon. Fanon, in his *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) and *Black Skin, White Masks* (1967) describes the identities of both the colonized and the colonizer as hybrid. They have two references and they live on borders.
This is called ‘liminality’ by Bhabha. The displaced persons or the migrants have fractured perceptions.

Bhabha highlights the fight against perceived inequalities as being central to post-colonialism. Where there is oppression, he says, there will be resistance. His views on cultural resistance to the imperial powers are based on Fanon’s. According to Fanon, the first step towards a post-colonial perspective is reclamation of the past and the second is eroding the colonialist ideology. Bhabha combines Fanon’s model of resistance with Lacan’s psychoanalytic theory. He finds in colonial discourse an inherent ‘ambivalence’ which allows for stoppages and native appropriations. He suggests that the subaltern has spoken; a native voice can be recovered by a properly symptomatic readings of the colonial text. Fanon is for using the past to put an end to the history of colonization and to bring into existence the history of decolonization (1961). Both Bhabha and Spivak are accused of neglecting material conditions of colonial rule by concentrating on colonial representations. Bhabha’s culture theory and his poetics based on post-colonial and post-modern displacements, are completely de-centred.

The three critics and theorists, Said, Spivak and Bhabha, along with other post-colonial critics, talk of a continued neo-colonial domination. Together these critics present the marginalized, oppressed, fractured and decentred self of the ‘other’, the ‘subaltern’, the ‘hybrid’. They are likely to remain vital points of reference, as post-colonial studies continue to grow.
1.3.3. Post-modernism and Post-colonialism

Post-colonial writing and literary theory intersect in varied ways with recent European movements like, post-modernism, post-structuralism, feminism and Marxism. As Ashcroft et al. point out, "'Post-colonial', 'postmodern' and 'poststructuralist' are inconvenient labels which cover a wide range of overlapping literary and cultural practices" (2002:160–61).

Post-modern discourse and post-colonialism have arisen in the late twentieth century as the two systems of critical thought to explain the world. Both emerged from the same historical moment of the decentring of Europe. Critical practices in both are highly eclectic and difficult to define. Arif Dirlik views post-colonialism as a "child of postmodernism" (1994:330). Post-colonial studies applies post-modern thought to the long history of colonizing practices. Both these studies resist a dominant discourse. In post-modernism, it is the resistance of the centre by the margins. It is extended in post-colonialism, as the resistance of the empire by the colonized or the resistance of the First World by the Third World. Both the theories are decentring and antisystemic; they do not believe in metanarratives; they celebrate pluralism, borders, fragmentation and multiple perspectives. Representation by subaltern groups has been given a great authority by the intersection of post-colonialism with post-modernism. Post-colonialism is about the colonized trying to find their voices and assert their agency and subjectivity. Post-modernism and post-colonialism are obsessed with the issues of identity. Both show the shifting identities by the mixing of literary genres, which leads to the disappearance of the real. Both foreground irony. They realize that past must be revisited,
but with irony. Ato Quayson suggests that “postmodernism can never fully explain the state of the contemporary world without first becoming postcolonial and vice versa” (2005:106). This clearly shows how one theory informs the other and in turn gets informed by the other. Their relationship is symbiotic.

1.3.4. Post-structuralism and Post-colonialism

Post-structuralism emerged in France in the late 1960s. Jacques Derrida is one of the key figures in the development of post-structuralism. In the Derridian universe there are no absolutes or fixed points. This universe is decentred or inherently relativistic. Since there is no centre, there is no deviation from it. So, Derrida’s universe is a decentred universe of free play. Thus, post-structuralism discredits master narratives. Bhabha, Spivak, Jan Mohammed and the other post-colonial critics have appropriated the contemporary post-structuralist accounts to the field of post-colonial writing. Post-structuralism and deconstruction hold great attraction for the post-colonial critics, because of the notion of the double, divided, fluid or shifting identity, which is polyvalent.

According to Derrida, all systems of thought are built upon a binary pattern. This pattern places concepts in opposition; it privileges one over the other; thus, it produces meaning. The Derridian term ‘differance’ means both ‘difference’ and ‘deferral’. According to Sassure, Derrida and Lacan, meaning can be created only by differences. Meaning can be sustained only through reference to other meanings. Thus, plurality of meaning is effected. This leads to rethinking of margins and borders and a decentred perspective, which is a hallmark of post-colonial writing. Post-structuralist
critics dismantle assumptions about language and textuality. They stress the importance of ideological construction in social-textual relations. These find echoes in postcolonial texts.

Master narratives have hidden the ‘other’ from history. Poststructuralist approaches to history have suggested that the lives of various oppressed peoples can only be uncovered by insisting that there is no single history but a multiplicity of histories. So, Jorge de Alva suggests that postcoloniality is and must be connected to poststructuralist theories of history (1995).

1.3.5. Feminism and Post-colonialism

Feminism and post-colonialism are theories of representation for marginalized people. Women share with colonized races and peoples an intimate experience of the politics of suppression and oppression. Both are considered the ‘other’. Both have to use the oppressor’s language. Since language is the site of cultural production of race and gender, both have to construct a language of their own, a language of subversion. In both the theories, the concept of ‘silence’, ’voice’ and ‘mimicry’ are important. Both reread the classical texts, to change the conditions of reading for all texts. Both their projects are oriented towards the future. Poststructuralist suspicion of established truths is shared both by feminist and anti-colonial movements. Their struggles emphasize culture as a site of conflict between the oppressors and the oppressed. Colour prejudices exist within white feminism and gender-blindness exists in anti-racist or anti-colonial movements. So, black and post-colonial feminists and women activists have had to challenge both.
Feminism and post-colonialism reject the binary structures of patriarchy and colonialism respectively. They offer valid alternative centres by reconstructing patriarchal/colonial canon. Some of the questions raised by both of them are about identity formation, essentialism, biologism and constructivism. Both feminism and post-colonialism have used the twin strategies of abrogation and appropriation to reject or subvert patriarchal/colonial norms. There are three phases of development in both: the imitation of the prevailing modes of the dominant tradition, protest against these standards and values, and self-discovery. A feminist theory itself becomes possible only within a post-colonial mode, with its interrogatory and interventionary thrust. Critics like Jean Rhys, Alice Walker, Doris Lessing and Margaret Atwood have begun to draw the two discourses together.

1.3.6. Marxism and Post-colonialism

Marxist theory has had many uses and much appeal for post-colonial societies. Marxism critiques colonialism as capitalism. It emphasizes that under capitalism, money and commodities stand in for human beings and human relations. Capitalism objectifies them and robs them of their human essence. Marx and Engels emphasize that the world under capitalism, gives rise to a series of illusions; money has the power to distort and invert reality. Aime Cesaire, a staunch member of the Martiniquan Communist Party, and Frantz Fanon also emphasize the dehumanizing aspect of colonialism. Fanon’s Black Skin, White Masks (1967) shows how colonized people’s labour has been appropriated. It also shows how
inferiority complex has been created in the colonized "by the death and burial" (1967:18) of their local cultural originality.

Marxist debates have marked the relationship of class and gender. But they have failed to connect the oppression of women with the operations of capitalism. Feminists have taken up this issue, later. Gramsci's ideology and Stuart Hall's perception of the relationship between race, ethnicity and colonialism have helped in the revisionary analyses of colonial societies.

Thus, all these various 'isms' of the twentieth century have challenged earlier epistemologies with their binaries - centre/margin, self/other, colonizer/colonized. In analyzing the colonial encounter, all these theories overlap and inform each other.

1.4. POST-COLONIAL LITERATURES

1.4.1. Defining 'Post-colonial Literature'

In English, as a discipline, the emphasis has always been on scholarship, philosophy and historical study. It has fixed the texts in historical time; it has searched for the determinants of a single, unified and agreed meaning. The prejudice underlying the metropolitan texts of canon is that only certain categories of experience are capable of being rendered as 'literature'. This alienating process has relegated the post-colonial world to the margin. But, the post-colonial marginality has become an unprecedented source of creative energy. Post-colonial literatures have emerged in their present form out of the experience of colonization. They
assert themselves by foregrounding their differences from the assumptions of the imperial centre.

Ismail S. Talib opines that “Postcolonial literatures can be defined as literature written by colonised and formerly colonised peoples” (2002:17). According to Keith Green and Jill Le Bihan, Third World literatures, Commonwealth literatures, New literatures written in English, World literatures (written in English), Migrant writing, Diasporic writing and Black Literatures may be called post-colonial literatures (1996:291). In the list of ever-burgeoning post-colonial literatures, new entries can be and are being made from time to time.

1.4.2. Place and Displacement

What literature does is to tell the world “what a period thinks about itself” (Machery 1990:134). Post-colonial literatures present the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination. This imperial dominance brought about the radical displacement of people through slavery, indenture and settlement. In the recent times, globalization has also caused an extraordinary and accelerating movements of peoples throughout the world. Disparity in wealth between the West and the world is the cause for the dispersal of significant number of people. According to Gayatri Spivak “Large-scale movements of people – renamed ‘diaspora’ – are what defines our time …. The new African, Asian, and other ‘diasporas’ connect globally in unprecedented ways” (2002:47). A major feature of post-colonial literature is the concern with place and displacement. In post-colonial literatures, the notions of travel, exile and diaspora are prevalently present.
In post-colonial literatures, there is a pervasive concern with the myths of identity and authenticity, alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image. Diaspora gives rise to vexed questions of identity, memory and home. The movement of refugees has often re-ignited racism in many countries worldwide. Yet, this new world order of mobility, this global culture seems to be at home with this motion rather than in a particular place. To Edward Said, the figure of the traveller or migrant is “Our model for academic freedom” (1991:17). The figure implies “a willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, and understand a variety of disguises, masks, and rhetorics” (18). Post-colonial concern with place has given rise to eco-centred or eco-critical perspectives on post-colonial studies. Out of the sense of displacement emerges the discourse of place, the notion of power inherent in the model of centre and margin, and its subversion.

1.4.3. Identity Crisis

Imperialism has divided the world into metropoles and satellites. Their relationship is marked by the unequal development of capitalism and latter’s dependency upon the former. Their relationship is unequal, hierarchical; it replicates the master-slave relationship. So, for a “Resident Alien” (Spivak 2002:47), say in a country such as the United States, the identity crisis crops up. The goal of success in America is to become a typical American, negating one’s particular history. But, the Caribbeans and other immigrants in the United States are not simply assimilated into the dominant culture. At the same time, they do not merely relive their ethnic cultures in their new home. Interactions of people, capital, ideas and
cultural practices take place. The immigrants maintain a heterogeneous notion of identity. They forge cultural practices that borrow from multiple sources. Such crossovers of various sorts, or 'hybridity' and 'ambivalence' are the hallmarks of the dynamics of the colonial encounter. Post-colonialism sees identity as doubled, or hybrid or unstable.

'The uncanny double' is a Freudian term, referring to psychic ambivalence. It is the combination of the familiar and the unfamiliar at the same time. It is pertinent to post-colonial situations where one is within and at the same time beyond the structures of colonialism (Gelder and Jacobs 1998:24). Such migrants or displaced persons have fractured perceptions. Salman Rushdie says that human beings are "wounded creatures, cracked lenses, capable of fractured perceptions" (1991:12). Homi Bhabha calls this fractured seeing as "the twilight existence of the aesthetic image" (Bhabha 1994 : 15). Edward Said is for dialogue of different identities in which they connect with each other and become hybrids. As a Palestinian born in Jerusalem and self-exiled to the United States, he speaks out of his own experience. In an interview with Salman Rushdie, he says: "The whole notion of crossing over or moving from one identity to another, is extremely important to me, being as I am – as we all are, a sort of hybrid" (1995:122). A continuous process of mixing and of reconfiguration of identities gives rise to Creole populations and cultures, all over the world.

Dawn Duncan writes of three central questions that deal with identity in A Flexible Foundation: Constructing a Postcolonial Dialogue: "Who am I? How did I come to be who I am? To whom am I connected?" (2002:328). Many non-post-colonial texts might analyse such identity
issues. “However, explorations of these questions permeate postcolonial literature with a ferocity of need and complexity of depth” (Ibid.). Such questions are asked by the post-colonial person, who is subject to conflicting identities, like historical identity and state-imposed identity. The individual’s struggle is to find “an identity that is his or her story rather than merely history” (329).

Wendy Ann Lee, a Korean-American, connects one’s identity with his or her history and nation. She feels that “Identity is site-specific” (2002:283). She further feels that “identity is arrived at through the work of identification…” (Ibid.). To quote an example, the African-American’s desire to identify with Africa is historical. This desire emerges from a specific history of diaspora, immigration and generational conflict. Active engagement with one’s past can help her or him to find her or his identity. But, identity is a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’. One cannot simply turn back to the idea of a collective pre-colonial culture. The return to the past is, actually, a re-telling of the past. This re-telling involves an imaginative recognition of both what existed and what people continually create. Thus, the post-colonial subjects are complex, mixed up products of diverse colonial histories.

1.4.4. Post-colonial Narratives

1.4.4.1. Grand Narratives and Small Narratives

The idea of alterity, or a binary opposition between colonizer and colonized, has enormous force and power in the construction of anti-colonial narratives. Histories of marginalized, subaltern subjects can only
be written by moving away from the grand narratives, which occluded such subjects and their stories. Peter Hulme, on writing about the need of smaller narratives, says: “Smaller narratives are now needed, with attention paid to local topography, so that maps can become fuller” (1994:72). In the recent years, histories from below are written by members of marginalized groups. Their writings confront European-defined notions of universality. European ‘Universalism’ claims that great literature has a timeless and universal significance. It judges all literatures by a single, supposedly, ‘universal’ standard. It asserts that literature depicts and examines fundamental and universal aspects of human condition. It assumes that the situations depicted hold good for all possible forms of human interaction. This Western ‘Universalism’ is rejected by the Third World writers.

1.4.4.2. Rejection of the ‘Universal’

In the words of N.Krishnaswamy et al., “The search for alternative systems is on” (2001:93). It results in the post-colonial mode of writing. In this mode, the inauthentic and the marginal is the real, the privileged. In the post-colonial world, destructive cultural encounter is changing to an acceptance of difference on equal terms. In post-colonial writing the poles of Governor/Governed is inverted; the concept of dominance is challenged; the notions of ‘centrality’ and the ‘authentic’ are questioned, challenged and abrogated. In short, post-colonial narratives reflect the profound transformation of Euro-centrist intellectual culture and transgressions of existing conventions. With disappearance of the ‘centre’ and with no ‘centre’, the marginal becomes the formative constituent of reality.
1.4.4.3. Choice of Language

Language is a central concern of post-colonial writing. Some post-colonial writers show an uneasy attitude to the colonial language that is English. They have thought that colonizer’s language is permanently tainted; when English is used, European values and world view are inevitably activated; and the values of the colonized would be immersed with that of the white man. So, some of the Third World writers, such as Ngugi, have stopped writing in English and switched over to their native tongues. But most of the post-colonial writers have appropriated the dominant language; they have transformed it and used it to reveal a cultural identity to a world audience.

According to Ashcroft et al., two of the “processes by which the binarism of centre and margin is itself dismantled” are “the complementary processes of abrogation and appropriation” (2002:113). Ashcroft et al. have defined the two terms ‘abrogation’ and ‘appropriation’ in The Empire Writes Back (2002). They say : “Abrogation is a refusal of the categories of the imperial culture, its aesthetic, its illusory standard of normative or ‘correct’ usage and its assumption of the traditional and fixed meaning ‘inscribed’ in the words” (37). To Ashcroft et al., “ Appropriation is the process by which the language is taken and made to ‘bear the burden’ of one’s own cultural experience…. Language is adopted as a tool and utilized in various ways to express widely differing cultural experiences” (38). Post-colonial literature is written out of the tension between the abrogation of the received English and the act of appropriation. This literature has become the expression of the self-defining and self-sustaining societies.
Ashcroft et al. show how the post-colonial model is suitable for the post-colonial experience. They assertively say:

By abrogating the assumptions of the language, appropriating it to local needs, and marrying it to local syntactic and grammatical forms, post-colonial writers provide a model for the agency of the local in the face of apparently overwhelming global pressures. (2002:204)

1.4.4.4. Strategies of Appropriation

Strategies of appropriation in post-colonial literatures are numerous and they vary widely. Use of irony and metaphor, allegory, allusions registering cultural difference, ethnographic details, representations of place, nomenclature, deployment of themes, forms and genre, syntactic fusion and circular narrative structure are some of the strategies appropriated in post-colonial writings, to highlight the cultural difference. Post-colonial vocabulary contains such words: “memory, trauma, reparation, reconciliation, race thinking, hybridity, creolization, diaspora, (post) colonialism, and crime against humanity” (Verges 2002:351). Recurring themes in post-colonial narratives are very often related to slavery, migration, suppression and resistance, difference, race, gender, class and place. According to Noam Chomsky “Linguistic theory is concerned with an ideal speaker-listener, in a completely homogenous speech community” (1965:3). But post-colonial literatures reassert that performance is language. The numerous constructions and neologisms introduced by post-
colonial writing continually reconstitutes English Literature. Ashcroft et al. have pointed out that

the appropriation which has had the most profound significance in post-colonial discourse is that of writing itself. It is through an appropriation of the power invested in writing that this discourse can take hold of the marginality imposed on it and make hybridity and syncreticity the source of literary and cultural redefinition. (2002:77)

1.4.4.5. Writing as a Social Practice

In post-colonial writing, the message is very important. To the post-colonial writers, writing is a social practice with a social function. Achebe has declared that “art for art’s sake is just another piece of deodorised dog-shit” (1975:19). Achebe believes that literature can be a powerful tool of education, in a broad sense. It often serves a political purpose.

1.4.4.6. Phases of Transition in Writers and Writing

Post-colonial writers and literatures seem to undergo, in the opinion of Peter Barry, three phases of transition. In the ‘adopt’ phase, the writers follow the European form and norms to tell their stories. The ‘adapt’ phase finds them suitably modifying the form and norms according to their subject matter. During the ‘adept’ phase, there is a declaration of cultural independence. The post-colonial writer is a “humble apprentice” in the first
phase, “a mere licensee” in the second phase and “an independent ‘adept’ in the form” in the third phase (2002:196). These phases can also be called the mimic, the hybrid and the syncretic respectively.

1.4.4.7. Major Models in Writing

According to Ashcroft et al., in post-colonial writings, four major models have emerged to date: ‘national’ and ‘regional models’, ‘race-based models’, (eg – ‘Black Writing’ model), ‘comparative models’, and ‘more comprehensive comparative models’. ‘National’ or ‘regional models’ highlight the distinctive features of the particular or regional culture. ‘Race-based models’ identify the shared characteristics across various national literatures. ‘Comparative models’ study particular linguistic, historical and cultural features across two or more post-colonial literatures. ‘More comprehensive comparative models’ deal with features such as hybridity and syncreticity etc. as constitutive elements of all post-colonial literatures. These models are often used as assumptions, not as schools of thought. In analysing post-colonial writing, more than one model may be used at the same time (2002:14–15).

1.5. BLACK FICTION

1.5.1. Emergence of African - American Novel

To find out Marshall’s place in the pantheon of black writers, and to understand the significance of her contribution to Black Fiction, a brief survey of the literary history of African-Americans is essential.
1.5.1.1. The Slave Narratives

The plantation enslavement of Africans by Europeans in the Americas took place during the period between the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries. The slaves were largely excluded from print culture; but they refused to remain voiceless. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Western representations of plantation life in the Americas appeared. They were in the form of the masters’ ‘memoirs’ and the slaves’ ‘narratives’. These narratives were the co-production of usually the slave and a white abolitionist. The legacy of slavery becomes the historical record of abolitionism; the contemporary racism is conveniently forgotten.

In white-authored texts, black characters received no representation, or only the crudest stereotyped sketch. As Stuart Hall points out, the black subject and black experience are constructed historically, culturally and politically (1996:446-47). The first African-American to trace and record the history of Africans and their descendants in North America may have been Reverend James W.C. Pennington, according to Bethel Hesse (1997:174). Pennington published his A Text Book on the Origins and History of the Colored People in 1841. As Margaret Atwood has pointed out, the best writing about the 'other' group is "most likely to come from within that group" (1990:23).

The slave-narratives bequeathed to subsequent generations of black authors the following: perceptions of black 'low life' and folklore, an emphasis on religiosity, especially Christianity, nascent elements of militancy and race pride, the theme of flight, the celebration of freedom, and a stress on courage, resourcefulness, perseverance and frugality.
1.5.1.2. The Harlem Renaissance

Edward Margolies and David Bakish trace the Harlem Renaissance period to be from 1915 to 1933 (1976). Black writers, during this period, celebrated the poor, the ordinary and the marginal. In the early 1920s, the hopes of equality were engendered by the rhetoric of World War I. Attracted by the post-war economic boom, the blacks from the South and West Indies moved to Northern cities, especially to New York. The Renaissance coincided with this great migration towards the Northern metropolis. But the hopes of black people lay shattered by economic recession in the 1930s and racial tensions. Black literature of this period reveals the race pride in blacks, cultural and political nationalism and the image of the black man as a noble savage. A noble savage is one who is apart from and superior to a corrupt and neurotic White civilization. Beyond the black community, anti-imperialist movements were taking shape, encouraged by the advent of Communism in Russia. There was a renewed interest in the ‘primitive’ arts of Asia and Africa. In America, the awakening interest in jazz and the vogue of Freud fuelled a new curiosity about blacks. Thus, the Harlem Renaissance may be seen as a response to pressures from both within and without the black community.

In the writings of whites, black people were represented in terms of buffoonery, pathos and malicious stupidity. So, the Harlem Renaissance writers were trying to strike a balance between the reality of black experience and a positive identity. To the black people, the white world represented material prosperity, success, happiness and a sense of belonging. The black characters, as in Nella Larsen's *Quick Sand* (1928)
and *Passing* (1929) longed to belong to the white world; they tried to 'pass' as white. But, the radicals among the Renaissance writers, such as Jean Toomer, Langston Hughes, Wallace Thurman and Walter White, extolled the virtues of black identity. Some of the names that stand out from among the Renaissance writers are Claude McKay, Eric Walrond, W.E.B. DuBois, Alain Locke, James Weldon Johnson, Rudolph Fisher, Arna Bontemps and Zora Neale Hurston.

1.5.1.3. Literature of Social Protest

Black literature produced during 1933-45 is labelled 'literature of social protest' by Edward Margolies and David Bakish (1976). Richard Wright considered the problems of the blacks as an important by-product of the class struggle; he did not consider them to be purely racial in origin. The post-war (II World War) years brought a new introspective quality to African-American literature. Abolition of slavery gave the blacks political freedom. But, they were not really free; they were victims of racism. The racial riots erupted in the 1960s under the banner "Black Muslims", "Black Panthers" or the "Civil Right Movement". The "Black Arts Movement" was the literary and aesthetic wing of the "Black Power Movement". The birth of "Negritude", the political, literary and theoretical movement in Paris of the 1930s and 1940s, also gave a shot in the arm for African-American literary field. It inspired African quest for identity. In the post-war years, the black authors appeared principally interested in exploring their psyches and in discovering or re-discovering their black identities within the larger American context.
Both Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin set out to discover their self, through their writing. Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) shows how his past sightlessness is the outcome of too much of dependence on others for a picture of himself. Baldwin's novels are about the condition of being black in America. His self-perception made him understand the significance of love in interpersonal relationship. Wright, Baldwin and Ellison have expressed their awareness of their invisibility and racial situation in their work, from the point of view of men. Black women's perspective of life is seen missing in their fiction.

In 1970s, autobiographies were written by black women to express their understanding about themselves. From the 1980s onwards, they have been employing literary devices, fictional strategies and creative resources to celebrate black women's strength, values and beliefs; they have been trying to correct the wrongs historically perpetrated against them. They look at racial, sectional, national and sexual differences as artificial barriers in human communication. To them, the route to freedom lies in their acceptance and not in their rejection of their roots. Assertion is the dominant strain in their writing; they assert themselves, their culture and their heritage. Thus, African-American novel, rooted in the African-American slave narratives, abolitionist and assimilationist literature, has come of age. Ashcroft et al. group the writings of writers in African diaspora under the 'Black Writing' model (2002:19).
1.5.2. Black Women's Writing

1.5.2.1. Stereotypes of Black Women

It is impossible to separate gender issues from other aspects of identity like race, class, sexual preference, nationality etc. The history of slavery colours the black woman's image of herself; it also colours the image, the others have of black women. The articulation of gender by black women writers and white women writers is different, due to the racial divide and the history of slavery. Black women were traditionally regarded as less than their white sisters. The stigma of sexual promiscuity was associated with black womanhood. Female slaves were depicted as mere breeders, not mothers. Commenting on the stereotypes of black women in American literature, McKay writes:

...black women in American literature, from the beginning, have been depicted as either sexually loose and therefore tempters of men, or obedient and subservient mammies, loving and tender to the white children they raised and forever faithful to the owners they served. (1991:250)

Slavery has been abolished; yet, its myths and attitudes linger on. So, the first duty of the black writers is to establish their heroines as women and mothers; their duty is to show that these women do have maternal feelings and feminine perspective. Black women make their gender visible by entering the literary arena. Black women writers combat the negative
stereotypes by establishing that black women are not only women and mothers but also persons in their own right.

1.5.2.2. Day-to-day Reality

Men on both sides of the colonial divide, engage themselves in a bitter strife; but often they collaborate to dominate women. Sexual and economical exploitation of colonial women is prevalent. Female slaves were the back-bone of plantation economies. Their bodies were not their own; they belonged to their white masters, to be used as they liked. They did not have any rights over their children; the children could be sold away from them. Things are no better today. On the economic conditions of the present day blacks, Paul Krugman, a columnist in The Hindu, says that the American government policies “consistently help those who are already doing extremely well, not those lagging behind—a group that includes the vast majority of African-Americans... both the relative and absolute economic status of blacks... have worsened since 2000.... the minimum wage... disproportionately affects African-American workers...” (Krugman 2006: 11).

On the political front, the segregationist presidential campaigns drive “a wedge between blacks and relatively poor whites who share the same economic interests...” (Ibid.). When it comes to the legal scene, the politicized Justice Department’s civil rights division is bringing “fewer voting rights and employment cases involving systematic discrimination against African-Americans...” (Qtd. in Krugman 2006: 11). Then there is the continuing efforts in America to suppress black voting by misidentifying large numbers of African-Americans as “felons ineligible to
vote" (Krugman 2006: 11). Thus, the black man is denied his civil rights. According to Loomba,

Third world women and women of colour provide the cheapest labour for sweatshops, the sex-trade, large multinationals as well as smaller industries, they are the guinea pigs for exploitative and dangerous experiments in health and fertility (1998:172).

Black men, finding their manhood challenged by the white norms of the dominant society, become more tyrannical at home. As a group, black women, in the words of bell hooks, a black feminist writer, are "collectively at the bottom of the occupational ladder" and their social status is "lower than that of any other group" (1984:14). bell hooks comments on the unusual position of black women in the US: "...we are allowed no institutionalized ‘other’ that we can exploit or oppress. White women and black men have it both ways. They can act as oppressor or be oppressed" (15). Black women find themselves subjected to racism, sexism and classism. All these things prove the statement made by President Robert Mugabe on the occasion of Zimbabwe’s twenty fifth anniversary of Independence, to be true. In a thirty five-minute speech in the National Sports Stadium in Harare he states: “To this day we bear the lasting scars of that dark encounter with colonialism, often described in the west as civilising” (Meldrum 2005: 14). Black women writers portray such contemporary realities in their writing, to create an awareness among black women and also men.
1.5.2.3. Black Subjectivity Proclaimed

The recurring themes in black women writers are black women's developing strength and self-consciousness. The authors present a full range of women's experiences in their characterizations. They make it clear that the struggle to be self-defined and autonomous is never easy; but at the same time, it is not impossible. Defining themselves on their own terms is very crucial for black women, in proclaiming their subjectivity. The importance of the reclamation of the black female self is voiced by Abena P.B. Busia. She asserts:

Our reality is not that we are “neither white nor male”, our reality is that we are both black and female; .... The difference is crucial, for what we are undertaking is a process of affirmation, to proclaim that selfhood, our very own, which has heretofore been “othered”. ...As black women we have recognized the need to rewrite or reclaim our own herstories, and to define ourselves ....we are simply, but quite radically, reclaiming our own stories, which have for so long been told for us, and been told wrong.(1988:1-2)

1.5.2.4. The Past in the Present

The past, both personal and historical past, plays a great role in the question of identity. The black women writers believe that to define themselves on their own terms, black people must consciously engage their past. They also believe that an oppressed people cannot overcome their
oppressors and take control of their lives until they have a clear and truthful picture of all that has gone before, until they begin to use their history creatively.

The black women writers believe that without tradition one has no real existence. So, they make their major characters to go back to their ancient heritage. A central motif in many of black women's writing, to use Busia's words, is "an exploration of a sense of self through both personal and group history to the final end of articulating a narrative of the self, with a clear sense of one's place among one's people, in an accepted or chosen location" (1988:3). In black fiction, women begin to define themselves, taking into consideration what they have and do with their lives rather than what they lack or must not do. Black women's literature has become a drive for self-definition and re-definition.

The protagonist in Black fiction confront their past and recognize the qualities of resistance, excellence and integrity that were so much a part of their past. They take them as guidelines to grow up and to find their self. The mother-daughter relationship that is so crucial in the black woman's search for self, is a sacred one to the Africans. This relationship symbolizes the relationship between the earth and creativity in Africa (Christian 1980). In the black woman's attempt to realize herself, the convergence of history and feminism is seen. Black feminist writers emphasize the need for women to re-establish connections with one another. This black sisterhood gives them emotional life support.
1.5.2.5. Black Feminism

Black feminism has been at work in the articulations of black women about themselves, since the second half of the nineteenth century. The earliest articulator of black feminism was the ex-slave Sojourner Truth. She questioned the invisibility of black women within the feminist movement by asking "ain't I a woman?" (Qtd. in Gamble 2001: 329) at the 1851 Women's Rights Convention, Akron, Ohio. Mary Church Terrell, Amanda Berry Smith and Anna Cooper were some of the black feminists of nineteenth century who spoke about the double slavery of black women. At the end of 1960s, there was a rise in the political consciousness. Many black activists, like Angela Davis and Audre Lorde, came to national prominence. Davis brought a Marxist interpretation to bear on women's oppression. bell hooks' Ain't I a Woman (1981) enriched black feminist discourse. The First Wave Feminism of the late eighteenth century and the nineteenth, and the Second Wave Feminism of 1970s have neglected the lived experience of racism. So, the Third Wave Feminism was initiated by women of colour in the US; it was founded by Rebecca Walker, the daughter of Alice Walker. It accepts the notion of hybridity; it is linked with political activism; it is an approach to work against the social injustices done to women in their everyday life; it is clearly informed by Spivak's notion of subalternity; it desires to deconstruct essentialist assumptions about race and gender. These ideas find echoes in the fiction written by black women writers in 1980s and after.
1.5.2.6. Writing, an Act of Resistance

Literature by women of colour, especially black fiction, is a very successful medium for expressing the particular difficulties of gendered and cultural identity. Being the post-colonial intellectuals, the black women writers try to give the subaltern a voice in history. It can be and should be done only by women of colour. In this regard Busia gives voice to the strong feeling of black women. She says: "Only we should be left with the task of illuminating our own lives" (1988:7). Black fiction is distinctive in its themes, structure and stylistics. The stories of black women writers are about the struggle of black people, especially black women, against the forces in the white dominant society that attempt to eliminate the black cultural identity. To tell their stories, they often use non-European mode of narration. This post-colonial mode of narration may be based on memory, blues, jazz music, the cyclic nature of myth or the story-telling tradition of Africa. To describe the alienation of vision and the crisis in self-image caused by their diaspora, the black women writers seize the language of the imperialists and appropriate it to their needs. They extend the horizons of the colonizer’s language by means of neologism, innovation, tropes and imaginative usage. By doing so, they construct difference, separation and absence from the metropolitan norm. Thus, the black women's writing, rather speaking through their writing, is an act of resistance. It is a very difficult job to do, because the write-supremacist, capitalist and patriarchal State undermines what is potentially radical; it turns it into commodity. But undaunted, the black feminist writers go on because these "organic intellectuals are actively involved in society, that is, they constantly
struggle to change minds and expand markets... organic intellectuals are always on the move, on the make” (Said 1994:4).

In the 1960s and 1970s the feminist ideology was at work with a new vigour and assertiveness. It coloured the thinking of women, especially of the women creative writers, the world over. Feminist texts would privilege female concern and feminine experience; they would present a gynocentric vision of reality. The American fiction of the 1980s was dominated by the African-American women writers. Dissent was the dominant artistic mode. The large number of autobiographies written by black women writers during this period show their resistance to cultural oppression. The impact of Second Wave Feminism could be seen visibly in the novels written by Paule Marshall, Tony Morrison, Alice Walker, Gloria Naylor and others. They have tried to instil in black women self-confidence and a sense of self-worth by showing them, through their fiction, that black womanhood could be turned into assets and sources of strength.

1.5.2.7. **Toni Morrison (1931)**

Toni Morrison, novelist, essayist, playwright, editor, critic and Nobel Prize winner, is one of the contemporary organic intellectuals who champion the cause of the blacks in the U.S. She deals with the American reality by drawing on African-American oral tradition, magic realism, and supernatural and gothic elements. Some of her well known novels are *The Bluest Eye* (1970), *Sula* (1973), *Song of Solomon* (1977), *Tar Baby* (1981), *Beloved* (1987), *Jazz* (1992) and *Paradise* (1998). To Toni Morrison, the present renaissance is not an isolated phenomenon. It is a part of a long and continuous tradition that has evolved after slavery. Her works are
rediscovery of history; they express a new innovative force. For example, the narrative structure of *Beloved* (1987) is not linear. The story of the protagonist, Sethe, is told piece by piece through the act of re-memory. The boundaries between myth and reality disappear. Morrison seeks to celebrate the legends of black women like Baby Suggs, Sethe's cultural mentor.

1.5.2.8. Alice Walker (1944)

Alice Walker is a womanist writer. She is a novelist, short story writer, essayist, poet, critic, editor, and author of children's books. Her *Colour Purple* (1982) won both the American Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize. She portrays black women as triply burdened and disadvantaged; they are black, female and economically under-privileged. They occupy a very marginal place in the American social life; they are made to feel insignificant, faceless, subservient and they are without identity. Walker believes that only black women can give them back their respected humanity.

Walker coined the word 'womanism'. It is a kind of feminism that deals with the special difficulties facing women. A womanist is one who is responsible, in-charge and serious. She is a woman who loves other women, sometimes individual men, sexually or non-sexually. She is committed to the survival of the whole race. Some of her major works are: *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), *Meridian* (1976), *The Colour Purple* (1982), *The Temple of My Familiar* (1989), *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992), *By the Light of My Father's Smile* (1998) and *In Search of Our Mother's Gardens : Womanist Prose* (1983).
Walker is another innovative force in black fiction. Her *Temple of My Familiar* (1989) is, basically, oral history written in the tradition of the African *griots*, the poet-priests. They are the living encyclopedia of their culture, in non-literate societies. The *griot* of the novel is Lissie. The story of her life is the story of thousands of lives. She has been many women; as the plot develops, Lissie's stories multiply. She expands into a kind of womanist consciousness and finally universal consciousness.

1.5.2.9. *Gloria Naylor* (1950)

Gloria Naylor is a novelist, an editor and a short story writer. Her work forms a part of the female African-American movement of the 1980s. Her work is compared to that of great writers such as Alice Walker and Tony Morrison. Her principal works are *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982), *Linden Hills* (1985), *Mama Day* (1988), *Bailey’s Cafe* (1992) and *The Men of Brewster Place* (1988). Her novel *The Women of Brewster Place* (1982) won the American Book Award for best new novel in 1983. She received a National endowment for the Arts Fellowship the same year. She is known for her lyrical prose and her skilful use of the mythical and magical in her novels. In the novels of Naylor, suffering becomes the environment, and pride becomes the inspiration for the individual’s dreams. Naylor’s fiction depicts the black-on-black oppression as in *The Colour Purple* (1982) and *Sula* (1973). She believes that only a revolution in consciousness can save the black community from imminent disaster.
1.6. PAULE MARSHALL AND POST-COLONIALITY

1.6.1. The Author and Her Works

1.6.1.1. Marshall, Truly Post-colonial

Marshall, novelist and short story writer, is a prominent and innovative voice in contemporary American literature. She is a passionate champion of the individual's search for personal identity. She is one among those writers who present positive images of Africa and the diaspora. The relationship between the individual's development of a healthy self and the black community is a paramount concern in Marshall as in Toni Morrison and Alice Walker. Ambivalence and hybridity mark both her work and her life. Her works are listed under headings as various as 'American Literature', 'Caribbean Literature', 'African-American Literature' and 'African-Caribbean Literature'. Her works reveal the influence of American, Caribbean and African literary traditions. According to Barbara T. Christian, "Marshall in her writing carefully sculpts the complex forms of her African cultural heritage as it appears in the black cultures of the Caribbean, South America, and the United States" (2001: 547).

Marshall was born in Brooklyn, New York, to Barbadian parents in 1929. They came to New York from a tiny island in the West Indies, shortly after World War I, as immigrants. Her parents were unskilled. So, her mother could find no other work except, in Marshall's words, "cleaning people's houses" (Baer 1992:252). Her father could not find "the work that he felt was in keeping with what he was as a person" (Ibid.: 255). Samuel Burke, her father, one day disappeared out of their lives to go and live in...
Father Divine’s “Kingdom” in Harlem. He abandoned them, in Marshall’s words, “to a cycle of poverty” and her mother’s “rapid decline into bitterness, cancer, and an early death” (Dance 1992:8). From early on, Marshall was trilingual. She spoke black English, West Indian style, at home; she used black English, African-American style, when she went outside to play with her friends; she learned standard English at school. Such experiences of Marshall and her parents speak of post-colonial condition of displacement and its attendant problems and blessings.

When Marshall was nine, her mother took her to Barbados to visit her grandmother. Her mother called Barbados 'home' and to Marshall, New York was home. It was a little bit confusing to the young girl. In Barbados, Marshall saw a different culture, African-West Indian culture at work. When she grew up she saw herself belonging to both. In her interview with Daryl Cumber Dance, Marshall makes it clear that she does not make “any distinction between African-American and West Indian. All o’we is one as far as I’m concerned. And I, myself, am both” (7). She also says that her way of seeing the world has been so profoundly shaped by my dual experience, those two communities, West Indian and African-American. Those two great traditions – they nurtured me, they inspired me, they formed me. I am fascinated by the interaction of the two cultures, which is really, as I see it, one tradition. One culture.(16)

When she started writing, she made a syncretic whole out of the various strands that went into her making. The power and importance of Marshall's
work transcends race and gender. In her works, she connects the local with the global.

1.6.1.2. Marshall's Literary Sources

Marshall acknowledges the influence of both oral and written African literary traditions, on her writing. These influences have made it possible for her to hold on to her vision and her voice. The foundation stone for her development as a writer was laid when she was a kid. She was forced to listen to her mother's conversation with her friends in her mother's kitchen. For these Barbadian immigrants, their talk was a refuge. They were baffled and overwhelmed by the vastness, complexity, power, strange customs and laws of America. Their afternoon daily talk served them as therapy. It helped them to “recover from the long wait on the corner that morning and the bargaining over their labor, it restored them to a sense of themselves and reaffirmed their self-worth. Through language they were able to overcome the humiliations of the work-day” (Marshall 1983a:26). Marshall speaks about her mother and her friends in an interview with Sylvia Baer; she says that they looked "ordinary" but "they were actually poets; they did marvelous things with the English language that they had learned in the schools of Barbados .... They transformed the King's English. They brought to bear the few African words and cadences that they remembered and they infused and enriched with all manner of biblical quotes and metaphors and sayings drawn from their life as black women" (Baer 1992:252). Their political perspective became Marshall's way of looking at the world. These "giants" taught Marshall a few things. Marshall acknowledges their lessons in the following lines: “They taught
me my first lessons in the narrative art. They trained my ear. They set a standard of excellence" (1983a:30). They so freely passed on to her “the rich legacy of language and culture... in the workshop of the kitchen” (Ibid.). Marshall has learnt from these “mother poets” (Baer 1992:253) how to use the colonizer’s language in a subversive manner, to suit her own purposes.

Another influence from the oral tradition on Marshall was her maternal grandmother. Da-duh was her nickname. She remains an important presence in Marshall’s work. She appears in almost all her works in one guise or another. She embodies for Marshall “that long line of unknown black men and women” (Dance 1992: 7) who are her forebears. Marshall always identified herself with “this stalwart black woman” (Ibid.). Marshall utters these words to describe her relationship with her grandmother: “In fact I’ve always felt that I was more her child than my mother’s. And her heir as well, in the sense that I have the feeling I was perhaps put here on this earth to preserve and continue her essence” (Ibid.).

Marshall moved from the oral tradition represented by her mother and her grandmother to the written tradition. As a little girl growing up, she read Nancy Drew books. In High School, she was introduced to Jane Austen, later on in college, to Joseph Conrad and Thomas Mann, Thackeray, Thomas Hardy and Charles Dickens. She was somewhat influenced by these writers. In an interview with Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, Marshall reveals that Mann is of value to her because “he handles so well the full-blown, the large-scale novel” (1977:25) and because of “his handling of characters” (26). She admired Joseph Conrad during her
adolescence for his “marvelous use of language” (30). For the same reason she liked John Updike and found Sartre exciting.

Marshall got introduced to black writing through Paul Lawrence Dunbar. He showed her what blacks could do with a language imposed on them. She found Ralph Ellison’s *Shadow and Act* (1972), a collection of essays which acknowledges and celebrates black American life, seminal to her approach to writing. When she got to read people like James Baldwin and Richard Wright, she was pleased because she was reading about black life. But still, something was missing. About this experience she says:

... I didn’t see myself reflected anywhere. Certainly I didn’t see myself reflected in the literature in any kind of truthful and complex way, and that was a very painful experience. There were no books back then that reflected my experience or reassured me that I had a right to be here, that there was much about my life that was of worth and value. (Dance 1992: 17-18)

Then, Marshall discovered black women writers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Gwendolyn Brooks. Brooks, especially her poetic novel *Maud Martha* (1953), had the greatest impact on Marshall because, “for the first time in *Maud Martha*, was a complex rendering of a black woman” (Dance 1992:18) and that was exceedingly important for Marshall. Just before she went to the West Indies, in the mid-fifties, she had read Lamming’s *In the Castle of My Skin* (1970); thus, she had begun her education in West Indian letters. Later in her life, Marshall came into contact with African-Caribbean women writers of Francophone expression, like Maryse Conde.
Marshall had been to Africa, to attend the Festival of African Arts and Culture, in 1977 in Nigeria. There she encountered black writers from Africa and the black diaspora, for the first time. She visited the University of Ibadan during her stay. She was interviewed by Omolara Ogundipe-Leslie, an African woman critic and writer, on home soil. Marshall describes her experiences in Africa: “What was extraordinary for me was the way Africa adopted me. The Yorubas thought that I was a Yoruba, the Ibos thought that I was an Ibo, and the Ghanians thought that I was from Ghana” (Williams 1986:52). In 1980, Marshall travelled to Kenya and Uganda in East Africa. There also, as in West Africa, she was adopted as a native daughter. Marshall says that an expression of Yoruba or Ibo origin “omowale” meaning “a native daughter has returned” (Ibid.), in translation, summarizes the experience of her physical return to Africa. She further says that there was also “a spiritual, emotional and affective facet” (Ibid.) of her return. Thus, she has initiated the dialogue among peoples of African descent around the world, taking the ‘journey back’ to Africa. Returning with a better understanding of her own self and African culture, she continues to sing the praisesome of her cultural heritage.

Marshall now divides her time between Richmond, Virginia, and New York City. She is a Professor of English and Creative Writing at New York University. There she teaches a fiction workshop and sponsors the “Paule Marshall and the New Generation Symposium”. In this yearly symposium, emerging novelists read from their first published books. Marshall is committed to encourage young black writers. Marshall finds that teaching does feed her writing; but she does not write while she
teaches. She writes when she is in Richmond; she finds a conducive atmosphere there.

Marshall has received the Rosenthal Award from the National Institute of Arts and Letters, a Guggenheim Fellowship, the John Dos Passos Prize for Writing, a Mac Arthur Fellowship and grants from the Ford Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

1.6.1.3. Marshall’s Works

Marshall came across a collection of poems by Paul Lawrence Dunbar in the New York public Library, when she was around twelve. He was the first black writer she has ever read. The collection of poems came as a “revelation” to her, telling her “something interesting and valid” about her own experience and “something worthwhile about that play with language” (Baer 1992:253). Dunbar also instilled in her “the secret desire to some day write” (Ibid.). Marshall made her attempt at writing at the age of twelve, trying her hand at poetry. She comments on her first writing:

Oh, it was very bad poetry, mainly because I was writing about things that I knew nothing about – apple trees, which I’d never seen growing in Brooklyn: kings and queens. I was trying to get out of myself and out of my world, not knowing then of course that writers should stick with their own worlds.(Lodge 1984:90)
1.6.1.3.1. “The Valley Between” (1954)

Marshall’s very first published story “The Valley Between” (1954) was written when she could “barely crawl”, when she was “a mere babe in terms of craft and technique” (Ibid.). It is included in Marshall’s Reena and Other Stories (1983c). The story is about the frustrations of a college-trained woman who is expected only to be an angel at home. Marshall entered Hunter College in New York in 1948. She got married to her first husband Kenneth E. Marshall in 1950. Soon after her marriage she fell ill and had to leave college. When she was convalescing, she wrote “The Valley Between”. She describes in an interview, the circumstances under which she had to write: “It was a very inhospitable climate in which I started writing. I had no mentors, no one that I could turn to” (Pettis 1991:127). May be because she lacked African-American female literary models, the characters in her first story are white, not black. Marshall gives a reason for this: “...I felt I could hide what was going on in my own life behind these white characters” (Baer 1992:254). Marshall has this to say about this story: “... even if technical things were a little off...it was firmly grounded in what are some of my main preoccupations as a writer: a woman’s need for self-fulfillment, her reaching out for another self and the kinds of opposition and resistance that she runs into” (Lodge 1984:90). These themes really came into their own in the early 1970s; but Marshall has anticipated them by twenty years. Even in her first serious attempt at writing, Marshall was a forerunner of future trends. She was writing about women who were just like herself: “...women who were raised to find worth that was important, were raised to have a sense of self, and yet at the same time were carefully programmed from the very beginning to go the
established route, marriage, family, the lot” (Baer 1992:254). In “The Valley Between”, even though Cassie, a white woman of twenty four years, has succumbed to the pressure at home, Marshall makes her reveal her desire to realize herself apart from her role as mother and wife.

1.6.1.3.2. Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959)

After completing Brooklyn College in 1953 with a degree in English, Marshall looked for a work on a newspaper or magazine. Careers available for black women, then, were teaching and social work. Even black journals were not interested in hiring women. After searching for two years, Marshall got a job at a small black magazine called Our World. She worked there for five years. Marshall talks of her experience there and how she came to write Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) in a publisher’s weekly interview. She says:

I was working for a second-rate magazine, and I became frightened that I was going to spend my whole life writing mediocre material for this magazine. So I came home one evening and began writing Brown Girl, Brownstones ....(Lodge 1984:91)

Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) was first published by Random House. Hiram Hayden, Marshall’s editor at Random House told her about the book: “Well, you know, nothing usually happens with this kind of book” (Lodge 1984: 91). On hearing this Marshall found what it meant to be black and a woman. Even though her book was going to be published, due to its literary merit, she was not considered a part of literary
community. Despite fine reviews, the book was a commercial failure. But it stayed its course and it was reissued in 1981 by Feminist press. Marshall has told Sally Lodge, in an interview, that the novel was “finding a new audience; a whole new generation is coming to Brown Girl, and these readers have found some of their own concerns and ambitions mirrored in the novel” (Ibid.).

Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), a traditional novel in form, permits Marshall to operate on many levels. It allows her to explore the inner state of her characters and the worlds beyond them. This novel certainly looks inward. Brown Girl, Brownstones describes, as is said by Helene Christol, “the journey of the fragmented self through experience to knowledge and ultimately, though the ending is still ambiguous, to wholeness and being” (1992 :249). The novel, initially, was considered a book for juveniles. But, the book’s complexity of language and psychology make it a book for adult readers. It is a Bildungsroman of a black woman, a novel of growth, development, a coming-of-age novel. Linda Pannill argues that Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) is more than a Bildungsroman; it is “a Kunstlerroman, an artist-heroine fiction” (1985:63). The protagonist is an artist, a dancer. There seems to be no black women artist-apprenticeship novels; Paule Marshall has written one. The publication of the novel initiated Marshall into writing as a vocation. She has often commented that in writing this novel, she was learning how to write and finding her own personal mode of expression. The creation of character within the physical and cultural context is the distinguishing characteristic of Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959). It relates individual, personal development to a collective history.
Marshall’s first novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, tells the story of an individual, Selina Boyce, a black girl, and her growing up within the context of the West Indian black community of the Bajans, in Brooklyn. To some extent, the novel is autobiographical; yet, primarily it is a novel rather than an autobiography. The entire novel focuses on the adolescent years of Selina, to show how a black girl becomes a woman. The novel is divided into four books: “A Long Day and a Long Night”, “Pastorale”, “The War” and “Selina”.

Book one introduces Selina, a ten-year-old girl, her elder sister Ina, their parents, Deighton Boyce and Silla Boyce and their community. The second book, “Pastorale”, is a short lyrical piece. Selina, on the verge of adolescence, goes on a trolley outing on a Sunday with her best friend, Beryl. The urge for freedom is always with her. The title of book three is “The War”. The time span it covers corresponds precisely to that of World War II. But the war referred to is the one which begins in earnest between Selina’s parents. Book four, “Selina”, concludes the novel. Selina experiences a deep conflict between her membership in the Barbadian immigrant community and her urge to seek a less materialistic and confining life for herself outside it. At the end of the novel, Selina is planning a trip to Barbados. She hopes that the journey will help her to understand herself as well as the people among whom she has spent her life and the influences which have shaped her. She has understood that facing the world alone makes a woman strong.

Helene Christol says; *Brown Girl, Brownstones* is “a book of origins: it started Marshall’s search for a true political perspective...”
The novel stresses the necessity to find new definitions of masculine and feminine for creating better relations between men and women. It "cracks the stereotype of the black matriarch" and "penetrates the worn image of ne'er-do-well black man" (Christian 1984a: 162). It focuses on the development of an intelligent and complex woman who is multifaceted and self-defined. It portrays the problems faced and overcome by the first generation Third World immigrants and their children in the First world; it points out the role played by one's community and culture in their struggle for survival. Marshall acknowledges the fact that Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) "has almost become a modern-day classic" (Pettis 1991: 127).

1.6.1.3.3. **Soul Clap Hands and Sing (1961)**

In an interview (Pettis 1991), Marshall has stated the reasons behind the writing of Soul Clap Hands and Sing (1961). When she was in Barbados, rewriting and revising Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), she came across the seed for The Chosen Place. The Timeless People (1969). Since it would take a very long time to do the research and write the novel, she wanted to "knock out" the second book for which "the stories were just there waiting" (Pettis 1991: 121) to be put down on paper. Moreover, she wanted to prove that she could write as effectively about men as she had written about women in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959). According to Marshall, the question that really prompted Soul Clap Hands and Sing (1961) was "how does one use well this gift of life. How do you really find a way to live fully?" (Pettis 1991: 122). Marshall has used the men in the collection of novellas as vehicles to explore that question and answer it. In
this regard Marshall says: "It was one of my ways, through those characters, to ease some of the tension of what I was feeling-how was I really going to order my life; how was I really going to commit myself to being a writer and all that that entails" (Ibid.).

The title of Soul Clap Hands and Sing is a musical symbol taken from Yeats' poem, "Sailing to Byzantium" (1926). This quartet of novellas is held together by the theme, the theme of alienation. The four stories, "Barbados", "Brooklyn", "British Guiana" and "Brazil" are about the pitiable fate of older men who face meaninglessness and lonely ends. Marshall makes women to act as catalysts for these men; through the women the men get a clear perception of themselves. The men come to understand that they have not used their lives well.

Soul Clap Hands and Sing (1961) identifies the West Indies as the pivotal landscape Marshall would use in her work. All the four places referred to by the titles begin with 'B' and they stretch from Brooklyn to Brazil. Marshall examines what is going on in these very different parts of the world and with these very different people. The four stories show that they are caught up in the same fundamental, universal kinds of questions and problems related to social fragmentation in colonial societies and conflicts of race and colour, class divisions and political disarray. The emergence of the New Order in developing societies, symbolized by the servant girl in "Barbados", Miss Williams in "Brooklyn" and Sidney in "British Guiana", gives a glimpse of hope. The four novellas present not a dismissal of the male but an affirmation of the female.
1.6.1.3.4. "Reena" (1962)

"Reena", a short-story, first appeared in the October 1962 issue of Harper's magazine. Marshall has included it in her short story collection, *Reena and Other Stories* (1983c). It is one of the first pieces of African-American literature to portray the complex choices confronting the contemporary educated black women. The story is in the form of a conversation between two friends, Paulie, the narrator and her friend, Reena. After a twenty-year separation they get re-united at the funeral of Aunt Vi. They meet at the wake and spend the entire night talking, trying to catch up with the personal past. But, in that brief period, the history of generations of black men and women is compressed. Marshall writes a story within the story and it is densely packed with historical and cultural information. There is no conventional plot line. The story often reads like an essay; it is autobiographical in nature.

Paulie and Reena with their spirited pursuit of self-identity and self-sufficiency, are assertive survivors. Their story is told with all the consummate artistry of Marshall's novels and novellas. Reena foreshadows Merle Kinbona of *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969); both are middle aged black women; both feel fragmented by their experience as oppressed people in the West; yet, both retain some measure of their own vitality (Christian 1984a: 166).

1.6.1.3.5. "Some Get Wasted" (1964)

"Some Get Wasted" (1964) is a story about Hezzy, a black boy. He wants to belong to the Noble Knights, a Brooklyn gang. He tries to prove
his manhood to the gang. The rival gang is the Crowns. Both the gangs ritualistically fight the other on Massacre Hill every Memorial day. Marshall focuses on the definition of manhood, from the viewpoint of black males in the racist America. For them, manhood is rage and arrogance which will get them recognition; masculinity is rooted in the concept of glory. The story takes place within Hezzy’s head, as he runs from the rival gang, the Crowns. He desires to be a hero among his people; he wants to exhibit his masculinity which is threatened by the dominant society's norms, in a dangerous and glamorous way. But, in an initiation rite Hezzy gets killed, ironically by his own people, who mistake him for one of the Crowns. He gets wasted, like Vere in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969). The story is spun around the contemporary phenomenon of the feeling of the displacement experienced by African-Americans in the United States.

1.6.1.3.6. “To Da-duh, In Memoriam” (1967)

“To Da-duh, In Memoriam” (1967) is a story about Marshall's maternal grandmother. It is included in Marshall’s *Reena and Other Stories* (1983c). Da-duh was her nickname. Marshall says that the story was straight out of her imagination; as a little girl, Marshall knew her grandmother briefly. But, even then, Marshall sensed "her special force and her resiliency, her spirit" (Dance 1992:7). Da-duh was "this stalwart black woman" (Ibid.). She became a very important figure to Marshall; she appears in almost all her works. The short story, “To Da-duh, In Memoriam”, is about the return of a first generation American girl to the islands. The child becomes aware of her divided self, after her first visit to
Barbados. The visit becomes a discovery of roots and heritage. Marshall uses the visit as a means to express her concern with pasts and their significance in reconstructing the racial self. She understands the importance of the ancestors; she celebrates them in her fiction.

1.6.1.3.7. The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969)

Marshall's monumental novel, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), was originally entitled "Ceremonies of the Guest House" in manuscript form. While she was working on this novel, Marshall was divorced; she received three grants and awards; she published three short stories: "Reena" (1962), "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" (1967) and "Some Get Wasted" (1964). Each of these stories represents a stage of Marshall's work. When Marshall was in Barbados revising her first novel Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), a group of social scientists visited the island for summer field work. Their reaction to and relations with local people gave Marshall the seed for the writing of The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (Pettis 1991:124). The title emphasizes the connection between the character and context as in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959). 'The chosen place' of the novel is Bournehills, a near wasteland at the end of a Caribbean island. 'The timeless people' are the people of Bournehills. The main concern in the novel is with the effects of the colonial condition and experience on a people; it is about neocolonialism and the echo of past actions in the present.

The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) is divided into four books. The first book "Heirs and Descendants" introduces the social strata of Bourne Island and the new comers, the team of members of
philanthropic agency, named the Center for Applied Social Research, from the United States. In the second book "Bournehills", the focus is on the land itself. In Bournehills, the past is vivid, refusing to be hidden by an illusory present. There is no pretence that things have changed for the better. Bournehills society is based on a feudal slave model. Little is changed in the life of the natives from the time of slavery to the present period of absentee ownership of the land.

The third and fourth books, "Carnival" and "Whitsun", are named after ritual times of the year; they denote both continuity and change. In these two books, the personal pasts of the various characters intersect and sometimes conflict with the rituals of Carnival and Whitsun. Bournehills becomes a land of self-recognition for the major characters. As Marshall says, the novel "makes a statement about what is happening in the Third World in general" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1977: 28), politically and psychologically. So, it can very well be called a Third World Novel. Marshall calls it "a strongly political novel" in which she is trying to deal with "the new colonialism" (26-27).

1.6.1.3.8. Praisesong for the Widow (1983)

During the 1970s Marshall worked on her third novel, Praisesong for the Widow (1983b). She remarried in 1970 and her "open and innovative marriage" (Christian 2001: 558) with Nourry Menard allowed her the time and freedom to work. In her 1983 interview with Felicia Lee, Marshall has talked about the inspiration behind the novel. She has said that she read a book called Drums and Shadows (1940), which contained the reminiscences of the Gullah people. One story in that book is concerned
with the Ibo people. According to the legend, the Ibos, brought as slaves, just turned around and walked back to where they came from. The story would not leave Marshall. In addition to that, there was a figure in the back of Marshall's mind "of a terribly dignified, kind of reserved, middle-aged woman" (Lee 1983). Marshall says of this woman: "I don't know how she got there, but she wouldn't go away. It is as if these slaves had something to say about this middle-age, middle-class black woman" (Ibid.). That woman became the sixty four year old Avey Johnson, a supervisor in the New York State Motor Vehicle Department and a widow in Praisesong for the Widow (1983b). About Avey, Marshall speaks in the Second National Conference on Women and the Arts held in July 1985: “She’s a classic type in the black community. And she never gets written about. Nobody writes about middle-class black women. And I decided to write about her because she too is part of the black experience” (1985a: 22). As Christian says, “In focusing on such an unlikely heroine, Marshall once again charted new territory in the area of African American Women’s Literature” (2001: 559).

Praisesong for the Widow (1983b) itself is a praise song, an African ritual that shows the relationship between the individuals and the community by recounting the essence of a life so that future generations may flourish. The novel is divided into four parts: "Runagate", "Sleeper's Wake", "Lave' Tete" and "The Beg Pardon". The title "Runagate" is taken from Robert Hayden's famous poem of that name. Like the archetypal slave figure of the poem, Avey stumbles from darkness to darkness. The second section "Sleeper's Wake" is a wake for the past and also an awakening from the past. The title of "Lave' Tete" refers to the Haitian Voodoo ceremony
in which one is washed clean. The last section, "The Beg Pardon" begins with a description of the preparation for the ritual of cleansing, healing and empowerment. Having both her body and mind washed clean, Avey participates in the Beg Pardon ceremony; she becomes herself by knowing her proper name, Avatara.

Talking about her first three novels, Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) and Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), Marshall says: "Taken together, the three books ... constitute a trilogy describing, in reverse, the slave trade’s triangular route back to the motherland, the source" (1973:107). Marshall has expressed her hope, in an interview, that the novel, Praisesong for the Widow (1983b), will be read closely by people in the black community. She says:

I hope older people read it and realize that at any point one is capable of reconstituting one's life. To younger people I'm trying to say one has to be careful about the choices one makes. One has to be careful about nourishing the past. (Lee 1983)

As Marshall avers, the novel seeks to answer two questions; one is, how does a black woman and a writer grow in a society that almost daily assaults her sense of self; the other is, "...how does one grow old in youth-struck America?" (Dance 1992:4).
1.6.1.3.9. **Reena and Other Stories** (1983)

*Reena and Other Stories* (1983c) is a collection of Marshall's stories previously published separately or in other collections. They are "The Valley Between" (1954), "Brooklyn" (1952, 1961), "Barbados" (1961) "Reena" (1962) "To Da-duh, In Memoriam" (1967) and "Merle" (1969), a novella excerpted from her 1969 novel, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* and extensively reshaped and rewritten. The stories collected speak of transcendence and continuity. Her women battle sexism and racism and their self becomes the source of strength. They create power to define their lives. They are emergent black women.

1.6.1.3.10. **Daughters** (1991)

Marshall's fourth novel, *Daughters* (1991), is an African diasporic text; it connects issues affecting blacks in the United States with those of blacks in the Caribbean. The seed for the novel was a quote which Marshall came across in a dance program. Once, when she was waiting for the curtains to go up on a performance of the Alvin Ailey Dance Company, in New York, she leafed through the program; she came across an epigraph to one of the dances; Marshall quotes the epigraph that struck her: "*Little girl of all the daughters, / you ain't no more slave, / you's a woman now*" (Dance 1992:1). That line stayed with her; it gave her the idea for a story about a group of four or five black women wandering around backstage in her mind; and "*Daughters* was born that night" (Dance 1992:2).

A number of crisscrossed relationships involving a cluster of women or "constellation" is at the centre of *Daughters* (1991). Several of the
novel’s chapters are structured around seven striking women characters, like the seven spectacular stars in the constellations, Ursa Major and Ursa Minor: Ursa Mackenzie, Estelle Mackenzie, Celestine Belgrade, Astral Forde, Malvern, Vincereta Daniels and Mae Ryland. These are the ‘daughters’ of the title and the ‘Little Girl of All the Daughters’ is the thirty four-year-old Ursa. The sun around which all these stars orbit, is Primus Mackenzie (Christian 2001: 560). Daughters (1991) insists on the need for deconstructing the power structure in the decolonized countries and questions the "Third-World status of black people’s communities in the First World" (Pettis 1993:9).

To Marshall's mother and her friends, the kitchen conversations were therapeutic. And for Marshall, it is her writing. In an interview with Deryl Cumber Dance, Marshall discusses the two abortions detailed in Daughters (1991). She says: "Writing about it permitted me to deal for the first time with a similar trauma in my own life when I was a young woman. A date rape, an unwanted pregnancy, a back-alley abortion, which was the only kind available in my day" (Dance 1992:10-11). Writing of Daughters (1991) has healed Marshall in another way also. It has helped her to finally overcome "some really deep-seated feelings of anger and hurt" (Dance 1992:7) caused by her relationship with her father. The greatest grief of her childhood was that her father whom she adored, deserted his family to become a member of Father Divine's quasi-religious cult. Through Daughters (1991), and through Ursa's relationship with her father, and her ability to cut away that emotional dependency, Marshall also has achieved her final purging. In this regard she says: “I’ve been able at last to forgive, to bless, and to release Samuel Burke from my life while retaining and
honoring the love I still feel for him. So Daughters in many ways is perhaps my most personal novel in that regard” (Dance 1992:8).

The entire novel, Daughters (1991) takes place within the span of two months. But, Marshall’s deft handling of time takes the readers back to slavery. Slavery was a time “when black women and men worked and struggled together in greater spirit of unity, mutual support, and equality. It’s been referred to as equality under the lash” (Dance 1992:6). The novel seems to mourn the passing of black men and women’s collective cooperation. It stresses that black political action against neo-colonialism and racism must be a united effort taken by both men and women.

1.6.1.3.11. The Fisher King (2000)

The Fisher King (2000), Marshall's fifth novel, was inspired by a photograph of her own cousin, Sonny, which sat on the piano in her parents’ living room. She never met him, due to a familial falling out. She learnt that in his teens Sonny became a jazz saxophone player. Marshall says, in an interview with Bella Stander, that it was a "phenomenally brave thing to do in my part of the world” (Stander 2001: 2). Marshall observes that the West Indian Community in America was “an upwardly mobile community and they had no patience for children who wanted to be artists” (Ibid.). Sonny was drafted into the army in World War II and soon after that he died mysteriously. But, “his willingness and determination to be an artist” (Ibid.) stayed in Marshall's mind. So, she decided “to invent a life for him, in part to makeup for the life he had been denied” (Ibid.). Brooklyn was a Mecca for jazz during the 1940s and 1950s. Marshall did a
research on jazz culture of the 1940s and wrote *The Fisher King* (2000), in memory of her cousin, Sonny. It was written to pay homage, also to the men and the few women, who in Marshall’s words, “braved community and family disapproval and became dedicated jazz musicians” (Doyle 2000:2).

*The Fisher King* (2000), which was nearly ten years in the making, was at the top in the Washington Post Book World list of favourite books of 2000. The story is told from the point of view of a pre-teen child. It tells the tale of two cities, Brooklyn and Paris. The convergence of three continents and four generations is effected in an eight year old boy, Sonny, who emerges as the hope of the feuding black families – the Caribbean-originated Paynes and the African-American McCullum Joneses who live on Macon street, Bed Stuy, Brooklyn. The novel's title is taken from an Arthurian legend. The legend is about a wounded king who is imprisoned in his castle, waiting for a knight to come to heal and protect him. Like that legend, *The Fisher King* is about a grandson's ability to heal and protect - to heal the old wounds and protect the black arts and culture.

Sonny brings together the different branches of the African diaspora and he is a very good example of hybridity. The reality of the nuances of diaspora interactions is best captured by the musical form of jazz. Thus, Marshall's voice joins the ongoing debate over Pan-Africanism and diaspora. Lourdes Lopez Ropero has pointed out that "*The Fisher King* enlarges upon many of the questions that Marshall had originally posed in *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, her trajectory coming full circle in the new novel" (2002:54). In the words of Adele S.Newson - Horst, "The work
[The Fisher King] exceeds the scope of the novel of development, the novel of exile, as well as the novel of the emigree to reach a new height in diaspora writings"(2001:1) Marshall's deliberately honed, deceptive simplicity of language and image in The Fisher King (2000) go hand in hand with clarity of thought and expression.

Marshall is presently working on a memoir that will focus on a number of people and places that have been important in her development as a writer (Annexure).

1.6.2. Marshall's Themes and Technique

In metropolitan texts of canon, the underlying prejudice is that only certain categories of experience are capable of being rendered as 'literature'. But, Paule Marshall and the other black writers have shown that the experience of the blacks can be the material for 'literature'. They have turned their post-coloniality into the source of their formal and thematic originality and strength. Their literature has become the expression of a self-defining and self-sustaining society. Marshall's major themes are both significant and timely; it is unfortunate that Marshall has been neglected for a long time. Linda Pannill feels that "As a Black woman writer who writes about Black women in terms of their particular situations and their complete humanity, Paule Marshall has been long in gaining recognition"(1985 :72). Her treatment of black women links her ethnic themes with feminist, rather, womanist principles and ideals. It is to the sunny side of feminism in the U.S. context that Marshall and her characters belong.
One of the challenges to Marshall and the other black women writers is how to refute all the various myths and stereotypes about black people, especially black women and how to depict them in all their complexity and richness. Marshall says that her responsibility as a writer is, "to tell her story with eloquence, and according to the highest literary standards" (Marshall 1974b:39). So, the big question is how to narrate? "All of Marshall’s novels pose the problem of how to narrate" (Willis 1987:65). African-American, British and Caribbean diasporic cultures not only have moulded each other but also the metropolitan cultures with which they interacted. Such diasporas have given rise to new and complex identities. To analyse these identities new conceptual tools are needed. Writers, such as Marshall, have drawn upon western ideas and vocabularies to challenge the imperialists’ point of view. They often juxtapose what they borrow with indigenous ideas and hybridize it. They read it through their own interpretative lens. They use it to assert cultural alterity. Marshall and her contemporaries have used the Western fiction form as their vehicle, for asserting their identity, individuality and history.

Mark Schorer points out: "To say what one means in art is never easy, and the more intimately one is implicated in one’s material, the more difficult it is" (1986:466). It is true in Marshall’s case; in her novels, many a time, “the personal and the autobiographical have been transformed, disguised, reinvented” (Dance 1992:8). Marshall is an intensely emotional writer. As Schorer says, “merely to repeat one’s emotions, merely to look into one’s heart and write, is also merely to repeat the round of emotional bondage” (1986:466). He further says: “Technique alone objectifies the
materials of art; hence technique alone evaluates these materials” (464). Insisting on the importance of technique, Schorer writes: “If our books are to be exercises in self-analysis, then technique must – and alone can – take the place of the absent analyst” (466). Howard Felperin has this to say about the significance of technique: “…means replace ends….Technique becomes the measure of all things…” (1985:203). The formalists say that form, after all, generates content and not vice versa. Knowing all these things fully well, Marshall has given equal importance to technique along with the themes in her novels. This attitude of Marshall towards technique and the technical scrutiny of subject matter has enabled her to order the greatest amount of black experience, in her novels.

In his interview with Gowri Ramnarayan, Bhabha insists on the importance of technique in literary writing. According to him, “Literature is not simply a window to reality. It is a deeply processed medium. Therefore we have to know about genre and technique that create a vision of the world, become aware of how certain forms illuminate certain things, or don’t” (2004: 4). Marshall having this awareness, uses post-colonial mode of narration, to successfully fictionalize the black diasporic woman’s quest for wholeness. She has taken control of the means of communication and has highlighted ‘otherness’ and ‘hybridity’ and appropriation of the frame of power. Henry Louis Gates,Jr. comments on the use of English by black writers: “To speak properly was to be proper. But to attempt to employ a Western language to posit a black self is inherently to use language ironically” (1987:117). Marshall uses English, the white male language, ironically. She has transformed, bent, shaped and manipulated it. It becomes symbolic; it becomes, to use the words of Gates, Jr., “the black
language of black texts, that expresses the distinctive quality of our literary tradition” (xxi). It signifies; it becomes a language of implication.

Marshall’s work is marked by metaphor and allegory. She uses music, song and dance scenes metaphorically. She reverses the connotations given to colours, such as black and white. She presses into service myth and memory, double exposures, imagery, dialect, story within a story, silence and voice, the ‘four-page-formula’ etc. to bring to light the hitherto-hidden-history of the black people. One of the appropriate techniques used by Marshall, to write about the diasporic black people is, the movement of characters. She redefines the genre, Bildungsroman, its form and function, and revitalizes it. All these appropriated techniques enable Marshall to present a new perception of black life and to assert the black peoples’ philosophy of life and cultural heritage. The present thesis focuses mainly on Marshall’s use of the subverted versions of existing conventions, such as the use of myth and memory, colours, and performing arts, in narration, to bring out her themes.

1.7. REVIEW

Section 1.1. speaks of the need for a broader and deeper study of the close nexus between the narrative technique and post-colonial perception in Paule Marshall’s novels. Section 1.2. states the objective of the thesis. Section 1.3. situates post-colonial studies. The brief outlines of various discourses, such as colonial, post-colonial, postmodern, post-structuralist, feminist and Marxist discourses, and their overlapping show the interdisciplinary nature of post-colonial studies and the significance of liberation of post-colonial writing. Section 1.4. traces the origin and
development of post-colonial literatures. It points out that the identity crisis caused by diaspora and the idea of alterity has given rise to anti-colonial narratives. These smaller narratives have rejected the ‘Universalism’ of grand narratives; broken “binarism”; adopted strategies of appropriation; and written the histories of marginalized, subaltern subjects. This section also points out the phases of transition and the major models in post-colonial writing. Section 1.5. discusses the emergence of black fiction in general and black women’s writing in particular. It also discusses the literary contribution made by contemporaries of Marshall, such as Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Gloria Naylor. Section 1.6. argues that Marshall’s works, like the author herself, are truly post-colonial. It examines Marshall’s literary sources and gives an idea of all her major novels and short stories, published till date. It shows that writing, for Marshall, is both an act of resistance, and affirmation and assertion. This section points out the symbiotic relationship that exists between her themes and technique.

Chapter 1A discusses the management of narrative perspective, including narrative persona, the handling of plot in relation to character, and the manner in which themes arise from the manipulation of narrative persona, plot, setting, imagery, tone and attitude, in Marshall’s novels.
Chapter – 1A

Narrative Technique -
An Analysis

(Added as per the recommendations of the External Examiner)
CHAPTER 1A
NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE - AN ANALYSIS

1A.1. SECTION OVERVIEW

Technique, the literary middleman between life and art, helps the
novelist in interpreting and transforming reality. The narrative technique
helps the readers to discover and travel among other selves, other identities,
and other varieties of the human adventure. They long for intimacy, to be
allowed into the mind of characters. They also long for an underlying
structure, tension and drive in the words written.

Section 1A.2. traces the origin and development of novel-criticism,
and shows how technique has gained importance over the years, in the
writing of novels. Section 1A.3. defines ‘narrative’, lists the modes and
elements of narrative. Section 1A.4. analyses the use of various elements of
fiction such as plot, setting, characterization, narrative persona and style in
Marshall’s novels for bringing out the themes that are dear to her heart.

1A.2. ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF NOVEL-CRITICISM

The earliest theoretical novel-criticism, that of the eighteenth century,
is mainly concerned with the moral implications of technique. Dr. Johnson’s
views on fiction can be cited as an example:
In narratives where historical veracity has no place, I cannot discover why there should not be exhibited the most perfect idea of virtue; of virtue not angelical, nor above probability...but the highest and purest that humanity can reach, which... teach us what we may hope, and what we can perform. (Qtd. in Halperin 1974: 4)

Such criticism is concerned less with theoretical aspects of novelistic form than with the moral function of art.

For Richardson, the letter is the record of consciousness, of the mind at work; when the readers are exposed to the psychological processes of the ordinary person, they can compare his private experience to their own; they can identify and sympathize more easily with that person, and in learning more about him through their aroused interest, they can also learn more about themselves.

In the nineteenth century and in the Augustan age, the same idea of sympathetic identification for the purpose of moral enlightenment is a tenet that is central to the thought about the novel. In George Eliot and Defoe, life is seen as a perpetual moral struggle; the transcription of real life serves the purpose of alerting the readers to the moral importance of everything they do. Fielding is interested in types rather than in individuals. When his approach to character is in the main external, Sterne, Fanny Burney and Jane Austen concern themselves with the mental life of their characters; they tend to teach the readers about themselves through the depiction of a psyche
which may not be far removed from their own. However, the Gothic novel 
and the novels of ‘sensibility’ were in full bloom; ‘new gate’ novels had 
criminals as their heroes, in the 1830s and 40s. But Bulwer-Lytton, Harrison 
Ainsworth Dickens were against these novels.

For Anthony Trollope, the novel is a vehicle for the presentation of a 
lesson in conduct. To Hardy, the true object of reading fiction is a lesson in 
life. The favoured method of George Henry Lewes, a theoretician of the 
novel before Henry James, is dramatic presentation or ‘dramatic 
ventriloquism’, the means by which the writer makes the character reveal 
himself; it reveals both external and internal truths. Meredith and George 
Eliot attempt to steer a middle course between idealism and naturalism. 
David Mason emphasizes the connections between mimesis and the moral 
elements of fiction on the one hand and the moral nature of the novelist 
himself on the other. When Scott, Thackeray, Trollope, Ruskin and Mill 
consider the novel as an inferior art form, Mason, Lewes and Charles 
Kingsley give a more serious treatment to the novel as a genre, due to the 
rise of French Realism.

Flanbert dislikes pure realism and he wants the artist to “raise 
everything up” (Qtd. In Halperin 1974: 10). He is obsessed with questions 
of form and believes that the techniques of fiction deserve as much aesthetic 
and analytic attention as those of poetry. He believes that fiction, like 
poetry, should use linguistic constructs appropriate to particular artistic 
situations and a book should hold itself through the inner strength of its 
style. Flaubert can be considered the first ‘modern’ theorist of the novel, as 
the modern novel-theory is more concerned with abstract principles of
composition than with moral qualities of structure. He expounds a systematic and widely applicable theory of the novel which emphasizes the relationships of the component parts of the aesthetic creation to each other and to the work as a whole. He is the dividing line between the old mimetic writing and the new autonomous writing; form becomes the end-product to him.

Like Flaubert, Henry James speculates on the aesthetic bases of the art of narrative. He says: "The story and the novel, the idea and the form, are the needle and the thread, and I never heard of a guild of tailors who recommend the use of the thread without the needle, or the needle without the thread" (Qtd.in Halperin 1974: 13).

By the end of the nineteenth century, novel criticism has come under the revivalist effects of Romantic Decadence. The new popularity of escapist literature and the storming of the fortress of realism have made Leslie Stephen to exhort novelists to follow the lead of Disraeli on fusing together in their novels the exotic and the mundane. Vernon Lee, a theorist of the novel, stresses on the organic inevitability of form.

Jose’ Ortega Y Gasset, a critic of the novel, also believes that art lives only in its form; that its qualities of grace must spring from its structures, its organism, and not from its subject; and that the novelist’s use of ideas must be confined within the inner world of his novel. Georg Lukacs views fiction as a provider of insights into the political realities of the milieu in which it is created and the effects of that milieu upon the human consciousness.
Unlike Lukacs, the Russian formalist critics wish to separate literature from politics. Like the New critics, the Russian Formalists advocate the isolation of literary criticism from historical, philosophical, and sociological concerns and their sole emphasis is on the analysis of literary structure, the study of the ways in which writers use words and linguistic devices. For them, the importance of literary devices lies in whatever value they themselves embody and not in any extra literal ‘meaning’ they may carry with them.

The Parisian Structuralists are even more specific in their approach to structure. For Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Gerard Genette, Tzvetan Todorov, and their Structuralist colleagues, the way to an understanding of a work of art lies through analysis of its language. Structuralism is interested in the unconscious obsessions of the writer and so it harps on recurrent images or ideas that tend to elucidate these obsessions.

For George Poulet, Marcel Raymond, Albert Beguin and other critics of the Geneva School, ‘consciousness’ is the key word in their literary criticism. To them, literature is neither more nor less than the consciousness of the author, and to read literature is to be transported into the author’s mind. The post-structuralists like Derrida and Barthes are for reading the text against itself, to find out the implied meanings which may be directly contrary to the surface meaning.

The post-modern writers such as Jean Francois Lyotard and Baudrillard foreground the shifting post modern identities, inter-textual elements, irony, element of ‘narcissism’ in narrative technique and the
absence of distinction between high and low art. The psychoanalytic criticism is centred on the distinction between the conscious and unconscious mind, unconscious motives and feelings of the author, the characters and the text itself. When Feminist criticism is for revaluing women’s experience and examining power relations between men and women, Marxist criticism concentrates on class struggle and its reflections in the literary text.

The New Historicists juxtapose literary and non-literary texts to read the former in the light of the latter and to see the literary text as if new. The Cultural Materialists, with their technique of close textual analysis, read the literary text to recover its histories. The post-colonial critics foreground questions of cultural difference and diversity and celebrate hybridity and cultural polyvalency, using non-European modes of narration.

Thus, one can see that up to the middle of the eighteenth century, novel-criticism was generally mimetic in tone and mimesis was the means to morality as an end. In mid-nineteenth century, in the critical writings of Flaubert and later of Henry James, novel-theory begins seriously and systematically to entertain aesthetic alternatives to mimesis. Twentieth century novel-theory is not much concerned with the relationship between reader and text; it mainly deals with the relationships among the various structural elements within the work of fiction itself. The modern view considers the novel as an autonomous creation independent of, or at least not wholly dependent on, the real world and it emphasizes the structure of the work and the symbiosis of its component elements.
1A.3. NARRATIVE FICTION AND ITS CHARACTERISTICS

1A.3.1. What is a Narrative?

‘Narrative’ is a term which has several and changing meanings. In origin it is a Latin word which came into English via the French language. A ‘narrative’ is, originally, a story or part of a story. Narrative as an adjective means ‘characterized by or relating to story telling’. Story telling is at the heart of entertaining and informative writing. Narrative is a socially symbolic act, and literature is an activity which is a symbolic meditation on the destiny of community.

1A.3.2. Modes of Narrative Fiction

There are two modes of narrative fiction in English: the romance and the novel. The romance is a heroic fable; it treats of fabulous persons and things; it is written in lofty and elevated language; and it describes things unlikely to have happened or to happen. Whereas, the novel is a fictional prose narrative of a certain length; it is a picture based on real life and manners and the times in which it is written. The contemporary American novel is receptive to history, ideas, sociology, ethnology and black experience.

1A.3.3. Elements of Fiction

The general characteristics of narrative writing are plot, setting, theme, characterization, style and point of view. Plot is about what of a
story; setting is about where and when of a story; theme is about why of a story; characterization is about who of a story; and style and point of view are about how of a story. But, the assumptions about the detachability of plot and character, incident and description, are quite desultory. Converging unity is the condition of every perfect work of art. In the words of Henry James, “A novel is a living thing, all one and continuous like very other organism, and in proportion as it lives will it be found... that in each of the parts there is something of each of the other parts” (Qtd. in Graham 1965: 113).

According to James L.Calderwood and Harold E.Toliver, “Technique, however, is a somewhat indeterminate category which may refer to specific means of rendering experience in fiction, such as point of view, dramatization, or narrative, or can expand beyond the mechanics of craft to become synonymous with fictional form itself”. (1968: 197). Technique is a transforming and informing agent and it unites with content in the act of expressing it. Such formative effect of technique on content is clearly seen in Paule Marshall’s novels.

1A.4. THE NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE IN MARSHALL’S NOVELS

Narration involves, in Marshall’s work, the way and manner in which the story of the black people is packaged and presented. Great writers are aware that “the mingling of exposition, narration, and dramatic rendering all involve a painstaking concern for technique, and that a novelist must be both master architect and expert stonemason, designer of windows and fitter of bits of stained glass” (Wright 1974 : 298). But they all start with an
awareness of reality. A novelist should create a strong illusion of reality. True to this tradition, Marshall’s novels perceive reality, reality at the social level of consciousness, fictionalizes it, manipulates plot, character, situation and dialogue on varying degrees of adjustment and understanding. The narrative in Marshall tries to achieve, after deploying all the technicalities at its command, a total integrative vision that fuses the ‘self’ of characters into the plot and the plot into the characters. Both are emancipated in the process. This is an attempt by the researcher to show how Marshall makes her stories work by orchestration of her plot to engage and hold the reader, by her expert handling of setting, characters, narrative persona and theme, and by her exceptional use of language.

1A.4.1. Plot

The plot is the narrative structure, which is composed of events and incidents, the smaller narrative structures. So the plot of a novel can be called a structure of structures. It is the artistically ordered presentation of the motifs, the ultimate plot elements; it is a deliberate sequencing of events in the text; it must move forward and further the novel towards its object of stating a poetic truth. When scenes give actuality to plot, dialogue and actions of the characters contribute to the furthering of plot. But in the words of Robert Scholes and Robert Kellogg, “Plot is only the indispensable skeleton which, fleshed out with character and incident, provides the necessary clay into which life may be breathed” (1968: 302).

Plots in Marshall’s novels are unambiguous and interesting. They contain conflict and suspense, and keep the readers engrossed. Her first
novel, *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) contains a conventional structure and narrative perspective. The plot of the novel covers a span of eight years in the life of its protagonist, Selina Boyce. It describes the growth of Selina from her tenth year to her eighteenth year; from budding adolescence to questioning womanhood. It follows the different stages in her development. She goes from innocence to experience, testing various phases, doubts, fears, hopes, enthusiasms, and conflicts of an archetypal adolescent girl. She gains a new awareness of herself through small incidents leading to large revelations, friendships, conflicts with her parents and family, puberty and its physical and mental manifestations and the discovery of her sexuality. Hers is a journey of the fragmented self through experience to knowledge and ultimately to wholeness and being. The journey motif, the motif of the West Indian immigrants’ adjustment to a new material environment and culture and the dance motif are central to the novel.

The novel, *Brown Girl Brownstones* “pens on a splendid play of presence and absence which governs its motif – the absence of the the Dutch-English and Scottish-Irish who had built the brownstone houses and the presence of the West Indians who slowly edged their way in. The brownstones, the novel’s central metonym, opens the novel and begins the narrator’s patterning of absence and presence, heralding its discourse of difference.

*Brown Girl, Brownstones* is a novel composed of anecdotes. There are many separate but related stories – stories of Miss.Thompson, Suggie and Miss. Mary. The telling of these stories defines a family, a household, a
neighbourhood. Selina’s life is a process of bringing together all these storytellers in the fabric of her growing up.

Marshall, who explores the areas in the world of technique – plot, narrative, imagery, setting, character development, interrelatedness of design – in her first novel, Brown Girl, Brownstones, has crafted “a brilliant multifaceted gem of a novel” (Leseur 2000: 90) in her The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969). It is a long novel sparing of plot. It covers a year of the protagonist Merle Kinbona’s middle age. Yet it is a novel of epic ambitions; it combines the myths of Praise Song for the Widow (1983), the convincing individuality of Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), with an added political and social consciousness. The plot of the novel reflects the political activism and community focus of the 1960s, showing how the changing times have affected Marshall’s artistic concerns. It involves a study of politics and society in an English-speaking Caribbean Community and the turbulence that is stirred when representatives of corporate America are introduced into it. The plot starts with the introduction of new comers and the returning islanders, through the protagonist, Merle. The plot develops showing the relationship among the newcomers and between the newcomers and the islanders. It portrays how the new comers are put to test by Bournehills culture. It ends with either regeneration or deterioration of the newcomers and a few islanders, and retention of the changeless quality of the timeless people. The essence of the novel is in the epigraph that quotes from the Tib people of West Africa: “Once a great wrong has been done, it never dies. People speak the words of peace, but their hearts do not forgive. Generations perform ceremonies of reconciliation, but there is no end.”
The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) has a sound structure; it is structured around the liturgical calendar of Lent, Easter and Pentecost (British Carnival and Whitsun). In the novel, the characters’ present and historical conflicts are framed in terms of guilt and sin, confession and penance, and forgiveness. The use of prominent motifs such as Cuffee Ned’s slave rebellion, survival and rebirth has helped Marshall in dealing with the whole sweep of colonial history, meditating on the consequences of slavery and colonialism, and presenting a vision for potential reconciliation and change on the personal, social and international levels.

Praise Song for the Widow (1983), unlike The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), avoids chronological development of the narrative and linear structure. The story is built up from fragments, fragments of memories and sensations. Yet, it is a firm book, because from the first paragraph, it moves purposefully and knowledgeably towards its final realization. It covers three days in the protagonist Avey’s sixty fourth year. The widow of the title, Avey Johnson is on the verge of a nervous breakdown while on a Caribbean cruise; her mourning precipitates into identity crisis; her lamentation is accompanied by sentimentality, nostalgia and myth-making; at the end of the novel, a new kind of person whose identity is firmly established, emerges. Even though the events recorded take place in three days at the end of an aborted holiday, the ground covered through a carefully worked out incorporation of song, dance and ritual is immense.

The structure of the novel reenacts the structure of a dance or jazz improvisation, moving between the linear narrative of Avey’s long day and
remembered melodies of her Tatem childhood and ending on the grand movement in Carriacou. Even though the storyline remains open-ended and incomplete, the structure of the novel gives a sense of fulfillment to the readers, at the end of the tale. *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) is a novel of healing as its structure emphasizes; it delineates the journey from disease (the disease of being a slave to materialism) to health (the reclaiming of an older collective legacy). Afro-Creole music and spirituality offer structures of freedom and authority. The novel begins and ends with the tread of feet; in the beginning, it is the footsteps of Avey, who is moving around the ship’s cabin packing and in the end, it is the tread of the dancers’ feet.

Some of the important motifs in *Praisesong for the widow* are of transition, of Christ’s walking on water, of journey, of descent and of death and rebirth. The plot delineates the archetypal journey into awareness; the protagonist runs away, awakens to a shocking reality, washes away false mentality and reconciles herself with her heritage. Avey’s journey is both an outward and inward journey; a physical and psychic journey. It is a journey of ascent to freedom and literacy in the dominant culture’s term, and of descent into African-American community and tribal literacy. At the end of the journey is the protagonist’s revision of the world, after her daring transition across the abyss between, in Soyinka’s words, “manifestations of the ancestral, the living and the unborn” (1976: 144). Through the life-journey of Avey, issues of class and age in relation to the racial, cultural and political issues of African-American society are explored.

In comparison with the other novels of Marshall, *Daughters* (1991), her fourth novel is more experimental in technique and invites interpretation.
Its plot traces several events: i) the protagonist Ursa Mackenzie’s spiritual and emotional development away from the overshadowing authority of her father Primus Mackenzie; ii) the struggle of Triunion’s other daughters to break their dependence on men; iii) Primus Mackenzie’s own inner struggle to maintain integrity in the neocolonial setup in Triunion; iv) and the hapless condition of blacks both in the United States and Triunion, a Caribbean island. The novel maps the ongoing confrontation between the neocolonialists and others, between past and present time and future possibilities and yet the tale ends on a happy note.

Of the four Books in Daughters, Books One and Three are set in the United States (New York and New Jersey) and Books Two and Four are set in the Triunion. Only seven (four in Book One and three in Book Two) out of fifty chapters are titled; they are named after major characters. Daughters moves slowly outward from the tiny, isolated New York apartment of Ursa in ever-widening circles and encompasses relations, friends, lovers and colleagues in both the Caribbean and New York. When the fictional world moves a mere two months forward through flashbacks and reminiscences in time present, it extends backward to the times of slavery itself.

Marshall uses astronomical configurations as major structuring devices for Daughters and explores the destructive connections between global capital, local politicians, NGOs and some unwitting international agencies. The narrative proceeds through a series of layered crossings of double exposures. The abortion motif runs throughout the novel and gains thematic and structural significance, through the three strategic women linked to the PM and connected to Triunion and American urban ghettos.
Another dominant motif present in *Daughters* is that of the city. The novel reflects the life choices given to an African-American woman or man in both the metropolis and the colonies. Besides these two, there are other significant motifs in the novel, such as the motif of silence, which is in keeping with the characters like Ursa and Estelle and their personalities. But, silence or the refusal or inability of the key women in *Daughters* to express themselves verbally does not preclude action; much of the talk in the novel takes place offstage and the women express themselves in action.

Like *Daughters*, *The Fisher King* (2000) also spans a greater length of time, and geography; but it is done in a fewer pages than in her other novels. It is as compressed as short story, yet it retains some of the Victorian sweep, the depth and complexity of her other novels. The plot moves among decades; it contains the history of two families whose fates are worked out over four generations; it embraces the black history from the Caribbean to the Deep South and Europe. It employs the musical form of jazz to delineate the nuances of diaspora interactions. It is as complex, intricate, thought-provoking, demanding the readers' attention and concentration as jazz music. In this novel of healing, Marshall fuses together the ancient legend of the Fisher King and modern jazz to write about racial autonomy, cultural stereotypes and the power of love. The plot begins with the visit of the eight-year-old Sonny in 1984 to both his maternal and paternal grandmothers whose feud dates back to the time of their children's marriage; it develops portraying the healing effect of the grandson's presence and ends with a promising note of possible reconciliation between the two warring families. Some of the significant motifs seen in the novel are those of flight, healing
and reconstruction. The abrupt ending of the novel may be disappointing, but it ends on a note of hope.

Marshall’s novels are structured on the black American experience, the brief but powerful history of black Americans from eighteenth century slavery to today’s cultural and economic struggle. In Marshall’s novels, each separate portion of the plot so fits into the rest, each successive situation arises so naturally out of others that the readers are satisfied that the author has not lost sight of her original design. In her novels, the subsidiary plots tend to the elucidation of the main story and take their places as part of one and the same work.

1A.4.2. Setting

Setting, one of the important elements of fiction, refers to the specific surrounding environment and its atmosphere in which a character exists at a specific point in time. Setting provides specific details to the readers to anchor them to a time and place. Since man is a social animal, the characters’ ontological being cannot be distinguished from their social and historical environment. Extensive description of setting enables the readers to realistically explicate the plot of the novel in relation to the environment in which characters live; it allows the readers to interpret the actions, reactions and moods of the characters and the influence which a specific setting has on the feelings and emotions of characters. Setting is generally used in sympathy or in contrast with the characters and actions. It not only creates atmosphere and tells the readers about the characters, but also represents the broader themes within a literary context.
A major feature of post-colonial literature is the concern with place and displacement and recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place. Due to many reasons, a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by dislocation. In this context, setting becomes very important. Marshall herself says in an interview: “The place is more important in my work” (Bonetti: 1984). Place is a dynamic factor in the contemporary reality and a believable setting increases the reality.

Marshall is a slow, deliberate writer known for her evocation of place. She is good at evoking the urban and tropical settings, and locale is a significant part of her narratives. Her settings are never mere backdrops or abstract stages on which the central heroine plays her roles. They establish themselves at the heart of the story; provide it with specific social, economic and cultural patterns that interweave with the fates of its main characters. What Michael Dash says about the role of setting in Caribbean discourse can be applied to Marshall’s works also. In her novels, landscape “stops being merely decorative or supportive and emerges as a full character.....The individual, the community, the land are inextricable in the process of creating history. Landscape is a character in this process” (Dash 1989: xxxvii).

In Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), Marshall blends sharp insight into people with an excellent evocation of locale. The title of Brown Girl, Brownstones emphasizes the connection between character and context. The brownstones become a character in the novel. Along with the Barbadian community and its goals, the brownstones become integral forces of the novel with its background of conflict between two races and cultures.
The novel indicates its 1950s origin in its accent on art and individualism, Selina’s distaste for community action and her unconsciousness of the effect of sex roles on her parents’ lives. It depicts urbanized, industrial and commercial North of the 1980s. The tight little world of West Indian Brooklyn becomes the urban setting for the novel’s coming-of-age process. Marshall situates Selina’s growing understanding of her parents and of herself in the context of racial politics. The growing up Selina is confronted with a lack of space for herself. The hostile, strange and confining environments in which Selina is repeatedly placed highlight the confrontation. These settings are Selina’s mother’s kitchen, the church, the school, an elevator, Father Divine’s restaurant and the Association’s hall.

Many of the scenes in Brown Girl, Brownstones take place in the kitchen with its steaming pots and humming refrigerator, where the West Indian immigrant women recreate the world through their words and actions. But Selina tries to escape the domination of the maternal voice, through her relationship with people outside Silla’s space, the brownstones. Miss.Thompson’s beauty parlour, Clive’s rooming house, Suggie’s rental space in the brownstones, the park and the street are for Selina, symbols of freedom. Kitchen is the place of inculcation; in this powerful place, the Bajan immigrant women try to bring Selina into their sisterhood. It is crucial to the building up of the mother-daughter bond. Selina’s escape from and return to the kitchen, time and again denotes a mother-daughter bond.

Setting is a major indicator of a character. Miss Suggie is first introduced by the street setting; it frames her outside of the Bajan-American community. Deighton is often seen in his sun-lit parlour, which speaks of his
sunny nature. The factory setting in the novel brings out the tough and iron will of Silla. The novel successfully mediates between the personal and public places, as Selina, the young girl grows into adulthood.

Like the title of *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, that of the *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) also emphasizes the connection between character and context; it extends the connection beyond gender and racial indicators to that of an entire people and their land. To the people of Bournehills, their traditions are the means of sustenance and mark of their existence. Bourne Island, an imaginary Caribbean island is the setting of the novel; it offers a microcosm of colonial and technological exploitation. In an interview with Joyce Pettis, Marshall explains the reasons for choosing West Indies as a setting in her novels:

...because the islands were small, they permitted me to deal with a manageable landscape. I could use that to say what I wanted to about the larger landscapes, the metropoles, but it would be more manageable by using the West Indies, and so I found them technically to my advantage. (Pettis 1991: 119)

Landscape in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* is never merely landscape, but always the mirror of human history. It reflects the history of colonialism in its various phases. According to Martin Japtak, who speaks about the colonial history of the Caribbean, the population of the Caribbean is
a direct result of the African slave trade, European migration, and later immigration from various parts of mostly the British empire, while little is left of the indigenous Arawaks or Caribs. The Caribbean ecology has been forever changed by the plants, animals, and agricultural methods imposed by Europe; in addition, the soil depletion characteristic of a number of West Indian islands directly results from the monocultural economy of the plantation system. The multi-lingualism of the West Indies mirrors the various participants in and stages of European colonialism – Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, French, British – while the fractured nature of West Indian politics grows out of European and North American rivalries over the fate of the Caribbean. (2000: 1)

In her second novel, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People, Marshall shows the inescapability of this history by inscribing it into the very landscape. Boumehills stands for “every place that had been wantonly used, its substance stripped away, and then abandoned” (100). Besides offering a microcosm of colonial and technological exploitation, the novel’s setting provides a map of the divisions based on class and colour in Bourne Island.

The setting in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People is imbued with the magical power and presence of myth; the Bourne Island is recognized as an extension of Africa. The island is presented as a piece of land and also as
a state of mind; Bourne hills is pictured as an archetypal aspect of human consciousness. Bourne hills and the surrounding sea provoke both visitors and dwellers to confront the past, their histories, or be destroyed in the process. The superimposition of Bourne Island as a real place and a dream-like symbol for the psyche begins in two views of the landscape from an airplane. Because of the shadows, Bourne hills scarcely seems a physical place to Harriet the wealthy white American with a questionable past, but "some mysterious and obscured region of the mind which ordinary consciousness did not dare admit to light" (21). To Saul, a mixture of various Jewish traditions, Bourne hills could have been "a troubled region within himself to which he had unwittingly returned" (100). But, Bourne hills is not only a symbolic landscape of the mind, but also a real place. To Vere, who is returning from an exploitative labour scheme in the States, Bourne hills is a world of poverty and work, not of metaphors for the psyche; sugarcane fields and sugarcane factory are exploitative workplaces. This double exposure, a picture conflating a white American's symbolic landscape of mind and a black West Indian's realistic landscape of economic and political dispossession, presents Bourne Island simultaneously as a psychological and political landscape. The Chosen Place, The Timeless People weaves the spiritual power of a significant place with the psychic life of the protagonist Merle. Her body becomes the site for radical transformation of both her self and the community.

In Praisesong for the Widow (1983), locale becomes a significant part of Marshall's narrative. The novel is "wide ranging in its geography, for it is a journey through the Brooklyn of Brown Girl, Brown Stones (1959) and the Caribbean society of The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) as
well as the rural black South of Tatem, South Carolina, and black middle-class North White Plains, New York. All these locations, both the north and the south of the United States, the Caribbean islands, and Africa, the home continent, are embraced in Avey’s memory of the connections made by ‘the silken threads’. Of all these places, Carriacou gains importance, as it locates the forces of memory, history and the spirit, and channels them to reclaim Avey from despair and alienation from her ancestors. Avey’s body also becomes important in this process, as it becomes the site for her own transformation.

The island of Carriacou off Grenada, offers such a strong psychic pull that Avey leaves her luxury cruise to embark on an unexpected journey which makes her spiritual return to her African roots possible. Both Carriacou and Grenada are located furthest east among the Caribbean islands, closest geographically to Africa. The passage from Grenada to Carriacou may be small in geographical terms, but it is vast when it comes to personal suffering and psychic transformation. When the Caribbean islands have a positive influence on Avey, the American city seems to seduce her and her husband Jay into forgetting the experiences of pre-urban black life in the United States. It is in Carriacou, on taking part in the Beg Pardon Ceremony, that Avey comes to realize that relocation and acceptance of the past is necessary to adapt to a new culture; that as long as one does not accept one’s roots, one is doomed to a lonely, isolated existence.

*Daughters* (1991), like Marshall’s other novels, has a flawless sense of place and character. It has a mid 1980s setting: the United States and Triunion, an imaginary Caribbean island, form its backdrop for the diverse
corruptions being played out. The novel’s action is set against the background of the contemporary ills such as poverty, teenage pregnancy, infant mortality, substance abuse, high crime, aids-rates etcetera that threaten the integrity, self-esteem, and the very life of people in America, the Caribbean and the other places. The juxtaposing of the physical settings of predominantly black populations (Midland city, New Jersey and Triunion) draws attention to the fact that social, political and economic liabilities are similar in the case of blacks in both first world and third world countries. Through such a juxtaposition of Caribbean-American urban communities, Marshall foregrounds the communities of Triunion.

Triunion, the setting of a large part of the novel is a “pure invention”, designed specifically by Marshall to indicate the idea of bringing together of the entire black community throughout the world. She has borrowed “bits and pieces of a topographical and cultural nature” (Dance 1992: 4) from a number of islands such as Haiti, the Dominican Republic and several of the English-speaking islands. Marshall in an interview with Daryl Cumber Dance speaks about the creation of Triunion:

I wanted to create a place that would represent the three major colonial powers in this part of the world: the English, French, and Spanish.... My Triunion was once under all three flags and although ‘independent’... it continues to suffer from those divisions. The place is meant to suggest the weakness that comes from disunity. It's meant to suggest all the poor countries and communities... that fall prey to the seduction and
domination of their former colonial masters because of disunity. (4-5)

Through her creation of Triunion, Marshall expresses her longing “for the day when the islands of the Caribbean – English, French, Spanish, Dutch – will come together in some kind of federation or European-style political and economic entity” (5). According to Marshall, it is the only way for them “to come out from under the shadow of Big Brother to the north, be able to achieve real strength and thus be taken seriously in the councils of the world” (Ibid.). The Caribbean and American settings and the communities in these places are linked through the physical placement of Ursa, the protagonist, in New York, and of Estelle Mackenzie, Ursa’s mother, in Triunion, and their close familial relationship.

The setting in The Fisher King (2000) is also an urban space, as in Daughters (1991). But, when the cities in Daughters are presented predominantly with their diverse problems, Bedstuy in The Fisher King (2000) is portrayed in a slightly romanticized manner. Action in the novel is set in the spring of 1984 in Marshall’s old neighbourhood of Bedford Stuyvesant in central Brooklyn, the setting of her first novel. Brownstones are once again a central figure. Having the same background, Marshall focuses on the parochial Barbadian immigrant community in Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), and tackles the issue of intra-racial conflict in New York ghettoes in The Fisher King (2000). The latter with the same warfare imagery, is an excellent companion to the former; Marshall has widened the ethnic scope of her black characters, in the course of her writing career; her
characters include migrants, immigrants and emigrants, who exhibit an acute sense of place.

The other locales the plot moves among are the rich and poor ‘quartiers’ of Paris and the antebellum southern America; but, it always comes back to Brooklyn. All the major characters live or have their ancestry on Macon Street in Central Brooklyn, popularly known as Bedstuy. Even though the novel is set in a time close to the present, it moves back and forth, taking the readers sometimes to the earlier eras in the twentieth century or even to the late nineteenth century. The novel, which is set against a backdrop of a triangular relationship, celebrates and portrays the nuances of diaspora relations.

In her search for wholeness in the diaspora, Marshall seems to have chosen the Caribbean as her literary landscape. Though her settings are particularized, they remind the readers of other places and other times. In Marshall’s novels, a sense of place seems inseparable from a sense of history. It reveals Marshall’s longing to know her history, not the distorted versions of black history in the texts, but the so-far-hidden history of black people. As a writer of fiction, under the surface of all her stories, Marshall seems to be trying to set the record straight.

1A.4.3. Characterization

Characterization is another important element of fiction, like plot and setting. It is the way a writer creates a fictional character. Understanding characterization is absolutely central to analysing fiction. First person
narration, third person narration, appearance, behaviour, actions, other characters' comments and other characters’ actions are the most common techniques used by a writer to give the readers a sense of what a character is like.

It is not possible to tell a story successfully without presenting characters. Writers need characters to express the ideas they want to tell the readers. The ideas are buried in characterization. By portraying the motivations, feelings, actions, regrets, limitations, aspirations and experiences of their characters, the writers can give the readers an understanding of the themes they are dealing with. For this to work, the characters have to seem real; they have to behave in believable ways and say credible things. The novel’s aesthetic value depends essentially on the skill with which the novelist presents his characters. The character is there in the novel to contribute to the plot, and at the same time, action should proceed or evolve out of character. A fictional event is not merely an element of plot, but a moment in the creation of self. In their responses to events, characters define both their experiences and themselves. The moral movement of characters from innocence to experience within the work is built in the narrative structure of fiction.

There are various methods in presenting a character. Sometimes the character is shown as a shadowy and indeterminate creature; but his reactions to a series of events reveal him to be a living personality. In some novels, a descriptive portrait of the character is given first; the resulting actions and reactions of the character provide a filling-in; the readers can appreciate the justness of such things by comparison with the original
portrait. Sometimes no hint of one’s real nature of personality is given; it emerges as the story proceeds; a full view of the character is given by taking him through a long and varied sequence of events. Another method shows the character changing or developing; while the initial portrait is valid with reference to the situation presented at the beginning of the novel, it ceases to be valid by the time the novel is concluded; the reader finally confronts a different person from the one he met at the beginning. In character drawing, the stream-of-consciousness method of describing states of mind plays a very significant role.

Marshall’s great talent as a writer is her insightful portrayal of individual characters. She sculpts her characters within the space of their culture and “the shape and rhythm of her characters can scarcely be detached from the space around them” (Christian 1980: 80). In Marshall’s Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), the growing up of Selina Boyce, a first-generation American girl of Barbadian descent, embodies the interface of two distinct cultures and the creation of distinct women characters. Selina loves her father, who wants to return to the land he inherited in Barbadas and dreams of living like a king there. But, Selina’s mother plans to sell that land to buy a Brooklyn brownstone. Within the context of this family struggle, character and culture interact and continually transform each other. Selina’s story concentrates on development and the parents of adolescent Selina, figure prominently in her development. Selina is deeply affected by the material conflict between her mother and father, but emerges from it self-assured, inspite of her scars. She assumes shape and meaning through her parents’ passions, clashes and hopes. Incidents and scenes hold the nuances of character. Selina inherits some of her mother’s iron strength and her father’s
love of poetry, fantasy, people and adventure. The conflict between these traits makes her a dynamic character and sets up a dialectic, out of which will emerge Selina, the grown woman as synthesis.

Selina is curious, inquisitive and has the propensity for making up her own mind. Selina’s consciousness is formed by three different but mutually inclusive value systems: those of African-Caribbean, Caribbean-American and African-American. She has to establish her individuality within her household, before subscribing to any of these value systems. Selina’s seminal experience in the kitchen, as a little girl listening to her mother and her friends’ stories, their talk about the world and political issues, has taught her valuable lessons in independence and autonomy. Marshall uses the mother-daughter relationship in her novels to move her characters to a personal freedom which is a prerequisite for the greater political freedom she has in mind for them. In Brown Girl, Brownstones, the mother-daughter dyad is portrayed as antagonistic yet loving, problematic yet central, to the daughter’s creation of an affirmed self.

In Brown Girl, Brownstones, a balance is kept between psychological, cultural and social causes and it gives vividness to characterization. Cultural conflicts activate Marshall’s characters; situations force the characters to take critical looks at their lives; eventually Marshall’s fictional people learn the lesson that survival depends upon knowledge of a brutal past. Selina, has rejected the materialism of Barbadian immigrant community in the United States, comes to accept that she is a part of that community forever, after having experienced the racism of the outside world. At the end of the novel, she discovers both her identity and community. She accepts ethnic
communalism, while pursuing an individual agenda and creates a new conceptualization of ethnicity in the process.

Marshall, in her narrative world of Brown Girl, Brownstones includes complex and diverse characters; they are both distinctly themselves, yet representatives of the cultural characteristics of their own community. When Selina symbolizes individualism and the community’s need to reorder itself, Silla stands for ethnic conformity. Silla has accepted the crass values of the upwardly mobile Barbadian community and has become a living embodiment of compulsive desires that go hand in hand with the demands of capitalism. This desire for property leads to Silla’s betrayal of her husband, alienation of her children, Selina’s denunciation of her mother, Silla’s brutal denial of self, her self-sacrifice and repression of sexuality. Marshall defines the political motivations behind Silla’s acts of cruelty; portrays Silla not as a monster, but as a highly conflicted individual whose passions and desires have been distorted by her integration into white bourgeois capitalism. The book is a kind of commentary on American society and through the character of Silla, Marshall presents the theme of loss of love.

Silla is presented sympathetically despite her harshness, as she is a product of her environment. In the racist climate, Silla the wife, is in conflict with Silla the mother; to have a stable family, she has to destroy her unorthodox husband. She is a combination of contrasting philosophies of life – toughness and softness. The image of the African-American slave-mother is one of the sources for the characterization of Silla. When Deighton deserts his family, Silla remains behind with the children. By portraying
Silla with complexities, contradictions and ambiguities, Marshall has broken the old stereotype image of the strong black mother.

Marshall does not see her women as strong but rather complex and central. In an interview with Sylvia Baer, Marshall says: “The other side of strong black women is so often weak black men, and I want to get away from that thinking, because it divides rather than unites” (Baer 1992: 255). About Silla and Deighton she opines:

I don’t see... Silla the mother in Brown Girl, Brownstones, as all that strong a woman. I see her as someone who has perhaps foolishly or unquestioningly bought the whole American materialistic ethic. And the price she pays for that is the death of love and the ruin of her family. I don’t see that as being all that strong. I see some strength in the father. He insists upon American success on his own terms. (Ibid.)

Both Deighton and Clive are portrayed as listless men and defeated ones. Marshall penetrates the worn image of the never-do-well black man, with her portrayal of Deighton. She portrays the conflict between sex roles in America, which arises due to the cultural assumption that men are to be dominant, women subordinate. But in the United States, black men like Deighton are systematically denied access to wealth; the economic realities of life make it impossible for black women like Silla to withdraw from the work world. Deighton, a man of imaginative personality, refuses to submit to the societal definition of manhood and the weight of survival and success
falls on Silla. Clive, a failed artist, also does not fit in the picture of society, where men are defined by their ability to acquire property and make money.

When the Boyce family turns out to be a misfit, there are other Barbadian-American families such as the Challenor family, which fit the pattern given by the American community. Percy Challenor, a dull, hardworking man, rules his household like a god; his wife subordinates herself to him; they buy a house; and they marry their children into other upwardly mobile Barbadian-American communities. Like the characters in the novel, the immigrant community of Barbadians in America, which also becomes a character, is ambiguous. Its contradictory values are that of material success as denoted in acquisition of property and that of sensual pleasures as symbolized in dancing. The Barbadian community is a support base for its members, against racism; at the same time, it is an obstacle to be overcome, in their journey to individuality. By presenting such complex and diverse characters, Marshall criticizes the way American materialism undermines the individual, and demonstrates how fixed gender roles distort the families like the Boyces’.

While most of the characters in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) are West Indian immigrants, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) presents international, interracial cast of characters, from the time of slavery to the present. These characters help Marshall to look at the relationship of the West to the rest of the world. Merle is a riveting character in this book. She embodies the many conflicting divisions present in Bourne Island, a former British colony. Her appearance tells all: she wears a mixture of African and European clothing. Her manner of dress reveals the
sophistication of her English education, the brilliance of her African heritage and her obsessive connection to her West Indian homeland. She is a hybrid's hybrid, being the daughter of an aristocrat, who is a descendent of an English planter and a slave; she is a daughter cast out by her fathers. She attempts to make a whole out of the diverse and warring elements within her personality. Her unresolved problems of identity are symbolically related to the problems of Bourne Island, which is trying to free itself from the political, cultural and economic influences of the Western countries.

Merle is middle aged; her staccato movement, incessant talk and noisy banter belie her frustration. Even though her breasts have begun to droop, upper arms to shudder, and face to slacken, neither her body nor her age could stop her from voicing her protest against the entire history of colonialism. Merle’s political ideals are an important part of the way she is defined in the book; she commands the loyalty of the villagers and prepares the way for a second coming of Cuffee Ned, the slave insurrectionary. In an interview, Marshall says about her characters: “The political is always there in my work, but as subtext. I’m always seeking to treat my characters and their lives by writing about them as people rather than as representatives-of-whatever” (Baer 1992: 253).

Marshall’s characters in The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969) are made to come alive on the page, but at the same time, are invested with symbolic meaning. They exist on two levels: to be people in their own right and as symbols of principles. Merle, on one level is a tragic mulatta; she is intelligent and attractive; not the sullen, stupid, promiscuous stereotype. On the other level, she is a Third World revolutionary; with her
social conscience, she becomes a narrative stress point. She tries to protect the West Indian community in Bournehills, which has the strength of its past, but no future. Since cultural revolution and political revolution go hand in hand, Merle has to rescue herself from the racist bind of the past. She does that by confronting successfully, Harriet a symbol of the white West. In Marshall's words, "cultural revolution is about how you see yourself" (Ogundipe-Leslie 1977: 31) and Merle learns to see herself with compassion and self-dignity; gaining internal power of being, she is in a position to help others.

Since women are central to Marshall, they can easily embody the power principles as a man. Harriet, a WASP, has inherited a sense of power and a sense of dominance, because of her ancestry. Marshall traces Harriet's family history and shows how even the women from respectable families of the North were very directly involved in the slave trade. By pointing out the complicity of the American women in the slave trade, Marshall highlights the ramifications of that whole trade.

Both Harriet an American, and the English woman who was once Merle's friend in England, exhibit the same pattern of dominance and exploitation. Harriet becomes the means by which Merle will finally be able to overcome her sordid relationship with the English woman. When all the important characters in Marshall's novels journey back to their past to find their self, Harriet, an insecure wife, American racist, a new colonialist is afraid to go back, as hers is a colonizer's oppressive past. She looks down upon the islanders as sinners, inferiors, who are in need of saving. Harriet's actions, while in Bourne Island, are motivated by her hatred and her fear of
black people. At the end of the novel, recognizing that she has made the same mistake – that of controlling their lives – in her relationship with Andrew her first husband and Saul her second husband, Harriet kills herself. Even though Harriet is highly strong-willed, independent and a rebel in her own way, she does not have a place in the 'Chosen Place', as she bears history and is a representative of the white order that has to go. Ironically at the end, Harriet shares the fate of the slaves whose grave is the Atlantic. Through Harriet, Marshall shows how it is very difficult for the whites to really change, to really give up and share power.

Saul and Harriet are “brilliant creations” (Brathwaite 1992: 212) and they give the novel, The Chosen Place, The Timeless People (1969), its American flavour. Marshall has made use of them to comment on the American role in developing countries. Saul is an aging but still active Jewish-American anthropologist. His anthropological survey of Bournehills fails to give him a notion about why the previous developmental schemes have failed. His conversation with merle at the carnival night, about Cuffee Ned Rebellion and Ferguson’s inability to talk to the white man makes him realize the fact that the proposed cosmetic changes will not do any good, unless and otherwise the power structure changes, empowering the ordinary people. Saul, a Jew who knows his and his people’s history and suffering, readily empathizes with the downtrodden people of Bournehills. Saul embraces Merle, the voice of the voiceless, when he is ready to embrace the Bournehills people. Saul’s real sympathy for people and their problems and his sincere attempt to help them, make his relationship with Merle acceptable. Marshall skillfully interweaves the general with the individual.
Saul, a wounded but deeply empathetic character, provides Merle a mirror of her own devastation, and helps her in the path of recovery.

When Merle and Harriet represent two extreme positions, Saul represents something of a middle ground. Saul is a very human character; he is one of the best creations of Marshall’s fictional world. He is very strong, but he has his own share of weaknesses too. He grows through the course of the novel and his character is revealed through interaction with the other characters. Marshall portrays not only Saul but also every one else in the novel with tenderness. She talks about her involvement with her characters, in a panel discussion with students: “I’m involved in all of the characters. They contain many bits and pieces of me” (Haydn 1970: 27). She further adds:

I could not create a character that did not incorporate some aspect of me... With a character like Merle there is very little of me. She is, in many ways, the kind of fantastic and vital person that I would like to be but could never be. She’s sort of an idealized image... Saul, that kind of wandering all over the place and seeking to have a sense of place certainly reflects much of my life because I’ve wandered all over South America and the West Indies, never feeling very much at home here. Harriet... that whole sense of being very inside oneself is certainly an aspect of me so that...the characters take on aspects, facets.... (Ibid.)
Besides the three main characters, Merle Harriet and Saul, there are other characters in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), who are also both complex individuals and symbols. They come across as people and they function also as vehicles for saying something broader, deeper; Marshall uses them for getting across her ideas, her point of view. For example, Allen Fuso, who comes to Bournehills as the research associate of Saul, comes alive on page as an individual. But, he also stands for a civilization which has “pledged its soul to the gods of technology” (Haydn 1970: 1). Yet, Marshall treats him sympathetically; as he is “not really participating really fully and intimately in life” (27), he comes closest to Marshall as a character. Vere is a talented young man of Bournehills who reaches out to improve his position; he goes to the United States with his dream of success in life and returns without realizing it. He represents the people who identify their goals in terms of machines instead of people. Ultimately, Vere’s love for machines destroys him. Lyle Hutson, who is smooth, polished, debonaire and sophisticated, is a black barrister who has made a success of his life. At the same time, he symbolizes the neo-colonial powers at work, in the now independent former colonies. The ‘backward’ people of Bournehills are a poor, hard working, honest lot. They are portrayed as individuals; yet, they are living embodiments of the millions of blacks who were drowned in their enforced exile from their motherland. It is pointed out by Barbara Christian that Marshall’s major characters in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) represent “all aspects of the Western world, black and white, male and female, Jew and Anglo-Saxon, upper, middle and working classes, natives and outsiders” (1984a: 167). Truly Marshall creates a microcosm representative not only of Bournehills and but also of the other under-developed societies in the Third world.
Marshall's third novel, *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), with its deft exploration of characters, presents Avey, the protagonist, as one the most positive and finely portrayed characters in African-American literature. This strong, self-directed and insightful woman appears on the surface, more conventional than Marshall's earlier heroines. The affluent Avey, who in her sixties is ready to retire from her supervisory job at the State Motor Vehicle Department, is a very proper and dignified kind of a black woman. She is always seen dressed in mute colours, with her white gloves and purse, her three strands of pearls, and her stylish but matronly hat. But, Avey is a manifestation of the tension between two warring value systems, those of Africans and Americans. She, who lives under the deadening oppression of bourgeois security, comes to discard both a false self and a false definition of community to rediscover her identity.

Avey, despite her personal qualities and identifiably individual character traits, comes to embrace "populations larger than herself – the older black woman, the black mother, the now-middle-class suburbanite black woman" (Willis 1987: 59). In the larger context, she is a vehicle for Marshall's socio-political engagement. She also stands as a symbol of diasporic healing. Marshall, through her characterization, brings out a picture of wholeness; the gap-bridging is done through the introduction of Avey's great Aunt Cunev, the old man Lebert Joseph, his daughter Rosalie Parvay and the other participants in the Beg Pardon Ceremony, who act as links between the dead and the unborn.

In *Daughters* (1991), Marshall seems to love her complex, imperfect characters, both male and female, as in her other novels. The protagonist of
the novel, Ursa Beatrice Mackenzie, is "a classic Marshall creation, a black woman of intelligence and ambition..." (Smiley 1991: 3). When Merle has to face and overcome social conditioning and Avey, economic conditioning, Ursa like Selina, has to confront parental conditioning on her journey towards independence. While for Selina, the formative influence is her mother, for Ursa, it is her father. In an interview, Marshall speaks about the father-daughter relationship: "The father figure in Daughters is physically different from my father, or the work he does, or the places he lives. Yet in terms of his relationship with his daughter, that whole emotional nexus reflects feelings and emotions that I have had" (Baer 1992: 255).

Besides Ursa, who is symbolically named after a northern constellation, there are other 'stars' – Estelle, Ursa’s mother, Astral Forde, Primus Mackenzie’s mistress and Celestine his nanny – orbiting Ursa’s father in Triunion. The similarity in the names of the four women are intentional. The U.S. orbit features two more women, Mae Ryland and Viney, Ursa’s friend. Through all these women in Daughters, the themes of seduction, dependency and domination are explored.

In Daughters (1991), Viney serves as a foil and alter ego for Ursa. Like Viney, Ursa’s lover Carruthers also functions as a member of the chorus, warning Ursa. In the novel, against the mythic closeness of Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe, a variety of ties between African-American men and women, such as ties between lovers, husband and wife, father and daughter, between friends are portrayed. By exploring such ties, Marshall registers the message that women can and should become men’s consciences, provided they free themselves from the spells of men. Marshall makes use of children,
like Dee and Robeson, to suggest future and Ursa to represent the coming together of two cultures: African-American and West Indian.

In *The Fisher King* (2000), the bridging of these two cultures is brought about by a preteen child, Sonny. Besides this, he brings together different generations of people and different branches of the African Diaspora. The novel has an ensemble cast, without a hero or heroine. It is rich with characters and the characters are engaging. They embody historic cycles; through their lives, the West Indian immigrant experience, and the Southern black migration Northward, the Northern discrimination, family alienation, expatriation and tensions of identity unfold. French colonial history is told through Madame Moulineaux and European racism, through Sonny-Rett’s experiences in France. The sharply-drawn portraits of characters like Ulene and Varina Sonny’s paternal and maternal grandmothers, Sonny-Rett Sonny’s father, Cherisse his mother, Hattie Cherisse’s friend, Edgar Sonny-Rett’s brother, are enduring, real and thought-provoking. Both parental and social conditioning are seen at work, in the moulding of characters.

Marshall excels in her character portrayals, and her characters are deeply human, whether they are men, women or children. Yet, she seems to be partial to women; she gives more attention to them, since they were neglected in literature. Her characterization includes women who are capable of taking risks, making choices, taking responsibility for their choices, and accepting their successes and failures. By rejecting a life of harmful conformity, by discovering how to use choice and power, these winning women move beyond survival to spiritual and emotional wholeness.
They learn to denounce materialistic indulgence and individualism; they try to understand and accept their cultural history. They learn to love themselves and share that love with others by becoming contributing members of their community.

1A.4.4. Narrative Persona

Subtle delineation of characters, exquisite descriptions of places and people, pregnant thoughts and witty dialogue cannot make the novel succeed, when the novelist does not understand the art of telling a story. Point of view is the perspective from which a story is shown to the reader. The novelist’s control of the readers’ responses to his creations is always necessary: “The control the novelist exercises on his readers depends ultimately on the stance, the point of view, the distance from the action, that the novelist adopts; and on his tone, which is the verbal embodiment of stance, point of view, distance” (Allen 1974: 329). But at the same time, over-conditioning of the readers’ responses to the author should be avoided. Tone is the writer’s tone or voice or atmosphere or feeling that pervades the text. It is the overall attitude that an author appears to hold towards the work or audience. It is developed from the diction and it can be humorous, light, serious, sarcastic, dark, formal or informal.

Vernon Lee, a theorist of the novel, believes that the highest form of narration is that from which the author seems most to be absent. Regarding the problem of narrative angle she says: “You can see the person from nobody’s point of view, or from the point of view of one of the other persons, or from the point of view of the analytical, judicious author” (Qtd.
in Halperin 1974: 16). The story may be told from the viewpoint of the omniscient author; or from the first person point of view, or the second person point of view or the third person point of view.

First person narrative is where the ‘voice’ telling the story uses the word ‘I’. This can have an intimate, believable, confessional feel. But, it is a limited point of view, because it is told from only one character’s viewpoint. The main character who ‘tells’ the story may offer opinions about the action and characters that differ from those of the author.

Second person narrative is where the narrator refers to ‘you’, and tells the story as if it is happening to the readers; he talks to the readers directly. This is often a challenging or conspiratorial mode, inviting the reader’s involvement, agreement or ever complicity in their actions.

Third person narrative is where the author uses ‘he’, ‘she’, ‘they’, or ‘it’. The narrator is outside the action of the story. A voice refers to actions, events and circumstances dissociated from both the narrator and the reader. The narrator reports events as they take place. Not everything is known about the action or the personalities of the characters. The third person narrator can be omniscient.

Omniscient narrator is the one who knows and sees all. He gives the readers a ‘godlike’ perspective; lets the reader in, on everything that happens in the story. But, he does not have a direct access to the thoughts and feelings of characters. However, he can overcome this difficulty through the use of letters, dialogues etcetera.
Marshall, like other writers, often alternates between these modes. The narrative point of view in her novels is crucial in revealing and telling the readers about characters and also in helping the story to be told in an exciting, structured, significant way. In Marshall’s construction of the narrative, repetition and circularity are also prominent. Repetition, a feature of oral narration, captures nuances of mood and setting, the texture and context of oral narrative. Circular narrative contains three basic elements: (i) the use of the framing structure (ii) the use of flashback (iii) the use of a limited point of view, which reveals events little by little. There is a basic narrative line; there are other stories within that main story, forming small parts of a large picture. This framework is the structure of the plot. The use of flashback to the stories allows the story line to flow seamlessly from past to present and back again. The limited point of view makes the readers a part of the narrative; the circle of listeners becomes part of the folk story teller’s performance. Marshall has adapted the oral story telling tradition with its art forms to the literary medium. Story within the story is a significant feature in folk narration. Marshall’s background and her knowledge of the folk culture provide her with a frame-work for her narrative style and for her presentation of individual human beings and their interrelationships.

In Marshall’s Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959) a novel of growth, the action is seen mainly through the protagonist, the ten-year-old Selina’s eyes. Selina is introduced with an emphasis on her eyes, implying her ripeness for the complex development that she is to undergo. With something too old lurking in their centers, Selina’s eyes are not the eyes of a child. Her own blackness is not acceptable to Selina, since she judges her physical self through a white lens. Only at the end of the novel, she comes to recognize
and accept her black self. Selina’s perception of her mother is full of negative connotations. She scorns her mother as the embodiment of a negative womanhood. Readers’ reaction is controlled by Selina’s perspective. Selina’s close relationship with her father prevents her from realizing and accepting the positive significance of her ties to Silla. Later, her stance changes. Selina is not for the Barbadian community’s struggle toward economic betterment by imitating their oppressor’s strategy. But, Selina’s forced confrontation with white racism jolts her into consciousness of the shared bond between herself and her people.

The readers see the events in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* not only from Selina’s point of view, but also from Silla’s angle and Deighton’s perspective. Silla’s point of view makes the readers understand why her philosophy is that of the driven capitalist, not of the humanitarian. Deighton’s view point makes it clear as to how and why the black male of the twentieth century has become a psychological and economic disaster.

The third person narrator of *Brown Girl, Brownstones* stands closer to Selina than to Silla. Silla is represented often in direct speech and when she is represented in indirect speech, it is mediated by Selina. It is “a representation of the daughter’s representation of the mother” (Basu 1999: 3). Selina also is represented in direct speech; initially she is reticent; but later, she waxes eloquent. Selina is represented in free indirect speech, too; it implies the narrator’s closeness to Selina. At the Barbadian Association meeting, one can hear the collective voice that threatens Selina. The text is layered in different voices, to talk about the complex process of growing up black and female in the racist America. In addition to this, the narrator uses
narrative devices from oral tradition, such as stories within the story, rituals, songs and dance, to bring to light the West Indian immigrants’ experience in the United States.

When *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) is a novel of becoming from one point of view, *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) is a novel of becoming from varied points of view. Marshall, with her adept handling of point view, makes each of her major characters confront his past, in the solitude of the mystical island; the flashbacks help the readers in understanding his motivation. The entire book is written in the third person; yet, it judges its characters as if from Merle’s point of view. The editorial omniscience and the focus on the mind of characters jointly give the readers an insight into characters. The narrator freely moves around the island and into the characters’ minds, and runs the risk of being god-like. Trying very hard to be detached, Marshall as a narrator in *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People*, chooses narration than dialogue. She says in a group discussion: “I try very hard to be detached, the most detached of narrators....the only way I could kind of manage the material was to be the narrator, to do it in the third person, to kind of look on and describe” (Haydn 1970: 30-31).

For effectiveness, Marshall has made the point of view in the novel shifting: sometimes it is limiting, the other times it is not. In her attempt not to appear omniscient, she seems to be as unknowing as the readers. To quote an example, in the beginning of the novel, without naming Merle, she calls her ‘the woman’. This is to capture the interest of the readers. Marshall uses irony, blackness or darkness, the technique of superimposition that overlays
pictures of economic, political and historical forces on pictures of psychological experience, the multi-voiced and allusive scenes, like the scene of the Sunday pigsticking, and the inclusion of performative arts, to trace the link between the past and the present. Marshall’s narrative art is at its height, when it combines the black aesthetics with politics; but sometimes, the balance between the two is tipped on the side of political message sending.

In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), the fragmented perception of truth is told by the third person omniscient narrator and the voices of different characters. The author is the bridge between the telling and what is being told. Her use of ‘rememory’ gives her story the structure of an oral narration. The narrative traces the arc of recovery and it reveals the reaction against the fragmentation produced under modern capitalist society and nostalgia for older, traditional communities. The traditional story telling is linked to the existence of an organic community and the individual’s recognition of his or her place in the larger group. In *Praisesong for the Widow*, there are stories related to naming (naming of Avatara) and ancestral foresight (The Ibos’ walking on water back to Africa). In the novel, Levert Joseph, the out-islanders and the Beg Pardon Ceremony signify a world still defined by story telling. “Here, narrative is enacted as ritual and dance; and the discourse is as tightly drawn as the fence line surrounding Lebert’s yard, which contains the dancers” (Willis 1987: 66). The narrative reveals the author’s desire for totality and the urgent need to invent a narrative capable of producing closure.
Avey’s suburban life is defined by the absence of closure, community and social whole. Using magical realism, Marshall traces Avey’s journey of discovery and arc of recovery. “This story of a backslider called by ancestral spirits to salvation takes us beyond orthodox gospel and beyond the current ‘movement’ of magical realism into the very real transfiguring movement central to Afro-Creole music and religion” (Cartwright 2003: 139-140). The deeply political marvellous realism helps Marshall to bring to light, the hidden history of blacks, and enables her protagonist to become whole.

Marshall blends memory and imagination, flashbacks and interior monologues to enter into the interior lives of her fictional characters in Praisesong for the Widow (1983). In the non-linear narrative of the novel, Marshall, using skill and literary subtlety, introduces various time sequences; keeps all facts and events clearly in place. She focuses on Vodun rituals as a means of reconnecting a divided self and a divided diasporic community; advocates the holistic Vodun world view that recognizes the interconnectedness of all living things and the fluidity of boundaries between the visible and invisible worlds.

Daughters (1991) a down-to-earth novel, is written from a female perspective. Marshall allows her various women to speak their own piece, forwarding and commenting on the action which covers about sixty years; introduces the slave rebels, Congo Jane and Will Cudjoe, in the novel and takes the readers back to the times of slavery. Daughters evolves on many levels at once. Being a writer of technical maturity, Marshall does not play all her dramatic cards right at the beginning.
In the first hundred and twelve pages that form Book One of the novel, the readers are introduced to only individuals; from Book Two, Marshall begins to piece together her themes by providing incidents of immediate drama and interest that simultaneously coalesce into a larger and larger picture and reveal the background and longer-term psychological influences. “Marshall’s technique is to move out from Ursa and other characters, then to circle back repeatedly, patiently and evocatively, but never stridently – building the reader’s understanding of how her characters’ world not only looks, sounds and feels, but also how it works and what this means” (Smiley 1991: 3). It shows the interconnectedness of all things that happen both in the First World and Third World countries. For example, Ursa is reluctant to return to Triunion, because of her parents’ conflict with each other. This conflict is due to her father Primus Mackenzie’s betrayal of ideals that he and Ursa’s mother once devoutly served. In turn, this personal conflict introduces the theme of political corruption in Triunion, and its counterpart in the United States. The pattern that unfolds is that of ever-widening circle and also of one box existing within a still larger box.

When Ursa’s dominating first person narrative presents her as a travelling daughter, experiences of Primus Mackenzie’s are chronicled by others around him. In the case of Estelle, Marshall uses less conventional methods for the revelation of character. The readers come to understand Estelle through her letters to the people back home, and a secondary voice, that of Celestine or others who are often unsympathetic to her. They learn about other women through their conversations with good friends to whom they speak honestly and directly or through entering their minds. Marshall makes good use of memory, ritual, abortion as a symbol, the techniques of
silence and talk, and double exposures, to do a sophisticated analysis of intersection between many things. The narrative dislocations in the novel, along with its refusal of sureness and definiteness in its portrayal of the protagonist, its natal community and its multivocality, situate it on the borderline where Modernism, Post-modernism, Post-colonialism, Post-structuralism, Feminism and Marxism converge.

Marshall’s latest novel till date, The Fisher King (2000), from the point of view of a preteen child Sonny, dramatizes the conflicts between black West Indian immigrants and native-born African-Americans. An anonymous article entitled “Paule Marshall’s People: Meeting the Relatives”, speaks in praise of the point of view in the novel: “Marshall’s first stellar achievement in The Fisher King is keeping an adult reader interested in a novel told ostensibly from the point of view of a preteen child without making the child seem preternaturally sophisticated. That’s no mean feat...” (The New Crisis 2001: 43). Written in stream of consciousness mode, the narrative is not hemmed in by many commas and periods; action moves back and forth between an inner and outer dialogue that sways to the music.

The two-week visit of Sonny to Brooklyn, who has come with Hattie to attend the commemorative concept of the fifteenth anniversary of Sonny-Rett’s death, brings to the fore the feud between the American family of Cherisse McCallum and the West Indian family of Everett Payne. Marshall tells a moving tale about the complexity of family to show that the lives of the diasporic blacks are not solely defined by racism; that most of the time they love their children, their husbands and their wives; that they have a
family life; and that they are able to maintain a sense of humanity, by celebrating such things in the face of an oppressive society. The innocent presence of the child leads the surviving family members to reevaluate their relationships, resolve old arguments and keep the feud from poisoning another generation.

Marshall has exploited the narrative technique to the maximum, in her novels. She blends writing and orality, and juxtaposes the world of reality and fantasy to explore and exhibit the complex nature of African, American identity. Her narratives, by foregrounding dreams, speaking, ritual, song, dance and other art forms, recognize the primacy of language and the spoken word.

1A.4.5. Style

It is style that gives value and beauty to art. The style of a text emerges as a combination of various elements that range from lexical choices to discourse organization. Every word or phrase must contribute to the author’s pronouncement on the world he is creating; that pronouncement is a manifestation of his feeling for events and situations and an author expresses himself through his style; what he says should present pictures to the reader, since the reader responds not to the words but to the picture. The essence of style is accuracy of observation and expression, as the primary duty of the artist is telling truth.

A writer’s style is determined by the force of his own personality and the occasion or purpose which compels him to write. Marshall’s novels also
show the complex articulation between the author the individual, social context and the play of language. Marshall takes great pains to find a suitable style for her material and she explains: “One of the reasons it takes me such a long time to get a book done... is that I’m not only struggling with my sense of reality, but I’m also struggling to find the style, the language, the tone that is in keeping with the material” (Qtd. in Draper 1992: 1364).

When “the language of criticism and... the language of fiction have nearly always been male-centered” (Busia1988: 6), one can hear the black female voices in the novels of Marshall. She has a brilliant ear for vernacular and dialogue and she says:

I’ve tried to celebrate the wonderful play of language that’s true of the African-American and West Indian communities.... I’ve tried to show what we’ve done with the English language that’s been imposed on us to affirm our place and our poetry. (Qtd. in “Only Paule Marshall’s ‘e’ is Silent.” 2001: 1)

Marshall, who comes from a people for whom language is an art form, has absorbed their ability to work magic with language; has tried to duplicate it in standard English; and has attempted “to imitate their tough, lyric way of dealing with language” (Washington 1988: 164). In her Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959), Marshall tells a story well by finding the telling phrases and “using the voice of the community” (165). In the novel, she has exhibited her “skill in rendering everyday speech... as well as the ability to tap, to exploit, the beauty, poetry, and wisdom it often contains” (Marshall
1983a: 23-24). Being a Barbadian immigrant, Marshall is familiar with the tone and rhythm of dialect speech, and she reproduces them in the book at certain moments such as kitchen gatherings and weddings. The language her characters speak reveals the interplay of African, British and Caribbean elements and reflects their diasporic history.

Selina’s mother and her friends have taken King’s English and transformed it by their Barbadian accents and stinging rhythms, to express themselves. They have changed the arrangement of words in sentences, to make them sound better. They have introduced a few African derived sounds and words like ‘Yam’. Their Biblical quotes, colorful metaphors, proverbs and sayings, which speak of their experience as women, enrich English. But in general, the style Marshall uses in the novel is “very literary” (Baer 1992: 254), with a lot of allusions to predominantly Western literature. Her disciplined prose displays universality of ideas and striking imagery. In the novel, unity is achieved through the sustained architectural imagery which binds the moral and existential antimonies. The warfare imagery highlights the individual, family and community conflicts. The images of sea and of prisms are central to the novel. They reflect Marshall’s conception of black consciousness. Marshall’s style includes images of power-as-experience. The rhythm of machine power is pervasive in ‘Brown Girl, Brownstones’ (1959).

Marshall uses liberally symbolic language to heighten the meaning. So her stories can be interpreted on various levels. For instance, the story of Selina’s growing up can be, on another level, the story of any people undergoing fundamental change and disruption. Marshall uses language
ironically, as she is employing a western language to posit a black self. The style is condensed and metaphoric. She makes use of metaphors as the trope of contradiction and says two things at once – for example, Selina’s flight from the white woman. Two historical moments are overlapped here; one is the harrowing flight of the fugitive slave and the other is Selina’s panic-stricken flight from white bourgeois persecution. Marshall has a good eye for detail. Her descriptive passages contribute to the psychological development or advance the symbolic action.

In *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969), one can find the same lyricism and Marshall’s love for language, as in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959). The novel is “a fascinating treatment of language – spoken and narrative language as well as paralanguage, that way of communicating nonverbally, through the body and through the pace, tone, and volume of speech” (Olmsted 1997: 250). The narrator in the novel uses Standard English to describe the island, the people and the voice of the sea. The islanders speak various dialects. Switching between codes is a common mode of discourse between classes, as in the case of Harriet and the Bourne island ladies. Education, class status and the ability to speak Standard English are seen as synonymous. The only exception is Merle. She seems to speak the language of the place itself.

In an interview with Sylvia Baer, Marshall says that *The Chosen Place, The Timeless People* (1969) “was a full blown, somewhat self-indulgent one in terms of style and language. If there were five ways to describe something I would use all five” (Baer 1992: 254). Marshall employs a traditional form of narrative in the novel, and it details every inch
of the setting the Caribbean island, and describes the characters elaborately. It might look tedious, but the journey of discovery and recovery which the novel deals with is long and strenuous and the readers are meant to experience it.

Marshall strives as a writer to communicate feeling, using words. For example, when she introduces Merle in the first chapter, she uses verbs instead of adjectives, to make her come alive on the page. She prefers passive construction to describe the road Merle is travelling, and the car she is driving; it impresses upon the readers that the road is also a symbolic road, a sort of long, weary road.

Marshall’s use of symbols demand attention; some of the striking symbols are: i) Vere’s woman’s boudoir dolls with painted blue eyes, blond hair, white skin, and elaborate dresses which he destroys ii) the white sow ritually killed on a Sunday iii) the cassia tree that blooms all of a sudden iv) the island v) and the sea. Imagery in the novel is effective; the image of the lost child connects all the characters: Allen, like a lost child, is full of fear; Harriet cannot bear a child; Vere and Saul have lost their children; Merle is separated from her child; and Gwen’s child is refusing to be born.

Metaphors of war and combat abound in the novel. The book has various violent images such as warring armies, wrestling men, apocalyptic fire, bombs and missiles, bloody eagle, roaring sea, torturing rack, the crushing rollers and Cuffee Ned’s Revolt. Except the last one, all the other images represent the first world military and economic power.
Marshall endows the island, the setting of the novel, with a language of its own and this language of the place is developed through Merle’s affinity with the island. The island speaks to the characters in different voices, but makes them all to remember their past and take responsibility for their past. The narration enables the readers to listen beyond the confines of language to the silences, such as Ferguson’s before the white man, and subtle voices of sea, island, and body. Through the use of subtle forms of language, Marshall demonstrates that resistance works at many levels.

_Praisesong for the Widow_ (1983) is a deliberate stylistic departure for Marshall. Her first two novels are verbose, but this book is much more compact. Marshall “wanted to experiment with economy, but have a kind of resonance” (Lee 1983). Marshall explains about her experiment: “I was trying to see if I could contain myself. _Praisesong_ is a much smaller canvas... It is concerned with a single character. I hope some of the lyricism and the love for the language remains” (Ibid). She presses into service a condensed, metaphorical style in the novel; her evocative style is functional and precise, yet imaginative and figurative. The novel is “economical in style... subtle in symbolism... mythic in implications” (Pannill 1985: 70). The restraint she had to exercise in writing the novel was difficult for Marshall. She speaks about that difficulty:

I am so given to describing things in a kind of full way that it’s difficult for me to kind of hold back, to exercise some restraint in the writing.... In terms of craft, it represents an attempt on my part to really write a tighter, sparer, more economical kind of book. That was a real
kind of challenge for me because, as a writer, I’m so in love with language. It represented a more difficult book for me than the bigger books because I had to throw out so much material. (Qtd. in “Paule Marshall’s People: Meeting the Relatives” 2001: 43)

In this tight knit work, there is room for details also; one fine example is the exquisitely detailed descriptions of Avey’s home on Halsey Street.

_Praisésong for the Widow_ (1983) is full of signs and allusions, cultural icons and codes and the experience of the widow’s journey to selfhood is relived differently by readers according to their understanding of these cultural signs. Symbols are aplenty in the novel; the one symbol that stands out is that of the umbilical cord, which summarizes the unity as well as the need to preserve and treasure the values that are uniquely black. Throughout the novel, the history of slavery is recorded as a physical memory. For example, Avey feels the gripping hands of her great-aunt Cuney and Lebert Joseph as if they were manacles, forcibly pulling her back into history; ‘manacles’, like ‘iron’ is used in the book as a grim reminder of slavery. The images employed have the ability to evoke bodily suffering such as Avey undergoes during her journey to Carriacou.

Marshall’s rhythmic prose descriptions of Avey’s experience in the Big Drum Ceremony sweep the readers into the dance movements. Marshall introduces Caribbean flavour to her prose through the increasing presence of the tilting English rhythm and inverted syntax of the Caribbean islanders through the lively Caribbean Patois, as spoken by Joseph Lebert, his
daughter Rosalie, another islander Milda, and Avey herself at the end of the novel. As much of the story is told in internal flashbacks, the past perfect is often used to keep chronology straight.

*Daughters* (1991) affirms the fact that Marshall is a novelist of voices with a marvelouss ear. “The idiosyncratic language of each of her characters is not only authentic but also compelling and intriguing, revealing over and over how each character experiences both the world and herself in it” (Smiley 1991: 3). Take for example, Ursa Beatrice Mackenzie; her linguistic style tells much about her. She uses standard narrative English, fast-faced, descriptive but objective and understated and it presents her as a middle-class American of intelligence and ambition. In the case of Viney and Estelle also, it is Urban North American speech. Then there are the different and colorful voices of Celestine, Astral Forde and Malvern, women from the Caribbean island, Triunion. Marshall skilfully balances the various voices in the novel to tell the story of similarity between two worlds, the First and the Third worlds. The style in the first hundred pages is quiet and lulling, and after that the book provides incidents of immediate drama and interest. Especially, the scenes in Triunion are wonderfully rich with vitality, nuance and dialect.

Marshall is called a ‘picture writer’ and she explains how she creates pictures in her books: “I’m always trying to use language and imagery and description in such a way that the reader sees as I see in my mind’s eye, with that same clarity, vividness, and depth of feeling” (Dance 1992: 13). There are very vivid pictures in *Daughters* (1991): the image of Ursa as a little girl trying to reach upto the toes of Congo Jane’s statue; that of Miss.Mach
hooking her cane around the neck of her helper in the shop; and that of Astral at the swimming pool holding the towel and soup for Ursa, like a maid.

In *The Fisher King* (2000), Marshall has successfully captured a multitude of voices, as in *Daughters* (1991). But this time, the voices are not only that of migrants and immigrants, but also that of emigrants. She captures the cadences of black speech, while exploring the complexity of family relationships and social issues faced by black Americans. *The Fisher King* (2000) has the texture of a longer work, by means of compressed language. Marshall says: “In *The Fisher King* for the first time I tried to write in a language that is honed down some. I try to give it a poetic sensibility, not my usual kind of full-blown language” (Qtd. in “Only Paule Marshall’s ‘e’ is Silent” 2001: 2). The avowed simplicity of language and image is deceptive, since allegory, fable or satire are present in her writing. She writes with clarity and humour. One finds expert dialogue and mellifluous rhythms in the novel.

Marshall takes some of her key imagery from the Arthurian story of the Fisher King to explore the themes of unity and healing. As in *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959), the warfare imagery is prevalent throughout *The Fisher King* (2000), highlighting the intra-racial conflicts and their futility. In Marshall’s novels, one can trace the rhythmic use of symbols for thematic definition. Her style therefore defines her themes.
A novel is a living thing, one and indivisible. In the internal structure of the novel there are no essential divisions between the elements of narrative, dialogue, and description, since each contributes to and inseparable from the development of the other. This is clearly made evident by the analysis of the elements of fiction expertly handled by Marshall in her novels. Her development of themes, characters, symbols and metaphors, her close attention to artistry and to the refinements and nuances of her craft as a writer of novels and her stylistic decisions mark her as an artist of a high order.

The next chapter analyses Marshall’s all the five novels, with regard to her use of memory and myth, for telling stories about the struggle of black people, especially black women, against the forces in the white dominant society that attempt to eliminate the black cultural identity.