

praise song for the widow

****Praise Song for the Widow: Exploring the Depths of Mourning and Memory****

praise song for the widow is more than just a title—it is a profound piece of literature that resonates deeply with themes of loss, identity, and cultural heritage. This evocative poem by Grace Nichols has captivated readers around the world, weaving a narrative that honors the strength and resilience found in mourning. Through its lyrical beauty and rich symbolism, "Praise Song for the Widow" invites us to reflect on the ways we commemorate those who have passed and how their memories continue to shape our lives.

Understanding Praise Song for the Widow

At its core, "Praise Song for the Widow" is a poetic tribute that blends personal grief with communal tradition. The poem draws inspiration from African praise songs—oral traditions used to celebrate individuals, their achievements, and their place in society. Grace Nichols uses this cultural framework to craft a narrative around a widow who is navigating the complex emotions following the death of her husband.

This piece is often studied in both literary and cultural contexts because it highlights the intersection between personal loss and collective memory. The widow's journey is not solitary; it is embedded within a larger tapestry of ancestral voices, nature, and the rhythms of everyday life.

The Role of Cultural Heritage in the Poem

One of the most striking aspects of "Praise Song for the Widow" is its invocation of cultural heritage. The poem incorporates vivid imagery related to nature—trees, rivers, animals—which are symbolic in

many African and Caribbean cultures. These elements serve as metaphors for continuity and rebirth, suggesting that though the widow mourns, life around her persists and offers a form of solace.

The praise song format itself is a nod to oral storytelling traditions. It functions as a way to honor the deceased while also providing comfort to the living. This dual role of praise songs is a crucial concept that Nichols brings to the forefront, reminding readers that mourning is both a personal and communal experience.

Thematic Richness in Praise Song for the Widow

Grace Nichols' poem is layered with themes that explore not only grief but also resilience, identity, and transformation. Let's delve into some of the key themes that make this poem so compelling.

Grief and Mourning

The widow's grief is palpable throughout the poem. However, instead of portraying sorrow as purely isolating, Nichols presents mourning as a process that reconnects the widow to her surroundings and her cultural roots. The repetition of natural imagery symbolizes the cycle of life and death, emphasizing that grief is part of a larger continuum.

Female Strength and Resilience

The poem subtly celebrates the widow's strength. Despite her loss, she embodies endurance and dignity. Nichols' portrayal challenges stereotypes of widows as helpless or broken, instead highlighting their capacity to carry forward legacies and maintain cultural traditions.

Connection to Nature and Ancestry

Nature imagery in "Praise Song for the Widow" is not just decorative; it is deeply symbolic. Trees, rivers, birds, and animals represent ancestral spirits and the enduring presence of those who have passed. This connection reassures the widow—and the reader—that death does not sever bonds but transforms them.

Literary Devices and Style

Grace Nichols' mastery of language shines through in her use of poetic devices that enrich the text and deepen its emotional impact.

Imagery and Symbolism

The poem is rich with sensory details that evoke sights, sounds, and textures. For instance, the mention of "trees like a people" or "river like a road" creates vivid mental pictures that anchor the widow's emotions in the physical world. These images are symbolic, often representing the collective strength and journey of the community.

Repetition and Rhythm

Repetition is a key stylistic feature that mimics the oral tradition of praise songs. The refrain-like phrases provide a rhythmic quality that reinforces the poem's themes and helps to create a meditative, almost chant-like atmosphere. This technique also serves to emphasize certain emotions and ideas, making the poem more memorable.

Language and Tone

Nichols uses simple yet evocative language that conveys deep emotion without becoming overly complex. The tone balances reverence with intimacy, inviting readers into the widow's internal world while also celebrating her place within a broader cultural context.

Why Praise Song for the Widow Resonates Today

In contemporary times, "Praise Song for the Widow" continues to find relevance among readers for several reasons. Its exploration of grief is universal, transcending cultural boundaries. Many people find comfort in the way it portrays mourning as both a personal and shared experience.

Additionally, the poem's emphasis on cultural identity and heritage speaks to ongoing conversations about diaspora, memory, and belonging. For those exploring their roots or grappling with loss in multicultural contexts, Nichols' work offers a poignant reminder of the power of tradition and storytelling.

In Education and Literary Studies

The poem is frequently included in curricula that focus on postcolonial literature, Caribbean poetry, and women's writing. Its accessibility and depth make it an excellent resource for discussions about cultural identity, gender roles, and the function of poetry as a form of healing.

In Personal Reflection and Healing

Beyond academic settings, many readers turn to "Praise Song for the Widow" during times of personal loss. Its lyrical tribute offers a way to connect with grief without being overwhelmed by it, portraying

mourning as a journey toward acceptance and renewal.

Tips for Analyzing Praise Song for the Widow

If you're studying this poem or simply want to appreciate it more deeply, here are some helpful tips:

- **Focus on imagery:** Pay close attention to the natural elements Nichols uses and consider what they symbolize in relation to the widow's experience.
- **Consider the cultural context:** Research African and Caribbean praise songs to better understand the poem's structure and purpose.
- **Analyze repetition:** Notice how repeated phrases contribute to the poem's rhythm and mood.
- **Reflect on tone and voice:** Think about how the poem balances personal emotion with communal tradition.
- **Connect themes:** Explore how grief, identity, and resilience intertwine throughout the poem.

These approaches can help uncover the layers of meaning Nichols has woven into her work.

Exploring "Praise Song for the Widow" is a journey through sorrow and strength, memory and identity. It reminds us that even in loss, there is beauty and continuity, and that through honoring those we have loved, we find ways to carry their spirit forward in our lives.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of 'Praise Song for the Widow' by Grace Nichols?

The central theme of 'Praise Song for the Widow' is the celebration of heritage, identity, and the strength of a woman who reconnects with her cultural roots after the loss of her husband.

How does Grace Nichols use imagery in 'Praise Song for the Widow'?

Grace Nichols uses vivid natural and cultural imagery, such as references to rivers, trees, and ancestral voices, to evoke a sense of connection to the past and the strength derived from cultural heritage.

What is the significance of the widow's journey in the poem?

The widow's journey symbolizes a personal and spiritual reconnection with her ancestry and identity, highlighting themes of resilience, mourning, and the empowerment found through embracing one's roots.

How does 'Praise Song for the Widow' reflect Caribbean culture?

The poem incorporates elements of Caribbean oral traditions, praise songs, and references to nature, reflecting the region's cultural practices and emphasizing the importance of community and heritage.

Why is 'Praise Song for the Widow' considered an important work in postcolonial literature?

It is considered important because it explores themes of identity, displacement, and cultural reclamation, showcasing the experiences of postcolonial subjects reconnecting with their heritage in the aftermath of colonialism.

Additional Resources

Praise Song for the Widow: A Literary Exploration of Grief and Identity

praise song for the widow stands as a compelling work in contemporary literature, authored by the distinguished Kenyan writer Grace Ogot. The narrative delves into profound themes of loss, cultural heritage, and the quest for personal identity, making it a significant study for literary scholars and enthusiasts alike. This article aims to provide a comprehensive and analytical review of **Praise Song for the Widow**, exploring its thematic depths, narrative techniques, and its place in African literature.

Understanding Praise Song for the Widow

At its core, **Praise Song for the Widow** narrates the transformative journey of Miri, a Kenyan woman who, after the death of her husband, embarks on a poignant pilgrimage to her ancestral home. The story intricately weaves personal grief with collective cultural memory, creating a tapestry that reflects both individual and communal identity.

The novel's title itself is evocative, drawing from traditional African oral poetry known as praise songs, which are typically sung to honor individuals and commemorate their lives. In this context, the "widow" becomes the subject of such a song, symbolizing resilience and the continuity of life despite loss.

Thematic Exploration: Grief and Healing

One of the most striking features of **Praise Song for the Widow** is its nuanced portrayal of grief. Miri's widowhood is not merely a personal tragedy but also an event that triggers a deep introspection about her place within her family and community. The narrative captures the multifaceted nature of mourning, showcasing how grief can act as a catalyst for self-discovery and healing.

Ogot's treatment of grief transcends the simplistic notion of sorrow by incorporating traditional African

rites and beliefs. The protagonist's journey back to her roots is emblematic of a spiritual and psychological healing process, underscoring the importance of cultural identity in coping with loss.

Identity and Cultural Heritage

The novel meticulously examines the tension between modernity and tradition, particularly in the context of postcolonial African societies. Miri's initial detachment from her cultural heritage is gradually dismantled as she reconnects with the rituals, stories, and landscapes of her ancestors.

This reawakening is depicted through vivid imagery and rich symbolism, where landmarks such as the river and the ancestral homestead serve as metaphors for the flow of time and the persistence of heritage. The narrative thus invites readers to contemplate the role of cultural memory in shaping identity, especially for women navigating the intersections of past and present.

Narrative Techniques and Literary Style

Grace Ogot employs a lyrical and evocative prose style in **Praise Song for the Widow**, which complements the novel's themes of memory and tradition. The narrative structure is non-linear, interspersing present experiences with flashbacks and oral histories, thereby mimicking the way memories surface and intertwine.

The use of imagery is particularly noteworthy. Descriptions of the natural environment—such as the river, the forests, and the village—are imbued with symbolic significance, enhancing the emotional resonance of Miri's journey. Additionally, the integration of traditional songs and proverbs enriches the text, grounding it firmly within its cultural context.

Character Development and Symbolism

Miri's character arc is central to the novel's impact. Initially portrayed as a woman estranged from her lineage, her transformation is both subtle and profound. The widow's pilgrimage is not only physical but also metaphorical, representing a return to wholeness.

Supporting characters, while less developed, serve as cultural anchors and narrative foils. Their interactions with Miri highlight the varying degrees of attachment to tradition within the community, thereby illustrating the broader societal shifts underway.

Symbolism is deftly used throughout the story. The river, for instance, symbolizes both life and change, while the praise songs themselves represent a form of cultural continuity and affirmation. These elements work together to reinforce the novel's central motifs.

Comparative Context in African Literature

When positioned alongside other African literary works addressing themes of loss and identity, **Praise Song for the Widow** offers a unique perspective, particularly through its emphasis on female experience and agency. Unlike some postcolonial narratives that foreground political upheaval, Ogot's novel focuses on personal and cultural reconciliation.

Comparatively, works such as Chinua Achebe's **Things Fall Apart** or Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's **The River Between** also explore the collision of tradition and modernity but often from a male protagonist's vantage point. Ogot's narrative thus fills an important gap by centering a woman's voice and her intimate relationship with heritage.

Pros and Cons of the Novel's Approach

- **Pros:** The poetic prose and rich symbolism create a deeply immersive reading experience. The focus on cultural rituals provides valuable insight into Kenyan traditions, enhancing the novel's authenticity and educational value.
- **Cons:** Some readers may find the non-linear narrative challenging, particularly if unfamiliar with African oral traditions. Additionally, the novel's introspective pace might not appeal to those seeking fast-moving plots or action-driven stories.

Impact and Legacy of *Praise Song for the Widow*

Since its publication, **Praise Song for the Widow** has garnered critical acclaim for its sensitive and evocative portrayal of widowhood and cultural identity. It remains a staple in African literature curricula worldwide and has inspired discussions about the intersection of gender, culture, and memory.

The novel's enduring relevance is underscored by its universal themes of loss and belonging, making it a poignant read for diverse audiences. Moreover, its contribution to elevating women's narratives in African literature cannot be overstated.

By weaving together personal grief with collective heritage, Grace Ogot's **Praise Song for the Widow** offers a profound meditation on the power of memory, tradition, and resilience. Its literary artistry and thematic richness continue to resonate, affirming its place as a seminal work in the canon of African literature.

Praise Song For The Widow

praise song for the widow: Praisesong for the Widow Paule Marshall, 1984-04-16 From the acclaimed author of *Daughters* and *Brown Girl, Brownstones* comes a “work of exceptional wisdom, maturity, and generosity, one in which the palpable humanity of its characters transcends any considerations of race or sex”(Washington Post Book World). Avey Johnson—a black, middle-aged, middle-class widow given to hats, gloves, and pearls—has long since put behind her the Harlem of her childhood. Then on a cruise to the Caribbean with two friends, inspired by a troubling dream, she senses her life beginning to unravel—and in a panic packs her bag in the middle of the night and abandons her friends at the next port of call. The unexpected and beautiful adventure that follows provides Avey with the links to the culture and history she has so long disavowed. “Astonishingly moving.”—Anne Tyler, *The New York Times Book Review*

praise song for the widow: Praisesong of Survival Richard Kenneth Barksdale, 1992

praise song for the widow: The Fiction of Paule Marshall Dorothy Hamer Denniston, 1995
Introduction : anatomy of an aesthetic : the African cultural base -- 1. Challenging the American norm : the gendered sensibility in the Valley between -- 2. Beyond bildungsroman : constructions of gender and culture in *Brown girl, brownstones* -- 3. Cultural expansion and masculine subjectivity : Soul clap hands and sing -- 4. Maturation and multiplicity in consciousness : the short stories -- 5. Changing the present order : personal and political liberation in *The chosen place*, the timeless people -- 6. Recognition and recovery : diasporan connections in *Praisesong for the widow* -- 7. Transformation and re-creation of female identity in *Daughters*.

praise song for the widow: Worrying the Line Cheryl A. Wall, 2005 In blues music, worrying the line is the technique of breaking up a phrase by changing pitch, adding a shout, or repeating words in order to emphasize, clarify, or subvert a moment in a song. Cheryl A. Wall applies this term to fiction and nonfiction wr

praise song for the widow: Tongue and Mother Tongue African Literature Association. Meeting, 2002 *Tongue and Mother Tongue* takes on two compelling challenges: the language question and the place and role of the mother tongue in African literature. This collection is the culmination of the fierce, decades-old debate on the question of African literature and its criticism. The fourteen essays range from a variety of critical and theoretical perspectives, covering the theoretical and ideological aspects of the language question, the nature of criticism, the influence of the oral tradition, critical analysis of mother tongue literature and textual analyses.

praise song for the widow: Nation Dance Patrick Taylor, 2001 Dealing with the ongoing interaction of rich and diverse cultural traditions from Cuba and Jamaica to Guyana and Surinam, *Nation Dance* addresses some of the major contemporary issues in the study of Caribbean religion and identity. The book's three sections move from a focus on spirituality and healing, to theology in social and political context, and on to questions of identity and diaspora. The book begins with the voices of female practitioners and then offers a broad, interdisciplinary examination of Caribbean religion and culture. Afro-Caribbean religions, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity are all addressed, with specific reflections on Santería, Palo Monte, Vodou, Winti, Obeah, Kali Mai, Orisha work, Spiritual Baptist faith, Spiritualism, Rastafari, Confucianism, Congregationalism, Pentecostalism, Catholicism, and liberation theology. Some essays are based on fieldwork, archival research, and textual or linguistic analysis, while others are concerned with methodological or theoretical issues. Contributors include practitioners and scholars, some very established in the field, others with fresh, new approaches; all of them come from the region or have done extensive fieldwork or research there. In these essays the poetic vitality of the practitioner's voice meets the attentive commitment of the postcolonial scholar in a dance of nations across the waters.

praise song for the widow: Constructing Black Selves Lisa Diane McGill, 2005-11-01 In 1965, the Hart-Cellar Immigration Reform Act ushered in a huge wave of immigrants from across the Caribbean—Jamaicans, Cubans, Haitians, and Dominicans, among others. How have these

immigrants and their children negotiated languages of race and ethnicity in American social and cultural politics? As black immigrants, to which America do they assimilate? *Constructing Black Selves* explores the cultural production of second-generation Caribbean immigrants in the United States after World War II as a prism for understanding the formation of Caribbean American identity. Lisa D. McGill pays particular attention to music, literature, and film, centering her study around the figures of singer-actor Harry Belafonte, writers Paule Marshall, Audre Lorde, and Piri Thomas, and meringue-hip-hop group Proyecto Uno. Illuminating the ways in which Caribbean identity has been transformed by mass migration to urban landscapes, as well as the dynamic and sometimes conflicted relationship between Caribbean American and African American cultural politics, *Constructing Black Selves* is an important contribution to studies of twentieth century U.S. immigration, African American and Afro-Caribbean history and literature, and theories of ethnicity and race.

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praise song for the widow: *Binding Cultures* Gay Wilentz, 1992-05-22 Wilentz . . . makes convincing arguments for the connections between African and Afro-American women's culture. —Nellie McKay Wilentz's jargon-free, intelligent discussion . . . will appeal to students in African, African American, and women's literature courses, as well as general readers interested in the emerging field. —Choice Through these works, Wilentz demonstrates the powerful transformation possible through understanding—and embracing—the past, even if that past includes oppression and brutalization. —Belles Lettres *Binding Cultures* investigates the cultural bonds between African and African-American women writers such as Nigerian Flora Nwapa and Ghanaians Efua Sutherland and Ama Ata Aidoo, writers who focus on the role of women in passing on cultural values to future generations, and African-American writers Alice Walker, Toni Morrison, and Paule Marshall, who self-consciously evoke African culture to help create a more integrated African-American community.

praise song for the widow: *Caribbean Women Writers* Mary Condé, Thorunn Lonsdale, 1999-02-12 *Caribbean Women Writers* is a collection of scholarly articles on the fiction of selected Caribbean women writers from Antigua, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica and Trinidad. It includes not only close critical analysis of texts by Erna Brodber, Dionne Brand, Zee Edgell, Jamaica Kincaid, Paule Marshall, Pauline Melville, Jean Rhys and Olive Senior, but also personal statements from the writers Merle Collins, Beryl Gilroy, Vernella Fuller and Velma Pollard.

praise song for the widow: *Maternal Metaphors of Power in African American Women's Literature* Geneva Cobb Moore, 2017-03-31 An in-depth examination of Black women's experiences as portrayed in literature throughout American history Geneva Cobb Moore deftly combines literature, history, criticism, and theory in *Maternal Metaphors of Power in African American Women's Literature* by offering insight into the historical black experience from slavery to freedom as depicted in the literature of nine female writers across several centuries. Moore traces black women writers' creation of feminine and maternal metaphors of power in literature from the colonial-era work of Phillis Wheatley to the postmodern efforts of Paule Marshall, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. Through their characters Moore shows how these writers re-created the identity of black women and challenge existing rules shaping their subordinate status and behavior. Drawing on feminist, psychoanalytic, and other social science theory, Moore examines the maternal iconography and counter-hegemonic narratives by which these writers responded to oppressive conventions of race, gender, and authority. Moore grounds her account in studies of Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs, Charlotte Forten Grinké, Jessie Fauset, Nella Larsen, and Zora Neale Hurston. All these authors, she contends, wrote against invisibility and powerlessness by developing and cultivating a personal voice and an individual story of vulnerability, nurturing capacity, and agency that confounded prevailing notions of race and gender and called into question moral reform. In these nine writers' construction of feminine images—real and symbolic—Moore finds a shared sense of the historically significant role of black women in the liberation struggle during slavery, the Jim

Crow period, and beyond. A foreword is offered by Andrew Billingsley, a pioneering sociologist and a leading scholar in African American studies.

praise song for the widow: Matria Redux Tegan Zimmerman, 2023-06-23 In *Matria Redux: Caribbean Women Novelize the Past*, author Tegan Zimmerman contends that there is a need for reading Caribbean women's texts relationally. This comprehensive study argues that the writer's turn to maternal histories constitutes the definitive feature of this transcultural and transnational genre. Through an array of Caribbean women's historical novels published roughly between 1980 and 2010, this book formulates the theory of *matria*—an imagined maternal space and time—as a postcolonial-psychoanalytic feminist framework for reading fictions of maternal history written by and about Caribbean women. Tracing the development of the historical novel in four periods of the Caribbean past—slavery, colonialism, revolution, and decolonization—this study argues that a pan-Caribbean generation of women writers, of varying discursive racial(ized) realities, has depicted similar *matria* constructs and maternal motifs. A politicized concept, *matria* functions in the historical novel as a counternarrative to traditional historical and literary discourses. Through close readings of the mother/daughter plots in contemporary Caribbean women's historical fiction, such as Andrea Levy's *The Long Song*, Edwidge Danticat's *The Farming of Bones*, Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow*, and Marie-Elena John's *Unburnable*, *Matria Redux* considers the concept of *matria* an important vehicle for postcolonial-psychoanalytic feminist literary resistance and political intervention. *Matria* as a psychoanalytic, postcolonial strategy therefore envisions, by returning to history, alternative feminist fictions, futures, and Caribbeans.

praise song for the widow: *Fusion of Cultures?*, 2022-02-28 The intention of this second volume of ASNEL Papers is to counter orthodox post-colonial emphases on alterity, subversion, and counter-discourse with another set of concepts: fusion, syncretism, hybridity, creolisation, cross-fertilisation, cross-cultural identity, diaspora. Topics covered include: gender and identity; syncretic aesthetics in Nigerian and South African performing arts; hyphenated identities in diasporic fiction; reversals of colonial mimicry in Ugandan fiction; cultural reflexivity in the Victorian juvenile novel; the persistence of colonial traits in Zimbabwean war fiction; syncretic strategies of resistance in African prison memoirs; indigene life-histories and intercultural authorship; neo-essentialism in post-colonial critiques of the Rushdie Affair; US multiculturalism and political praxis; creolisation in Surinam; cultural complexities in the Caribbean epic; literary representations of the Haitian Revolution. Authors treated within broader frameworks include Margaret Atwood, R.M. Ballantyne, Marie-Claire Blais, Alejo Carpentier, Roch Carrier, Aimé Césaire, Michelle Cliff, Tsitsi Dangarembga, Edouard Glissant, Andrew Hacker, Eddy L. Harris, Wilson Harris, Bessie Head, C.L.R. James, Maxine Hong Kingston, Jayanta Mahapatra, Paule Marshall, A.K. Mehrotra, Timothy Mo, Bharati Mukherjee, Ngugi wa Thiong'o, Akiki Nyabongo, Eugene O'Neill, Molefe Pheto, Salman Rushdie, Wole Soyinka, Ted Trindell, and Derek Walcott. There are also poems by David Woods and Afua Cooper.

praise song for the widow: Twentieth-Century and Contemporary American Literature in Context Linda De Roche, 2021-06-04 This four-volume reference work surveys American literature from the early 20th century to the present day, featuring a diverse range of American works and authors and an expansive selection of primary source materials. Bringing useful and engaging material into the classroom, this four-volume set covers more than a century of American literary history—from 1900 to the present. *Twentieth-Century and Contemporary American Literature in Context* profiles authors and their works and provides overviews of literary movements and genres through which readers will understand the historical, cultural, and political contexts that have shaped American writing. *Twentieth-Century and Contemporary American Literature in Context* provides wide coverage of authors, works, genres, and movements that are emblematic of the diversity of modern America. Not only are major literary movements represented, such as the Beats, but this work also highlights the emergence and development of modern Native American literature, African American literature, and other representative groups that showcase the diversity of American letters. A rich selection of primary documents and background material provides

indispensable information for student research.

praise song for the widow: *A Human Necklace* Moira Ferguson, 2013-12-01 Argues that Paule Marshall's work collectively constitutes a multigenerational saga of the African diaspora across centuries and continents. From *Brown Girl, Brownstones* (1959) to *The Fisher King* (2000), Paule Marshall's novels, novellas, and short stories include a rich cast of unforgettable men, women, and children who forge spiritual as well as emotional and geographical paths toward their ancestors. In this, the first critical study to address all of Marshall's fiction, Moira Ferguson argues that Marshall's work collectively constitutes a multigenerational saga of the African diaspora across centuries and continents. In creating a space for her characters' interrupted lives and those of their elders and ancestors, Ferguson argues, Marshall trains a spotlight on slavery's wake and engages her fiction in the service of healing deep global wounds. "In sophisticated yet accessible discussions, Ferguson places Marshall's work in a variety of contexts that are at the center of diasporic and postcolonial studies. By producing this comprehensive examination of Marshall's fiction, she captures the way in which Marshall not only writes about diasporic experiences but, through the interconnected themes of her novels, is crafting a diasporic saga on the subject." — Sharon M. Harris, author of *Dr. Mary Walker: An American Radical, 1832–1919*

praise song for the widow: *Africana Methodology* James L. Conyer, Jr., 2018-10-15 This book critically examines the collection, interpretation, and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data from an Afrocentric perspective. The necessity of interpretive Afrocentric research is relevant to position agency and to locate Africana studies in place, space, and time. This study will provide readers with a compilation of literary, historical, philosophical, and social science essays that describe and evaluate the Africana experience from a methodological perspective. Paradoxically, the collection presents measurable and qualitative research, in order to flush out a global Pan-Africanist consciousness.

praise song for the widow: *Places of Silence, Journeys of Freedom* Eugenia C. DeLamotte, 2016-11-11 Alice Walker has described the Barbadian American novelist Paule Marshall as unequaled in intelligence, vision, craft, by anyone of her generation, to put her contributions to our literature modestly. Such praise has echoed through reviews and analyses of Marshall's work since the 1959 publication of *Brown Girl, Brownstones*, a novel followed by *The Chosen Place*, the *Timeless People* (1969), *Praisesong for the Widow* (1984), and *Daughters* (1991). *Places of Silence, Journeys of Freedom* is the first study of Paule Marshall's work to focus explicitly on her contribution to feminism. It is also the first to identify one of her original contributions to narrative art—a technique of superimposition or double exposure through which her books have explored topics now at the heart of feminist debate. Centered around the subject of voice and silence, these issues include the interrelation between women's power and powerlessness, the interpenetration of the political and economic world with the world of the psyche, and the mechanisms through which oppressions on the basis of race, class, and gender operate as mutually shaping forces.

praise song for the widow: *Ghosts of the African Diaspora* Joanne Chassot, 2018-01-02 The first monograph to investigate the poetics and politics of haunting in African diaspora literature, *Ghosts of the African Diaspora: Re-Visioning History, Memory, and Identity* examines literary works by five contemporary writers - Fred D'Aguiar, Gloria Naylor, Paule Marshall, Michelle Cliff, and Toni Morrison. Joanne Chassot argues that reading these texts through the lens of the ghost does cultural, theoretical, and political work crucial to the writers' engagement with issues of identity, memory, and history. Drawing on memory and trauma studies, postcolonial studies, and queer theory, this truly interdisciplinary volume makes an important contribution to the fast-growing field of spectrality studies.

praise song for the widow: *Sacral Grooves, Limbo Gateways* Keith Cartwright, 2013 "We're seeing people that we didn't know exist," the director of FEMA acknowledged in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. *Sacral Grooves, Limbo Gateways* offers a corrective to some of America's institutionalized invisibilities by delving into the submerged networks of ritual performance, writing, intercultural history, and migration that have linked the coastal U.S. South with the Caribbean and

the wider Atlantic world. This interdisciplinary study slips beneath the bar of rigid national and literary periods, embarking upon deeper—more rhythmic and embodied—signatures of time. It swings low through ecologies and symbolic orders of creolized space. And it reappraises pluralistic modes of knowledge, kinship, and authority that have sustained vital forms of agency (such as jazz) amid abysses of racialized trauma. Drawing from Haitian Vodou and New Orleanian Voodoo and from Cuban and South Floridian Santería, as well as from Afro-Baptist (Caribbean, Geechee, and Bahamian) models of encounters with otherness, this book reemplaces deep-southern texts within the counterclockwise ring-stepping of a long Afro-Atlantic modernity. Turning to an orphan girl's West African initiation tale to follow a remarkably traveled body of feminine rites and writing (in works by Paule Marshall, Zora Neale Hurston, Lydia Cabrera, William Faulkner, James Weldon Johnson, and LeAnne Howe, among others), Cartwright argues that only in holistic form, emergent from gulfs of cross-cultural witness, can literary and humanistic authority find legitimacy. Without such grounding, he contends, our educational institutions blind and even poison students, bringing them to “swallow lye,” like the grandson of Phoenix Jackson in Eudora Welty's “A Worn Path.” Here, literary study may open pathways to alternative medicines—fetched by tenacious avatars like Phoenix (or an orphan Kumba or a shell-shaking Turtle)—to remedy the lies our partial histories have made us swallow.

praise song for the widow: The Search for Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature Silvia Castro-Borrego, 2011-05-25 This volume has as a cohesive argument the exploration of the different manifestations of the search for wholeness and spirituality in the writings of contemporary African American women writers, covering different literary genres such as fiction (both novels and short stories), drama and poetry. Together with the issue of spirituality, the African American search for wholeness is analyzed as a source of creativity and agency. As expressed in the contemporary literature of black women writers, starting in the 1980s, the search for wholeness reflects a beauty realized through the healing of the spirit and the body, and is a process that takes on dimensions of reconciling the past and the present, the mythical and the real, the spiritual and the physical—all in the context of an emerging world view that welcomes synthesis and expects both synthesis and generative contradictions. The book will be a valuable collection for scholars of African American literature, comparative American Ethnic literature, American literature, and spirituality, as well as women's studies. In addition, it will be an important text for both undergraduate and graduate students in those fields. As Professor Johnnella Butler (2006) points out, the African American search for wholeness is tightly linked to the search for freedom and agency. Ever since the 19th century, African American writers have given expression to an African American self which functions in Western civilization simultaneously as a “colonized” other and an assertive “self.” Due to the continuous ordeal of the African Diaspora, this self is caught in between the binaries proposed by the material and the spiritual world, seeking a balance where the person can become whole. The search for wholeness feeds from cultural roots that imply the presence of ancestral spiritualism, rememory, and double consciousness. Contemporary black women writers reflect the metaphor of building spiritual bridges, seeking the possibilities of building a bridge to the archetypal African past that is carried in their memories as a presence that offers sustenance via spiritual reconnection. Their works seek to bridge the gap between the myths and traditions of the past and contemporary African American culture. The texts included in this collection are examples of writing as an exercise of what Vévé Clark calls “Diaspora literacy.” The texts written by contemporary African American women writers explicitly show how to recognize and read the cultural signs left scattered along the road of progress. In this way, material acquisition is achieved along with cultural dispossession, becoming a metaphor for the history of the African in America. The powerful message is that one should not exclude the other.

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