



Research Paper

An Ecological Perspective of Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983)

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Abstract

In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), through the life story of Avey Johnson, Paule Marshall emphasizes the interconnections between human beings and their environment in her intertwined representation of space and the dynamics of identity. Recursing to different settings Avey Johnson typifies the realities, Marshall highlights the mutual influence between individuals and nature. Thus, beyond geography, she pictures space as the milieu in charge of the individual's integration, initiation, adaptation, identification as well as the agent of social disintegration. In that same vein, Paule Marshall portrays the individual as the atom bearing the cultural heritage characteristic of a given environment, which despite its malleability cannot be nonspatialized. In this, beyond its artistry, Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* reflects the mutual dependence between the individual and his milieu conveying an ecological lens of her work.

Keywords: milieu, individual, interconnections, culture, identity.

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I. Introduction

As a product of human creative imagination, the literary work encompasses various areas of knowledge which, when glanced beyond its artistic worth, reflect life in its dimensions. Those fictionalized aspects of realities provide literature with merits which deny the limits imposed by "the inevitable (...) questions: "Why can't we simply enjoy this poem (story, novel, play) ? Why must we spoil the fun by criticizing ?" (Guerin, et al., 2005: x). Thus, the richness of literary works resides in readers' different perspectives, otherwise, the lenses through which one analyzes and interprets a piece of work so as to deal with the world of reality. From the sociological, psychological to the feminist approaches, to list some, the mimetic function of literature makes inherent the varieties of reader responses.

The multidisciplinary facet of literature which finds its life perspectives merges it with ecology, thence the emergence of a literary approach accepted as ecocriticism. According to Cheryll Glotfelty, "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Opperman, 1999: xviii). In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), through the story of Avey Johnson, Paule Marshall represents various social settings which not only reflect the dynamics of identity and space but also highlight the close connection between the individual and the milieu as well as its influences on human interconnections. Hence, the ecological lens to Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983). As a science that has evolved through time under the influence of research and denotes "'oikos" meaning house or habitat and "logos" meaning study or knowledge" (Ulusow, 2004: 11), ecology refers to the study of species in their environment. Thus, this work aims to emphasize how, through the story of Avey Johnson set in distinct social milieus symbolizing different influences, Marshall represents the complex relationships between living organisms and their environment which, in turn, shape the dynamics of identity.

In this work, the ecocritic perspective is considered since Marshall's different issues connect literature to ecological concerns. In this, one starts with a literary review of ecology aiming to trace human-environment interconnections through space and time. Then one focuses on Marshall's representation of environmental features and their links with the dynamics of identity in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983).

1. A Literary Review of Ecology

As a scientific discipline, ecology originates from the second half of the nineteenth century, corresponding to the usage of the neologism "ecology" by the German biologist Ernest Haeckel. However, the interconnections between people and their environment have through history revealed inherent in human evolution to be of practical concern in various fields in which the human-environment relationships are linked far back to the beginning of human history.

In *Fundamentals of Ecology* (2004), Odum and Barrett trace the connection between human beings and their environment to primitive society. Otherwise, human-nature contact marks the evolution of man. It is firstly referred to for survival's sake, since nature constituted a means for sustainability: animals and plants provided food and, at the same time, determined people's style of life which consisted of hunting and food gathering. The latter lifestyle, in turn, directed human beings to other natural spaces and shaped their nomadic condition because the shortage of natural resources led them to different spaces.

Moreover, for Odum and Barrett (2004) not only did nature supply food and put human beings into contact with distinct environments, it enabled them to modify the living world with the use of fire for light, warmth and as a method for cooking food. According to the authors of *Fundamentals of Ecology* (2004), that interdependence is notwithstanding humans' continual use of air and water.

Besides Odum and Barrett, Ulusow (2024) associates human-nature mutual dependence with the perspectives of ancient civilizations in the example of ancient Egypt. In the latter, the sacred significance of the Nile River linked human beings to nature. Associated with deity and rebirth Nile River flooding shaped the interpretation of rebirth and regeneration, otherwise, it epitomized life and death.

In addition, Knapp (2018) sets the background of ecological concerns in early writings. In his reference to works dated from the Hippocratic tradition, he emphasizes ancient Greeks' regard toward the link between human creatures and their environment. For him, the work entitled *-On Airs, Waters and Places* about the impact of the environment on human health by an anonymous author illustrates how the close connection between the individual and the milieu has so long been paid attention to before its conceptualization.

Despite its vibrant foundation through human history featured by the various references through Ancient Civilizations, traditions, philosophy and even early writings instancing the interest in the connection between people and their habitat, "ecology or modern ecology appeared as a scientific subject in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century" (Odum, Barrett, 2004: xviii).

Ecology is firstly referred to as a science particularly because of its close connection with biology marked by Haeckel's concept of ecology and his conception of it as a scientific study of organism-environment interactions. The latter idea is what Odum and Barrett (2004) confirm in linking ecology to biology otherwise, they equate biologists to ecologists: "To understand ecology thoroughly would be to understand all of biology, and to be a complete biologist is to be an ecologist" (Odum, Barrett, 2004: xviii). Nevertheless, modern ecology is under the influence of researchers from various other fields such as natural sciences, literature etc.

The naturalist Alexander von Humboldt's Holistic approach is a significant one. Humboldt's belief in the interconnectedness of the aspects of nature urged ecological investigations on the relationships between creatures and their milieu. Also, his emphasis on the paramount importance of understanding environmental relationships lays the ground for branches in the example of biogeography, which deals with the impact of geography on the distribution of plants and animals and its influences on the evolution of species.

On his side, Charles Darwin's *On the Origin of Species* (1859) constitutes a shift in the conception of nature, with his theory of evolution highlighting how species evolve and adapt their milieus. According to Mayr and Vorzimmer, *On the Origin of Species* awards Darwin his close connection to ecology through the appellations *Darwin the ecologist* (Mayr, 1964), or the *ecology of Darwin* (Vorzimmer cited in Acot, 1983). As for Eugen Warming, Darwin's theory is what ecologists owe their understanding of beings' adaptation which he acknowledges as "the epharmony prevailing in every niche and cranny of Nature" (Acot, 1983: 35).

Besides Humboldt and Darwin, Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (1854) is a valuable contribution to the scientific community. His observations in Walden Pond give insight into the importance of environmental research. Thoreau's interest in the environment also provides an extensive look at species' survival and decline as well as the dynamics of ecosystems, particularly the interactions between humans and the environment.

Despite the influences, ecological research began in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century marked by investigations on the dynamics of ecosystems with its pioneers such as Frederick Clement and Ernest Haeckel. Various movements and environmental agencies have contributed to the advance of ecology in the example of the conservation movement led by the naturalist John Muir, Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring", the environmental agencies like the United Nations Environment Programme and the Environmental Protection Agency. The latter is supported by the formation of ecological societies in the example of the Ecological Society of America (ESA), The International Association for Ecology (INTECOL) and publications which foster the dissemination of ecological research.

However, a broader understanding of the relationship between species and their environments shapes ecology multidisciplinary marked by the emergence of its other branches relying on diverse disciplines.

Thus, from mere ecology to ecosystem ecology, the holistic approach obliges combined research on biology, chemistry, physics and earth sciences. On its side, community ecology appeals to experiments and mathematical models. As for human ecology, it explores the complexity of human nature interconnections through the prism of geography, sociology, anthropology etc.

Besides, modern developments in the ecological field relate it to economics, political sciences etc. That shift from a purely scientific field to a multidisciplinary one is what Odum and Barrett emphasize in their broader definition of ecology: "ecology is now seen as not just a biological but a human science" (Odum, Barrett, 2004: xviii), which the emergence of ecocriticism instances, otherwise the combination of literature to the scientific discourse.

As a word on the recently published anthology by Cheryll Glotfelty, Opperman (1999), defines ecocriticism as the sign of the emergence of a new type of literary criticism. Even though the British romantic literature and transcendentalist writers in the example of Thoreau mark a connection between ecology and literature, the ecological-oriented approach to literature is related to Glotfelty's conceptualisation in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Glotfelty, Fromm, 1996). As a means of expression, the interconnection of environmental problems to literature is a way to have the piece of writing transmit values aiming to contribute to ecological perspectives, what motivates the calls of ecocritics in the name of Patrick Murphy, Donna Haraway, Evelyn Fox Keller and Diana Fox for a representation of nature through literature.

The power of a piece of work to address values, language and meaning beyond its artistry dives into the ecological lens of Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983). In her representation of Avey Johnson's journey back to her cultural milieu, Marshall uses distinct environments and their facets in time and space to picture the mutual interconnections between individuals and their milieus in his correlation of space and the dynamics of identity. There, she reflects on various attributes of the environment, expressed through Avey's reaction to definite environments and how they influence people's integration, assimilation and self-identification.

2. The Milieu as a Means for Self-Reflection and Identification in *Praisesong for the Widow* :

In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), via Avey Johnson's story, Paule Marshall gives a glance at space beyond its different physical features related to its characteristics on a map but refers to it as a definite place embodying materials which convey social and cultural meanings. The latter view of the milieu shapes its close connection with individuals since it directs people's view of themselves and determines their interrelations as well. Alluding especially to Halsey Street, Carriacou and Tatem, Marshall makes use of literature to represent the milieu in harmony with individuals and its influences on their interconnections, highlighting an ecological perspective of *Praisesong for the Window*.

The symbolic use of Carriacou, Tatem and Halsey street pictures how beyond geography, the setting is a mark of identity, it incarnates a given social environment enabling people to connect and re-connect to their cultural heritage. Thus, in her representation of the milieu, Marshall provides an imagery of Barnett and Casper's concept of social environment. For them: "Human social environments encompass the immediate physical surroundings, social relationships, and cultural milieus within which defined groups of people function and interact" (Barnett, Casper, 2001:465).

From that perspective, the ecological lens of Marshall's work resides in her portrayal of the environment as the embodiment of heritage, a ground for assimilation, which she in turn pictures through the way individuals are initiated to cultural values they are charged to perpetuate. Those assets of the social milieu in Marshall's novel establish a particular link between Avey Johnson and Tatem and Halsey Street. Coinciding with the period after the 1960s and 1970s in America marked by Blacks' quest for identity, Marshall's work urges to posit that space constitutes the roots enabling the individual's self-identification and recognition, it also makes the individual a social atom bearing ways typical to a given milieu.

In *Praisesong for the Widow*, Marshall's ecological penchant is firstly emphasized in how she points out the individual as a re-presentation of a social environment, making both the human and natural world prevailing features of the milieu. Aunt Cuney's dream before Avey's birth recalls the integration of the human into the physical milieu. Through the character of a baby in her mother's womb, The Williams family is called back to the roots after they moved from Tatem. Suppose ancestral dreams are, in African American communities, related to maintaining family stability (Anedo, 2012:43), in *Praisesong for the Widow*, Marshall highlights the communal interest, in the ancestors' request for human communion with the landing. In that dream, they are called back to the roots for a mission the land confides its society or the unliving confides the living. The latter interrelation foreshadowing ecology gives sense to Aunt Cuney's dream, what the baby's name chosen beforehand imparts. Avatara shorted for Avey charges the unborn baby to pass on their history, it connects the baby to the environment through her duty to immortalize the Ibo heritage.

Then the characters in Cuney's dream consisting of her grandmother, Cuney and the unborn baby make it an explicit call to fulfill the mission of transmitting the cultural heritage. It consists of three people symbols of past, present and future, to mean the Great mother, Aunt Cuney and the baby. Thus, each one stands for a generation that epitomizes Tatem. Through Aunt Cuney's call and insistence to have Avey each summer in

Tatem, a period coinciding with the excursion, Marshall pictures the milieu as the ground for initiation. Cultural heritage stems from the environment, what Avey went to fetch each summer.

In addition, Avey's particular routine with Aunt Cuney mirrors Tatem as a ground for assimilation, she was connected to the cultural realities: through the history of Ibos, African realities during wars and slavery and her walk to the landing. Thus, as in biology in which the integration of nutrients provides the body with energy for survival, individuals' initiation into cultural practices ensures the perpetuation of culture, an idea Avey's attitudes toward her brother and sisters after each summer in Tatem illustrates: "*Back home after only her first summer in Tatem she had recounted the whole thing almost word for word to her three brothers, complete with the old woman's inflexions and gestures*" (Marshall, 1983:38).

However, beyond the physical characteristics of a social environment, rituals and realities of a setting establish the connection. Thus, as the bearer of cultural heritage, humans are the historians of space conveying its practices and rituals beyond geographical boundaries. Through Jay and Avey Johnson's relationships, Marshall personifies Tatem in their everyday routine in Halsey Street to highlight people's close connection with the environment but also how their adaptation to a new one can be favored by environmental features. Darwin's theory of adaptation corroborates Marshall's representation of how Jay identifies himself in the landscape in Tatem first in his regard to Avey's story and how he embraces the ways of Avatara's community :

I'm with your aunt Cuney and the old woman you were named for. I believe it, Avey. Every word. "During their early years in Halsey Street, he would look forward to the trip to Tatem each summer even more than she did. He used to say the "down-home" life of the place reminded him of Leona, Kansas, where he had been born and raised before coming to New York by way of Chicago at the age of twelve. (Marshall, 1983:115-116)

Avey and Jay Johnson's interconnected beliefs in the Ibo story, make space the main determiner of human relations since their routine in Halsey Street turns around common practices they owe the cultural environment. Halsey Street symbolizes their rapport with the landing through cultural practices typical to the African American community. Their main routine after work consisting of music and dance evidences the significance of practices in people's communion with their ancestors. As a means of expression and a way to preserve their heritage since slavery, Marshall's various references to music, specially blues in the everyday life associated Avey and Jay to Tatem.

Music alleviates Avey et Jay's daily routine in a society where they have to bear the weight of racial inequality "*the fatigue and strain of the long day spent doing the two jobs—his and his boss's—would ease from his face, and his body as he sat up in the chair and stretched would look as if it belonged to him again*" (Marshall, 1983 :94). In Marshall's references to African American icons in the example of Hawkins, a great figure in music history that made the saxophone a quintessential instrument, she paints music as a means to pass on history. Also beyond that, their main room turned into The Rockland Place during evening dance relays the message of a community that has much contributed to the history of a nation where they are discriminated.

Besides, the preponderance of the rituals on Sundays in the Johnson's family in Halsey Street also draws a particular link between the individual and his environment in Marshall. The main description of Sunday's practices turning around poetry and rituals reconnect the Johnsons to ancestors and traditions. Their focus on rituals and poetry was their response to discrimination, reviving their African American heritage with Jay's allusion to Langston Hughes, a figure of Harlem Renaissance relating the experience of the black community through poetry. As for Thorson that practice consists in "*Africanizing the small, domestic ritual of poetry recitation in Jay and Avey's home*" (Thorson, 2007:647). Thus, through the poetry they retrace the history of their community highlighting horrors and triumphs, celebrating blackness and identity and particularly the continuity of their race. Marshall's particular choice of the fragment from Hughes reconnects them to the experience of their community evoking the human-nature link: "*...I've known rivers:/Ancient, dusky rivers. /My soul has grown deep like the rivers*" (Marshall, 1983:126).

Apart from Tatem and Halsey Street, Avey Johnson's experience in Carriacou is representative of interconnections between the individual and the milieu and particularly people. Suppose Tatem initiates her and Halsey Street perpetuates her cultural heritage, Carriacou reconnects Avey to her milieu. Her encounter with Out-islanders in Carriacou recalls Avey of people in Tatem. Otherwise, it restores familiarity with her people and their ways. Marshall's emphasis on her reaction, when she heard people speak Patois, underlines the social significance of language. As a means of communication, it conveys ways typical to a given environment, enabling people's self and social identification. Marshall also refers to signs of deference such as waves, the worth of smiles through Avey and the Out-islanders' sense of friendliness despite their appearance which signals they are not from the same environment.

In addition, the depiction of the healing power of Rosalie Parvay's house and the Big Drum establishes a connection between animate and inanimate things through the particular way Avey Johnson recollects her descendants. The latter, materialized in the setting in Carriacou, linked to her cultural landmarks : the dresser and cologne reminisce her parents, the tub in shape and color resurrects her great aunt, otherwise Tatem and the

oil reminding her of her duty as a mother connotes Halsey Street. The hill which emblemizes the ruined field she and her aunt crossed on their way to landing conciled Avey Johnson to the milieu and its practices she has neglected long ago in search for comfort. At last, the dance and music typical to African American culture reengages Avey in her mission once she participates in nations dance, begging pardon for a community she bears the heritage, making both the “most concrete of themany manifestations of this cultural and geographical territory in Praisesong” (Thorson, 2007 : 664).

The intertwined representation of social realities in Carriacou, Tatem and Halsey Street to Avey Johnson's life story shows the joint influence between individuals and the social environment which is not without impact on people's interconnections. Nevertheless, in Marshall's work, the portrayal of such interconnection at the same time bears dynamics in identity which far from connecting people to their roots, can be a means to disintegrate communal ways.

3. Marshall's Representation of Space as an Agent of Social Disintegration

Next to the picture of human-environment mutual influence in *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) in the way the character Avey Johnson responds to spatial features, Marshall confirms how determinant the milieu is for the self and social dynamics through Avey and Jay's lifestyle in the North of America. Suppose Carriacou and Tatem reflect their connection to African American realities, North White Plain, the epitome of progress and material success shapes distinct characters.

The social standing reflected by the Johnsons movement to North White Plain formalizes their lifestyle, starting from the references to their identification. From Jay and Avey or Avatara, to Jerome and Avey Johnson, Marshall emphasizes the influence of the milieu on human which the adaptation of their names to the environment signals. The particular meaning of Avatara or griot that attached her to Tatem, a landing she epitomizes the present, wanes, so is the mission she and Jay had accomplished together from their vow. Thus, in the same way, space erases the first references for identification in Marshall's, it acts as an agent of change and disintegrates the individual from the milieu such references owe their existence. Consequently, space shapes some sets of circumstances different from another, meaning the one individuals have evolved so far.

In Marshall's work, that human environment interrelation results from the living beings' movement to a new natural setting which, on its side exerts influence through its realities. The latter, in North White Plains, reside in questions of comfort, materialism, status and appearance in contrast to Harlem where the daily routine connects them to their ancestors. Therefore, while instilling such spatial features on their lifestyle, Marshall shapes the milieu in its connection with human beings as a double edged sword since North White Plain stands for whatever is not Tatem and Halsey Street, otherwise Jerome and Avey Johnson erase every mark of Avey and Jay.

That dynamics of space which impact the identity construct is foreshadowed in every aspect of the Johnson's lifestyle and firstly in Avey's dissociation from her past character. Not only does Avey Johnson care for her present situation but also her contempt toward the woman who represented an icon in the community evidences her divorce from values which so far embodied her self and social identification. In her characterization of her former personality, Marshall paints how she left behind the community which charges her to perpetuate its ways for the position North White Plain endowed. Avey's following thought puts into words her communion with the new surroundings and detachment from the former :

Back then the young woman whose headstrong ways and high feelings Avey Johnson had long put behind her, whom she found an embarrassment to even think of now with her 1940s upsweeps and pompadours and vampish high-heeled shoes, used to kick off her shoes the moment she came in from work, shed her stockings and start the dusting and picking up in her bare feet (Marshall, 1983 :11-12).

In the same term as Avey, North White Plain features the breakdown of traditions on Jerome Johnson's side. Jay has been through specific features characterized as the figure model of respectability, hard work and protective toward his family and cultural heritage. He personified the dignified black character. However, his style in his new environment from his shaved moustache not only distances him from the ordinary Black character but also symbolizes his detachment from the heritage immortalized so far. He ceased to be the protector to Avey, (symbol of past) and his family but also his descendant whose particular style he copied for tribute to fit in his social position. While vanishing with “everything special” according to Avey Johnson, the moustach wanes with Jerome's roots.

Furthermore, Jerome Johnson's distinctiveness from Jay that Marshall makes illustrative in her correlation of the milieu and the individual resides in his new character's view of the Black community. His way of deploring most of African American manners and conditions particularly how they earn their living signifies his detachment from Jay who had to work for two to meet both hands. There Marshall emphasizes the inexistence of Jay, he gives place to Jerome Johnson whose realities are framed by his prestige in North White Plain. Nevertheless, the representation of Jerome Johnson as the other of Jay, otherwise as distinct symbols of the human environment connection is featured in Jerome Johnson's view of progress in the Black community “If

it was (sic) left to me I'd close down every dancehall in Harlem and burn every drum ! That's the only way these Negroes out here'll begin making any progress!" (Marshall, 1983:131)

Compared to the individual who alleviated the burden of long time works through music and dances, faced discrimination and connected to his ancestors through rituals, the figure of Jerome Johnson personifies the influence of the milieu on humans as a mental construct. The milieu brainwashes to instil a new setting for social identification and representation in the same way it destitutes every mark of the self.

That construct influences one's perceptions and causes the denial of one's heritage Marshall pictures in different situations throughout Avey Johnson's life. Her attitude toward her children particularly Marion, which Marshall contrasts with that of her mother and even that of Avey typifies the influence of space. Her silence after a child has shown disregard toward her emblemizes her adoption of a community reality divergent from hers. The comparison of her attitude in similar circumstances to that of her mother or even Avey Johnson shows how she desintegrates from educational values typical to the African community which impose children obedience to forebears : "*Avey Johnson's own mother would have slapped Marion down long ago had she been her child—and never mind she was twenty-eight and a woman already married and divorced (...)* And the Avey Johnson of thirty, forty years ago would have done likewise Marshall" (Marshall, 1983:13-14). Thus, her response different from social expectations shows the outcomes of her new setting on her African American identity.

Besides, the influence of the milieu on humans goes beyond their attitudes, spatial features direct people's references. Avey Johnson's choice of a Cruise for her vacation, discarding Marion's proposal for Brazil and Ghana which are connected to African culture conveys her detachment from her roots in the deep South. Through Marshall's symbolic representation of her attendance through Bianca Pride and Versailles Room, she features her spatial references framed in hobbies and activities distinctive to her white neighbourhood. First, The Bianca Pride "*a wonder, built for to satisfy white man's quest for fun, tourism and entertainment*" (Sarr, 2021 : 52), emblemizes self-respect and identity as regards to the white community. As for Versailles, a spot in the history of racial equality represents betrayal toward her community as her daughter Marion desperately emphasized when Avey Johnson mentions it :

"Versailles..." Marion had echoed despairingly when Avey Johnson had made mention once of the name. "Do you know how many treaties were signed there, in that infamous Hall of Mirrors, divvying up India, the West Indies, the world ? Versailles"—repeating it with a hopeless shake of her head (Marshall, 1983 :47).

Furthermore, in Marshall's picture of the interconnection between individuals and the surrounding environment, he emphasizes how assimilation to realities characteristic of a given milieu detaches the individual from his roots. Suppose Avatara personified Aunt Cuney's shadow "*There was never any need to call her, because Avey, keeping out of sight behind the old woman, would have already followed suit*" (Marshall, 1983: 31), the representation of Avey Johnson's resistance toward the call of Aunt Cuney in a dream set in Tatem highlights her disintegration from cultural background. There, through Marshall's particular attention to Avey Johnson's material achievement, the symbol of her status in North White Plain, she signifies the social-spatial features as the main hindrance toward her communion with the land : "*Did she really expect her to go walking over to the Landing dressed as she was ? With her hat and gloves on ? And her fur stole draped over her arm ?*" (Marshall, 1983 : 40-41).

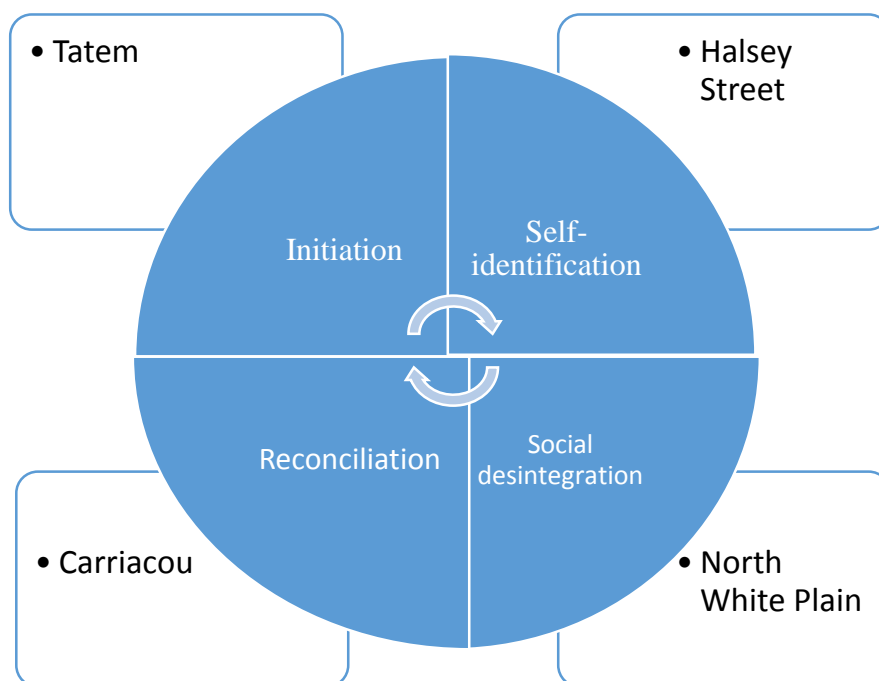
II. Conclusion :

In *Praisesong for the Widow*, Marshall's resort to various settings and their correlation with the dynamics of identity personified through Avey Johnson and her different reactions toward the social and physical features of the milieu shape the close connection between the individual and the environment, highlighting the ecological approach of her work. Paule Marshall pictures identity at the intersection of social and cultural dynamics as the epitom of the same or the different, resulting in one's self identification or cultural desintegration.

Nevertheless, while defining the individual-nature connection through some physical and cultural features, Marshall underlines how determinant the material representation of the environment is in human assimilation and adaptation. She also paints their influence on Avey's response toward the values of the initiating circle : the material form of one's identity. Otherwise, even if mobility implies that humans are exposed to different cultural milieus, a synonym of disintegration or acculturation, individuals are in perpetual quest for landmarks to reconnect to their environment. Those spatial markers pictured via language cultural significance, the material representation of space as well as practices typical to an environment constitute the umbilical cord attaching the individual to his milieu.

Marshall paints those different reciprocations of human beings shaped by the environment features in her cyclic representation of identity, what the following chart illustrates. In the latter, the characteristics of given spaces and their impacts on the self epitomizing the initial circles show the mutual influence between nature and human beings. Suppose Halsey Street and Carriacou epitomize African American realities, they consolidate

Avey and Jay's link to Tatem, making the milieu a reflection of one's values, a ground for reconciliation in contrast to North White Plain. The latter features human nature interconnection through how Avey's assimilation to distinct social realities consisting of questions of comfort and social position disintegrates the characters from their cultural preoccupations. Nevertheless, in Marshall's concerns on human nature connection, she conveys the indelible marks of the background since from Tatem, to Halsey Street, North White Plain and Carriacou Avey seeks spatial, social and cultural coherence to connect to herself, what Carriacou in its distinctiveness to the realities of Tatem provides : It reconciles her to her roots.



1. Marshall's Representation of Human- nature Interconnections through the Dynamics of Space and Identity :

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