People evolve a language in order to articulate, describe and thus control the circumstances and reality of life. And, if they cannot, they feel suppressed. Language and man are connected by the necessity to confront life, and in moments of crisis language becomes a political instrument and proof of power. It becomes the most vivid and crucial key to identity. It is both a personal identity, and connects or divorces an individual from a community thus permeating communal identity. It becomes a cause of acceptance, and achievement of one’s temporal identity. The Africans came to the United States chained to each other, but from different tribes. They could hardly speak the other’s language more often than they could hardly speak. In the process of becoming African Americans they had to create a language which could not be understood by their White masters.

Ebonics (ebony + phonics), Black Talk, African American Vernacular English, Black English, African American language, Spoken Soul, African American English are the different terms used to refer to black dialect. The fact that they created their own dialect bears testimony to their innate capacity to be creative which again is a stamp of superiority and not inferiority.

“Spoken Soul” was the name that Claude Brown, author of “Manchild in the Promised Land” coined for black talk. In a 1968 interview he waxed eloquent in its praise, declaring that the informal speech or vernacular of many African Americans “possesses a pronounced lyrical quality which is frequently incompatible to any music other than that ceaselessly and relentlessly driving rhythm that flows from poignantly spent lives” (234).

The term Ebonics was created in 1973 by a group of black scholars who disliked the negative connotations of terms like 'Non-standard Negro English' that had been coined in the 1960s when the first modern large-scale linguistic
studies of African American speech-communities began. Ebonics simply means ‘black speech’ - ebony ‘black’ and phonics ‘sounds’. The linguistic scholars used it to highlight the African roots of African American speech and its connections with languages spoken elsewhere in the Black Diaspora, e.g. Jamaica or Nigeria.

African American dialect was evolved to establish the fact that they were not parrots. They deliberately spoke that idiom not to be fully understood by their masters. The dialect of the blacks which was used earlier as a weapon of protest – a veiled attack against their masters turned into a code of black difference as it is their unique dialect. Henry Louis Gates. Jr quotes William Labov’s observation of the Black English vernacular --which "is a healthy, living form of language” and has all the indications of a group of people “developing their own grammar” (Gates Jr Xii).

According to him, the challenge of Black Literary Criticism lies not only in deriving “principles of literary criticism from the black tradition itself, as defined in the idiom of critical theory but also in the idiom that constitutes the language of blackness, the signifying difference that makes the black tradition” their “very own". The black difference “manifests in the specific language use”. Gates always insists on a close textual analysis. He says "A literary text is a linguistic event; its explication must be an activity of close textual analysis” (Gates, Jr 1).

“All literatures have an essential literary tradition in oral, whether it is visible or invisible in the text” (3) says Gayl Jones in Liberating Voices. When African Americans turned towards writing, their foundation was their vernacular; they found that Euro-American modes would not be apt to express their unique experience and sensibility.
It does not mean that they were not competent enough to master and use Standard English proficiently. Most African Americans were fluent speakers of Standard English but still invoked Spoken Soul to laugh or cry, to preach and praise, to sing, to rap, to shout, to style, to express their individual personas and their ethnic identities (ʼspress yoʼ self! as James Brown put it), to confide in friends, to joke, to mock and mimic, to tell stories, to create authentic characters and voices in novels, poems, and plays, to render deepest emotions and embody their vital core. The vibrancy and vitality of African American dialect was an expressive instrument in American literature, religion, entertainment, and everyday life.

African American Literature was born during the antebellum period as the oral, ʼvernacular traditionʼ comprising of work songs, folk tales, spirituals, ballads, blues and sermons which was primarily a body of spontaneous lyrical expression of the slaves, compiled later to remain as a fountain head of inspiration for the writers of the black traditions in the years to come. The authenticity of vernacular tradition, the dialect with rhythm was suitable to literary medium. Undoubtedly their dialect is the true sign of their originality. African Americans adopted their dialect consciously to avoid the usage of white mastersʼ language; it also enabled their expression to gain spontaneity. Hence, the characters in their literature sounded original and genuine and never artificial. Their language was a code which enabled them to make a veiled reference to their misery. Being highly individualistic, spontaneous and original it remains the best repository of African American culture. Just as meaning is inseparable from the word, the culture of the society is inextricably intertwined with the language or idiom of a people.

During the era of Harlem Renaissance they realized that the language to express creatively need not be the language of the elite but that of the masses—the black idiom. For the first time the writers realized that their writing to be intelligible to their folk was more important than endlessly seeking
acknowledgement from the white critics. With the Harlem Renaissance African American literary tradition celebrated the artistic self-assertion of the writers and their “black heritage and aesthetic” with their new tradition of "African American modifications of American language" (Jones 9). Zora Neale Hurston insisted on recreating and representing black southern dialect and folklore within her work. Hurston’s focus on that language and folklore flew on the face of the prevailing wisdom. Every literature is influenced by the folklore and oral literary models of its country. Harlem renaissance writers tapped all the resources from their oral tradition and chose the black idiom as the fitting medium for expression.

The impact of the black idiom and the black music is all pervasive in the works of African American writers till now. Black writers from Paul Laurence Dunbar to August Wilson have made extensive use of it in their works. Toni Morrison and June Jordan have glorified it overtly. Black preachers and comedians and singers, especially rappers, also use it for dramatic or realistic effect. But some, both black and white, regard it as a sign of inadequate education or sophistication, as a legacy of slavery or an obstacle to socioeconomic mobility. Some deny its existence and some others criticize it. Maya Angelou found the Oakland School Board's 1996 Ebonics resolutions ‘very threatening’ although she uses Ebonics herself in her poems like “The Pusher”.

In the Black Arts Era the African American English found very emphatic and original modes of expression in the works of black writers like Baraka. The orality and oral styles were predominant and the written text became ‘a talking book’, telling stories and interacting with the readers, as they were transformed to ‘audience’ and ‘listeners’. The writers became voices and mostly voices of their community. Houston Baker observed “a Black Aesthetic generation was the first paradigmatic community to demonstrate the efficacy of the vernacular” (Baker 112).
Amiri Baraka believed that the black men were more natural than whites so their language too was natural, spontaneous and indigenous. In *The Blues Aesthetic and Black Aesthetic: Aesthetics as the Continuing Political History of a Culture*, he claims:

> The Blues Aesthetic is not only history and carrying all the qualities that characterize the African-American people, but social in the same way. It must be how and what black life is and how it reflects on itself. It is style and form but it is the continuum of the content—the ideas, the feelings’ articulation—that is critical as well as the how of the form. Yet form and content are expressions of each other (105).

African American philosopher George Yancy, exuberantly sensitive to the power of language in texts, asserts that in representing “the complexity of Black experiences,” not just “any form of discursivity will do”: the narrative content cannot be divorced from the narrative form; the narrative voice must speak in harmony with the reality it describes (qtd in Wright 75). What other linguistic medium, asks Yancy, “could I use to articulate the rhythm, the fluidity, the angst.... and the beauty involved in traversing “the ghetto streets” of youth than the dialect of African American English?” (qtd in Wright 73).

Within literature, African American authors confront this reality continually, weighing the value of speaking in the so-called “Standard” American English dialect against speaking in the languages of what Yancy calls their “nurture,” those languages “which helped to capture the mood and texture of what it was like for [each] to live” (qtd in Wright 73). Bambara’s splendid contribution to her community is the genuine record of their indigenous speech which could be understood or reproduced by a few black writers such as Zora Neale Hurston, Paul Laurence Dunbar, August Wilson and others.
As Yancy remarks Naylor and Bambara could bank on their dialect which was a medium to transmit the richness of their culture and regain their identity lost in the exodus from matchless innovative African world of tradition to the ‘civilized’ America where they were condemned forever. Without the Ebonics, the African American experience recorded by these writers would have lost its lustre and legitimacy and would have failed to prove the power of language which fortifies their written word.

The attempt was not only to replicate their dialect but an effortless style of doing things in a different way- defined as signifying by Saussure. According to Ferdinand de Saussure the sign relation is dyadic, consisting only of a form of the sign (the signifier) and its meaning (the signified), whereas for Africans signifying was part and parcel of their life and culture but there was no theory as such to formulate and publish. Henry Louis Gates Jr discusses in detail how ‘signifying’ was in their blood and like breathing, it cannot be separated from them.

African American women writers gained predominance in the eighties and they were excellent story tellers like their grand and great grand-mothers. They gathered from their ‘grand mothers’ gardens the story telling tradition and techniques - the flowers and fruits which have enriched the pristine green valley of African American fiction. 'Talking back' and 'Talking Black' in the African American dialect, undoubtedly they were the torch bearers excavating the wealthy mines of oral tradition. Toni Morrison, the Nobel Prize winner, asserted that the distinctive ingredient of her fiction was the language,

Only the language. . . . It is the thing that black people love so much—the saying of words, holding them on the tongue, experimenting with them, playing with them. It’s a love, a passion. Its function is like a preacher’s: to make you stand
up out of your seat, make you lose yourself and hear yourself.

(32)

June Jordan, a celebrated essayist and poet, in 1985 identified "three qualities of Black English -the presence of life, voice and clarity - that testify to a distinctive Black value system". The reasons for the persistence and vitality of Spoken Soul by the writers are manifold: it marks black identity; it is the symbol of a culture and a life-style that have had and continue to have a profound impact on American popular life; it retains the associations of warmth and closeness for the many blacks who first learnt it from their mothers and fathers and other family members; it expresses camaraderie and solidarity among friends; it establishes rapport among blacks; and it serves as a creative and expressive instrument in the present and as a vibrant link with this nation's past.

How the power of the word used as a weapon facilitated an identity is elaborated in this chapter **Speech Musicked**. The impact of the African Oral tradition, communal living and the story telling tradition intertwines with their American experience of Preachers' sermons and the qualities of their music have permeated in their speech. Black English or Ebonics with all distinctive features and unique grammar usage which carried a label of inferiority turned very indigenous in literature. The various nuances of their music lend itself to enhance stylistic and literary qualities of their written literature.

Speech Musicked was used by Amiri Baraka to define poetry and to relate it to sound

Poetry, first of all, was, and still must be, a musical form. It is Speech Musicked... It, to be most powerful, much reaches to where speech begins, as sound, and brings the sound into full
focus and highly rhythmic communication. High Speech. (Meally 538).

African American dialect is ‘speech musicked’ as the swing and the dance and all the characters of Negro Expression discussed by Zora Neale Hurston have enriched it. When William J. Harris asked if his work grew out of the black tradition Al Young declares

There are many black traditions. I would say yes, the black tradition of storytelling and versifying and also the black musical tradition with many facets that entails: different musical idioms – gospels, blues, jazz, pop song, and also the idea of additive rhythm and the spirit of improvisation (Meally 537).

The paradigm shift from the oral tradition to the written word was not a handicap instead their vernacular facilitated abundant range and dimensions like the carbon buried in the earth for millions of years dazzle as diamond in the sunlight after it gets polished. The writers chosen have not only removed the stamp of inferiority on their dialect but also have used as any other writer would, with all its beauty and splendor, brilliance in style and literary techniques. Hence, the use of idiom or African American experience has not deteriorated the quality of their works as it was feared; nor do they tend to be social documents. To prove it this chapter studies how language carries the stamp of ethnicity and also enhances the literary quality and artistic value of the chosen pieces.

Language is an inescapable element in almost everyone's daily life, and an integral element of human identity. African American idiom means much more than what poet Edward Braithwaite calls “nation language”, Nourbese Philip calls 'cultural speech or demotic' or Houston Baker's ‘vernacular’. 
Naylor uses the black idiom to give a realistic portrayal of her characters according to their social and educational background. Black speech and black music have percolated into her narratives making it lyrical and poetic, rich with the flavors of originality, improvisation and musicality of black vernacular.

Through her word choice and rhetoric, Toni Cade Bambara reaffirms the reality and beauty of the black community. The use of a black dialect is always politically charged; it can be seen as Bambara’s way of questioning the authority of Standard English. By writing, the racist historical marker for linguistic development, in Black English it places it on the same level as Standard English. For other cultures this forces them to learn the black dialect. To give credence to this idea, Bonnie TuSmith, President of the Society for the Study of Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States, illustrates an example from Toni Cade Bambara’s short story, ‘Playin’ with Punjab. A social worker asked the protagonist to stay by her side, ‘I need you right here with me to translate, Violet, cause you know I don’t speak negro too tough’. (GML 21)

Tu Smith sets up a parallel between the social worker and other cultures in a reading of Bambara's work and asserts that effort has to be taken to understand the dialect.

If you want access to the black community it is up to you to learn to speak Negro; and if you want access to Gorilla, My Love, it is your responsibility to learn its linguistic framework. This is especially true since Toni Cade Bambara is writing primarily for black people (23).

Through writing in a dialect, it is saying that code-switching to a black dialect is just as worthy as code-switching to understand a white dialect.
Naylor and Bambara's use of a dialect, like most of the African American writers, differ from white author's use of dialects for blacks. The dialect that they choose do not demoralize, it uplifts. The language is able to tell other cultures, and reiterates for blacks the validity of black dialects by being written in a dialect but not an 'eye dialect'. An eye dialect compared to the written dialect of Bambara is the aesthetical difference in reading ‘nuthin’ compared to ‘nothin’ or ‘cause’ for, ‘kawz’. Toni Morrison defines an eye dialect as the dialogue of black characters construed as an alien estranging dialect made deliberately unintelligible by spelling devised to defamiliarize it.

In her attempt to render the actual speech of her characters in “The Women of Brewster Place” Naylor uses numerous colloquialisms and different grammatical structures. The difference in grammar usage can be found in phrases and uses like “shoulds I say” (8), “you was born a fool” (8), “when you done drunk it” (9), “I plans to stop”(10) etc. The writer is bringing alive the orality in written language. It is more than ‘eye dialect’ which just drops the final consonants like ‘fas’ (fast), ‘comin’(coming) or ‘my’ written as ‘ma’or ‘masuh’ (master).

Doubling of the negatives is one of the earliest traits in African American dialect. Illustrations of double negatives are profuse in The Women of Brewster Place and Mama Day: “you aint got no cause to be scared” (WBP 10) “get sunstroke running down the hill to tell something that really aint nothing” (WBP 11) “I couldn’t stand to get no poorer”(WBP 12) “Ain’t nobody thinking’ bout that” (WBP 13) “What he savin’ you up for –his self ”: (WBP 13) “I ain’t noticed no such thing”(WBP 14). “I never been no Christian” (WBP 15). “Nobody said nothin about-not enjoying life” (WBP 15). “Ya know, befo” the two of us get into a rut and We’re cussing and fighting and just holding on because we done forgot how to let go. So when they stuck with them men who are ignorin’ em, or beatin' and ‘cheatin’ on ‘em, they sit up on their backs porches shelling peas and they thinks about old Butch, and they
say, yeah, that was one sweet, red nigger- all our days were sunlight’ (WBP 16).
“He aint botherin’ nothing” (WBP 33). "That little bit ain’t doing nothing to you" (MD 64). "I am not making up no more cake batter" (MD 69). “ain't no place near the airport”(MD 71). "We ain't said a word about nothing" (MD 78). "He don't do no real harm" (MD 122).

African Americans appropriated English grammar too. "We was off again"(WBP 34). ? “I likes 'em all, but they don't seem to agree with me --like fried onions” (WBP 34) "you're too ornery to die and you know it" (WBP 39). "She don't hear her" (WBP 65). "you's always beautiful"(MD 177). “I knowed you were coming””(73). “what she want?”(WBP 77). "brung"(WBP 56). In the following lines the preposition becomes a verb bringing rhythm into speech: “Well, then developers upped the price and changed the plans and upped the price, till it got to be a game with us” (MD 7). The writer brings orality into the written language with the profuse use of "y all"(MD 10) "gal "(MD129) "yes suh "(MD 6, 7) "ought a "(MD 71) "she tole em" (66).

Bambara's use of Black English can be seen as her claiming an identity for the black community. When she edited The Black Woman (1970) an anthology of works by African American women writers and Tales and Stories for Black Folks in 1971, she says it was written with the intention to transmit to the black youth 'how to listen, to be proud of our oral tradition, our elders who tell their tales in the kitchen.

“Sand” she says ‘My Mamma is dead and I feel so bad, I can't go on’ and dah dah dah (SE 8). But like wisdom warns, Doan letcha mouf gitcha in what ya backbone caint stand this the old woman said loud for everyone to hear (SE 9). So whadda we supposed to do, stand here for this comedy? "Shush"(SE 17). She chewed with her mouth open, certain the sight would make him shut up or at least turn away. "Shit. Scared of you? Sheeeeeeet Obie" (SE 23). Jan had made clear, “Woman's thaang” ringing in her ears and keeping her head as
buried in her notes as Lonnie's was buried in Daisy Moultrie's blouse (SE 28). "Sistuh mine, it's a hard row to hoe, but ain't nothing to go out about", Ruby was saying (SE 41). Cutting and stabbing and facing off and daring and dividing up and suiciding. Even abundant references are from the Bible like. “Them four horses galloping already, seven trumpets blasting” (SE 46) is referring to the seven trumpets of the Book of Revelations. “‘The chirren are our glory, Min’. Minnie Ransom would have had to admit that she was stalling, stalling and failing, her hands resting on Velma Henry's shoulders silent and her fingertips still” (SE 47).

A wise blend of Standard English and Black vernacular sounds very authentic with Naylor's characters using them, according to their level of education. Lorraine, Theresa and Kiswana speak literary English dialect, whereas Ben, CC. Baker and his gang, Mattie, Etta, Butch speak the standard.

The following excerpts from *The Women of Brewster Place* prove it:

Lorraine followed Theresa into the kitchen. "No, I’m not really tired, and fair, you cooked last night. I didn’t mean to tick off like that; it's just that…… well, Tee, have you noticed that people aren’t as nice as they used to be? Theresa stiffened. Oh, God, here she goes again. “What people Lorraine? Nice in what way?” Well, the people in this building and on the street. No one speaks anymore. I mean, I’ll come in and say good evening — and just silence (WBP 134).

Ben’s language is naturally very different from that of Lorraine and Theresa: I lives in this here block just like y' all,"” Ben said slowly. "And when you ain't got no heat, I ain't either. It's not my fault 'cause the man won't deliver no oil" (WBP 139).
Bambara and Naylor do not want to create borders with walls, but they explore possibilities of meaningful exchange. Their use of Black English gives the language validity as being able to transmit intelligent and insightful thoughts and ideas. Faith comes by hearing and hearing and hearing the word of God, similarly African American writers believed in constructing their identity by hearing Black English from the mouths of their characters. The fiction of the 1970s focused on claiming an identity for the self. These authors’ use of Black English can be seen as their claiming an identity for the black community. Language becomes a vehicle of power in their hands. They made the whites powerless by their indigenous use of Black English. Naylor uses Black idiom to fathom the depth of the personal experience of her characters and as members of the community retrieving their identity through it whereas Bambara uses it as a political weapon in her works.

Alice A Deck appreciates Bambara:

The hallmark of Toni Cade Bambara's fiction is her keen ear and ability to transcribe the African American dialect accurately. She writes as one who has had a long personal relationship with the black working class and has said that she is very much interested in continuing to write all of her fiction in this idiom. Writing and teaching others to write effectively has become a tool, a means of working within community. Hence her art and her profession have merged (qtd in Pavlovski 171).

It is interesting to note that in Gorilla, My Love all short stories have first person narrators who faithfully reproduce the black dialect in an authentic and conversational style reminiscent of Negro spirituals. The vernacular idiom emerges robust in emotional range and nuance as well as a powerful weapon of social criticism. Like most of her contemporary writers Bambara has a great admiration for Zora Neale Hurston. In "Salvation Is the Issue" Bambara ranks
Zora Neale Hurston very highly among her "foremothers", primarily for her use of African American folkways as the basis of ‘art’. If Hurston decisively established the voice of rural southern black folk as a literary language, Bambara achieved something comparable with the vernacular language of Northern urban folk.

The vernacular idiom used by the girl narrators of *Gorilla, My Love* emerges as a language not only remarkably resilient in emotional range and nuance, but also as a fine-tuned instrument of a social critique. The idiom enhances the quality of Bambara’s fiction and gives a realistic picture of girls growing into awareness of their own sexuality as well as their expected roles in the family, community and wider society.

*Gorilla, My Love* deals with 'growing up black girls', their emotions, conflict in relationships, their fears, anxieties and doubts about the adult world. Hazel, the protagonist’s toughness is exposed in the title story but one also learns that she is both sensitive and vulnerable underneath her tough exterior. Hazel, Baby Jason and Big brood go for a movie “"Gorilla, My Love"” but in the theatre a movie about Jesus were screened. They get angry and disappointed."I am ready to kill, not cause I got anything against Jesus. Just that when you fixed to watch a gorilla picture you don't wanna get messed around with Sunday school stuff. So I am mad” After ‘yelling, booin, stompin, and carrying on’ (GML15) to show their displeasure they watch it with the hope that "Gorilla, My Love" will follow but it doesn't. Hazel's anger is expressed ‘we know we keen had. No gorilla no nothin’(GML 14). She complains to the manager and asks for a refund. “So Hunca Bubba in the back with pecans and Baby Jason and he in love there’s a movies house… which I am about. Cause I am a movie freak from way back, even though ‘it do get me in trouble some time” (GML 14). She also sets fire to the candy stand and tells her father that she expected people to keep their word.
Cause if you say Gorilla My Love, you suppose to mean it. Just like when you say you goin to give me a party on my birthday, you gotta mean it…. I mean even gangsters in the movies say My word is my bond. So don't nobody get away with nothin for as I'm concerned (GML 17).

Hazel seems to hint at Hunca Bubba forgetting his promise to marry her and deciding to marry someone else. Hunca Bubba's’ attempts to pacify her fails and she says:

I’m crying and crumpling down in the seat and just don't care. And baby Jason crying too, cause he is my blood brother and understands that we must stick together or be forever lost, what with grown -ups play in change up and turn in you round every which way you so bad. And don't even say they sorry (GML 20).

Anger, frustration, disappointment with the elders and their pretensions, false promises are all expressed in the language of protest by the adolescent girls growing into experience and maturity in understanding the ways of the world. Language becomes ineffective Hazel’s brother crying with her is more expressive than words and Bambara seems to say that sometimes words fail and are not potent enough to bring people together instead tears them apart. In the collection of stories, one can find a hum; a hug; a touch, a smile or tears bring more understanding between people and strengthen the bond between them than words.

The following excerpts from the various stories of Gorilla, My Love demonstrate the Bambara's use of black dialect. “Maggie of the Green Bottles” is about a very special relationship between Peaches and her great grandmother Maggie, who is in the child’s father as a monster, giant described by her.
Peaches compares her to David who pitted against Goliath, as she is ready to battle with anyone, Maggie scorns the people who are satisfied with the mundane:

Margaret Cooper Williams wanted something she could not have. And it was the sorrow of her life that all her children and theirs were unco-operative – worse squeamish. Too busy, takin in laundry, bucklin at the knees, putting their faith in Jesus, mute and sullen in their sorrow, too squeamish to band together and take the world by storm, make history or even to appreciate the calling of Maggie the Ram or the Aries that came after GML(153).

The use of the present continuous tense to describe the daily chores reflects the mechanical meaningless activities of the women. The stories in Gorilla, My Love were also very much in tune with the spirit of the nationalist Black Arts Movement, which encouraged literary uses of urban vernacular language as the source of a new authentic black voice. The 'gorilla' in the title is referring to the signifying monkey. Surprisingly the narrators are adolescent black girls, whereas the pivotal characters are men. Her first-person narrators speak as linguistic and cultural insiders, and Bambara lets their vernacular expression stand as a self-sufficient literary language in its own right opening the way for future black women novelists such as Gayl Jones, Alice Walker and Sapphire.

‘My Man Bovanne’ is like a small drama with simple sequence of events, a musical in miniature. A mother is lectured by her militant and politicised children. They want her to get respect, give up her short skirts, wigs and make-up and most of all slow-dancing with the likes of the also old and blind Bovanne. Bambara registers her strong voice through her "Cause the old folks is the nation" (GML 10). Until the children learn this, narrator Ms Hazel
suffers the indignities that her children, "who ain't kids no more. To hear them tell it", put her through for "[d]ancin with that tom" Bovanne. Bambara sketches the impact of Black Power Movement on the younger generation shedding the slave names for African ones and also the old folks. It is generation gap which can be called rather a communication gap which is the central motif in almost all Bambara's stories.

Old Ms Hazel strives hard to stick on to the sameness needed in the fast changing world of the next generation and identifies it in the old blind Bovanne with his "blown- out fuses" (GML 6) for eyes, "his hummin jones" and a stomach that, "talks like a drum". She questions "don't grown men call me long distance in the middle of the night for a little mama comfort?" and about the new generation "don't hardly say nothin to me direct no more since that ugly argument about my wigs". She feels out of place amidst her children and their ideals, and clings to Bovanne like a babe and feels protected and comforted with "belly rubs" and “touch talkin” which reassures that certain things remain the same. Unable to speak, searching for words she repeats "just nice old man", "the same old nice man" but she "speaks the speak" (phrase recurrent in Bambara's works) taking Bovanne home "just like the hussy my daughter always say I was" (GML 4).

Bambara writes in her highly original but still culturally situated voice for a wide and radically diverse audience for whom she need not translate her idiom. Not only for the lyrical linguistic cadence representing black speech but also for her complex and subtle exploration of issues of race, gender and sexuality, Bambara is compared with Alice Walker.

Sylvia the protagonist in "The Lesson" is a witty, arrogant, tough and bright black girl who learns about the unfairness of life and her low position in the society. Outwardly she refuses to admit that she is affected but she is victimized unaware and boils within when she realizes it. Her vocabulary
reveals it. Miss Moore who has taken up to educate the young ones organizes field trips which Sylvia hates: "And quite naturally we laughed at her, And we kinda hated her too, hated…she was always planning these boring –ass things for us to do" (GML 91). She describes Ms Moore with a strong language “sorry - ass horse” goddamn gas mask”, "some ole dumb shit-foolishness" and her sense of pride. "Me and sugar ware only ones just right". The teenager gives an adult view of the urban environment she lives: “And we kinda hated [Miss Moore] too, hated the way we did the winos who cluttered up our parks and pissed on our hand ball walls and stank up our hallways and stairs so you couldn't halfway play hide-and-seek without a goddamn gas mask” (GML 87). Her comment about the aunt who is "saddled" with them while "our mothers [are] in a la-de-da apartment up the block having a root ole time” (GML 90).

The children are taken to an expensive store on the Fifth Avenue for them to know the extravagant lives led by the wealthy. Sylvia is very much shocked to know the prices of microscope $ 300, paperweight $ 480 and toy sailboat $ 1,195 and gets angry unconsciously and states “for some reason this pisses me off” (GML 92). Even such aggressive and daring Sylvia hangs back without entering the store saying "Not that I'm scared, what's there to afraid of first a toy store. But I feel funny shame” (GML 93).

The impact of the expensive items in the store and the life style of the rich compared to their abject poverty keep echoing in her mind like a refrain. At the end of the day she tries to dismiss the painful lessons she learnt saying "messin up my day with this shit"(GML 95), but determined to maintain her former arrogance. "But ain't no body gonna beat me at nuthin"(GML 96).

Bambara brings out the stark realism on one hand and the romantic views of the adolescent world on the other. In this story, she portrays the delightful romanticism of Kit, in a breezy style apt to the romantic nature
of the protagonist. Bambara intertwines Kit's awakening sexuality, crazy and exuberant temperament and the season of spring beautifully; with Penelope splintering through landscape and the pores secreting animal champagne, I bent my youth to the season’s tempo and proceeded to lose my mind”. She describes her meeting the handsome BJ and their innocent, romantic we experiences’ as “a two-strawed mocha, two jay-walking summons, two some whistling scenes” (GML 122).

In contrast to the reaction and resistance against the evils of racism, class and gender in her characters, Bambara highlights the sweetness of the young love in the "Sweet Town". Kit becomes excited, goes crazy and her imagination grows wild. When Kit, B.J and Eddie make an excursion to New York one summer, the city becomes a kaleidoscope and BJ the fertility God pan for Kit, "Hand in hand, me and pan and Eddie too, whizzed through the cement kaleidoscope making our own crazy patterns, singing our own song". This aptly describes how the black idiom is used by Naylor and Bambara. The magic spell of teenage love breaks and the charm fades when B.J bids an unromantic farewell and the sweet fruit begins to rot. "No matter Days other than here and now, I told myself will be dry and sane and sticky with the rotten apricots oozing slowly in the sweet time of my betrayed youth" (GML 125). Naylor in Bailey's Café uses the image of a plum to bring out the pain and pathos of Mary’s circumcision. The rotten or oozing fruit salad is used as a symbol of the awakening or suppressed sexuality of the African American women.

In "The Lesson", Toni Cade Bambara uses the type of language to allow the reader to get familiar with the type of culture that is being portrayed. In the story, words such as: "cept", "Flyboy", “outta” and phrases such as, “Whatcha gonna do with a microscope, fool?” are used and "But ain't nobody gonna beat me at nuthin"(GML 17). Like Naylor using Standard English and African
American dialect for different characters in her fiction, Bambara too uses language to illustrate the different types of people who live in the community.

She does the same in a very large and grand scale in *The Salt Eaters*. In “The Lesson” Bambara depicts the hardships African American adolescents undergo in an unjust society. It expresses inequality, unfairness or judgmental behavior in an oppressive society.

What kinda work they do and how they live and how come we ain't in on it? Where we are is who we are, Miss Moore always point in out. But it don't necessarily have to be that way, she always adds then waits for somebody to say that poor people have to wake up and demand their share of the pie and don't none of us know what kind of pie she talking about in the first damn place (GML 19).

Africans believed in the harmony of the universe which replicates in their communal living. All elements, beings, Nature –everything in the world communicate and co-exist. The Africans' binding with the Creator and the creation is mirrored in call and response which permeates Black English communication and their texts. Hence, the interactive network with active participation of all is the basic requirement of art. Unlike the western texts with a reader and author, in almost all African American writing there is a wide range of narrator or narrators, voice of the community, (sometimes the writer’s voice) like Greek chorus and listeners. So readers transform into listeners. Call and response in sermons and music takes a new dimension in the fiction of Naylor and Bambara.

Karen Castellucci Cox in his Magic and Memory in the Contemporary Story Cycle: Gloria Naylor and Louise Erdrich says Mama Day has clear affinities to oral traditions and to the projects of retrieving communal memory
and building community so prominent in what we designate as "ethnic" literatures (151). In *Mama Day* Naylor seizes the voice of the community. The novel opens with the communal voice announcing “WILLOW SPRINGS. EVERYBODY knows but nobody talks about the legend of Sapphira Wade. And goes on to introduce her "A true conjure woman: satin black, biscuit cream, red as Georgia clay: depending upon which of us takes a mind to her" (MD 1). The readers set their mind to listen. Helen Fiddyment Levy writes in :

> The communal voice of Hurston, her courageous defiance of both black male and white definitions has empowered Naylor, as well as other African American women authors, to write out of their experience of doubled marginality as woman and black, and like Hurston, Naylor reaches back to the local language, which exists at the margins of the competitive beauracritic social order. Naylor insists on the vitality of woman’s communal voice (280).

Both Bambara and Naylor use black idiom as an identity of their community. Naylor creates an island rich with black culture and the voice of the community narrates the story of Days Women. *Mama Day* is not intact in chapters. The first person narratives of Cocoa and George are followed by the third person narration of life of Miranda and Abigail and islanders in Willow Springs. Naylor uses the natural demarcation, without mentioning who is speaking, by the language variations in the monologues of George and Cocoa. Their monologues give an account of their experience, lives as individuals and then as a couple. The monologues of George and Cocoa constitute chapters and are like call and response. The different voices are beautifully realized and the plot (the whole) develops through these fragmented views. Naylor has juxtaposed two worlds and their languages -black idiom and Standard English-very wisely. Cleverly Naylor connects and juxtaposes the past and present and justifies its coexistence in her characters and language. Rachel Hass states in
Boston Review, “Characters shout off the page; whisper in your ear. The scenes between Cocoa and George read as a series of monologues, providing insight into both sides” (23).

A griot in African tribal culture was a revered person who was responsible for maintaining tribal history. Unlike chronicles these griots created composite word- pictures of their beliefs, ethics values and culture. African elders are repository of communal wisdom. Taking an oath not to alter the history, customs or culture of their community, they served as walking dictionaries, encyclopedia and museums. Front porch was the stage provided for these story tellers. In a crisp language, Naylor narrates the history of African American music - their blues and jazz through *Mama Day*, the old conjure woman who is the reservoir of African American culture.

No, I’m gonna tell you about cool. It comes with the cultural territory: the beating of the bush drum, the rocking of the slave ship, the rhythm of hand going from cotton sack to cotton row and back again. It went on to settle into the belly of the blues, the arms of Jackie Robinson, and the head of every ghetto kid who lives to a ripe old age. You can keep it, you can hide it, you can blow it –but even when your ass is in the tightest crack, you must never, ever LOSE it (MD 158).

West African languages are tone languages, in which speakers rely on the tone with which the sounds and words are pronounced to communicate the meaning. Voice rhythm and vocal inflection convey the meaning in black communication. Voice is employed like a musical instrument. Different notes, riffs and improvisations and lyrical quality of the language, nuances of dialect are all brought out in *Mama Day*. 
Naylor's comments about the Southern dialect prove its musical quality. "Southerners can't swear you'd say with a laugh, you make bastard sound like it should be a woodwind instrument" (MD 189). There are other references to Southern accent and its musicality too. When George teases Ophelina about the way she calls him George. "It amused me the way your tongue and lips were determined to clip along and then your accent would find you in the spaces between two words- “talking about”, “graduating at...” “In spite of yourself, the music would squeeze through at the ending of those verbs to tilt the following vowels up just half a key” (MD 48).

The prose turns poetic in the hands of Naylor: “Long after her mama will spend her days rocking and twisting thread, twisting thread, while her daddy spends his nights digging, digging into blocks of wood” (MD 54). The slow pace of the time is expressed by the verbs in continuous tense. Throughout the novel the effect of onomatopoeia echoes and resonates.

The novel has many dramatic scenes like this. It highlights the dramatic element Zora Neale Hurston points out in her Characteristics of Negro Expression.

“I knowed you were coming “Miranda says, hands on hips.
“You know too much, Mama Day”,
Cocoa mimics her stand and winks.
“That’s why I took you down a peg this afternoon”,
“Bring your fresh self here” she draws the girl’s body into her own.
“I’m sure glad your home” (MD 73).

Another example of Naylor’s dexterous usage of language and tonal modalities of Black dialect and rhythms of Black speech is found in the dialogue between George and Cocoa, in a light vein:
“Now a normal heart would sound and beat like yours: lub-dub, lub-dub, lub-dub.
But listen to mine…” I put your ear to my chest, cradling your neck gently with my right hand. “Can you hear it? Lub-dub swish, lub-dub swish…”
“Nooo, it’s not”.
“Imagine a pipe line with a tiny leak. The blood flows in, it leaks out a little. Flows in, and leaks out a little” (MD 166).

The image of rhythm of the heart, the flowing of blood and the slow process of understanding between George and Cocoa are analogous. Naylor uses words with a great precision. The onomatopoeic effect of sounds and words are heard by the listeners as Abigail chides Buzzard.

Abigail wilts pitifully, “Buzzard, where’s Cocoa?”
“Cocoa- your grand baby, Cocoa?”
Yes, you addled –brained, slow-footed son-of-a-crow, Cocoa! (MD 88).
“Her mama’s wail and the angry thud of her daddy’s hobnail boots spiral above her head louder and louder. The sound will fill the house while one and then the other grows mad, mad” (MD 53).

The novel is filled with words of color and smell: "City smells like gasoline fumes", "I smell like the lavender water" (MD 52). There is references to the black culture and ethnicity: "Juke joints" (MD 74) and “clubs” (MD 75) "boogie-woogie music"(MD 110). Black idiom enriched not only the realm of music but also the American writing. The themes, central motifs and the background of the novel and its setting are wonderfully drawn in by the repetitive use of words and phrases like "Candle Walk", "Lead on"...
Verbal power can be achieved through the use of words and phrases carefully chosen for sound effects. This can be either a line or a pervasive structure in a total rap. Rhyme, voice rhythm, repetition of key sounds, letters and words are used by the narrators. Naylor uses tonal semantics and Bambara uses it in her Salt eaters as if to challenge the white critics and theorists 'I don’t bother if you understand or not'. Velma Henry’s schizophrenic mind is digging the past as M’Dear drones and tells the tales one by one. “She didn’t have time to care….while M’Dear told her that long tale of hers in a tongue not known then like Nowalamme dow ta slip Apreydlawd, not being real words later” (emphasize mine) (SE 266) Speaking in tongues leads a person to commune with the Creator. The Holy Bible says in Romans 8:26,27:

In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for God’s people in accordance with the will of God. (NIV1879)

Similarly Velma speaking in tongues takes her to the core of her being. As M’Dear leads her into “the marrow of the thing”, Bambara writes, “And leading her on, into, down past familiar, drawing her from the known words and always ending talking about the power, the power available if we’d look in that back –hall closet”( SE 266).

If Bambara leads her listeners from known to unknown words in the above quotation, she teaches them to listen to the voice blending with the music of the instruments in the following passage: “And up under the brass of horn and cymbals was the sister still singing faintly, “Wiiiiiiillld women doan worrerreeee”( SE 267).
She coins new words like “musicalness” (SE 265). The African drums speak: “Tenth came the pittitt tibaka pata of small drums” (SE 200). African Americans are highly sensitive to music. In *The Salt Eaters* the musicians in the café were attempting Latin, Iris listening to that thinks of “… beer- can timbale-ing or slamming down dominoes singing with their eyes closed and always cora-

\[ \textit{z-on, cora-
\[ \textit{z-on, and love ever } \textit{siempre} \text{ and passion } \textit{caliente}, \text{ and a high } \textit{-note esperanza lifting the old men from the chairs and their pants baggy but the singing magnificent” (SE 238).} \]

When tonal semantics is employed the rapper as well as the listener gets the meaning and a familiar sound chord in the listener's ears. The words may or may not make sense: but it is much more important to sound good. Sentences like, “And I feel so sanc-anc-tee-fie-eyed” (SE 123). The reader comes across stationary man but listeners hear “Stay shun nary maa ah an” (SE 198). Dr Serge’s unique way of speaking with “heh heh heh” suggests the tonal modalities of African American dialect: “Bantu Bootehhh! heh heh heh”, “Who to? I am the man in the shoes around here, heh, heh, heh” (SE 131).

The repetition of words and phrases produces the rap effect and keeps ringing in the ears of the readers in *Bailey's Cafe*: "If they can't figure out that we are only here when they need us, they don't need to figure it out " (BC 28), "Its music you can talk over and Jones likes to talk as much as he likes to listen"(BC 69), "She can’t let her smell like a bitch in heat. Like the bitch she wants to be"(BC 34), "Sure a little like children but whole lot like Angels "(BC 34), "Unlike their cities, the south side of Chicago has always been the south side of Chicago. Colored settled there, stayed there and made it their own" (BC 40). Referring to how Sadie handled abortions: "“A couple of folded towels and a little peroxide on a coat hanger... A couple of folded towels and a little peroxide on some forceps” (BC 41). The writer uses language not only to bring out the emotional intensity of the characters but also the musical and oral tradition of her community.
Gloria Naylor’s *Bailey’s Café* comprises of loosely connected, gripping, moving personal stories of destitute women by the owner of the café. The novel is appreciated for a vivid verbal picture of human existence, the characters true to life, described in a language suitable to each one of them and their social and mental condition. Naylor’s portraits are deeply rewarding though heart-rending. It reveals an extraordinary ability to imagine, create and relate the stories of half dozen people nearly destroyed by their pasts, yet getting some flicker of hope in Eve’s boarding house, arrived at via Bailey’s Café.

Each story is narrated in a language befitting its central character and motif. Many techniques from music and story-telling traditions are employed by Naylor. There are no punctuation marks used in the novel as the narrative is in the form of music. Naylor has used epigrammatic sentences profusely to bring the effect of story-telling, with moral or serious observations on life.

Jones likes to talk as much as he likes to listen. At twenty, he took a job on an ice wagon that was worse than some, better than others. Later there was wife, one son and daughter. They were still poor but they ate. They were close but they fought. She knew he was an ice man. He knew she was a twenty-five cent whore. (BC 71)

"He bought by the pound, sold by the piece. The sound of his voice echoed.(BC 78). "She knew this dear sweet man was offering her the moon but she could give him the stars"(BC 78), "One I don't like and one I don't trust"(BC 80), "A woman is either ready for Eve's or she's not. And if she's ready, she'll ask whether to find it on her own" (BC 80), "sometimes they pay her, sometimes they don't" (BC 80), "And it's a plain brown face that doesn't scowl but doesn't appear pleasant either "(BC 81) "Eve looks at other women in
the café: some are older than others, some wear makeup, some don't, some are very pretty, and some are quite plain" (BC 81).

Writers have captured the power of music in their fiction. Words capture the electrifying note of black music. Historically, Jazz music was born out of the African American musical tradition and is “inextricably grounded in the black experience in America” (Grandt 14). Novels with jazz as form or content, such as Toni Morrison's Jazz, Naylor's Bailey's Café, Bambara’s The Salt Eaters are also grounded in African American experience. The narrator conveys the basic melody- the theme and background of the novel. The narrator in the classical literary tradition simply narrates the story whereas in Jazz novels the narrator engages in the process of story- telling, reacting against and responding to other voices, other sounds, picking up new motifs on the way, correcting itself, even contradicting itself.

Karen Castellucci Cox in his Magic and Memory in the Contemporary Story Cycle: Gloria Naylor and Louise Erdrich says that these multiple voices are often those of members of a marginalized or embattled community-a tribe, a town straddling national borders, a multiracial family, a tenement neighborhood, for instance (155). Bailey is such a typical narrator like the jazz musician who blends and improvises all the solos to make a whole.

There's a whole set to be played here if you want to stick around and listen to the music. And since I'm standing at center stage, I'm sure you’d enjoy it if I first set the tempo with a few fascinating tidbits about myself. (Nadine, nobody asked you). (BC 4).

He introduces himself, the café at the crossroads, its customers: "I am very captivating Fella"" (BC 16). "You might say I’m majoring in Life, standing in front of this grill and watching that door open and close, open and
close as they step in here from all over the United States and some parts of the world" (BC 3). The writer brings the effect of jazz music in repeating words and phrases and also the nature of the café and its customers as given below: "But that door will still open and close, open and close"(BC 3). "They don't come for the food and they don't come for the atmosphere" (BC 3) "I didn't start in this business to make a living — personal charm is not my strong point — or stay in it to make a living — kind of hard to do that when your wife is ringing up the register and its iffy when and how much she'll charge."(BC 4)

Words seem to swing and dance like jazz music and musicians and the earthly and lively qualities of music are transferred to fiction. The fusion, blending and intertwining of qualities of music with fiction is very much experimental as Jazz music. Naylor's language becomes lyrical and poignant expressing the pain of deferred dreams of Sadie,

Dreams that drowned out the sound of wailing and screaming of her mama’s losing battle with invisible monsters that crawled out the abs in the bottle. The hawking coughs, the pus filled urine hitting the sides of the chamber pots. The smell of licorice and fever pouring out in night sweats. (BC 46)

He gave it all of three sentences: "Lord we commit this soul to thee, Ashes to ashes, dust to dust" and the narration of Sadie's story ends with “There was no fifteen and sixteen year old world” (BC 48). This explicates how her dreaming comes to a stand-still at the age of fourteen and realism slaps on her face. The rudimentary words spoken by the priest at funeral of Sadie's mom could not be repeated by Sadie but very earnestly she repeats 'yes' after each sentence.

Bailey's parents, their occupation, social status and they being victims of racial discrimination among people of their own race are very brilliantly
narrated. Naylor, a wordsmith, very magnificently describes two extreme natures or different opinions of Bailey's parents about everything in life:

"To discover his fortune: my mother
A shiftless bum: my father". (BC 5)

“As interior decorator: my father
Interiors, period: my mother”. (BC 6)

“Opera: my father
Burlesque: my mother”. (BC 7)

African American experience left the African Americans at crossroads as they were wounded not only by the racial discrimination but also the class division among the blacks themselves. The rich blacks were more snobbish than rich whites. This theme is the basic melody of the novel and like a jazz soloist who "improvises on a basic theme… and in the course of the solo constantly invents, reharmonizes, elaborates, digresses, explores, and the narrator does much the same thing with this melody..."” (Grandt 3) Bailey tells about the rich black family his mother worked for: "And that's what my parents did as butler and cook for the Van Morrisons, who were as colored as we were; and all their friends sure looked as colored as we were, and while I couldn't vouch for their homes"” (BC 4), ""There were rich white people, poor white people, rich colored people and us”” (BC 5), "According to my mother Mrs. Van Morrison didn't want them as servants because it cheapened their appearance to the neighbours"(BC 7).

He also observes and comments how race was underlying in all activities and moves in the army which he served during World War II: “They came in acting like Jim Crow was something new, like they got drafted From Mars somewhere. They had been living with segregation, and so how did they figure the navy expected them to die without it?” (BC 22).
The narrator's voice "improvises a story, or several stories, constantly adding, revising, inventing and shifting back and forth among various characters" (Grandt 2). He passes comments on the new customers asking for something other than regular menu.

New customers are a pain in the butt until they get into the rhythm of things. Fried chicken Mondays. Hamburger Tuesdays. Hash Wednesdays. Pork chop Thursdays. Fish on Fridays and a weekend open house; breakfast, lunch dinner; your call. (BC 31)

Bailey analyses himself and all characters around him: ""But I'm good at my word and I call 'em the way I see 'em" (BC 32). "My mother hated Mrs. Van Morrison with a quiet passion that is peculiar to women: it burns low, slow, and long" (BC 5). "But a woman can drag the whole thing out - over years - and pick, pick, pick to death" (BC 5). He says that his wife is a woman of few words and she too joins him in narrating the stories: "I know why I finally married her; I just didn't know why she married me" (BC 19), he tells with a good sense of humour. African American women emanated various feelings but lament, dejection, despair and a sense of longing were predominant and the same music healed. Despite the deplorable conditions in life, the African Americans had a great sense of humour.

In *The Women of Brewster Place* young Mattie is walking to the sugarcane fields with the confidence that she would not fall into the trap of Mr Mike. To make her conversation casual and matter of fact she asks him looking at the knife he carries with him ""Going to cut cane, Mr. Mike.... Mr. Mike grinned "'Ain't figure you to be goin' cat fishing with that knife, gal"" (WBP 12). In the story of ""Two", Theresa and Lorraine spend the evening together:
Theresa silently finished unpacking the groceries. "Why did you buy cottage cheese? Who eats that stuff?"

"Well, I thought we should go on a diet,”

"If we go on a diet, you'll disappear.”

You’ve got nothing to lose but your hair”.

"Oh I don't know I thought that we might want to try and reduce our hips or” Lorraine shrugged playfully.

"No thank you we are very happy with our hips with the way they are” Theresa said. "And even when I lose weight, it never comes off there. My chest and arms just get smaller, and I start looking like a bottle of salad dressing”.

(WBP136) Such dialogues amuse the readers and also bring out the unbeatable will of African Americans despite their predicament.

Bluesiness prevails in Naylor's language. The blues call and response or the antiphonal pattern is all pervasive. Eva's accusation of Mattie being unnatural in not finding a partner is a perfect example of call and response.

“I ain't talking about them children, I'm talking 'bout you. You done spent another weekend holed up in this house and ain't go out nowhere.””

"Now that's not true. Friday night I went to choir practice, and Saturday I took Basil to get a pair of shoes and then took him and Ciel to the zoo. And last night I even went to a double feature at the century, which is why I overslept this morning. That only leaves Sunday morning, Miss Eva, and there's church today, and then I gotta go back to work tomorrow. So I don't know what you're talkin” about”."

“What I'm talkin’ bout is that I ain't heard you mention no man involved in all them exciting goings on in your life —church and
children and work. It ain't natural for a young woman like you to live that way. I can't remember the last time no man come by to take you out.” (WBP 37)

The dialogue develops in the same line for a few minutes and Miss Eva throws a question,

“Ain't you ever had no needs in that direction? No young women want an empty bed, year in and year out”.

“My bed hasn't been empty since Basil was born.”

“Basil needs a bed of his own. I been telling you that for years.”

“He's afraid of dark. You know that”

“Most children are afraid at first, but they get used to it”

“I'm not gonna have my child screaming his head off all night just to please you- He's still a baby, he doesn't like sleeping alone and that's it.”

“Five years old ain't no baby” Miss Eva said.” (WBP 38)

One of the African American traditions of sermon and oration served as a means of catharsis in the life of blacks. The call and response made them feel one with their agony and struggle for freedom. The freedom they longed for, they seem to have tasted, enjoyed and relished in their worship. The preacher played the role of a narrator as well as an actor. His tonal variations and the tempo of his voice in initiating the participation of the members are reflected in the Black English. In the most moving episode of Ceil losing her daughter Serena, the writer describes how Ceil feels during funeral service at the church after losing the first child and having aborted the second one and her husband Eugene’s absence.

The plaintive Merciful Jesuses, lightly sprinkled with sobs, were lost on her ears. Her dry eyes were locked on the tiny
pearl-grey casket, flanked with oversized arrangements of red-carnationed bleeding hearts and white-lilied eternal circles. The sagging chords that came loping out of the huge organ mixed with the droning voice of the black-robed old man behind the coffin were also unable to penetrate her (WBP 101).

Naylor not only portrays the sermon and its impact but also ‘the jungle sharpened instincts’ of pastors like Rev. Woods in The Women of Brewster Place. 'The congregation waited expectantly, breathing in unison as one body’. Once the sermon started, “Amen brothers” and “yes Jesus” were pouring out rhythmically and the replies became fervent prayers. “Yes lord- grind out the unheated tenements! Merciful Jesus– Shove aside the Low-paying boss man. Perfect father- Fill me, fill me till there's no room, no room for nothing else” (WBP 65).

In “Characteristics of Negro Expression” Zora Neale Hurston highlights drama as the innate trait in African Americans that manifests in everything they do. Whatever African Americans did they did differently. Hyperbole is one among the rhetorical tropes, Henry Louis Gates Jr discusses in his Signifying Monkey. He declares: “Signifying is the nigger's occupation”.

In the chapter on 'Two', Lorraine and Theresa talk about the unfriendly atmosphere in Brewster Place and how they are rejected as they are lesbians. Whenever Theresa talks about sex or men, Lorraine gets jittery. Theresa convinces Lorraine that there's nothing disgusting about it.

Lorraine throws a question, “If they (men) were so great, then why are you with me?”
Because --- “Theresa looked steadily into her eyes and them down at the cookie she was twirling on the table. “Because,”
she continued slowly, “you can take a chocolate chip cookie and put holes in it and attach it to your ears and call it an earring, or hang it around your neck on a silver chain and pretend it’s a necklace—- but it’s still a cookie. See— - You can toss it in the air and call it a Frisbee or even a flying saucer, if the mood hits you, and it's still just a cookie. Send it spinning on a table ——like this ——until it's a wonderful blur of amber and brown light that you can imagine to be a topaz or rusted gold or old crystal, but the law of gravity has got to come into play, sometime, and it's got to come to rest— - sometime. Then all the spinning and pretending and hoopla is over with. And you know what you got?”


“Uh-uh.” Theresa put the cookie in her mouth and winked “A lesbian.” She got up from the table. “Call me when dinner's ready, I'm going back to read.” She stopped at the kitchen door. “Now why are you putting gravy on that chicken, Lorraine? You know it’s fattening”. (WBP 138)

A Cookie is a cookie in spite of using it in different ways. Similarly a lesbian is lesbian. This scene is dramatic as Naylor uses the devices of black dialect and music and brings drama into her narration.

African Americans imbibed the story telling techniques and aptitude which they received from the oral tradition. Communication is a two-way activity. In Bailey's Café some “songs”, as Naylor calls the stories of her characters, have been sung with different techniques like jazz. The story of Sadie has dialogues without any punctuation suggesting that narration is more poetic to suit the jazz mode. It also brings out the innate story telling skill in African American and their natural tendency to go back to their oral tradition.
When his wagon pulled up that Saturday morning, Sadie was out there as usual, only this time she had her paisley satchel with her. She found the courage to look him full in the face for the first time in three days: I didn't want to leave without knowing your name. And then she drooped her head, which relieved him because he'd never liked her eyes. He took in the rest of her, though: the neatly braided hair, the slender neck, full bust narrow waist, those tiny fine-boned hands that she clutched in front of her you got any people? He asked. She shook her head no. He didn’t say anything else to her until he had unloaded the wood and he rung the bell for his last payment. I could use me a wife, he finally said. I can't have children, she answered. He motioned for her to climb up beside him in the wagon. Well at my age, probably couldn’t give ‘em to you. She sat down beside him, her satchel on her lap. And your name? Sadie asked. (BC 50).

The third person narrative technique suddenly turns into describing the thoughts in the narrator's mind as if to reply the question in Sadie's mind.

He'd taken to calling her that, making it sound like the caress he meant it to be. And It wouldna been a whole hour, except I turned up Lenox instead of heading straight for Amsterdam. See, the fire trucks were blocking off most of Amsterdam from 123rd to 125th and I could see the smoke, but Nell had already smelled it and she was getting skittish. I doubt if she's got enough juice left in her to be a runaway, but I wasn't talking no chances. And wouldn't you know it? The hydrants had broken down and they couldn't get but a trickle of out 'em, and the building just a - blazing. (BC 72).
The readers get a feeling of listening to breathtaking stories as if being in a jam session, listening to singers emptying their hearts and the writer has successfully transferred the image of a woman and a man dancing, while listening to Mood indigo to her listeners. The novel has transformed into in to a story telling session with the narrative techniques employed by Gloria Naylor in Bailey's Café.

Malcolm Jones in his "Life, Art are one for Prize Novelist" says that the loosely connected stories of The Women of Brewster Place and those narrated in Bailey's Cafe "reflects a traditional Chippewa motif in storytelling, which is a cycle of stories having to do with a central mythological figure, a culture here" (qtd in Witalec 104). Naylor follows a similar pattern, taking as its center the culture of an urban ghetto.

In the section “Mood Indigo” narrating the story of Sadie, whose life is filled with unfulfilled dreams, there are many techniques producing a fairy tale effect as if suggesting the world of reality she encounters is false. Her childhood is full of etiquette which is far from her inner longing to be accepted what she is. Naylor exposes the sad story of Sadie victimized by her mother's ‘profession’. Sadie's mother lives as a prostitute and leaves her a prostitute with no sense of security in life. Her mother certifying Sadie as a good girl and ‘I am proud of you’ turns ironical in actuality.

Her four year old, five- year –old, six- year –old world was really simple: her mama did these things because she was her mama. Her seven-year-old, eight –year-old, nine-year-old world was when it started to get confusing, because then she could compare her bruises to the unmarked face of the blacksmith's daughter, her mother's high pitched threats to the voice of Mrs. Johnson when she called her own boy in from play. There was a difference. (BC 42-43).
A ten-year-old, eleven-year-old, twelve-year-old, world of slicing tough brisket and the knife not clinking on the plate, of spooning corn gruel into her mouth without a trace of milk on her lips. A world of May I, please and thank you; speaking quietly, walking softly. A perfect little lady, very very good was to say, I love you mama. And very very good was to be deserving of the love she believed was waiting in return. (BC 44)

The story is never a linear plot according the whims and fancies of the story teller certain words and phrases are repeated. “"You are a good girl Sadie""- is repeated throughout the story. That was the dream of a mother to bring up Sadie as a good girl unlike her. But dreams always ended the same way: "Mama, I'm doing so good here. Yes I'm so proud of you. “You’re a good girl Sadie”". (BC 44) And this 14-year-old world she found herself in gave her to reach for. (BC 46) And mama would take one of the orchids and pin it on her collar and say, “I knew you could do it. I'm so proud of you. You're a good girl, Sadie” (BC 48).

In the chapter “Eve's Song”, there is a typical story telling mode. “The town had only three buildings that qualified as such: the school, the cotton exchange and the church. He was preacher in one, the scale foreman and the book keeper in another” (BC 85). This creates a feeling of sitting amidst listeners and gaze at the story teller what is going to happen next.

As a story narrated is repeated with revision in African communities, the writers who become story tellers infuse their personal opinions, philosophical observations and reveal the inner mind of the characters. It is strongly reflected in Naylor’s debut novel in which she portrays the black women’s rich experience in America. Voices of the character and the author interact as in a dialogue in the novel.
Naylor describes Mattie Michael's dilemma in taking a stand to support her son Basil who is caught by police.

She was touched by the gentleness in his caress and immediately repentant of her attitude in the car. During the day she resolved to make amendments with him. After all he was under a great deal of pressure, and it wasn't fair he that he bear it alone. Was it so wrong that he seemed to need her constant support? Had he not been trained to expect it? And he had been trying so hard those last two weeks; she couldn't let him down now (WBP 52).

Observing the animal instincts in Rev. Woods and how he is able to detect and assess Etta Mae's hidden agenda, Naylor reports to the listeners:

Well he shrugged his shoulders and placated his dented ego, that's the nice part about these worldly women. They understand the temporary weakness of the flesh and don't make it out to be bigger than it is. They can have a good time without pawing and hanging all onto a man. May be I should drop around sometime. (WBP 73)

When Etta Mae returns to Mattie after disappointed by Rev. Woods, "'[When Etta got to stoop she, noticed there was a light under the shade at Mattie's window, and she strained to hear what actually sounded like music coming from behind the screen]. Mattie was playing her records'" (WBP 74).Commenting on Kiswana's activities: "'Damn. Kiswana could have strangled herself!'" (WBP 80).With Luceilia who was always in a desperate state "'But how do you tell yourself, let alone this practical woman who loves you, that he was back because of that. So you don't', You get up and fix you both another cup of coffee, calm the fretting baby on your lap with her pacifier,
and you pray silently—very silently—behind the veiled eyes that man will stay"(WBP 92). Inquisitive Sophie, ever gathering and spreading news about others is the first one to guess and leak the information that Lorraine and Therese are lesbians to the women in Brewster Place. Naylor recounts, "'Sophie had plenty to report that day. Ben has said it was terrible in here. No, she didn't know exactly what he had seen, but you can imagine'." (WBP 132)

Cora Lee's lack of maturity draws lot of attention from the author:

What did these people on Brewster Place want from her anyway? Always complaining. If she let the kids go outside, they made too much noise in the halls. If they play in the streets, she didn't watch them closely enough. How could she do all that—be a hundred places at one time? It was enough just trying to keep this apartment together (WBP 163).

The writer feels sorry for Lorraine, “If only she had some friends in the city. It was then that she thought about Ben.” (WBP168). Such discourses between Naylor and her characters reveal the scrutinizing of their experience, vision, conflict even concern of their creator.

Naylor's highly sensitive perception of reality is brought out in their vivid imagery and metaphors which create a dramatic effect on her characters. ‘The sweetness and terror of sex’ is depicted by the smell of freshly cut sugarcane which serves as a very powerful symbol throughout Mattie Michael's story. Etta Mae Johnson's romantic mood in captivating Rev. Woods and her loose life is symbolized by the omnipresent Jazz music in her story.

Amidst the lyrical language of the novel, the author describes the deterioration of the urban community using 'animal imagery' in The Women of Brewster Place. Mattie Michael arrives in Brewster place in a van that creeps "like a huge green slug"(WBP 7). The appropriately named Rev. Moreland
Woods, a wolf in sheep's clothing, has "jungle-sharpened instincts" (WBP 66). Social misfits, CC Baker and his gang wander in a pack like wolves. Cannan Baptist Church is a 'brooding ashen giant' with organ chords "barreling out of its mouth". (WBP 62)

Kiswana Browne's ending up in Brewster place is very similar to the flight of a pigeon which glides in front of her window. Kiswana's fantasy that it bears her dreams on its back and "will “ascend to the center of the universe”" dies with the wind and the bird lands on the "corroded top of a fire escape on the opposite building" in Brewster place with awkward and frantic movements (WBP 75) like her. Water, a soul cleansing element is a metaphor and leitmotif in Lucielia Louise Turner.

Two episodes are very symbolic in her story. One in which she washes rice with water is symbolic of giving up her unborn baby and the other in which Mattie gives her a bath after her child Serena's death is symbolic of baptism and rebirth. Cora Lee’s infirmity is constructed on a dramatic metaphor: "her new baby doll!", a doll she abandons when she gets bored or she gives birth again. "Yellow mist" is metaphorical of the atmosphere that surrounds the lesbian couple (made up of gossip, rejection, isolation) and also yellow symbolizes the home-sexual preference. In maintaining the cultural ties of their community Naylor has rediscovered the black music, language, oral tradition in reaffirming the African American ethnicity in her magnum opus, The Women of Brewster place.

Of Bambara’s writing, this has an endearing musical character, Lewis views: “She amplified multiple community voices simultaneously, capturing all the divergent register of voices, issues, idioms, riddles, intonations and vocabulary of the African American community, much like a jazz musician playing bebop”. (qtd in Mc Kay 63)
The musical qualities and its impact in works of authors chosen for study are established in the chapter **Soul Music**. Apart from analyzing black idiom this chapter throws light on Naylor and Bambara as writers and their literary style and techniques too. Not only similes, metaphors, personification, diction, imagery and syntax, but also the personal expression and the specific way in which the literature is perceived and delivered by the writers are discussed. There are numerous ‘similes and metaphors' found in Bailey's cafe turning it poetic:

Glassy-eyed like a robot, she tried to cover the coffin. So you're caught wailing between them in a leaden silence so heavy your heart feels like groaning under the weight, and then the lightening vibrations of that shattering laughter coming from nowhere to send your heart pounding and flying into little pieces. (BC 84).

"So the words resembled sounds of thunder in the summer". (BC 84) "And near the Lousiana Delta that means the air is cream and the lingering heat from the sun throbs just under the rich soil" (BC 86) "because, his laughter keened high over my heaving body, spinning and diving circling the clouds as flock of wounded doves screaming" (BC 89). "The dead of winter...... that corner of the room was turned into a block of ice" (BC 94)."She was going to leap out at me like some poisonous spider ". (BC 94).

Jesse Bell estranged by her husband and his snobbish family, unable to be a mother to her son who alienates from her and her family because they are poor blacks, laments like a vulnerable child looking up to her mother:

Like it wasn't pain .Like it wasn't real. Like I was a kid or something, complaining about a scratch on my knee A icy icy
mama. The only woman I've met who would be a match for uncle Eli. Lord knows, I wasn't. And I am quite a woman. Was a woman before I was a girl. But that horrible old man, may he rot in hell, kept at it until he killed me. He was a murderer ---- a cold – blooded murderer. (BC 118).

Deirdre Donahue, a reviewer for the Washington Post, opines,

Naylor is not afraid to grapple with life's big subjects: sex, birth, love, death, grief. Her women feel deeply, and she unflinchingly transcribes their emotions... Naylor's potency wells up from her language. With prose as rich as poetry, a passage will suddenly take off and sing like a spiritual ... Vibrating with undisguised emotion, The Women of Brewster Place springs from the same roots that produced the blues. Like them, her book sings pf sorrow proudly borne by black women in America (Smith 495)

Very deep philosophical thoughts are always written in a wonderful versified prose apt for depicting the profound feelings and experiences of the characters. Critics have praised Naylor's style as clear but impetuous. She has created her characters with strong feelings and has painted them with such realistic emotions, actions, and words that they come alive in Brewster Place. Her language creates images both believable and consistent.

Time's passage through the memory is like molten glass that can be opaque or crystalize at any given moment at will: a thousand days are melted into one conversation, one glance, one hurt, and one hurt can be shattered and sprinkled over a thousand days. It is silent and elusive, refusing to be damned and dripped out day by day; it swirls through the mind while an entire lifetime can ride like foam on the
deceptive, transparent waves and get sprayed onto the consciousness at ragged, unexpected intervals. (BP 70)

“Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There is a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it's all over.” (BP 70) "Practically every apartment contained a family, a Bible, and a dream that one day enough could be scraped from those meager Friday night paychecks to make Brewster Place a distant memory"(BP 77). “You constantly live in a fantasy world- always going to extremes- turning butterflies into eagles, and life isn't about that. It’s accepting what is and working from that” (BP 85).

Giving an account of the bleakness which hovers over the heads of the women existing as destitute in the abandoned Brewster place, which was an abode to the Irish and Italian refugees, Naylor pens their pain thus:

Confronted with the difference that had been thrust into their predictable world, they reached into their imagination and, using an ancient pattern, weaved themselves a reason for its existence. Out of necessity they stitched all of their secret fears and lingering childhood nightmares into this existence, because even though it was deceptive enough to try and look as they looked, talk as they talked, and do as they did, it had to have some hidden stain to invalidate it—it was impossible for them both to be right. So they leaned back, supported by the sheer weight of their numbers and comforted by the woven barrier that kept them protected from the yellow mist that enshrouded the two as they came and went on Brewster Place. (BP 132)
The author shatters the glassy wall of misconception between the mother—proud of her culture and ancestors and the daughter—disgusted with middle class backs, searching for her roots in African culture, as the mother pours out her heart:

Squeezing Kiswana even tighter—Then know this I am alive because of the blood of proud people who never scraped or begged or apologized for what they were. They lived asking for only one thing of this world: to be allowed to be. And I learned through the blood of these people that black isn’t beautiful it isn’t ugly; black is! It is not kinky hair and it isn’t straight hair; just it is. (BP 86)

Bambara brings out the malleability and elasticity of the African American dialect in The Salt Eaters. As there is no rigidity in form, the language is also explicitly fluid taking the readers deep into the realm of the characters and their experience. Profuse illustrations quoted below are evident of their calibre as writers sans their African American identity. This does not nullify their difference not fitting into white definitions, but enhance it to a celebration of their inimitability:

“The glistening bangles, the metallic threads, the dancing fringe, the humming like bees...” (SE 4) “bandages unraveled and curled at the foot of the stool like a sleeping snake”(SE 4) “She could roll of the stool like a ball of wax and melt right through the floor, or sail out of the window, stool and all, and become some new kind of UFO.”(SE 5)“She looked like a farmer in a Halston a snuff dipper in a Givenchy." (SE 8) "The high-pitch wails of birds overhead like whistling knives in the sky"(SE 14). "Her throat was splintered wood.”(SE 35) "Old Wife's complexion was still like mutton suet and brown gravy congealed on a plate"(SE 51) "Looking like a vaudeville dummy"(ibid 53). We
got to free her up from fire and water so she don't drown in air like some backass fish"(ibid 62).

The sophisticated and metaphoric language is used in “The Survivor” to describe Jewel's thoughts is later found in The Salt Eaters too. “But the words got caught in the grind of her back teeth as she shred silk and canvas and paper and hair. The rip and shriek of silk prying her teeth apart. And it all came out a growling.” (SE 41) Bambara's narrative skills are so outstanding that the readers are also healed of their physical as well as psychological ailments:

On the stool or in the chair with this patient or that Minnie could dance their dance and match their beat and echo their pitch and know their frequency, as if her eyes closed and the mind dropping down to the heart, bubbling. In the blood then beating, fanning out, flooded and shining, she knew each way of being in the world and could welcome them home again, open to wholeness. Eyes wide open to the swing from expand to contract, dissolve congeal, release restrict, foot taping, throat throbbing in song to the ebb and flow of renewal, she would welcome them healed into her arms. (SE 48)

The world of Salt Eaters is a bundle of past, present, ancient wisdom, science, philosophy, body, mind and soul that Bambara brings a cohesive intact, whole. So her language is elevated to suit the strata of plentiful experiences of numerous characters found in the seven day festival filled with its stake-holders:

Or by letter, the biometric reading of worried eyes and hands in writing, the body transported through the mails, body/mind/spirit out of nexus, out of tune, out of line, off
Economy, politics, finance, science, religion, history, all “isms” and branches of knowledge are not spared. Bambara leaves no stone unturned. This reflects the all-encompassing nature of African American community. “You, the staunch Marxist-Maoist-dialectical-historical-materialist who is always plenty short mouthed about the buzhwahh elements in the improvisations? You, Inez, want to know Palma's sign backside!” (SE 64) and “That moment of correspondence-phenomena, noumena—when the glimpse of the life script is called dream, *de'ja'vu*, clairvoyance, intuition, hysteria, hunger, or called nothing at all” (SE 89).

The elegant and exclusive style of author divulges her empowerment of elocution and imagination, despite being labeled as neo realist. The stark realism need not be void of fresh fancy and colourful imagery. The following quotations from the novel talk for themselves:

Trees like blazing giants with their hair aflame, crashing down in the fields turning corn, grass, the earth black. Birds falling down like bedraggled crows. The furniture blistering, crackling like hog skins crackled on grand daddy's birthday. His mother dragging the mattress out sparking and smoldering, beating it with her slipper and matting jumping like popcorn all over the front yard. (SE 83)

Velma's going back to and forth is described with colours than the present and flying birds are often used to indicate the past with deeper and darker shapes.
Tendon, feather, bone and flesh were riding against a back drop of eight-minute-ago blue, of fifty-years-ago blue, rode the curvature to the seam, flying through to what the sages of old had known about gravity and the outer edge, gazing up. Birds riding the air, riding the sun's beams and back, gliding in light in and out, hollow-boned and tiny-brained but sufficient when living in the law. (SE 89)

Bambara uses the metaphor of veil to interpret the imagined fears and anxieties of both whites and African Americans that has concealed reality. “Nilda, still lifting from her seat continued to stare at the ceiling agape as though it a membrane, a veil to look through at the fabulous apparition flying back from the concealed world in the far side of the mind”. (SE 89)

Bambara recalls the impact of her predecessors' writing in her essay, “Salvation is the Issue”, that she has become aware of “the power of the word, importance of the resistance tradition and the high standards our community has regarding verbal performance” (23). Bambara believed that words should be taken seriously because they set things into motion; they conjure and set up atmospheres. She has used language as a medium of resistance.

Both writers use black idiom as the signifiers of Black Culture. Bambara's pen has raised political consciousness whereas; Naylor's strengthens the individual's consciousness towards the community. Naylor rebuilds her community with love while Bambara brings coalition through political activism. In this mission African American dialect permeates in their texts, is metamorphosed into an exuberant ethnic feature.