

the rest of America)! Lydon is pointing out that knowing about the injustices that have occurred in America's past does not necessarily mean that they will not occur again. It is a noble thing to construct a monument to the forgotten Chinese immigrants, but if this monument does not enlighten the present then it is nothing more than a nice book for the coffee table. This last statement is not meant as criticism of Lydon's history but as an admonishment to all those who read his book to not romanticize history so it has no relevance to the present, or to relegate discriminatory practices to the past. I hope that Lydon's monument will also be used as support for those trying to ensure that such practices do not continue to occur.

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Paule Marshall. *Praisesong for the Widow*. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1983) 256 pp., \$6.95.

Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* is an account of maturation or, put another way, of a black woman's willingness to confront her emergent self. Tastefully groomed, sixty-four year old Avatarra "Avey" Johnson leaves her suburban New York home to vacation with two friends on a West Indies cruise. Her decision to interrupt her plans, shortly after arriving at one of the destinations, is a surprise to everyone. Avey is compelled to discount the material investment she has made in the trip in order to follow a mind that has been haunted by dreams of her great aunt Cuney.

When she had religiously visited the old woman in the South Carolina sea islands during the summers of her youth, Avey received lessons in resistance and courage. The instructions had centered on a legend about a group of Ibos who chose to return to the waters that brought them from Africa in chains rather than approach the land that promised them bondage. A visit to the Ibo Landing was a ritual during those early days; Avey's recent dreams were reminiscent of those times and she was being forced to recall them. But, she was unsure about the meaning of her visions and embarked on side trips before taking a flight back to New York.

It was during her interim excursions that Avey pieced together the significant experiences of her life—the relationship lessons of her youth,

of her marriage, of motherhood, of her workplace and, finally, of widowhood. She is encouraged in this regard when the old man of Grenada—Lebert Joseph—entices her to go with him on the yearly excursion that many of the main islanders take to a remote place. The islanders celebrate their ancestral ties and sense of national pride with dance, the drums and with dignity.

Marshall's use of ritual, music and mood brings together the strands of a theme about culture that link Africa, the West Indies and the United States together in convincing ways. This is especially so for one who is familiar with the territory she covers. The author calls upon myth, geography, history and psychology to give penetrating reports of movement that a black woman experiences within her environments.

Marshall presents ideas and feelings that convey many levels of meanings. These are specific for some and more universal for others. A sense of family is felt as the writer weaves stories of kinship ties in ways that challenge the traditional approaches that social scientists take to identify the social ills of black family life. Upward social and economic mobility patterns, for example, are presented in case situations that also place such struggles within the context of community-building needs. To be financially secure, but emotionally alienated from one's cultural ties is to somehow be unfulfilled and less than free. Out of the wilderness for some time now, black women's voices have centered on the woes of woman's oppression. Paule Marshall has provided a pitch and tone that celebrate the human heritage by transcending the barriers of color, time and place. The range of the sound embraces the silenced voices of many black men.

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Waldo E. Martin, Jr. *The Mind of Frederick Douglass.* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984) xii, 333 pp., \$27.50.

He was one of the foremost orators and abolitionists of the 19th century. He was also a feminist who actively worked for woman's suffrage. He was a Christian who opposed the use of the King James Bible in public schools as a violation of the separation of church and