CHAPTER V

Bailey’s Cafe (1992) is the fourth in the sequence of novels which Gloria Naylor has conceived as a quartet. Love, tragedy, sacrifice and the enduring strength of women is the pivotal theme in Naylor’s novel. In Bailey’s Cafe, inspired by the improvisational quality of jazz, Naylor explores the painful lives of several women who end up their lives at Eve’s place; a brothel and frequenting Bailey’s cafe locate, “...between the edge of the world and infinite possibility.”¹ Like Naylor’s previous works, Mama Day, Linden Hills and the award-winning The Women of Brewster Place, this novel too offers interesting characterizations in familiar settings imbued with mythic qualities. The cafe setting allows a range of characters to tell stories from their lives, each in a quaint voice. Bailey’s cafe and the nearby boarding house (which some call a bordello) offer respite for those who have been battered in the outside world and their long-lasting scars shape the book’s narrations and interactions. The characterizations are distinctly and believably drawn from The Women of Brewster Place.

Bailey’s Cafe, “...owns its name to an unknown personage and the title also becomes synonymous with the anonymous narrator of the novel.”² Bailey is the chief narrator and in order to avoid inadequacy in conveying the character’s multiple experiences, multifarious voices are used to expose the diversity of life and to understand different layers of meanings. Structurally,
the novel starts with the prologue where the narrator introduces not only himself and his wife Nadine but also gives us a synoptic view of the prevailing social, economical and political conditions of his time. Bailey is sufficiently educated and when he goes to Brooklyn to finish up his grade school, he gets married to Nadine. Bailey runs a cafe and always believes that Brooklyn is the capital of the world and that all colored people are rich except his family. His parents worked as interior decorators. He has a deep fondness for the baseball game. He reveals his sheer disgust and dislike at the racial discrimination practiced not only by the whites but also by the blacks, “...white baseball or not. When you love the game, you love the game, and mutilation is mutilation”(11). In fact, there is hardly any concern shown by the society to help integrate America whether it is a baseball game or his parents’ black employer, Mr. Van Morrison, whose wife Mrs. Van Morrison is a woman of loose virtue and always irritates her husband and his kitchen staff:

...and baseball is not going to help integrate America. Having Jackie Robinson out there with Pee Wee Reese is the same as having my mother and Mrs. Van Morrison’s maid (Swedish girl) trading gossip in the back kitchen...real power getting shared at the top, nothing but a game of smoke and mirrors is going on at the bottom(12).

Bailey and Nadine are a good husband and wife. Throughout his life, Bailey notices that Nadine has not strung more than six sentences together in her whole life. She is really a nice and a taciturn woman. Both the couples practically live at Steeplechase Park. Bailey belongs to Brooklyn and Nadine belongs from the Sea Islands. Nadine mostly spends her hours on the boardwalk and that is how Bailey learns that she rarely laughs at anything and
when she laughs at, it was not him. The meetings between them finally compelled them to marry.

Later on, the war breaks out in Europe and Bailey is also interested to join the army against Japan. Dorie Miller, the Satchel Paige of the war in the Pacific and a mess man, choose some men for the war and Bailey is one of them, who are sent over there to face the same maniacs. After joining the mess men’s branch, Bailey tells Nadine that he indeed does not know when he would be come back. But he confidently tells her that he would miss her from the bottom of his heart, think of her every moment and carry her photo in his heart. Nadine as usual tells him nothing. After passing few days in Pacific, the war eventually starts and inch by inch, island by island, the Japanese were going back. Lastly, through the extreme efforts of Pacific soldiers, Europe finally wins and San Francisco and other urban American towns celebrate the victory. Whether it is the racial discrimination in games or the inhumanity in wars, Bailey unmasks and reveals the degenerated and corrupt face of society, “It is the prevalence of such a debased society that the creation of Bailey’s Cafe takes place.” After a long journey, when Bailey comes back, he first of all meets Nadine, who at once says that there are customers waiting. Startled, he turns around and finds that she is standing behind him and behind her is the cafe. When Bailey returns from the war, the name Bailey’s Cafe was painted across the front window of the cafe. Most of the customers think Bailey is Bailey’s surname and they generally call Nadine, Mrs. Bailey. Nadine is very helpful to her husband and feels that people should not to get the wrong idea about this cafe. The maestro alias Bailey and
his wife Nadine do not run a simple cafe at all but rather a way station; a place to rest.

‘The Vamp’ is a chapter and a musical term where Bailey warns the readers about his character, “...to go below the surface, to take’em one key down”(35). He forewarns the readers not to take them and their stories at the surface level but to go deeper in understanding their intentions. During the vamp, the maestro introduces two more characters: Sister Carrie and Sugar Man; both characters appear to be polar opposites. With one predetermined never-changing food choice for each weekday and, “…anything a customer wants on the weekend, Bailey’s Cafe takes some getting used to.”⁵ Therefore, the nonexistent menu that the maestro refuses to print becomes a vamp and he simply repeats the offerings as many times as are necessary. The two characters: Sister Carrie and Sugar Man that the maestro introduces, the choice of both characters is ideal for maestro’s music, for he sees both of them as, “…one-note players. Flat and predictable’ but when taken to a lower key, the maestro can demonstrate that ‘every point’s got a counterpoint’”(33-34). Sister Carrie is cornerstone of the Temple of Perpetual Redemption, one who sees sin waiting to happen all around her, as she judges the world from her self – righteous pedestal; the later, a pimp in a purple suit, one who sees a way to make a living off the backs of women on their backs.

Further in ‘The Jam’ the maestro has prepared the reader for the performances of the seven major players who solo during the jam. There are seven chapters jammed together depicting the predicament of five female personages, their struggle and their survival. These, “…shunned, exploited,
molested, mutilated, defeated women are Peaches, Sweet Esther, Jesse Bell, Sadie and Mariam and all become denizens of Eve’s brothel. Like the seven women of Brewster Place in her first novel, Naylor delivers another community of women, whose lives are sustained and enhanced by the company they keep. These women are thoroughly desolated, depressed and dejected souls and first they try to seek solace at Bailey’s Cafe. Then, Naylor chooses to insert a colon between the two words of the chapter title she selects for Sadie’s story but the reference is to Duke Ellington’s 1931 highly popular ‘Mood Indigo’. Firstly, the stories of the women start from the setting of Sadie’s early days; who belongs to Chicago’s South Side, an area that grows with the massive Southern migration of African-Americans from the South. Sadie is a regular customer at Bailey’s Cafe. She had a battered childhood at the hand of a drug-addict, prostitute mother, whose deferred dream of a clean nice home gets dissolved into alcoholism and prostitution. Sadie’s daddy is one of the customers of her mother. Sadie is the inadvertent result of a failed abortion, called by her mother, “The One The Coat Hanger Missed” (41), so many times she believed that it was her name. Sadie exactly looks like her father and as she grows older, her mother hardly speaks and looks at her unless she drinks. Whenever she asked her mother about her name, she first of all screams her name ‘Sadie’ then beats her violently because primarily she had not been aborted. Sadie was deprived of mother’s love and when she grew up and reached the age of eight or nine, she feels confused because she compares her bruises to the unmarked face of the blacksmith’s daughter. At the age of twelve or thirteen, she becomes a perfect
little lady. She loves her mother and believes exactly in return but, “Waiting, you see, until Sadie, somehow, managed to be good enough”(44). Being a thirteen year old little lady, she starts dreaming. She goes to the academy to learn French and to be an expert in typewriting machine to make her dream true. After some struggle, she becomes the first colored woman who establishes herself as a typist in the biggest insurance company on State Street. As Sadie gets this job, she thinks that her mother surely will come to meet her to appreciate her and her new job also but very soon she realizes that her mother does not love her at all. Dreams that drown out the sound of the wailing and screaming of her mother’s losing battle with invisible monsters that crawl of the absinthe bottle. Sadie’s mother is dead and her eyes are vacant and dry because she has been left alone in the world. After her mother’s funeral ceremony, Sadie once again, gets back to their boarding house, where the rules and percepts are very rigid. Nearly sixteen she starts to care about herself and also starts her new occupation to survive with the support of her mother’s fanciest whorehouses downtown on South Dearborn. The owners of this whorehouse are two sisters from an old Kentucky family and they believe that they never hired a colored maid, who they think might have been out on the streets. Within a year, Sadie becomes the personal maid for one of the house favorites. Sadie mostly dreams to sustain her life. Sadie uses her dreams to focus on a man thirty years her senior who delivers wood to the whorehouse, who speaks her name when she tells him without looking at him. For three years she lives for the, “sound of her name in his mouth” (49). When the whorehouse closes and she meets him for what she
believes to be a final time, hoping only to find out his name, which he has not bothered to reveal in three years. The brief conversation of five minutes, resulting in a marriage proposal, becomes the longest one they will have in the next quarter century of life together. In Naylor’s ironic choice of Daniel for the name, “…the silent, quite–drinking man has a biblical namesake whose gift is dream interpretation.” Daniel's drinking makes Sadie compelled to think what he thinks of her and as she finds out it is not very much. Gradually, Daniel starts to dislike Sadie and very often tries to hurt her. In fact, he suspects that she can not conceive babies because she has caught some white man’s disease from the white whorehouse. Sadie never reveals Daniel’s violence in front of anyone. Daniel, in the state of intoxication, very often beats Sadie and next morning he always forgets what he did with his wife. In fact, “…he certainly couldn’t remember over years of such mornings”(54).

After Daniel’s death Sadie is once again lonely and reverts to the path of dreaming. Daniel’s two daughters, though never met their father but after their father’s funeral, they all of a sudden appear to exhibit their rights towards their father’s house and want to sell it away. In order to get his house back Sadie works hard to fulfill the target of 200.00$ and starts to search work around. She approximately collects around 100.00$ in near about nineteen days. In the meantime, she hears of a laundry near the South side that runs an evening shift. The owner agrees to pay her in cash after each shift since she agrees to run the steam press for half pay. After finishing her steam work, when she demands her two dollars and four cents then suddenly the owner laughs and says, “You’re kidding me”(63). The owner shaking her head
consciously arrests her. Sadie passes her crucial two weeks in women’s detention cell. Sadie is so depressed that she has now no more dreams. Meanwhile, the unidentified footsteps that come, “slowly from the far edge of the settlement”(65), who bring her the first comfort after she has realized that all is lost, are a kind of Christian soldier, a symbol of dream keeping. Sadie now finds herself alone and, “…the footsteps no more than a distant echo”(65). The star–studded wine becomes the only way she can see stars in this world. In pursuit of the wine, she becomes a two – bit whore; from the streets of Chicago, she finds her way into Bailey’s cafe.

Once Sadie arrives at the cafe, Naylor’s language moves toward magical realism, making the cafe, “…the last place before the end of the world”(68). Sadie is welcomed by Nadine, who serves her on the house because Sadie is capable to turning the, “thick mugs into fine bone china”(68) by the way she reaches out to receive her tea. Meanwhile, a widower Iceman Jones enters, who is a regular customer of Bailey’s cafe. He offers Sadie the love she has never experienced. With Jones, there are two more customers Sister Carrie and Eve. Sister Carrie from the vamp returns to repeat her biblical views and Eve, whose solo in the jam appears after Sadie. Eve, like Mattie Michael of Brewster Place, is a survivor, who suffers at the hands of her god father in Louisiana and continuously makes an effort to associate with the womenfolk in her method, by bestowing rooms in her brothel to these women whose horrified background Eve can relate to. Now, Bailey’s Cafe has filled with customers and during this meeting, Iceman Jones first meets Sadie. Like everybody else, he has too heard the talk about her past and is of
opinion that, “A real pity, she musta been a fine looking woman”(70). Sadie’s very first look attracts Jones at first sight. Jones’ life is very simple; he has parents, three brothers and two sisters. Though they are poor but they always maintain themselves as far as possible. He, at the age of twenty, takes a job on an ice wagon and during the job he gets married. He has one son and one daughter. Jones is still poor but however, he fosters his family very well. The children grow up, get higher education and move away. Jones’ wife has dead and he is alone. He has his lodge, church and his handful of friends. His life is going on smoothly and, so he does not want to imagine, “…the type of life is must have taken to freeze that look in a grown woman’s eyes”(70). Gradually, Jones and Sadie start to like each other. Sadie now mostly laughs at the talks of Jones and it is the first time when Sadie starts to laugh and looking at her laugh the whole cafe stands still. Sadie is almost changed in her behavior. The deep concern and possessiveness for each other make them to come close together. Sadie at once lifts up her hands, moves out of his arms and leaves him standing in the middle of the pier. She knows, “…this dear sweet man was offering her the moon, but she could give him the stars”(78). Here, Naylor through the maestro wants to explain to the readers that it is the perfect end of the line for Sadie and finally she desires to live alone.

The next segment of the novel is ‘Eve’s Song’. Eve is just like Mattie Michael of Brewster Place. In fact, she is the mother figure for these fictional females, who are escaping from, “the emasculating ethos of mass society.” Eve is a proprietor of her boardinghouse or bordello. She has been in the neighborhood for twenty – five years when the maestro and Nadine take
ownership of Bailey’s cafe. She arrived in New Orleans in 1913, stayed ten years and then left eventually to unlock her boardinghouse and plant her garden. In 1948, she became the cafe’s first customer. Bailey describes about Eve that she gives room only to single woman. Sometimes they pay and sometimes they do not pay her. Though he has no idea how she decides when to charge or not but he very frankly says that Eve is not a charitable person. Overall, as the maestro knows he never heard her laugh. Eve knows that people believe that she runs a whorehouse but it does not matter to her because she knows her criterions and does her job excellently. Eve explains that seldom people ask her about her age and mostly she replies she is near about thousand years. Though people think she is kidding but it is the ‘gospel truth’. Eve is the citizen of Pilottown. She mostly recalls her Godfather’s words, who always told her that, “…since I never had a real mother or father and wouldn’t be alive if it weren’t for him, he would decide when I was born”(82). Whenever Eve asked her Godfather about her birthday, he kept changing it year to year and month to month. If he revealed about the date there was always a different date. Finally, it became clear that he found her in a patch of ragweed and, “I [Eve] was still tied to the birth sac and he had to bite off the umbilical cord with his teeth and spit it out save me from being poisoned”(83). As the time passes, she finally reaches Arabi and there is surely no doubt about how many years she has in fact lived, perhaps she is closed to a thousand. Arabi is located just outside of New Orleans, the first home of jazz in the United States. Meanwhile, Eve’s Godfather throws her out of the church and from Pilottown where she works, due to some
misunderstandings. Eve is shocked and for her, “To be thrown out his church was to be thrown out of the world”(85). Her Godfather is the preacher of the church and when he casts her out, there was nobody who dares to take her in their shelters. In fact, the activity that incites her Godfather and causes her dismissal is the, “stomp, Billy, stomp”(87) game, which he views as sinful machination of self–pleasure. When she leaves Pilottown, she was naked, just as she was when her Godfather brought her into his world. She covers and packs her nakedness with mud, so that when she arrives in New Orleans, she is, “neither male nor female”(91) only mud. The biblical first man, “…was created out of ‘dust from the ground’ that had been watered from mist, so Naylor’s use of mud suggests that Eve gave birth a new to herself.” Eve’s story clearly indicates that her life in New Orleans is a preparation for the business she would later expand in a new location, where women can find her when they need her. Eve plants wildflowers and Nadine knows all their names very well. All of the Eve’s flowers are for sale except the lily which can not be bought because it has a very important place in Eve’s life.

After Eve’s song, Naylor includes another story line of Sweet Esther and the maestro alias Bailey reads that kind of power as hate. Bailey, who has seen Esther only one time, instantly reads the look in her eyes. She speaks only one word, ‘Eve’ and it would be to Eve alone that she would tell her story. In Esther’s story, the reader has to understand the source of the hate that the maestro reports. Esther is raised by a relative, her brother, who is quite kind to her. When Esther is twelve years old, her brother marries her to his employer. She has a pretty and big house but unfortunately, she is
alone and has to pass her nights alone because she is married not as wife but as the material use. She is visited and prepared for the day by a hag, a woman, who has characteristics of a man, such as long gray hairs on her chin. Esther has never seen a woman with a beard. The hag wakes her up each morning to bathe, cooks the meals, cleans the house and washes their clothes. Here, Naylor’s Esther is still a child and becomes the victim of sexual abuse at the hands of man, who forces her into, “sadomasochistic activity.” Her husband always avoids her and asks about how quickly she was learning or when she will be ready then hag responds ‘soon’. Esther has no friend and whenever someone comes to meet her it is no one only hag. They both sit all the night and have drinks. She has a radio, which shares her loneliness. The radio also provides her with, “‘The Shadow,’ a favorite show which becomes her company in the dark and words to call what happens there and they, ‘make evil’”(98). Esther takes up shelter in the basement of Eve’s boarding and Eve is only person, who shares Esther’s tragedies and sorrows, though she already knew about it. Onwards, Eve claims that, “…the most honest face of any woman I know, sweet Esther”(99). In Eve’s basement Esther no longer fears the abuse she faced during those twelve years in the monster’s home but the memory of those gloomy days are reflected in the hate that remains in her eyes. In Eve’s magical garden white roses are available all year a long. Eve makes sure that these are always obtainable for Esther’s callers. White roses symbolize silence and the men who come to Esther mimic the god of silence, who is often, “…represented as a young man, half-naked, and holding a finger to his lips and with a white rose in the other hand.”
Moreover, another story concentrates over Mary (take one). In Bailey's cafe, Mary alias Peaches' father comes to search for her. He goes from table to table, asking each man about his daughter. Bailey, who is observing his activity, tells him that nobody knows his daughter by Peaches' name. Mary is very beautiful and Bailey also admits it that, “She’s one of those women you see and don’t believe”(100). Sugar Man, one of the customers of Bailey, is also fascinated with the beauty of Mary and even loses his mind at a time. Mary is with her luggage and baggage and as a matter of fact, Sugar Man offers her the place for shelter. Mary is in need of a proper shelter like Eve’s and as such she refuses the offer made by Sugar man, though he tries his best to confuse her but fails to convince her to join him. Mary is living at Eve’s but no man knows her by the name of Peaches, so nobody can help her father. He gave her the nickname Peaches because of her skin texture and color is, “Plump and sweet, yellow and sweet”(102). As she grows up, her father’s over-zealous possessiveness to protect her from the males of all ages, give her a muted message that she understands somewhere outside of language. Peaches is only and last daughter among seven sons, hence she is the very dearest to her father Jim. Gradually, when Mary tries to read her world through the mirrors, imported by her father from Belgium, as gifts, into which she gazes, the literal ones that hang in her room and the eyes of those into which she looks and sends conflicting messages that contribute to her awareness that she must he two people, “a whore and … Daddy’s baby”(104). Peaches faces and collides with the swan-shaped mirror, her tenth-birthday present. The choirmaster, supposedly a trusted church staff member while
helping her, begins to molest her. As Mary plays out her turn in the jam, the language of her story alternates between first and third person that, “In horror I watched her grow up, and I learned to hate for breaking my father’s heart”(105). Thus, this take one on Mary has become a biblical counterpart.

When Mary grows up and starts to work, she tries to mix up with her colleagues. She sexually entices men. There are no words to describe how ugly that realization was. She admits that she was trying to tempt men in the streets and also feels that, “Last night I warned inside when caressed my neck and touched me”(107). Right now, there is nothing good to see in her but in spite of it, Mary thinks that she may find solace in a man named Narcissus who simply asks her name, “Before we even get started, tell me your real name”(109). In fact, Mary has no problems with him but as she knows him she finds that, “He just took out his straight razor one morning at breakfast, pressed it against my throat, and told me very quietly that the next man I was with, I would have to watch die”(110). He finally dies still looking at his own face and is turned into the narcissus flower. As Mary is haunted by the woman she sees in mirrors, the youthful Narcissus falls in love with the reflection of himself in a mountain pool of water. Mary now has reached at boarding house of Eve. Peaches’ father asking the address of her daughter, finally reaches at the destination, where Eve makes a promise to Mary’s father and tells him three times, “I’ll return your daughter to you whole”(113).

Unlike the other women who reside at Eve’s place, Jesse Bell, another character and lodger of Eve’s boarding house, flagrantly disregards Eve’s rules. She deliberately ignores Eve’s after midnight curfew to play rummy with
the maestro in his long, slow early morning hours, she has her own opinions about those among whom she dwells. She then lets the maestro know that she is no Shirley Temple and if he wants to talk to her then deal with her in her own way. Jesse Bell lives in Eve’s boarding house because she is a heroin addict who wants to get this, “monkey off my [her] back”(118). Uncle Eli is her former husband’s uncle, who is the hardest man she ever seen. Jesse’s experience about Uncle Eli is very horrible because she believes that he killed her husband and son and even tried to kill her also. Uncle Eli wanted to be like, “white folks” not the, “honest ofays” but the, “dicty” ones(125). Both references to white people, these slang expressions found their way into print by 1928 and 1931 respectively but were most likely a part of spoken language for many years. An ‘ofay’ is believed to be ‘foe’ in pig Latin and ‘dicty’ means, “stylish, high class, wealthy.”

Jesse Bell marries a ‘Kings’, one who gives her the biggest brownstone in, “Sugar Hill”(122). Like the rest of the Kings, Jesse’s husband too feared Uncle Eli and as a wife she could not understand as to why it is so. Uncle’s behavior is so rude that she wonders whether he is really her husband’s uncle. Jesse’s problems started right from the dinner table, when as a newly bride she cooked some food. In fact, what she cooked was unknown to everyone, and her husband asked her very politely, “Wife, what kind of meat is this?(124). As this happens all of them come out and Uncle Eli, who never let the Kings eat peacefully, all of a sudden comments, “slave food”(124). Uncle Eli is a very shrewd person and always conspires against Jesse. At this time, he again plays his cards well and taking Jesse’s son back exposes her relationship publicly with her lesbian lover. Though
Jesse knows her priorities, hence, she gives her first preference to her house but in spite of it, she loses her house, her husband and her only son. In fact, when Jesse delivered a son at that time though Uncle Eli showed his happiness and till sixteen years he nurtured the son very well. During this fostering, he provides every comfort for her son, but it is Uncle’s game of plan to command over the son, to ultimately use him against his mother. Gradually, Jesse starts facing her son’s misbehavior. In the meantime, Jesse’s mother dies due to Uncle’s hocus-pocus and as she blames him, she suddenly faces her husband’s bitter comments, “I was out of order, blaming Uncle Eli for her death. After all, she was over ninety years old”(130). Lastly, when Uncle Eli plays his last wager then Jesse becomes dissipated and compares her marriage, love for son, the clothes she wears, the music she likes, the school she went, the family she came from, everything that makes her ‘her’ with, “dog shit”(131). No one is interested to understand her feelings and so, she is dissolved being, “…on display like a painted dummy in a window”(131). After passing her crucial nineteen years, she finally comes to Eve’s bordello, where she too starts her duties according to brothel’s rules. Right now, Jesse Bell’s flower is the dandelion; a weed that Eve would under ordinary circumstances eliminate from her garden but like all the women she cares for, Jesse too as a ‘special case.’ Naylor chooses a weed that symbolizes grief and bitterness, one that early, “Flemish and German painters used in pictures of the Crucifixion to suggest the suffering of Christ,”12 in which salvation is included. Jesse looks out the back door of Bailey’s Cafe and at once finds hell.
Another story concentrates on ‘Mary (Take Two)’. The maestro, who introduces each of the jams, is not present for this one. Rather, the mostly silent Nadine steps forward to share the stage with Eve. Here, this story in alternating voices presents the story of Mariam. Mariam speaks only six words in a repeating refrain six times in the novel that, “No man has ever touched me” (143). As Eve comes out in her garden to trim her camellias flower, she looks up to see Gabriel, a proprietor of the pawnshop, standing beside Mariam, requesting Eve to take Mariam in. Though each of the cases is a special case but this second Mary’s case breaks all the rules in the, “…relay for broken dreams” (144). When Gabriel, “breaks the pattern” (145), Eve guesses that there must be something different about the girl. But however, ignoring every reason, she tells Gabriel that she is the one who will decide who will stay and who will not stay in her place. He runs his business and she runs hers, hence there is no need to go against the system. Eve has set some rigid rules and according to her rules, if Mariam could not find her place on her own, she should not be standing at her garden in the first place. Gabriel without saying a word leaves the girl right there and turns away. Though Mariam is not the first pregnant girl but she is the first to make such claims that no man has ever touched her. Mariam for proving herself true gives a plum to Eve. The fruit looks tender and soft and to cut it Eve brings a knife to Nadine. As a symbol, the plum is the literal fruit of her womb. The process of Eve’s surgery on the plum gives Nadine the shivers, while the talk continues into past time in Ethiopia. When Eve plunges the knife into the plum in order to remove the pit, it does not come out clean, but the removal of the
pit suggests the removal of Mariam’s baby, “The plum functions as a powerful metaphor for the reader’s visceral understanding of Mariam’s situation.”

Mariam is the first child of a Beta Israel mother, one of the Ethiopian Jews, “outcasts in their own nation”(146), who strictly follows Jewish traditions. Mariam’s mother has delivered a female child, for which she must stay fourteen days in the, “…hot and airless in the hut of blood”(147), moving to a second hut for another sixty-six days because she is unclean. After cleaning and bathing, finally, she will be allowed to return to the village. The Beta Israel expects and looks forward to the birth of sons but Mariam’s mother wanted the female child, and, so secretly hopes that second one will also be female. While Mariam’s mother had her purification when she was three, Mariam is over twice that age when her mother begins to plea for Mariam. After hearing about Mariam and Mariam’s mother, Eve’s face becomes like stone as she holds the plum in her hands and Nadine bringing her the knife, expresses her horror at the thought of the procedure, claiming, “This isn’t in the Law of Moses,” but Eve’s response is that, “It’s older than that. It’s the law of the Blue Nile. And along those shores there is no woman in her right mind—Jew or Muslim—who will want her daughter to grow up a whore”(150). The discussion of female circumcision between Nadine and Eve remains in a nonjudgmental mode, considering the event within its historical and cultural contexts. In Naylor’s work, no blame is placed on the mother’s decision, only unmitigated compassion for Mariam. Throughout the novel, Eve is the first woman who has been around since the beginning and Mariam’s incident is enough to make her cry. Eve is confident that no one really ever touched her
but nobody can ignore still the fact that a child is growing in her womb. When Eve asks her, time and again, about the ‘beast’s’ name, she too repeats, no man has ever touched her. At last, after losing patience Eve strikes her and beats her until she breaks free and runs from the *tukal*. She races behind Mariam and the *kahens* expels her from the village. Finally, Mariam reaches at Gabriel’s door too tired to run anymore. He consoles her and helps to find a place, where she can rest freely. Eve has lot of responsibilities and does not want to take anymore risk on behalf of Mariam, who is hiding the name of the man responsible for her pregnancy. However, both the females Eve and Nadine worry about Mariam.

The last of the seven characters, who has a solo in the jam, is a heterosexual. With Sadie, Sister Carrie, Peaches alias Mary (take one), Jesse Bell, Sweet Esther, Mariam alias Mary (take two), the last one character comes is Miss Maple alias Stanley. Miss Maple, a heterosexual transvestite and also manager of Eve’s boarding and lodging, lives there with dignity without being let down. Though Miss Maple is a male but he prefers women’s dresses and makeup and Eve mostly calls him little sister. When Miss Maple (Stanley) makes his way to Bailey’s cafe, on a crowded night in the cafe, the first person he meets is Eve, who hires him as her housekeeper. Miss Maple is a married person and his wife always supports him, so he mostly finds himself with the urge to do something nice for his wife. Nadine prepares for a little get together on Christmas Eve and Miss Maple too prepares for the party. He makes no efforts to camouflage his male body; women’s dresses are simply a cooler alternative to his hot wool flannel interview suit. The
maestro goes to some lengths to remind Sugar Man and Jesse Bell, who feel jealous to him and call him a ‘faggot’, that Miss Maple is not a homosexual and for Sugar Man, he makes him understand that, “…faggot has been the kindest thing he’s called Miss Maple”(164). In fact, Miss Maple’s internal melody has a hard-won integrity but as he moves into a white-dominated society to find challenging employment in his profession, he continues to collide with those underlying rhythms of a period of American history in which doors are shut simply because of skin color. Miss Maple’s background also addresses another race-related issue that is not explored among the other women. Miss Maple’s real name is Stanley Beckwourth Booker Taliaferro Washington Carver. Stanley is mixed-race; Native American, Hispanic and African-American but he lived in California where his identity was crushed into, “one six-letter word”(171). His father gave him the name after a great man because he expected the same from him. Though he did not want to disappoint his father but he could not carry these entire names at a time. Colored people were not born in California and, so they did not have Ph.Ds or any other upgrade degrees. Stanley reveals about his grandfather and father, who were not slaves. He says there were only two types of Negroes, first who were slaves and second who were not slaves. He recalls that his mother was murdered. His father loved her very much. While his father was a highly successful businessman and landowner, could own a prestigious La Salle convertible and drive up to the local bank to conduct his financial transactions, he could not do so without incurring the rage of the white men in town, “He’d come back out of the bank to find all of his whitewalls flat and that six-letter
word scrawled in mud over his windshield” (172). During his own adolescence, Stanley, “…thought [his] father was pathetic for never fighting back,” and it would take him a bizarre encounter to, “…understand that [his] father was also teaching [him] something very special: how to be [his] own man” (173).

Meanwhile, Stanley is ready to leave home for college; his father has purchased for him a set of thirty-eight volumes of Shakespeare’s plays, including the sonnets. Shakespeare’s plays have a recurring presence. In each of Naylor’s novels, “…The masterpieces of Western world literature make a significant contribution to the lives of her characters.”  They must pick up the books from the head clerk Peters at the freighting office, a Ku Klux Klan member, whose best side comes out when he sees the contents of the crates, “Peters opened the cover like a man making love and wiped his sweaty hands on his trousers before daring to touch the tissue overleaf” (177). The “Ku Klux Klan” (176) got imported into California. Like the communist party, it started gaining strength during the depression. The displaced Okies, running from starvation, had a problem with being so close to the Mexican border; they soon discovered that the other migrant workers were not just niggers who spoke Spanish but a bunch of sneaky lunatics who spoke Spanish. Though his father was conscious to take his son but Stanley was frustrated and his father consoled him, saying that, “Don’t worry, Stanley, I’m pressing charges for this outrage” (180). On the other hand, Gatlin was laughing at their haphazard condition and Peters enlightened the boys to finish the joke. Stanley was unable to breathe in that room much longer because he was feeling insulted and burning like in an acute fire. His father
made him understand that as God is his judge, he will surely make them pay for this. But Stanley was horrified and did not believe his father’s words. Being baffled, he consistently screamed at his father and ultimately, he fell down and cried like the child as he was. His father observed Stanley’s condition and said:

> It hasn’t been easy; Stanley, but I did it for you. From the day you were born I’ve been speaking to you in a language that I wanted you to master, knowing that once you did, there was nothing that could be done to make you feel less than what you are, and I knew that they would stop at nothing to break you – because you are mine.(182).

After giving a long speech, Stanley’s father tried his best to wake up Stanley’s senseless senses to go against the Gatlins. After experiencing sufficient torment, finally Stanley’s father came in his real sense and beat up Gatlin beyond expectation. The greasy Gatlin begged Peters to call the Sheriff and Peters who was already enjoying this scene, finally behind his desk keeping silent.

During the graduation program, Stanley earned a scholarship but sadly he faced racial harassments at the hands of Father Flanagan, who avoided him because he was colored. Meanwhile, by 1942 the armed services found themselves so in love with ‘Negro soldiers’ that all of those mentally deficient volunteers who had been earlier turned away by the thousands when the war first broke out were now considered more than able to figure out one end of a rifle from another. During the war, there was a massive blood donation drive going on at school and, like the rest, so he volunteered and went down to the Red Cross to contribute but at once he got that they were not taking Negro’s
blood at the banks. All of a sudden, he thought that the three hundred thousand colored men, who were the part of the forces were fools and the handful of white Stanford student’s brains were very important for the war efforts. They told him he was only fit to die. Three COs formed a committee and told the warden that they wanted to eat together but he told them it would not be possible because coloreds and whites were not allowed to eat together. As a repercussion, the colored people organized a hunger strike against these rules. Finally, the warden came under pressure and called the committee, though he was surprised greatly to see every inmate or every race in unity but, “…his attitude hardly dampened our [their] spirits”(192). Now, after some struggle, he ultimately had another year left before earning his doctorate but still he did not need to go back. As he reached nearby his target to earn his degree, he told his father that he was ready to finish his degree at Stanford. He researched ‘The firm’s history in trade journals; the products, the customer demographics.’ Stanley was of thirty-five. Stanley is only character in the novel, who faced double–jeopardy and had been surrounded by Negroes all his life. Wherever he went for an interview, he always faced racial discrimination and being disappointed, he loudly thought of a Negro woman, “Why, a Negro woman had been like a mother to him – better than his own mother”(206). Finally, he reached Pittsburgh; the Waco Glass and Tile Company, and ran into another black man who had allegedly made it in corporate America, he again abandoned hope. But, “Domestic marketing” wanted Stanley to have lunch with, “the second in command at layout and design”(208) another black man. In this unnamed man, Stanley saw who he
could become, one who was second in command when he was the only person in the department, one whose lobster bib stayed spotless during an eating challenge, one who had no definite opinion of anything that matters, one who shredded his bib into tiny pieces. Right now, Stanley was surprised as well as shocked to see America’s growing and changing face. This encounter leaves him no alternative but to seek his own end and finding the pawnshop he saw the arrow pointing to the squat little cafe where he met Eve. She finally offered him a job as a housekeeper with terms that he could not refuse. Miss Maple has been with Eve for two years and as the 1949 New Year comes, Miss Maple is in community with the maestro. Miss Maple or Stanley have played out his ragtime and come to understand his worth. Thus, these were the main causes which compel Stanley to change into Miss Maple. His degree, education and knowledge vanish in front of prevailing social injustice, where black people could not sustain with equality and honor.

The novel has reached in its climax and the epilogue of the novel depicts ‘The Wrap’. As the jam concludes, a new year begins and the maestro forward to wrap this song but he tells the readers that life is not merely a song. Bailey believes that, “...life is supposed to make you feel good, or to make you feel miserable either. Life is just supposed to make you feel”(219). The Bailey’s cafe accepts a new face when Mariam delivers a son. The birth of Mariam’s son becomes the symbol of joy and togetherness. Epilogue titled ‘The Wrap’ clearly projects the celebration and hope of the people. When the baby arrives, everyone is present to celebrate the moment; the unbelievable happens as, Nadine hugs the maestro; Gabriel, Miss Maple and maestro
dance; Jesse does the flamenco; Peaches sings; Esther smiles and the whole community joins the song. Naylor forgoes the happy ending in the wrap but she lets the maestro give a hopeful ending. Unfortunately, Mariam dies in the well of water that she has created to bathe in, so her young son George will be raised an orphan, never knowing the occasion of his birth, “…the world lit up with lights”(288). Readers of *Mama Day* know what happens in this Christ figure’s life that George grows up strong, finds a surrogate mother figures in Miranda and Abigail Day and love Cocoa, for whom he sacrifices his life. *Bailey’s Cafe* is a pause in life. Unlike Brewster’s Place, here Christ-like birth of a child brings hope and some sense of promise and faith for the future, “And that’s how we wrap it, folks. It’s the happiest ending I’ve got”(229). Thus, one can be safely find that, “Eve spreads the feeling of Kinship and sisterhood among these lost women.”

In *Bailey’s Cafe*, Naylor uses the multiple stories with multiple narrators formats once more, this time juxtaposing male voices and character along with females. The work shows Naylor’s wide technical range, all the while creating a world that is emotionally complex and varied. Its immediacy in setting and character is indelible. She simultaneously explores the possibilities of healing a community affected by the interrelationship of race, class and sex. Though the whole novel revolves around Bailey, Nadine and
Eve but somehow, it does far beyond them and explores the new male and female with their bitter experiences and miserable conditions. Naylor uses Bailey's voice in establishing the time, place, mode and character for each woman's story, except that of Mariam, a curiously virginal unwed mother, whose touching account of anti-Semitism and sexism recreate a vital sisterhood among women of color across the Diaspora, who often find themselves at odds with notions of female sexuality prescribed by patriarchy. Each and every character of this novel is oppressed from triple–jeopardy. Whether it is male like Stanley alias Miss Maple or females like wise; Eve, Peaches, Sweet Esther, Jesse Bell, Sadie and Mariam all are exploited, molested as well as defeated and come to live in Eve's brothel. Their, “desolate, depressed and dejected souls first try to seek solace at Bailey's Cafe.” From Bailey's cafe, they come to the nearby boarding house owned by Eve, so that they can experience some sense of belonging as well as an identity. Bailey and Nadine, a good couple feels sorry for these characters. Hence, through Bailey and Nadine one can study the psychological effects of race, class and sex. In this sequence, we first analyze the character of Sadie. She is a regular customer at Bailey's cafe, who had a battered childhood at the hands of a drug-addict, prostitute mother, whose deferred dream of a clean, nice home gets dissolved into alcoholism and prostitution. Even Iceman Jones, a regular customer of 'Bailey', who offers to fulfill Sadie's dream is not able to stop her from going into the fantasy void of Cafe's back door away from the harsh reality of her life, by giving up her life. When Sadie married Daniel, even he exploits and tortures her physically as well as mentally.
Finally, facing sexual and mental harassment, she moves back to Eve’s brothel and like her mother she too, becomes a harlot.

The second character Eve suffers at the hands of her godfather in Louisiana and finally gets exiled forever. She is thrown out of her home by her godfather for a display of sexuality; she makes a perilous journey to New Orleans. This trial destroys her but ultimately it establishes her existence in the society. Eve is a customer in the cafe but as a proprietor of the boarding house she holds more power than anyone. She is only to decide who is to stay in the boarding house and who may not. She like Mattie Michael, one of the characters of *The Women of Brewster Place*, becomes a mother figure for the females, who are oppressed and escaped from the suffocating society. It is the resolve and affirmation of women like Mattie and Eve not only to seek and identity of their own but also to pull other weak and feeble women along with them, giving them comfort and assurance to trace out a niche of their own. Thus, with sublimation she reaffirms a place for herself in this ever changing society. The boarding and lodging at Eve’s place is managed by a heterosexual transvestite, Miss Maple alias Stanley. Gloria Naylor portrays society’s apathy not only towards women but also towards Men like Stanley, who never gets a job according his capability despite having a Doctorate in mathematics, is compelled to wear woman’s clothes as a revolt against the, “callousness of a dehumanizing society.”\(^{17}\) When Bailey introduces Stanley, we find him thoroughly oppressed by triple jeopardy. In fact, he is an incredible example of this aspect. When he traveled across America, the summer of 1948 in search of a job as a statistical analyst in marketing (The
offers accumulated: bellboy, mailroom, clerk, sleeping-car porter, elevator operator). Along the way, in the process of collecting ninety nine job rejections, he faced racial as well as sexual harassment and finally realized that being a Negro he could not get a proper and good job. Stanley after facing these severe experiences transforms from a sweating gray–flannel corporate aspirant to a cool housekeeper at Eve’s bordello, where he wears light percale housedresses to work. He finally comes under the pressure of racism, sexism and classicism accepts his demotion being a Miss Maple.

Mary (Take one) alias Peaches also falls prey to the appropriation of male hegemony. There is Peaches, whose self-hateness drives her to even mutilate her beautiful face. As she tries to read her world into the mirror, it sends conflicting messages that contribute to her awareness that she must be two people, “a whore and ... Daddy’s baby”(104). When Peaches was nine-year-old then the choirmaster, supposedly a trusted church staff member begins the rip into her psyche when he places his hand, “under [her] blouse”(104). Thus, after facing molestation, she finally makes her way to Eve’s from Kansas City. Jesse Bell too resides at Eve’s place. She too like Stanley faces triple jeopardy. She is haunted by a scandal–ridden marriage, who is lesbian and a drug addict. Her husband’s Uncle, Eli always reminds her that she is black and poor. Though Uncle Eli and Jesse’s husband Kings are blacks but they live exactly like whites. So, Jesse tries to adjust herself in this uncomfortable family but fails. Whenever she cooks, Uncle Eli always ridicules her saying that it is a slave food. Uncle Eli shrewdly and deliberately makes Jesse entangled in the case of lesbianship because before marriage
she loved heroine. She falls from the eyes of her husband and compares her entire life with, “dog shit”(131). Even when she delivers a son, Uncle Eli grows up and makes him too against his mother. Due to these causes, Jesse leaves her home and moves into Eve’s. Esther is exploited at the hands of her own brother and husband. When she was twelve years old, her brother, who called her ‘little sister’, married her with an aged landowner. After Esther’s marriage, though her brother’s economic conditions improved but Esther’s condition worsened. She felt longed to be pregnant but her dreams never came true, because her husband always ignored her. So, Esther lastly being alone starts her journey to find out solace and finally comes to Eve’s bordello. With these women, the novel introduces another powerful woman, Nadine. Bailey’s wife Nadine supernaturally taciturn, but her silence has such a powerful, magical feeling throughout the narration of various characters in the novel. She gives us the story of Mariam, a story she warns us is so horrifically female, but Bailey is sneaked in to tell us, when Mariam was fourteen years old that time she became pregnant and always claimed, “No man has ever touched me”(144). She ultimately comes up to Eve’s bordello but Eve’s rules are so rigid and she desires to know the name of the person responsible for her pregnancy but time and again she ignores it and lastly Eve has to beat her violently. After this, Mariam runs away and searches a new place to live. Here, Mariam exploits at the both hands, once by the man, whose identity is invisible and secondly by Eve, who being a woman is not sympathetic to her and compels her to run away from the boarding house. Thus, Mariam too is the prime example of sexual harassment.
Naylor’s black women characters truly become metaphoric deep divers, who, “…dive beneath the frozen crust in order to determine alternative modes of existence.” These fictional characters acutely undergo the pressure of race, class and sex and after facing such atrocities, Bailey and Nadine both present the psychological study of triple jeopardy of these females as well as males. Though these females and males are suppressed as well as exploited but in spite of it, they show togetherness and help each other to break the pillars of societal prejudices, especially the encapsulating and emasculating male order. In the process, these female reconstruct their inner psyche to combat the ills associated with the cardinal issues of identity, race and gender.

Geographically, Bailey’s cafe is everywhere. It can be entered from the real world at any point but its address is despair. In Bailey’s Cafe, the author tells us the stories of some of the people who find the cafe memorable and musical, harsh and funny, strange and familiar and these stories are narrated, for most of the book, by the cafe’s cook and manager. Though Bailey is not his name but he lets us call him that. He is really incredible character, full of humor and his voice sings to us through the painful parts of his own story. Bailey’s cafe is a halfway house, halfway between the finite and the infinite, halfway between the belief that the universe cares for us as individuals and the evidence that it does not. The edge of the world is at the front door of Bailey’s cafe and the void at the back, where the maestro or Bailey’s cafe and the void at the back, where the maestro or Bailey sends females for living and sustaining their life under the observation of Eve. The book plays against the
particular pains contained in the various characters’ stories. As we concentrate over the sub-title, ‘Bailey’s Cafe: A unique combination of suffering and redemption’ each by each the curtains fall from the characters and disclose their suffering and redemption.

Each character, who comes to live in Eve’s brothel first enters from the cafe and through the help of Bailey or Nadine they get shelter. Though Eve’s boarding–house–bordello is opened for each needy female but nevertheless, there are some rules and each character has to follow these rules. In the case of Mariam, she tried her best to get the Eve’s shelter but unfortunately she could not fulfill the requirements and got exiled forever. Her only fault was that she did not know the name of unborn baby’s father. Eve, who is owner of the boarding house; herself had undergone the maltreatment at the hands of her godfather and exiled forever from her hometown. Though she is alone but she does not leave the ray of the hope and establishes herself as well as her bordello. Sadie’s childhood as well as adulthood both is miserable. She is the daughter of an alcoholic and harlot mother, who mostly misbehaves with Sadie and even never looked after her properly. For livelihood she worked in a hotel. After some time she got married with Daniel and within year she faced exploitation and misbehavior of her husband. In fact, she was unable to fertilize and that was the main cause for her husband’s to mistreatment with her. Another customer at Bailey’s is Peaches, who is the victim of child abuse. At the age of nine, she was molested by her father’s colleague and after frequent molestation; she firmly thought whether she is a whore or her daddy’s daughter. She deliberately leaves the house and comes to live in
Eve’s once she grows up. Gloria Naylor’s *Bailey’s Cafe* is highly critical of whites and more profoundly of black society, who corrupt and denigrate the sensitivity of a girl child. The mechanism of hope, faith, trust and goodwill does not work with the girl. As she grows, there is tremendous change in her behavior and perception of things around. She develops hate, vengeance and indifference in her attitude, especially towards the agents of abuse—men and society at large. Whether it is Sadie, Peaches, Esther, Mary or Miss Maple, all of them fall prey at the hands of male supremacy.

Thus, Bailey’s cafe in itself is an outermost incredible place where stories are disclosed and each and every character come together to show their unity. These fictional characters never knew their self-identity but at Eve’s they got opportunity to trace out it but just by being together. Eve spreads the feeling of kinship and sisterhood among these lost women. In fact, after giving a cinematic view of the existing society, the narrator i.e. Bailey then sets on to introduce the characters who tend to become the victims or rogues of this inconsistent and wayward society. They stand up as, “…perfect representatives of a pretentious, dubious and immoral society.”

Hence, through these short and long incidents the *Bailey’s Cafe* becomes a unique combination of suffering and redemption.

Naylor says, “The core of the work is indeed the way in which the word ‘whore’ has been used against women or to manipulate female sexual identity.” She also intends to employ the blues and jazz into the novel’s structure by using lyrical language. The characters tell their own stories and sing their own songs which empower them to generate the hope for
necessary living. Before coming to Bailey’s cafe all male and female characters had faced and experienced the hardships and adversity at the hands of their males or females partners. Sadie was persecuted by her mother as well as her husband. During this persecution, Sadie starts to drink and becomes wino. After facing these tyrannies when she searches the way for living, she finally finds Eve’s shelter. Not only Sadie but also one by one each fictional characters namely Esther, Peaches, Jesse Bell, Mariam and last but not least Miss Maple alias Stanley. Stanley is only man who being a Miss Maple lives as a housekeeper of Eve’s boarding house. Each character’s family background as well as past is very horrific and Eve, who runs the boarding house cum bordello, her own past, was horrified. So, she starts to unite such persons who are hopeless, isolated and oppressed by the society. Her efforts finally become successful when each woman comes to live in her house. All these characters after coming to Eve’s brothel find their lost identity, respect and even self-dignity. Each character recovers himself or herself and fight against triple jeopardy. Male and female both within the shelter and support of Eve, really feel a kinship and tranquility and finally live in happiness.
REFERENCES

1 Gloria Naylor, Bailey’s Cafe (Harcourt: New York, 1992) 76. All further quotations have been incorporated with the text parenthetically.


3 *ibid.*, 85.

4 M.E. Whitt, Understanding Gloria Naylor (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1999) 164.

5 Kaul, *op.cit.*, 86.

6 *ibid.*, 170.

7 Kaul, *op.cit.*, 87.

8 Whitt, *op.cit.*, 177.

9 *ibid.*, 179.


13 Whitt, *op.cit.*, 192.

14 *ibid.*, 197.


16 *ibid.*, 86.

17 *ibid.*, 87.


19 Kaul, *op.cit.*, 86.