CHAPTER IV

Naylor’s third novel, *Mama Day* (1988), marks a significant change in her endeavors. She uses alternating narrators, who are the soul of the novel to reflect and reinforce the novel's thematic concerns with reality and truth. The novel is genuinely concerned with examining, reconstructing and redefining the past events. Its strongest elements are the bonds shared within the female community and betwixt the generations of women.

The novel portrays the story of a conjuring woman called Sapphira Wade and her descendent Miranda alias Mama Day. Abigail, Miranda’s sister and Ophelia alias Cocoa alias Baby Girl, her grand-niece and the way all of them come to terms with the spirit of Sapphira Wade forms the narrative element, “The problem for the present generation of women is to continue with the heritage of Sapphira Wade.”¹ The novel starts in Willow Springs, where everybody knows but nobody talks about the legend of Sapphira Wade. Sapphire Wade as a sorceress changes everything by her magic. She turns the moon into slave, the stars into a swaddling cloth and heals the wounds of every creature within two or four days. In 1823, she gets married to Boscombe Wade and gives birth to seven sons in just thousands days. She persuades Wade to deed the Willow Springs isle to those seven sons and after this processing; she slays her husband very brutally. She smothers Bascombe, poisons him and even puts a dagger through his
kidney. After killing him, she vanishes in a burst of flame. According to the genealogical chart of Sapphira’s family, she gives birth to seven sons in six deliveries. The first page of the novel, after the title page, consists of a family–tree beginning with Sapphira. The next generation consists of her seven sons– Elijah, Elisha, Joel, Daniel, Joshua, Amos and Jonah; the third son possesses his seven sons – Mathew, Mark, Luke, Timothy, James, John and John-Paul. The seventh John-Paul gives birth to three daughters, the eldest being Mama Day alias Miranda, the middle one is Abigail and the last one is Peace. Abigail then gives birth to three daughters, out of whom the last two daughters each have a daughter. The second one has an Ophelia alias Cocoa and next one has a Willa Prescott Needed.

Mama Day is a contemporary love story, a timeless generational saga, a chillingly unbelievable tale of the supernatural power and homage to the redemptive power of African–American traditions. It is a novel that spans into two worlds. One is the southern barrier in island of Willow Springs, a place which is exempted not only from the laws of nature but from the racial laws of men too. God created the Universe in six days. It took her longer but, “Gloria Naylor has created her own universe in Mama Day.” The other world, New York City is polyglot, multi-racial, governed by strict and seemingly heartless codes of love. Naylor gives each of these worlds its own narrative and narrator and then she brings them together. In doing so, she simultaneously explores and examines several kinds of reconciliations between the blacks’ rural past and their urban present; between myth and history, between individuals and communities, faith and logic and finally the
living and the dead and so on. Symbolically, she reconciles the scattered children of Africa with their first, true home. Naylor employs three alternating voices in the introductory pages. The first voice belongs to the omniscient Mama Day and her sister Abigail, the second voice belongs to Abigail’s grand daughter, Ophelia also called Cocoa because of her light brown skin, who lives in New York City and comes back to Willow Springs on the occasion of Candle Walk. This festival is celebrated in each year’s 22nd December. It is mostly celebrated after the harvesting of all crops, which people cultivate in their fields, “For the poor, the winter could be very difficult due to lack of food and clothes. Candle Walk is a way of helping the needy without feeling obliged. People give all sorts of things to each other without considering its monetary value.” Cocoa in New York meets George Andrews, an engineer, who has no family and almost orphan and now he provides the third voice for the story. Miranda, on the other hand, reminisces about her father and great grandfather, Boscombe, who belonged to Norway and got married to Sapphira, who was African–born and then the coming generation came beneath the influence of slavery. Willow Springs, an imaginary place, where the blacks reign in their own way by disobeying and ignoring every rule and regulations of the whites. Being the owner of the place, the inhabitants stand united against the adversaries that men made likewise:

Malaria. Union soldiers. Sandy soil. Two big depressions. Hurricanes. Not to mention these new real estate developers who think we gonna sell our shore land just because we ain’t fool enough to live there.
Naylor looks at the contrast between the mainstream society and an isolated black community in Willow Springs and explores the query of self-identity. The blacks, although establish their own place ‘Willow Springs’ yet for occupation and daily needs they have to cross the bridge, made by Whites. While they go beyond the bridge, they have to pay taxes in a big amount. The place of slaves, Willow Springs is the island off the coast of Georgia and South Carolina and the islanders of these costal lands often fight to get control of the island but fail. So, the island belongs to the foremothers of Cocoa and the black community. Since then, the island is controlled by the elderly matriarch Miranda or Mama Day. If Mama Day says no, everybody will say no. Anything can happen in Willow Springs as one learns from the moment one meets the indomitable Miranda Day. She can tame lighting and heal wounds through magic or the ingredients of her medicine pot. She has already passed one century and now she is ninety years old. Reema and Winky are dwellers of Willow Springs and very excited to know about the secret of ‘18 & 23’ but the inhabitants keep them silent saying that, “…the God–honest truth: it was just our way of saying something”(7). They believe that they are brought to Willow Springs as slaves and are isolated from daily needs and proper education. The islanders want to learn and write good English but there are no proper facilities for education. Suddenly, they all become astonished to look at the crates of books. The people, who were initially sending their children to other places for learning, immediately alter their mind and turn back their children. Winky and Reema become busy in the books and nobody really bothers
about what ‘18 & 23’ meant. But there is some doubt just arising in the mind of Winky, who very excitably wants to know about Miss Abigail’s place and where she used to live. So, the dwellers send him down the main road to that little yellow house where Miss Abigail lives.

Miss Abigail is very aristocratic lady and with her, there is also a grandchild, a girl who lives in Charleston with her husband and two boy kids and regularly comes to meet her grandmother. After meeting Winky, Abigail sends him to Mama Day and here too he hears about Cocoa because both the ladies love Cocoa from the core of their heart. He hears about that summer, fourteen years back, when Cocoa visited from New York with her first husband. As he hears about her first husband then Mama Day immediately says, “Yes… there was a first husband – a stone city boy”(9). He asks about George and the reason of Cocoa’s separating with her first husband but Mama Day could not response because of disappointment. In Willow Springs nobody hears and talks about the legend of Sapphira Wade:

Willow Springs takes the reader into the numinous world, where understanding comes through the mysterious, the ethereal, and permeates the whole self. To know through the mind is insufficient and secondary to sensuous saturation.\(^5\)

Thus, in *Mama Day*, the oral structure of the text, which is in the form of quotation, is the most important device that guarantees the readers’ participation in the creation of meaning. The novel’s oral frame is to describe vividly the narrator’s oral frame to the reader. The introduction of the novel starts with a mythical island, which does not exist on any map but has a rich history and has a touch of mysteries.
Cocoa has a great memory of New York, where she first time met George and finally married him. Cocoa accepts the people’s words, who believe that Cocoa is a gift of Mama Day’s second sight. People love Mama Day as well as Cocoa. Cocoa is too aristocratic as her grandmother Abigail. After some time, though she gets a good job but her experience as a jobless person was not so good and therefore she comments:

> When your unemployment checks have a remaining life span that's shorter than a tsetse fly’s and you know that temp agencies are barely going to pay your rent, and all the door–ways around Times square are already taken by very determined – looking ladies, masquerades go right out the window(15).

Later on, Cocoa reminisces about her first arrival in New York, seven years back when nobody helped her because everyone was busy in their routines. Though she was alone but in spite of it, she was determined to find out such a living Apartment where she could live safely. First of all, it was very difficult and struggling to sustain in a city like New York but ultimately she won over every tribulations. Cocoa is very conscious by nature and it is her consciousness that she very instantly perceives the hypocritical condition of a city and percepts about the city:

> ... it keeps half of its population underground half of the time; you can start believing that there’s much more space than there really is—to live, to work. And I had trouble doing both in spite of those endless classifieds in the Sunday Times. … But it took me a while to figure out that New York racism moved underground like most of the people did(18).

Cocoa passes her life with certain rules and ethics which are prescribed by her grandaunt and grandmother. She tries her best to find a good job but
fails to get a good one and therefore she desperately ponders, “If I got the job, I could still go home for mid–August. Even if I didn’t get it, I was going home. Mama Day and Grandma could forgive me for leaving Willow Springs, but not for staying away?” (19). Indeed after more headaches, she gets a call letter for job nevertheless she is still not content with it. Eventually, after a number of ups and downs, she collects her inner power to go through this motion.

One of the candidates, Mr. Andrews’s interview is still going on and when he comes out, he seems very relaxed and confident. On looking at Andrews, Cocoa becomes more restless because she thinks perhaps the job is out of her hands. She very earnestly wants to go back her home with all the Willow Spring’s problems. But however, she re-collects herself and feels, “Nothing about New York is ever going to surprise me anymore” (22). Cocoa feels desperate and thinks quietly about Mr. Stein, who is probably an anti–Semitic and luckily taking interview. The tension is very clearly showing in the face of Cocoa. Finally, she goes for interview and fortunately there she sees Andrews, who smiles sincerely for the first time in these days. During the interview, Mr. Andrews enlightens Cocoa that he is a very optimistic person and never believes in superstitions. He admits that he believes in fate and predestination. He discloses that he lives at the Wallace P. Andrews Shelter i.e. boys’ hostel and Mrs. Jackson is their in–charge. Boys’ hostel in-charge, Mrs. Jackson is very dedicated to her job and commands all hostellers. She is considered cruel due to strict behavior but Cocoa does not call her cruel because she believes that she is controlling everyone. Mrs.
Jackson knows that boys feel disappointed but despite of it, she feels that their fury does not matter to her and they have to render their life within the limited rules. George and others have started to learn the percepts and lessons at Wallace P. Andrews. They all make themselves understand that the punishments they bear are meant to improve their ability and they are beaten up and starved, it was just for, “being born”(25).

George recollects that in the hostel he was Mrs. Jackson’s favorite and he was the only one of them, who had grown up there through the nursery. She never punished him because George had a congenital heart condition. Mrs. Jackson is a very sharp minded lady and hence, nobody could pretend in front of her because she very clearly states that she is not the mother of anyone. She also speaks emphatically, “This is not your home. And it is not a prison – it is a state shelter for boys. And it is not a dumping ground for delinquents, rejects, or somebody’s garbage – you are boys”(26). She makes them understand that it is not a place to be tortured, exploited or raped, though the place provides them all kinds of facilities, by which they could sustain their life very peacefully. She wants them to stay till they grow up. But until they are teenagers, they will have to sustain at Wallace P. Andrews. These were the facts of life at Wallace P. Andrews. Most of them choose their future in college to remain in a trade or most of them choose to be a poet or artist and some of them became draftsmen and the musicians. Someway, everyone and George believed that the arts were waiting for poor black kids, “… who were encouraged to dream big, and so was death row”(27). George has left the Wallace P. Andrews and while leaving, he
possesses only his head and two hands and he had each day to do something with them. At the beginning of his life, he had no dollar and even no dreams but however, he starts his journey and finds his destination to Columbia. Initially when he gets his office, he sees Cocoa and straight away realizes that she is his woman in future. George for making his dream true gives Cocoa a job opportunity because he believes, “And just imagine, Miss Day, when I passed you I said to myself, wouldn’t it be funny if I saw her again?”(28). George likes Cocoa and tries to make some special place in her heart.

In the office, George, by and large, calls Cocoa by her pet name Ophelia but she dislikes it and makes him compel to call her only ‘Cocoa’. George wants to know the mystery behind her pet name and surmises about her native place, “Willow Springs is it? That’s in Georgia?”(29). Cocoa responds that Willow Springs is situated in no state because it is an imaginary place. Naylor amply illustrates the imaginary places in her novels, where blacks live their own way and under their own percepts and even stand daringly against whites’ mistreatment and supremacy. Cocoa at once stops her narration that it is a long story and makes him understand that:

…not to be rude, Mr. Andrews, but I really would like to talk about my credentials for working here. Where I was born and what name I was given were both beyond my control. But what I could do about my life, I’ve done well(29).

Finding Cocoa’s low–weighted sound, George tries to understand something about her sadness. George curses himself because he feels he is responsible for eliminating the whole silent features which were annexed
with Cocoa. She during the job keeps conditions that she needs the next two weeks vacation because every August she has to go to her hometown. George firstly wonders and then reacts, “... how badly does someone need a job who’s taking a vacation?”(30). Looking at George’s attitude and mood, Cocoa immediately makes clear about vacation that she goes home every August and never felt a problem before, while she had the job for seven years. She discloses about her family that there is a grandmother of eighty-three and since she has lost one of grandchildren named Willa and her family last year, so she is the only grandchild left in her family. George sympathizes and feels sad about her family’s destruction. Cocoa further states that her cousin sister Willa, her next of kin and son lived in Linden Hills where a year back, in the Christmas Eve, the fire broke out and the family was killed. Cocoa, for the first time in her life, discloses about her family matters with an unknown person. George honestly admires Cocoa as a woman and appreciates her spunk. He also notices his own shortcomings and starts to hate himself because he did nothing in his life and admits that he likes and gives value only to his privacy and nothing more. George reveals that he belongs to northern area, so she can call him George because, “There isn’t a southerner alive who could bring that name in under two syllables”(33). George’s intention seems clear; he wants to make Cocoa to rise with the fighting spirit, so he, over and again, raises the point of southern and northern sides. He wants that Cocoa must fight for blacks and her imaginary place. Cocoa does posses an audacious spirit and has a profound affection for her native place. She explains to George, “I had the
same myths about southern women that you did about northern men. But it was a fact that when you said my name, you became yourself”(33).

Hereafter, the other segment of the novel concentrates on the story of Miranda alias Mama Day, who is utterly and internally annexed with her grand child Cocoa. In New York, Cocoa discusses with George about Mama Day, if she is not a number one Aunt but she is a great–aunt at all. She is the Mama of each and every person. Miranda, since infancy, has seen various ups and downs in life and her bitter experience of life made her very hard and rigorous towards her family and also islanders. But despite of it, she very sincerely nourishes her family as well as natives. Mama Day and her family bore the dismal days and grief one after another because one and then the other child grow mad and madder. In her family, she has lost her mother, younger sister Peace, grandchild Willa and her family and so many other relatives and after it, there are only three members remaining Miranda, Abigail and their only grandchild i.e. Cocoa. Since childhood, Miranda plays a role of mother; she very carefully looks after her sister as well as grandniece. She always tries to give Abigail moral support and feelings of kinship, “Miranda’s small fingers place themselves around the rhythm of Abigail’s breathing. Nested under the quilt, they are four arms and legs, two heads, one heartbeat”(36). Hence, being two bodies and one soul, they start their each day with fresh thoughts and incentive.

Mama Day with her instinctive power reveals about the coming of Cocoa to Abigail and starts to keep her room tidy. Miranda had visited north mostly because her immense favorite niece Hope and her daughter Willa,
who lived there. Hope married a nice person Benjamin Prescott, “... though
he never made too much of himself – gambling took a lot of it away”(38).
Due to this, their daughter Willa chooses to live apart from the family. Willa
knew well that marriage in high–society never becomes successful; therefore
she herself marries in a middle class family. Initially when Grace, one of the
sisters of Mama Day, delivers a baby then Miranda and Abigail both ladies
named the baby ‘Ophelia’. Grace was heedless about her daughter Cocoa;
so both the women took charge of nourishing Cocoa. When Ophelia is five,
she opposes being called ‘baby girl’, so the women give her another pet
name Cocoa. This name suits according to her color and complexion.
Everybody knows that Cocoa comes at home every mid–August. Bernice,
one of the islanders, is a good friend of Cocoa and she too waiting for her.
Miranda and Abigail, both are busy in their cooking and abruptly a horn
begins sounding. Dr. Buzzard, assistant of Miranda takes charge to pick up
Cocoa and lastly completes his duty. Cocoa desires to meet her friends and
Mama Day permits her to visit but with Dr. Buzzard, who will invariably
accompany her. Cocoa knows every detail about Dr. Buzzard that in Willow
Springs, there is one Dr. Buzzard, who lives in Beaufort County, South
Carolina and this Buzzard is not Dr. Buzzard because his real name is
Rainbow Simpson and he via his fake name befools the folks of Willow
Springs. Cocoa is a senior citizen in this place, hence she simply comments
over Dr. Buzzard that, “...an out–and–out bootlegger and con man’... ‘But
what you do ain’t none of my business...’”(51). While Dr. Buzzard gets
annoyed but ultimately both of them become friendly due to Miranda’s fear.
Eventually, after passing her holidays, Cocoa is prepared to go back to New York. At the departure time, notwithstanding, it was not easy for these old women to let her go but however, she has to move.

In New York, George is engaged to someone, named Shawn, a white woman but their relationship does not go longer. Meanwhile, Cocoa has made a position and through her serious hard work, Hopewell, the Office Manager appreciates her and calls a perfect employee in his old company. Simultaneously, the meetings between George and Cocoa mount and he has started to think and care about Cocoa. Lastly, Cocoa too becomes possessive for him and does not want to hurt him anymore. Cocoa further explains about Willow Springs to George, it is a network of small towns and there is only one apartment building. The islanders speak their own language, read their own newspapers and magazines; they have their own laws, codes of behavior and even own judges and juries. Describing about the Willow Springs, she comments to him, while living in New York, he cannot surmise about the pros and cons of Willow Springs. George listens to everything but someway he has many queries about the development of Willow Springs. He is in a dilemma and emphasizes:

And it was so easy to see where you’d settled. No development planning for schools, hospitals, or funeral homes.... you’d pour your polyester bodies into natural fibers and litter the sidewalks on wrought iron chairs, so you could be seen sitting outside eating whatever food was current “in”(62).

Simultaneously, he also speaks that she is meeting with a native New Yorker and New Yorkers are also good tourists who enhance source of income
anywhere and give positive response to any person who arrive in New York from anywhere. Cocoa at once repartees to George, where every time they face race relations and horrifies with the political system, then how a city can becomes good city as New York City. They have heated discussions and arguments on this issue.

George is confused and desperately wants to know why she behaves like this and why she disbelieves in a man who wants nothing but only honesty from her. Cocoa divulges her horrific experiences about New York. She is passing her life with her own terms and manners for the last seven years. In New York, she was scared because there were numerous people always walking through her room hindering her privacy and within such insecure circumstances she has passed her crucial seven years hardly on her fingertips. Hence, being resolved she retorts:

So, I guess the way I talk is my way of coming to terms with never knowing what to expect from anything or anybody. I’m not a bigot, but if I sound like one, I guess it’s because deep down I’m as frightened of change and difference as they are (63).

Cocoa guesses that George is taking more interest in her and wants to make her locate New York. So, George gives a proposal and insists Cocoa to see more about the city.

In Willow Springs, Miranda and Abigail try to answer Cocoa’s letter which they just got. In the island, there is no politer boy than Ambush and both women appreciate him from the bottom of their hearts. At this time, Ambush seems tensed because his wife Bernice is ailing and for the sake of
his wife, he comes to Mama Day. Mama Day without wasting any moment goes with Ambush and as usual asks him about the patient’s condition and troubles. Ambush is alarmingly worried in view of his wife’s miserable condition but however, he tries to give satisfactory answers to Miranda’s questions. Miranda tells Ambush to get lard; because by using it, she can bring down the fever of Bernice. Ambush is perplexed and discloses to Mama Day about the pills which were taken by Bernice and listening about pills, Mama Day becomes shocked and desires to know more about these pills. Bernice got these pills from Dr. Smithfield’s shop and Mama Day guesses that Dr. Smithfield would never give her such pills. In fact, it was stolen by her from the store where she works. Bernice’s condition is so critical that she can not tell a word but however, for the sake of her unborn baby she tries to tell to Mama Day that she does not want to lose her baby. Mama Day examines her very carefully. Ambush asks Mama Day about Bernice’s baby’s condition but abruptly, Mama Day replies that she is not gravid. Mama Day sympathizes with Bernice but somewhere she is furious enough and hectically warns her that, “And if you weren’t so sick, I’d give a good horse whipping this minute”(74). Mama Day reveals to Bernice that these fertility pills inflamed her female parts and what exact part is assaulted; it was also unknown to Mama Day. During this examination, Mama Day eventually finds out some clues about her sickness. Soon, she concludes that she has some growing thing in her womb, it may not be a tumor but something similar and, so she had no monthly periods. Bernice’s condition becomes more critical, her breathing is low and shallow and seeming too weak. But Mama Day believes that she will come out soon from this trouble.
Mama Day through her life saving herb, treats Bernice and after this treatment, the anguish ultimately becomes low in her body and she finally goes to sleep. Miranda decides to wait for Dr. Smithfield. Smithfield is a doctor and sarcastically comments to Miranda that she steals his patients and also blames, “A poor country like me can’t keep body and soul together that way” (84). Miranda though feels insulted but for the sake of Bernice, she ignores everything and pays attention to Dr. Smithfield regarding Bernice speaking that she took some pills for conceiving a baby named ‘Perganol’, which has damaged her ovary. On hearing this name, Dr. Smithfield tries to know that where from she got it and when she began taking it because he did not prescribe her any medicines. Finally, he examines Bernice with his own method. In the meantime, through the best efforts of Dr. Smithfield, Bernice has improved to some extent and Miranda too observes her very profoundly. Bernice tells Mama Day that she has told everything to Dr. Smithfield and she has cysts in her ovary. Bernice gets well but someway, she feels sad and her eyes fill up with tears. Miranda knows that Bernice has been yearning to conceive a baby and for the sake of Bernice’s happiness, Mama Day gets ready to help Bernice. Mama Day enlightens her, if she wants a baby; she has to work hard and has to do whatever she will instruct her. She would need Bernice and Ambush both in the beginning of this crucial work. Bernice assumes her proposal and hears all her advice very cautiously. Initially, Mama Day warns her not to disclose it anywhere because it must be a secret for everyone and even for Ambush also. She quietly thinks, “Time will tell. Time will tell” (87).
Mama Day reaches her home and sees the old ‘Buick’ comes creeping down the road toward her. At this very moment, Mama Day sees Frances. Frances appears upset and looks neurotic because her problem is Ruby, another islander and enchanter. She reveals her doubts that her husband Junior Lee has been hired by Ruby and she at any cost, wants her husband back. But being helpless, she can not do anything and comes to Mama Day, who can solve out her problem as quick as possible. Mama Day knows that Ruby is widow and makes herself sure that may be she can hire Lee and states, “A man don’t leave you unless he wants to go, Frances. And if he’s made up his mind to go, there ain’t nothing you, me, or anybody else can do about that”(90). However, Mama Day makes a plan against Ruby, by which she will have to get rid of Frances’ husband Lee. Mama Day performs some Voodoo to mess with Ruby’s mind and, “Make as many trips to graveyard she wants with his hair, her hair, his pee, her pee. Walk naked in the moonlight stinking with Van-Van oil – and it won’t do a bit of good. Cause the mind is everything”(90).

Moreover, in the Willow Springs everybody knows about Dr. Buzzard and his activities but they do not interfere in his work. But Pearl always interferes and challenges Mama Day in her day to day life. Pearl alleges to Mama Day that she harasses Ruby with something terrible. She again divulges that at Ruby’s doorstep, some bewitching things are found and finding this malicious clue, Ruby takes Frances before the deacon board. Miranda is confused and wonders, what Frances would say in front of the board. Pearl straight away replies that she told especially Reverend Hooper
and the deacon board, ‘a bunch of hypocrites’ and also told them all to go to hell. Mama Day becomes hagridden and expresses, “I think the Lord sits high and He looks law, Pearl. And sometimes He’s gotta look a little lower than other times”(94). Miranda is puzzled but she fully concentrates over Bernice and discloses to Pearl that she promised Bernice to get her well soon and Bernice is also trying her best to get well. Pearl hears everything attentively and realizes that Bernice is sick and her son is looking after her. ‘A trial and tribulation’ is just faced by that girl who is sick and nervous. Since the marriage of Ambush, Pearl never saw her daughter—in—law by caring eyes but on listening her critical condition, somewhere the motherhood of a stone-hearted person wakes up and really she wants to do something good for Bernice. Hence, observing this caring and changeable behavior of Pearl, Miranda becomes startled and imagines, “Miracles do happen”(94). In the meantime, Ambush comes to pick Mama Day and she puts every herbal thing in her pocket, which she prepared for Bernice, “… a handful of pumpkin seeds and shook’em up in a bottle of saffron water, then another handful of crookneck squash and mixed them into a little dewberry juice”(96). Miranda plants these magical pumpkin seeds till spring and starts to wait for its outcome. Indeed, this is not the last step because just after it, Miranda will go to such special place, which she will not even share with Abigail. When the plants will grow up, the best one will be picked out and Bernice will look after this best one. She has to wait till end of the March or starting of the spring. As Bernice will watch them grow, the life will sure grow inside her body. These hocus—pocus will sure come to reality and make her a ‘mother-wit’. 
Additionally, Cocoa in New York feels something altering in herself because she feels a longing for George and just wants to be with him to see New York. George is also happy and enjoying the change in Cocoa because he always desired to look her like this, since his first meeting with her. Meanwhile, George yearns to know more about the place, where she came from and how she had grown up there. Simultaneously, as the transparency between the couple clears, George for making their relationship more strong tells her about Shawn, his ex – girlfriend. Cocoa does not mind and starts to imagine, “THERE ARE SOME TIMES in your life when you have to call upon the best of all God gave you – and the best of what He didn’t”(101). As the closeness betwixt Cocoa and George enhances, the informal get-to-gather is being grown up as a ‘special relationship’:

Ophelia and George represent male and female heritages, each decent and honorable in itself but with no clue as to the other’s inner workings. Ophelia’s father leaves before her birth and she has no other male relatives. … Raised in an orphanage for boys, George has never lived with women until he visits Willow Springs.6

To some extent, Ophelia and George represent especially rural and urban, western and African–American cultures and identities. Lastly, Cocoa has started to trust George and concurrently, both of them have started to like each other. George has some heart problem since childhood and when he shares it with Cocoa; she tries to mollify him and moves her thumb gently up and down, collarbone to chin, to erase his anxiety. The sympathy and physical touch of Cocoa make both of them close to each other for passing a loving new life.
Besides it, Miranda is busy in kitchen due to Candle Walk. Candle Walk is the traditional festival of Willow Springs, which is celebrated after the harvesting of all crops, which people cultivate in their fields. This festival is a way of helping the needy folks and always celebrates on the 22nd December:

Outside white traditions, Willow Springs – with its Candle Walk instead of Christmas, its "standing forth" in lieu of funerals – is culturally independent as well. The vanity of attempts by the white world to assimilate, order, and define this black one is suggested in the anecdote about one Willow Springs resident who returns to do anthropological work.7

In the meantime, Abigail gets another letter from Cocoa, which is quite cryptic in its contents. At this time, Cocoa writes, “I met a man. He’s no good. And it’s over”(109). After reading the letter, Abigail becomes worried but Mama Day explains:

Don’t you know Baby Girl by now? ...This is probably the same man who in the last letter, she was having such a lovely time seeing New York with. And in one single month – he’s no good, and it’s over (109).

After this interpretation, finally Abigail gets mollified and both the women start to write a letter to Cocoa. The Candle Walk night comes and Miranda reveals about so many legends of Willow Springs as well as Candle Walk ceremony. She divulges:

…the island got spit out from the mouth of God, and when it fell to the earth it brought along an army of stars. He tried to reach down and scoop them back up, and found himself shaking hands with the greatest conjure woman on earth (110).

One can see that Candle Walk takes place not on December 25 but on December 22. James Robert Sounders has rightly pointed out, “Naylor does
not wish to eliminate Christian themes such as sacrifice and rebirth, but she does make it clear that Mama Day’s celebration is not based on the Euro–centric approach to Christianity." During the Candle Walk, every islander holds some kind of light in their hands and come out to the road with strolling, laughing and talking. Candle Walk’s main purpose is to help the needy, who are assaulted by winter and can not cultivate the food and cloth, so they help them without feeling obliged. Mama Day has inherited many of Sapphira’s gifts. It is fitting that, “she, be a leader in the Candle Walk where the residents of Willow Springs have in the past chanted: ‘Lead on with light, Great Mother. Lead on with Light.”

Finally, at the night of Candle Walk, the roads of Willow Springs are glowing or shining and filled with young and old generations. The particular ‘sanctimonious’ demos like Pearl are also celebrating this festival with candles, shopping bags of gifts and foods. Pearl has started to live with her daughter-in-law Bernice Duvall. Besides it, Ruby, the enchanter do not free Junior Lee and through her cryptic power, does something awful with Frances. Frances’ condition becomes so critical that she is hospitalized in mental hospital. Moreover, in the occasion of Candle Walk, Bernice and Ambush come to greet both the women with beautiful gifts. Bernice is now perfect enough and shares the story about her magical pumpkin seeds with Miranda. Bernice seems very relaxed and her eyes show some hope for coming springs.

Furthermore, in New York, Cocoa very happily renders her life with George and feels insecure to far from these halcyon days. During their love
affairs, a minor dispute erupts in their life, when George has to leave Cocoa alone in New York to go other places to watch the football matches. Cocoa is desperately annoyed about George’s habit of watching football matches, even leaving her alone at home:

Despite the symbolic role of sports, Naylor’s depiction of male and female heritage has little to do with stereotypes of aggressive, macho men and submissive women or of cold men and lovingly over-dependent women.9

Cocoa is utterly depressed and, so she writes a desperate letter to her grandmother about her breaking off with George. In the meantime, Cocoa gets her Candle Walk package from Willow Springs. She is depressed because seven years have passed and she utterly misses Candle Walk festival. After a long clash, one morning George wakes up and realizes that he can not live without Cocoa and wants to spend his whole life only with her. Therefore, he decides, “We had to look at each other and see if we could accept what was there – because that’s exactly what we were getting” (123). Cocoa has also relented, so by the time of coming New Year, she has started talking with him. Cocoa has disclosed as well as shared everything about her life to George and, so is keen to know much more about George’s life. She tells him that he does not care for her and always hides everything from her. In fact, “His orphanage bringing up forced him into constant focus on the present rather than the future; he envies Ophelia’s knowledge of her family’s past and her wider tribal history, his own being, of course, drowned with his mother.”10 Cocoa further blames that she knows nothing about him and has a desire to know much more about his past and family background:
George’s scientific outlook does not prevent him from possessing a sharp sense of his own emotional life.... She can’t understand that he is never going to display his emotions the way she displays hers. George says that living with a female is a day–to–day balancing act, and I really enjoyed the challenge. Because the times I got it right, you’re being different made all the difference in the world.

Finally, George reveals everything: his age, background, working place etc. But however, Cocoa is not satisfied and deliberately calls him a ‘son-of-a-bitch’. George feels insulted and being shocked, plans to go to his football match destination and decides not to call Cocoa while going or returning from there. Cocoa finally tries to apologize to him. George ultimately decides to meet Cocoa to give all the answers of her questions and proposal of marriage. He reveals about his background and first of all he reveals about his mother, who was a harlot and that is why, he does not like to be called the son of a bitch. George has a firm belief that his mother was not a bitch. He recalls that his mother was fifteen years old when he was born. His father was one of the customers of his mother. Wallace P. Andrews had found three months old George lying on a pile of newspapers. Since then Andrews brought up and looked after him up to eighteen years. George is very much attached to his mother, who is no more with him. He still believes that she was an innocent and a prim woman. After this disclosure, Cocoa is entirely scandalized and George finally proposes for marriage to Cocoa. Cocoa too accepts it.

In Willow Springs, the folks get tidings about Cocoa’s marriage. The widow Ruby too marries Junior Lee. Miranda, at this instant thinks about wedding gift for Cocoa and George, a double–ring quilt. She gathers all the
demos for making the quilt, till their fingers ache. The quilt is not only for George and Cocoa but also for the future generations. It will help communicate the feelings of sharing, caring and sense of belonging to the community. Mama Day does not leave anybody out of the quilt making, which is symbolic of the unity and sense of belonging, “The feelings of kinship and community in Willow Springs are so strong because of Mama Day’s perception of the past, and because she is able to make the whole picture by putting together and connecting the past, present, and future.”

Both the sisters begin to make the quilt and are concerned about Cocoa. Meanwhile, Miranda very keenly waits for spring season for the sake of Bernice and her unborn baby.

Here, in New Orleans, George and Cocoa prepare for their honeymoon and side by side, George feels happy as well as proud to get Cocoa in his life as a life partner. He never lived with a composite family and has no experience about females but however, he tries his best to make Cocoa happy as far as possible. Still, they are not married but before marriage they are surrounded by the senseless disputes. Cocoa is twenty seven years old and does not want to conceive a baby, so this is one of the main reasons for uneasiness between their relationships. Meanwhile, Cocoa gets her nice wedding gift, a quilt from her hometown. Later on, Cocoa comes to her hometown and meets Miranda. They reach near the graveyard of John-Paul, father of Mama Day. John-Paul from the graveyard speaks out about his family tree and Miranda through her supernatural powers, hears everything. The soul of John-Paul divulges that he had six brothers namely:
Mathew, Mark, Luke, Timothy, James, John and the last he himself. His Father’s name was Jonah Day and there were also six brothers born before him, namely: Elijah, Elisha, Joel, Daniel, Joshua, Amos and the last himself Jonah. These all were born in slavery but their mother provided them such kind of atmosphere, where they did not feel slavery and enslavement. Their mother becomes such a legend that black demons, white demons as well as red folks used to whisper her name Sapphira. John Paul further states, “God rested on the seventh day, their mama declared, and she would too. So my daddy was Jonah Day and it’s what I got to pass on to you”(151). Cocoa and Miranda come to meet Abigail. During the meeting, Mama Day talks about May Ellen who was buried last month. There are rumors and every islander knows that Ruby might have poisoned May Ellen. Meanwhile, Cocoa desires to meet evil Ruby but Miranda is not interested to send Cocoa there. On the other side, George is alone in New York and longs for Cocoa, “I’ve been with her all my life and I’ll be with her for the rest of my life. That instant I could say that, and the next and the next”(158). Prior to marriage, though the harmony between the couple has disturbed but in spite of it, they still love each other. Meanwhile, Bernice through the extreme efforts of Mama Day ultimately delivers a son and looks after him very heedfully. The son exactly looks like his father but he is skinny, so the folks and Cocoa mostly call him Chick or Little Caesar. Moreover, a year has passed and next August has come, when Cocoa goes to Willow Springs. At this time, George too goes to the island with Cocoa. Cocoa and George, after some ups and downs, eventually get married and once again, they give a chance to themselves for
passing their life peacefully. George someway wants to rescue their marriage life, so he suggests that separate journeys are the salvation of their marriage. Finally, after some confrontation they reach Willow Springs. Cocoa is also trying to bear with her marriage and speculates, “...when I try, George, when I try to pick a point at which we could have stopped, there is none”(165). Cocoa and George have leisurely disintegrated into two parts; their thoughts have also divided and even they have rendered their crucial four years with each other. Hence, the novel’s first half is complete and this first half of the novel generally deals with the story of Cocoa and George’s, “stormy courtship.”

The second half part of the novel relies upon George and Cocoa’s fateful summer visit to Willow Springs. At this time, the island is affected not only by a tumultuous hurricane but also by a, “… darker, more elemental forces.” These forces and calamities are invited by a jealous witch, Ruby, with Cocoa as her prospective victim and Mama Day with the help of George acts as a savior. In the starting of the second part, Miranda very eagerly waits for the couple. Abigail, somewhere, is nervous to take George but Mama Day consoles her that not to worry about George because he is a perfect match for Cocoa. Cocoa and George have reached in Willow springs and George is happy to come to this island. His amusement makes him think, “… he is entering in another world. In it Cocoa’s great aunt Mama Day is a matriarch.” He is amazed to meet Mama Day and Abigail. Mama Day looks barely five feet and can be snapped in the middle with one good sized hand and on the other hand, Abigail is also old but seems completely young.
Thus, after this formal introduction, George is tremendous glad and impressed with both the women. Meanwhile, George dreams of Mama Day who is leaning over the bridge. She cries like thunder, “No, Get up And Walk”(183). George tries to rescue her life, swimming harder toward the receding shore but he becomes unable to help her and in frustration screams. George sleeps through the night and when he wakes up, as usual goes for his long walk. During the walk, George meets Dr. Buzzard, who invites George to play cards. Next evening, every dweller waits for the game of playing cards. George finally wins the game and Dr. Buzzard arranges a cocktail party. George takes a little bit sip of beer. In the state of some intoxication, George reaches at home, where three women anxiously wait for him. Looking at them, he first of all becomes afraid but however, collecting some spunk he says to Cocoa, “I didn’t want your grandmother and Miss Miranda thinking that you’d married a drunk”(215). Later on, George and Cocoa go for a walk. Cocoa seems some puzzled because she is not yet pregnant, since it has taken a long time. She seldom feels that she is not a good wife and also realizes that she should give more attention to her husband.

Moreover, Miranda feels death all around her. She could not exactly guess, who would be dying but she is sure that somebody is going to die. She immediately rings up Abigail to disclose about the storm’s coming and makes her remember about ‘18 & 23er’. Meanwhile, Miranda sees George and asks him whether he is not worried about the forthcoming storm. George at once replies, “No, when you do a job, you do it right. It’s not going to take
me much longer”(229). His response makes Miranda impressed and Cocoa is lucky to have such kind of a husband. Cocoa and George prepare for the party which is being organized by both the women to welcome the couple and as usual they again fight with each other over trifle matters. Cocoa blames him, “Look, George, what you wanted was what you wanted. And what you got was what you got. It’s that simple. I know I’m not your ideal”(233). Listening to this, George firstly reacts because he knows very well that she is clearly indicating towards Shawn, his ex-girlfriend hence, he immediately replies that neither she nor Shawn are his ideal. Though George is hurt but in spite of it, he mollifies her stating that:

Only a fool would spend his life looking for some dream woman. The right woman is the one you can live with, not the one in your head. The one in my head was sheer fantasy. I used to have images of someone who was deep, deep brown…(234).

Listening to these sensational details, Cocoa calms down and is assured that George only and only loves her. In Abigail’s house, the folks gather for a party. Bernice, after her delivery, meets Miranda for the first time. After the party is over, George once again thinks about the misbehavior of Cocoa. At this time, he decides that he will never talk with her. The thought of such a silent and an empty future depressed him evermore. Being depressed, George wants to leave Willow Springs but because of hurricane warnings he can not move or travel. In the meantime, witch Ruby observes that the webbed clouds move on northward to cover Willow Springs and during this observing, she sends a letter to Cocoa, “I’m sorry I married a fool. Come, see me”(244). Cocoa goes to meet her and Ruby according to her cryptic
plans, combs and massages Cocoa’s hair by the warm solution and wants to do some sorcery experiment with her hair. She uses the white twine, the braids and starts forming on top of Cocoa’s shoulders and knots the thread on each end. Ruby’s experiment over Cocoa makes her very pretty. Ruby takes a few strands from her lap and puts them in her pockets.

Cocoa comes back home and George appreciates her well-equipment. Meanwhile, as George perceives the sky, the clouds, the water and the horizon, it all looks ghastly and terrific. Finally, “…the whole landscape was blended in gray but each feature was distinct”(248). During this horrific scene, the sky has started raining constantly and through her magical power, Miranda feels the symbol of hurricane. The storm wanders upon Willow Springs and step by step, it faces the attack of violent weather. Mama Day eventually conjectures that it is done by a woman but she exactly does not get the name. Moreover, Miranda once again dreams same terrible incident involving George. At this time, he drowns in ‘The sound’ and she tries to help him. After some struggle, George seems missing and for the first time in her life she does not succeed. After this gruesome dream, when she wakes up, she finds it is just a dream and George definitely will never leave them. In the meantime, George gets the news that the bridge has been destroyed, everything has stopped in Willow Springs, no phone lines, no signal in the transistor, no coast guard and even in casualties there is no medical assistance to help. During these complications, he all of a sudden sees Bernice Duvall, with her dead son. Unfortunately, nobody knows the
reason for Little Caesar’s demise. Ambush and Bernice both are scandalized and have broken away due to their son’s death.

Later on, the mist again turns into rain and during the rain; Bernice comes through the woods with her dead son. In this novel, like *The Women of Brewster Place*, Naylor once again uses the aspect of rain and this constant raining once more shows the adversity of Willow Springs, calamity of the islanders and severe sorrow of Mama Day. When the rain stops and as a clear sun rises, Miranda consoles Bernice as a mother and makes her understand, “Go home, Bernice, Go home and bury your child” (259). Cocoa is still sleeping and when she wakes up, George hurriedly reveals about the demise of Little Caesar. Cocoa being shocked starts to cry because she feels sorry for Ambush and Bernice. Cocoa abruptly feels a fever and George at once goes to Mama Day to disclose about the fever of Cocoa. Miranda loses her self-control and being worried, she goes in the retrospect of her dead family members:

…past the birth of Hope and Grace, past the mother who ended her life in The Sound, on to the Mother who began the Days. She sees one woman leave by wind. Another leave by water. She smells the blood the broken hearts of the men who they cursed for not letting them go (262-63).

Through this memorandum, Mama Day cries. Cocoa, on the other side, suffers from brain fever and except Mama Day, nobody can cure her. Simultaneously, Abigail is also sick due to bad atmosphere and after giving some medicines and cautions her Miranda in a fit of anger plans to slaughter Ruby. Miranda goes to look after Cocoa and tries to assess the whole
matter. Her doubts about Ruby are clear and she ponders, “Naw, death is peace” (264). Miranda now, takes the shears and begins to cut off each braid from Cocoa’s shoulder, which was adorned by Ruby and as they fell, they at once curl up like worms on the pillow around Cocoa’s face. Miranda then leads Cocoa in the bathroom, applies shampoo and herbal treatment in her head. Cocoa, through this treatment, feels better and, “The turning point of the book comes when George is asked not only to believe in Mama Day’s power but to act on it.” Though Cocoa feels better but somehow she is serious and needs some other treatment. George seriously pays his attention to his wife and quickly wants to do what Miranda tells him to do for Cocoa. Mama Day sends George to bring the red hen’s eggs which are available in the hen house beyond the bridge. He tries to do as he is told but George needs a quantifiable outcome. Unfortunately, he fails but his action allows his wife to live even though the result of this task is terrific and awful for him. In order to rescue Cocoa, he sacrifices himself and, “Success is a form of surrender: the opposite of the desire to control.”

George has died and the novel gradually has reached in the climax where all at once, its climax becomes scary, sad and triumphant. Cocoa’s life is threatened but saved and, on the other hand, George loses his life at the altar of love. Indeed, Miranda alone takes retribution against Ruby. As Miranda reaches Ruby’s house, Ruby instantly runs inside and locks the door. Initially, Miranda calls her name thrice but Ruby does not answer and even does not open the door. As a result, on the thunderous sound of Mama Day, Ruby’s doors, windows and whole house get cracked and Miranda
leaves. As Miranda comes home and sleeps, the clouds get lower and the
lightning nears the earth. It hits Ruby’s house twice and the second time the
house explodes fiercely. Miss Ruby, a mistress of sins, burns in her house.
Like a wild fire, the death news of George comes to Day’s family and by the
demise of George, Ophelia has become alone:

George pursues Mama Day’s path but, sadly, in his own
way, like an engineer. Emotional and physical exhaustion
combine with over exertion to literally break his weak heart.
So, in the end, George does it his way and is buried on the
island. Ophelia lives.²⁶

For a long time, everyone of Day’s family and every islander have once
again rehabilitated in their own place. Cocoa, being aloof, goes back to New
York for reinstatement in the job as well as for the love of George. When
Cocoa is in New York, once again Willow Springs celebrates another Candle
Walk. At this time, the folks are scandalized with the series of so many
accidents and demises. Cocoa having mourned for her own loss i.e. George
develops as she ages, “...a face that has been given the meaning of peace”
(312). Cocoa coming under the pressure of Mama Day ultimately again gets
married. Her second marriage succeeds and it perpetuates George’s
influence. Cocoa has two sons and her younger son is named after George
but his physique renews Ophelia’s temperament rather than George’s.
Mama Day visits George’s grave regularly and Ophelia yearly during her
visits to Willow Springs, “The reader realizes that a good deal of the
narration consists of George’s and Ophelia’s direct speech to each other,
from perspectives which can only have formed after George’s death.”²¹ Thus,
although Cocoa lives in New York yet consciously she remains aware about
her traditions and the legacy of her grandaunt Mama Day and the great
grand mother Sapphira Wade.

In addition to this, one can discern that in African–American society,
the rich familial past and the sense of nurturing of families by the women in
the community that helps the black women to survive, which provides them,
respectability and a sense of belonging. Survival spirit is inherited on from
one generation to another and in this sequence; it passes through from
mother, sister, aunt, cousin or another woman to other kins in the
community. Having the great sense of survival, the women of Willow
Springs, represent a meaningful past, a stable present and a hopeful future,
“The survival knowledge and security of the kinship and community enables
the generations of the black women to learn from the success and failures of
the previous generation, but the absence of this knowledge leads them
nowhere.”

Naylor’s characters are connected with each other and through this
connectivity they portray the scenario of female unity. Mama Day as a
fosterer fosters every islander and mostly looks after the females. Strong
community feeling is evident in the behavior of Miranda and Abigail, and it
spreads through the whole island. Ruby snatched the husband of another
woman to satisfy her sexual desire. Cocoa, on the other hand, also exhibits
a character of bold black woman, who uses her husband, George at her will
and wish. While loving a person and calling him ‘son of a bitch’ at the same
time is quite significant. So, the novel is a mirror of black community and
clearly reflects the women superiority and women bonding through their co-operation and active participation in the society.

Female power and wisdom are vividly incarnated in the title character, Miranda alias Mama Day. She is not only a mother to her grandniece, Ophelia but a ‘Mama’ to the whole community of Willow Springs, “For decades she is not only the community’s midwife but also its guardian of tradition and it central authority figure: ‘Mama Day says no, everybody says no.’”\textsuperscript{23} She is a powerful conjure woman with special gifts derived, in the community’s view, from being a direct descendant of Sapphira Wade. She is an omnipotent woman and, so she makes Bernice fertile and calls down lightning to punish the murderous Ruby. Miranda has an unparalleled woman power, so she creates such an atmosphere, which is profitable for her well-wishers and against her opponents, “The men in the novel tend generously to support the women up to a point and are respected by Miranda for up-rightness and strength.”\textsuperscript{24} In the isolated island Willow Springs, Miranda works through nature, as a midwife, as a death-dealer and as a daughter of the Mother Goddess, she redefines the categories of gender conventions and rejoins the human community. Miranda, being a Mama of whole folks, takes care and protects them from calamities and adversities. Looking at Frances’ insanity for her husband, Mama Day does some magic against Ruby and her house. All these activities of Mama Day show her motherhood and care for her folks. She is fully responsible for every pros and cons of her citizens, so being mother of her relatives as well
as natives; she does not dare to fight with anyone, “For black women history is a bridge defined along motherliness.”

Mama Day is a woman of supernatural power and magic. Through her power and magic, she helps and controls the Willow Springs. Ruby, a witch creates an artificial stormy atmosphere, targeting Mama Day’s dearest one Cocoa, “Naylor portrays Ruby’s obsession as the source of disorder and evil within the community.”

Gloria Naylor makes magic as well as fiction. Like her characters, she has the ability to believe and writes with the power of knowing that, “anything is possible.” Miranda usually does not practice magic but when she feels that it is very essential for the welfare of the people, she ultimately uses her sorcery and strength, “Some of Miranda’s ‘magic’ therefore, consists of psychological insight aided by the useful symbol.” Miranda knows the various powers of roots and having been trained in her sensitivities, through a long period can perceive, hear or see beggar’s description in the familiar landscape. Hence, she is the Goddess of the isle, who suffers from some hideous flaws but in spite of it, for the good of Willow Springs, she loses her dearest family member George. In a nutshell, it can safely be concluded that Mama Day, a symbol of motherhood possesses the power and magic, which make her strong and superior amongst the people of Willow Springs.

Naylor’s Mama Day remarkably resembles William Shakespeare’s The Tempest, in both character composition and plot structure. The setting of each work is a surreal isle paradise in which the islanders are guided by strong magical leaders. The inversion of the plot and character in The
*Tempest* and in *Mama Day* function to emphasize the power and capabilities of black women:

Gloria Naylor, although unintentionally, clearly appropriates... Shakespeare’s play *The Tempest* using an ‘Africanist’ style... however, Naylor is quick to deny that the play exerted conscious influence on the composition of her novel. Despite Naylor’s intentions, *Mama Day* serves as an ‘African–American revision’ to the Shakespearean play’s ‘racist doctrines and objectives’ by transposing them from white male dominance to black female control.  

The revision of power demonstrates Naylor’s attempts to redo the gender and racial stereotypes present in Shakespeare’s work. Naylor’s borrowings from Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* in *Mama Day* can be assessed on two fronts. At the first, George’s attachment to King Lear is examined thoroughly, on the second, more pervasive level; associations between Willow Springs and *The Tempest* are tested, “This twofold approach is co-related with the novel’s overall geographic movement from North to South since George’s Lear is situated in the former while *The Tempest*’s connections are with the latter.”  

King Lear specifically provides the medium for negotiating George are seductive of Cocoa, “The games people play. I wasn’t coming to your apartment the following Tuesday night to talk about King Lear”(104). George’s relatively superficial attachment to Shakespeare comes nowhere close to his passionate commitment to football. If Shakespeare’s images of women are restrictive, ball excludes women entirely. In Cocoa’s case, she utterly dislikes football matches because she believes and feels that players smell each other’s behinds during the football playing, “Since Naylor herself shares Cocoa’s resistance to George’s love of football.”
The novel’s second Shakespearean strand, the interplay between *The Tempest* and Naylor’s representation of the Southern isle of Willow Springs, involves a much more active encounter with Shakespeare. *Mama Day* has its roots in *The Tempest*. The theme is reconciliation, the title character is Miranda (name of Prospero’s daughter in *The Tempest*) and Willow Springs is an isolated isle whereas, on Prospero’s isle, magical and cryptic events come to pass. As in *The Tempest*, one story line concerns an enchanted Miranda alias Mama Day and her obtaining, exercise and abandonment of sorcery powers. The other story line concerns a pair of lovers Cocoa and George Andrews. Willow Springs is a wondrous island, wonderfully situated. On this wondrous island, one can see different forms of life as slavery and race relations, lover’s disputes, family affairs and scandals, professional competitions and jealous etc. *The Tempest*, on the other hand, emphasizes repentance and forgiveness as a prelude to the re-establishment of a just order; *Mama Day*, emotional connections, compassion or sympathy, respect for great natural powers and savage retaliation against fundamental betrayals of the social contract. Gloria Naylor’s *Mama Day* highly resembles Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Naylor not only inspired with the black women’s survival and struggle but also inspired with the Shakespearean dramas and somewhere uses the drama of Shakespeare in her novels as *The Women of Brewster Place*, in the character of Kiswana, her fiance Ambush, mostly exhibits the shows of Shakespearean dramas. Naylor is highly impressed with the play *The Tempest*, so for showing some glimpses of *The Tempest*, she makes same isle, which Prospero made. Prospero was
the King of that particular isle and Miranda nicknamed Mama Day is the
queen of this particular island ‘Willow Springs’, “Naylor appropriates the
Shakespearean play to create the female dominated island of Willow
Springs, which inversely mirrors the male dominated island of The
Tempest.”32 The Tempest and Mama Day share isle settings; magician or
sorceress in Prospero and Miranda alias Mama Day, terrific storms which
isolate folks on the island; serious usurpers in the false king of Naples and
Ruby, a witch comic usurpers in Stephano and Dr. Buzzard; representatives
of suitors from the brave new world in Ferdinand and George. Mama Day’s
given name, Miranda was a Shakespearean exploration, original in The
Tempest.

Besides it, as Prospero uses his magic to meet his own daughter
Miranda with her fiance Ferdinand, exactly Mama Day makes such grounds,
in which George and Cocoa meet to each other. Prospero through his magic
power controls each and every things as well as people and, on the other
hand, Mama Day through her supernatural powers, controls and protects the
Willow Springs and its folks. As Prospero uses his magic to control Caliban
with the crudest sorts of physical punishment and eventually liberates Ariel,
exactly Mama Day uses her powers to control hurricane, Bernice and witch
Ruby and sets free Junior Lee from Ruby’s trap. Thus, control is central to
the use of magic—control of creatures, spirits, natural elements and finally
other human beings. Master of the isle and its residents as he was once
King of Naples, Prospero uses sorcery as quasi–legitimate extension of his
rule. Finally, in order to leave the island and rejoin human society, he must
renounce it. On the other hand, Miranda has a great and tremendous power but she, by contrast, does not exactly practice magic. She mostly uses her herbs as well as seeds and relies upon the prescribed waiting period. Through this practice and manners, she usually heals her patients, so her enchantment consists of psychological insight aided by the useful symbols:

Unlike Prospero’s magic, Miranda’s work exists firmly within the natural context, speeding or slowing processes already there but not creating either processes or potential exnihilo.33

Thus, *Mama Day* remarkably resembles William Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*. Annotated Bibliography on Gloria Naylor shows, “The two stories incorporate community alcoholics, a twisted subplot to usurp the leadership, and a ravishing storm, or tempest.”34 The inversion of plot and characters in *The Tempest* and *Mama Day* functions to emphasize the power and capabilities of black women. Indeed, it can safely be concluded that Gloria Naylor has taken a cue from the Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* for making her novel more impressive and by this effort her novel becomes one of her best novels.
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17 Ranveer, op.cit., 140.

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19 *ibid.*, 140-141.

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