CHAPTER VI

Gloria Naylor’s fifth novel *The Men of Brewster Place* strikingly resembles with her first novel *The Women of Brewster Place* in both character composition and plot structure. Once again, Naylor revisits the neighborhood of her first novel to connect her fifth novel with the sequences of her first novel. Although her first novel *The Women of Brewster Place* gives a thorough study about the seven women of Brewster Place with some diversity, which in some way resembles this recent novel yet it stands skillfully on its own phraseology. Here, Naylor once more uses the number seven and, “… tells the individual stories of seven men in a format that is similar to the earlier work.”

The novel opens with the prologue ‘Dusk’, the end of the day but symbolically and fortunately, the end of bad times for the men of Brewster Place. Ben’s spirit, as a narrator, narrates the story, “Three buildings on the east; three on the west; and the wall blacking light from the south. A deadend street. Full of shadows. It always feels like dusk on Brewster Place.” We have met Ben earlier in *The Women of Brewster Place* and as far as this novel is concerned, he appears as a spirit to narrate the story and incidents involving the men, who are in various shades and moods. So, Ben explains, “…there was always a Her in his story”(8). Each of the seven characters in this novel is affected by the females in their lives and vice-versa. *The Men of Brewster
*Place* is a novel of men, who do not share and do not want to share their secrets of life, nor do they share a common objective and even they do not share a common dream.

The beginning of the novel starts with Ben. He is a drunkard and a great doting father figure of girl children of Brewster Place. He is like a surrogate father for those who make their home on Brewster Place and being a janitor; he always nurtures as well as protects the inhabitants of Brewster Place. He is near about sixty-eight years old and throughout his life, he bothers only for, “... ain’t ever been in a situation where anybody ever called [him] sir”(11). Meanwhile, Ben’s spirit goes in retrospect of his grandparents where he recalls them from the bottom of his heart. He is extremely attached and inspired with his grandparents because they raise him from a little backwater town of Tennessee. The place is very small where sharecroppers have settled down to raise cotton on Percy Wall’s rich bottomland. Seldom is this place called Richland Plantation, an imaginary name, by the dwellers of this place. He manifests his view about his grandfather’s attitude towards the whites that he was very rigorously bitter towards the white people because he believed, “I’m opening this Bible where someone shows me the place that says white people is going to hell”(12). These lines very effectively evaluate the attitude and personality of grandfather, Jones. Grandfather has a grave and deep jealousy with whites and, so he always remains furious but in spite of it, grandmother always keeps a soft corner for her husband because she knows that both of them were born in slavery on the same Virginia plantation and both were still children when freedom came. So, she very quietly admits
that her husband’s frustration and fury towards white people is understandable but nevertheless, she always tells him, “… the Bible spoke for all people – black or white – redeeming themselves or damning themselves by what was in their hearts”(12). Ben remembers that grandfather did not disclose one personal story to him and also even to Grandmother. Ben learns his first lesson of life experience through the bad experiences of Jones. Ben has a silent and horrible memory of his dearest grandfather, who is, “…sitting in his porch rocker with a closed Bible in his lap”(12). He memorizes grandfather’s protest against the Bible because Jones believed that there is no curse, no punishment and even no hell for white people, so he always shuts the Bible. The reason for the closing of the Bible permanently by Jones is an unspoken truth because, “It was a story that he carried inside; because there were no words he could use to talk about silence”(13).

Since childhood Jones hates white men because one white man very violently beats and rapes and even causes the death of his ten–years–old sister. Finally, the girl dies without saying any word about justice. Jones, on the other hand, does not hear the minister’s sympathetic words for his dead sister. All colleagues of Jones and slaves move back to work but Jones remains there. He feels uncomfortable as well as racial injustice towards himself and his innocent sister. Although he is a child yet he knows that the minister is wrong. He remembers the minister’s words, “The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away” (15) but he concludes that the Lord can not take away his sister’s life; the main culprit is the white man, who is ignored by the minister. As Jones interrupts the minister that, “No, he don’t”(15) and openly
challenges the minister, then all eyes turn to him and abruptly his mother slaps him. For the first time in his life, the child elevates his voice and gets the transparent message of black survival in a white world that there is no justice for the blacks. He is perplexed to look at his mother’s negative approach, “Boy, shut your mouth, you hear? Shut your mouth. Be a man”(15). She explains, for the black people, silence is the most momentous key to survival. They can not express their feelings, emotions and even they can not find a proper place and justice in society against whites. Jones’ mother has lost one of her children and at any cost she does not want to loose her second one, so she slaps Jones to be silent. Ben recollects that Jones was an atheist and always avoided the church and kept the Bible close. He wanted to search such a kind of God in another place or another world where the black men could pass their lives peacefully and respectfully. His grandfather died when he was seven. At seventeen, his grandmother is also dead and once again he is left alone. At this time, he makes up his mind to stay on that plantation but he longs to see the outer world. So, for this purpose he plans to go Memphis to find a job. He gets a job in a low standard hotel where he works to clean the spittoons and keep them shining. During his job, he remembers grandmother’s fervent words, “If you do a job, do it right”(17).

Later on, Ben learns his second lesson about how to behave in the society and world from the, “bellhop Billy”(17). Billy is a good and swift worker of the hotel and always gets appreciated by the manager, who says, “… he had a ‘good attitude’”(18). Meanwhile, Ben perceives, “There was not a whole lot of work for black men like us outside of picking cotton ; and some would do
anything to keep from having go back to the fields”(18). Ben also realizes the white men’s economic control everywhere. After some time, Ben goes to look for another job and initially, he gets it in the city as a shoeshine boy at the railroad depot. Among the shoeshine boys, Ben was the youngest one of them. Ben sees his work sight, the shoeshine chairs are set up in a row of twelve, ten for the white customers and two a little bit a part for the Negro customers. Here, Naylor indirectly shows discrimination between whites and Negroes.

Meanwhile, Ben memorizes Elvira, who worked in the ladies bathroom, kept the sinks, floors and hands out clean towels. He remembers her because he believes, “I guess I would stay on as a shine boy if I hadn’t met Elvira”(20). Elvira keeps outermost momentous place in the life of Ben. Elvira is popular in society with the name of ‘Evil Elvira’ but Ben always appreciates her because she respects and loves herself. Besides it, in leisure she always reads magazine and books and does not waste her time in useless things. Ben has longing to find such kind of girl, who has fondness of reading and writing. Finally, Ben proposes her and they get married. Later on, for living they start working in the field. They have a sweet girl but unfortunately she is lame from birth. Ben is worried about her lameness but still he loves her and vice-versa. Ben’s family is an extremely pretty family and throughout his life, he shares and experiences each and everything with his wife. So, one thing conspicuously becomes clear that there is good accord between spouses. As the time passes, Ben finds Elvira’s behavior very strange, “… everything white that God put in this world was good. And everything black was to be
despised”(22). Elvira’s dialogue safely exhibits the dissimilarity between white and black and also reveals her personal positive thoughts for whites. Even Elvira is a black lady and has undergone different forms of perplexity and atrocities by the white community but even then she appreciates whites and gives thanks to God. Through Elvira, Naylor highlights existing racism in black society. Elvira’s trifle comment as she refuses to take black coffee, “It’ll just make me darker”(22) shows clearly the discrimination between white and black. Ben becomes completely insane because he never expected this kind of behavior from Elvira. Now, their married life becomes better to worse but however, Ben is enduring Elvira only because of their only and lovely daughter.

Meanwhile, Ben and Elvira meet Mr. Clyde, a white master, who offers them a job for their daughter, whose duty was to keep the house tidy in his absence. And without wasting time, the spouses accept his offer. After two months, the couple realizes the change in their daughter’s behavior, who becomes a victim of child abuse. Although the mother Elvira does not believe her daughter and scolds her for lying yet Ben hears his daughter attentively and learns the third lesson of his life. The third lesson is twofold; one is his daughter’s bitter experience with Mr. Clyde, the white man under whom Ben and Elvira were sharecroppers and the second one is attached with his grandfather, whose young innocent ten years old sister was raped by an old powerful white man. The memories of the past and present events make him dazed and impotent, so in spite of being a protective father of his only child, he feels powerless to intervene. Elvira is depressed to see the arrival of her
daughter and being thwarted, she argues and suggests to Ben, "She can’t go to the fields but she can clean house and she'll do it"(24). She constantly does not believe her daughter and, time and again, misguides Ben to say that she came home with a bunch of lies against Mr. Clyde because she does not want to work. Meanwhile, after observing her parents’ different attitude, the daughter abruptly vanishes to earn more money. She moves to Memphis where she can earn better money as a harlot. Though it is clear to Ben that his daughter is unsafe because Memphis is not safe place but however, he compromises with all possibilities. Here, Naylor amply shows that Ben and his family are invariably poor, perpetually facing economic crisis and under such a pressure they are ready to compromise with the future interest of their only daughter. Ben starts to drink and almost becomes alcoholic. Whenever, the girl sends an envelope of money, it remains always without any return address. Ben leisurely starts to hate his wife and even he would not bear her presence besides him in the bed. Ultimately, Ben finds his way to Brewster place, "It holds the hopes and dreams of many who find themselves here with the broken stoop railings, the grimy side-walks, the crumbling bricks in the wall"(27). He recollects his terrific and painful memory which makes him realize, “What does it mean to be a man?”(28) He finds himself vulnerable and heartbroken towards his daughter and entirely blames himself for her dilemma. At the age of sixty-eight, Ben analysis his life, if he kills Mr. Clyde Haggard, perhaps the law kills him. If he kills his wife, Elvira then maybe law puts him in jail till end of the life and at last he thinks if he kills himself, there is no one but an understanding God who is always observing everything. So,
Ben selects an easy way of death in which he will die slowly but surely and for this process he starts drinking hard to show God that he is fighting for his manhood.

The second story is related to ‘Brother Jeroma’, who is a unique and extraordinary character. He does not appear in *The Women of Brewster Place* but his living appearance comes in *The Men of Brewster Place*. Ben from beginning to the end narrates about Brother Jeroma, who is unable to speak, write or unable to go out alone. Jeroma is expert in repairing old and non-functional piano. When people hear his piano they become astonished and start to cry, “… it was the blues, nothing but the blues coming from that boy’s heart through that piano reading your life and sometimes his”(32). Jeroma’s mother Mildred is a very possessive and caring mother for her only child. She believes in a straight and simple life. She works at the drycleaners from Monday to Friday and organizes the parties at weekend with group of people for laughing and amusement. Ben analysis about Mildred’s life, who is alone and lives with a retarded child. In one of the best parties of Mildred, “…the light from the lamp kept swirling around the room”(34-35) and this moving light allured the invitees and mostly the face of Jeroma. Jeroma is sitting in a corner with, “…the seat of honor” (35). Abruptly, Jeroma plays the piano and fortunately the disturbed atmosphere gets silent. As he plays, everyone gets shocked to see five year old Jeroma, “… who bends towards the keys and sends out a boogie-woogie that would put even the likes of Jelly Roll Morton or Count Bessie to shame”(35). Ultimately, the party gets quiet and everybody observes the miracle with their amazing eyes that was happening on Mildred’s
old upright. The whole folk treat Jeroma as a saint Jeroma and ask him to play the piano. Mildred being the mother of a special child starts charging admission to her house-parties that were in huge demand. With this charge, she starts to earn more money from Jeroma’s playing and is able to afford a new T.V. and living room set etc. Psychologically, Jeroma has the great fondness for the piano. While sitting before the piano, he would often wet himself and Ben or Jeroma’s cousin Hazel checks him and brings him to the bathroom. There is always some message in the piano music and mostly his music speaks about, “our lives” (37). As the years pass, his playing becomes a holy work, “… for his blues receive ‘Amens’ from apartment where individual men turn bitter about their lives.” ‘Amens’, through the music of Jeroma’s piano want to give messages that men should struggle against white’s persecution. Eventually, the ‘Amens’ come from every brick, every piece of concrete and also from the iron railing on Brewster place to encourage every people against their blues as well as exploitation.

The next character of the novel is Basil, who was first introduced in Mattie’s chapter in The Woman of Brewster Place. Mattie has died and Basil stands at his mother’s grave site praying for snow to fall because she liked snow very much. He thanks his dead mother because she puts up the house for him. Basil works full-time jobs in two places and part-time on Sunday to save enough money. During the part-time job, he lives at the YMCA (Young Men’s Christian Association) and thinks, “I would lie in a room no larger than a prison cell and imagine what it was going to be like when I brought her the money”(43). Basil imagines that all of a sudden with opening the door Mattie
started to crush him. So, one day he pulled up into Brewster Place with a moving van and finally ran away from his home town. But still he has a reverie that he should get his mother’s trust back once again. So, to get back his invisible identity from that ‘Dead–End Street’ where Mattie’s ditch love had left her alone, he tries his best. One day when Basil gets his half success, he decides to see the street where his mother lived. Basil needs a place and after getting the place, once again he starts his journey towards Brewster Place to find out his mother’s grave. After losing his mother, Basil becomes serious, determines for his life and also promises himself to find out such a woman with whom he will get married and would make her life prosperous. He thinks about his father whom he never seen, “I would act like the man I’d finally grown up to be” (46). So, first of all, he wants to meet his father Butch. During childhood, whenever Basil asked Mattie about his family then Mattie discloses about only her parents and their home town but as he asked particularly about his father then she replied, “Your father wasn’t the marrying type and so I never bothered to tell him about you”(46). Basil’s new target is to find out Mr. Butch i.e. his father’s address, so he starts his journey for Rock Vale. Reaching at a ramshackle depot, he becomes worried that without any address how he can find out his father but after sometime, he concludes that he should start his search from the post office because he thinks if Butch is alive he would be doing some correspondence. Finally, Basil meets Butch Fuller. After the long discourse, Butch asks him about Mattie and Basil replies that she has died and all of a sudden starts to cry. Butch tries to mollify him and being trustworthy, discloses the secret about his flashback, when he was eighteen, the doctor
suggested him that he can not be a father but someway he knew that he was the first man of Mattie and father of Basil. Butch reveals that when he heard about Mattie’s pregnancy he tried to visit her but her father i.e. Mr. Michael was so hard and rigid that he did not allow him to meet her. Butch realizes that he committed a mistake. Basil becomes anxious and as a result, he thinks his mother was right, “It was better to think of you dead”(49). Butch interrupts that he is not so bad person because he went to meet Mattie for his only child but all his efforts go in vain. Later on, Basil begins thinking about the woman i.e. his girlfriend whom he had met earlier and recollects his breakup with her. He wants to settle down and make a good family with kids. He also thinks in any case he could not have his own kids then he will adopt some. Basil loved Helen and wanted to settle down with her. But in the meantime, a new character, Keisha, cousin sister of Basil meets him and unconsciously intervenes into his smooth life. She has two male kids viz., Eddie and Jason. Keisha and Helen meet first time but unfortunately Keisha’s children call Basil as his father. Though Keisha hits her child and says, “No, it ain’t your daddy”(53) but listening to it, Basil at once replies, “Don’t blame the child, may be I look his father”(54). Keisha listens attentively but interrupts, “He doesn’t know his damn father. His father is a...”(54).

Basil meets Helen and discloses the matter which is going between him and Keisha. Basil loves the children too much and his intense attachment with the children keeps him apart from Helen. He wants to marry Helen but his confusion seems clear to her and, so she suggests to Basil, “May be you aren’t interested in Keisha but the closer you get to those children, the more difficult
it’s going to be to leave”(56). Besides it she also says, “Basil, if I marry you – or any man – I’ll want to have my own children”(57). Finding Helen’s straight forward mind-set, Basil becomes dejected because he never imagined such an approach and calculates that she is wrong and selfish. Helen’s attitude brings Basil nearer to Keisha and as a result, Basil proposes to Keisha. Keisha agrees because she knows very well that her children need a father and Basil can be a good one.

This marriage was not just a knot between Keisha and Basil but also to join kids and Basil together. As the time passes, the marriage, however, does not convert into love between Keisha and Basil; still they remain apart as husband and wife. Even after years, both fail to maintain healthy relationship. One day Eddie, one of the Keisha’s children gets angry with his mother who brings some man into their home and this too enrages Basil who warns her, “‘I will kill you,’ ‘If you bring scum into my home around these boys again’”(60). This controversy continues when Keisha says, “You hardly ever touch me”(61) and also blames that how he can say that he is the father of both kids. Keisha’s frustration is natural and Basil seldom understands and feels it, “May be if I’d concentrated on being as good a husband as I did a father, I could have saved the marriage”(60). In a rage, Keisha hurts Basil and reveals about Penny, who was coming before with her that he is a real father of children rather than him. Basil finally decides to leave Keisha. Basil loves and nourishes the kids but finally Keisha succeeds in controlling her sons and takes them apart from Basil forever:
In his [Basil] ultimate marriage to Keisha, he learns that placing fatherhood before a meaningful and loving relationship with his children’s mother, who happens to be his wife, throws his pledge to make some woman happy off balance. When Basil commits his first loyalty to both of the sons, he falls into the same life pattern that he watched his mother play out for him. He runs out on Mattie and returns too late for her to know that her life choices that did matter to him and which caused Mattie to lose her home. Finally, Basil leaves the boys and again meets them after a gap of six years. But now, everything has changed. Keisha once again is living with Penny and both the kids do not recognize Basil. Basil is in shock now and once more compromises with the situation and starts his life with new dreams and thoughts.

The novel’s fourth character is Eugene, who unfortunately due to joblessness leaves his wife. Eugene has first appeared in the episode of Ciel in The Women of Brewster Place and again comes up in this novel. He truly loves his wife as well as his daughter and remembers his previous halcyon days which he had passed with his little family. He worked overtime and seldom double time at docks. However, he could not earn enough money and failed to fulfill his dreams to own a red brick house. Under the pressing circumstances of his job and glaring failure, he abruptly and consciously leaves his wife. In fact, their friendship starts with being pen pals and after some time, Eugene gets married with Ciel. But with the passage of time, the love and affection between them vanishes and the hardships of life start ruining their life. Eugene remembers first job in the docks where he meets Bruce, a very strict worker and a head foreman for the company in the docks.
In the docks, Eugene and Bruce often play football and, “The part of the day that changes his life starts arch a one–on–one basketball game with Bruce.”

Meanwhile, both the guys go to the bar and there Eugene meets bar worker Chino, in a good looking makeup and hairstyle. Chino wants to be friend Eugene but he rejects Chino’s overture and exhibits the huge difference between him and Bruce. In fact, Eugene presents a good conduct of a good husband. Although Eugene entangles in the trap of Chino’s artificial beauty yet lately realizes that his two years marriage has come into trouble. By the time, the couple’s married life has become sore and bitter. Eugene is now in an utterly financial crisis as he has finished all his account balance. He though tries to save his marriage twice or thrice but all his efforts go in vain. Bruce has now become a sort of godfather and Chino as a fairy godmother for Eugene. Both of them consult about his marriage and even Chino tells him to properly divorce Ciel. But Eugene becomes furious and retorts, “Get the hell away from this table”.

The affinity between couple becomes bitter and Eugene finally starts to think about the advice of Chino. In fact, during this unfavorable and negative time, Eugene loses his job, shouts on Ciel and holds her responsible for his plight. Ciel is once again pregnant and Eugene tells her to abort the forthcoming baby. He is ready to search a new job and wants to leave his family for sometime. During this time, Ciel too wants to go with Eugene but he frankly refuses and also does not disclose about his destination. Ciel loves Eugene very much and tries to stop him but Eugene wants to go away at any cost. In the meantime, their daughter Serena gets electrocuted. Eugene tries
his best to save his daughter’s life but, “His coming and going might have continued, but his daughter’s death permanently causes the break.” Eugene has truly become alone as he is far away from his wife as well as his daughter. Finally he seeks, “redemption.” Eugene becomes depressed and wants to punish himself. So, he goes to Chino and uses the leather whip to beat himself for salvation with the help of Chino, “He suffers the pain that Jesus had endured.” For the redemption, Eugene gets tortured himself but his efforts do not lead him to die. One can discern that, “Eugene will repeatedly return to Chino for subsequent floggings, searching always to pay enough for his role in Ciel’s pain and Serena’s death.” It seems clear that Eugene loves Ciel and after missing his family he has become isolated and whatever he did to his wife for its repentance and somewhere for reconciliation he chooses the punishment in the form of lashing.

Ben now, introduces the fifth character Reverend Moreland T. Woods; minister of Sinai Baptist Church. We have already met him in The Woman of Brewster Place; he is as a visiting preacher to Canaan Baptist and now he has become the minister at Sinai Baptist for twelve years:

Wood is slick – from his good looks, assisted by his fancy clothes and car, to his silver – tongued ability to intone a sermon that slides from his mouth to land safely in the hearts and heads of his congregation.

In Brewster Place, Deacon Bennett always competes with Moreland Woods. Deacon Bennett, who also works in the church, is too completely dedicated to the service of church. Since childhood, Deacon Bennett is a very religious man. His mother was “Pentecostal”(105) and father was a marginal Baptist,
so it was his mother’s religious influence which came on him since childhood. Ben makes clear that Bennett spends a good part of his career in the service of church trying to balance the membership by starting the Samaritan League, “… an outreach program to net whole families as new members”(106). Bennett is much more satisfied with the post of deacon as well as trustee in the deacon’s board, though he is ambitious like Moreland but:

It was in the church, on the deacon’s board, that Bennett could gain a stature that the world denied him. It was a place where he could assert his power, even against the successes of a popular preacher. Bennett will be at Sinai for life; Woods is temporary.11

Moreland’s previous years were not so congenial. His mother, Mama Lou never got her husband’s support. Living isolated, Mama Lou sets her heart with this belief that someday Moreland will surely be a doctor or a lawyer. But unfortunately, Moreland was never sure about his future. He was only sure about, “…one day he’d have to leave the island of Jamaica to find out”(101). At the age of eighteen, he finds his close relationship with the God and believing on his inner-self as well as the God, he decides to give up wine, women and other mal-activities for the noble cause of Church. Moreland basically is not a religious person but his regular services with Mama Lou on Sunday in the Anglican Church, satisfies his conscience and inspires him to do something for the church and persons who live around him. After it, he gets a visa and leaves Jamaica for the United States.

In America, Woods passes his crucial eight years and during these eight years, he visits dozens Churches and finally settles down in the Baptist
Church as a preacher. Meanwhile, he gets married with Annette. As the time passes, Moreland feels comfortable with his work. Leisurably, Moreland starts his old act i.e. seducing women and this act goes against him and in good favor of Bennett. Moreland knows the condition of the poor women. So, the married or unmarried women come out in support of Moreland. Because of controversy, Deacon Bennett calls a meeting against Woods. At this time, Bennett does not want to take any risk in front of Moreland, so in order to mock at Woods; he makes a plan with the help of his nephew. As the meeting starts against Reverend Woods, he gets up from his seat and majority of the members votes against him. But their attempt and Bennett’s plan very soon fails when the Reverend Woods plays his cards. During this episode, Woods meets Sister Louise. She had met him at the age of nineteen and unfortunately that time she was pregnant and scared. She barely knew about the father of unborn baby. She only knew that one of the members of Deacon’s board is responsible for it. So, via the support of Sister Louise, Woods plays a game over Bennett to make him responsible for her unwanted and unlawful pregnancy. As a result, the Deacon’s Board becomes helpless and finding no solution, decides to give acceptance for the new church against Bennett’s will. In this way, the cheater Reverend Woods wins over an honest man like Bennett. Although Bennett is defeated yet his fighting spirit against misdeeds and injustices does not diminish:

With the smooth soul that Ben has identified, Woods becomes a means by which the Brewster Place members of Sinai can measure their own ragged wounds of the soul. Sinai will continue because people like Deacon Bennett will never stop fighting for it. Moreland T. Woods, on the other hand, is only passing through.12
The sixth Character is C.C. Baker, who is known for marked violence and pivotal role in the gang rape of Lorraine. He becomes, “One of the most dangerous species in existence – human males with an erection to validate in a world that was only six feet wide.” What he did with Lorraine is not forgivable and further his detestable crime against Lorraine is part of C.C. Baker’s story in *The Men of Brewster Place*. The beginning of the segment starts with the conversation of two police detectives with Baker, who want to know his role in the shooting death of his stepbrother, Hakim. Though C.C. is murderer of Hakim but shows complete ignorance about the death and tries to co-operate with the police to give some clues about murder case. He discloses that:

> He’s only twelve years old when his mother and father stop trying. They can’t keep him in school and off the streets. His father came back from Vietnam with one leg and three of his fingers blown off…. His mother works full-time to keep them off welfare. But there are six children in this home – two his father brought from another marriage – and only so much energy to go around. They lost the oldest boy, Hakim, to the streets and he hasn’t been home in three years.

Hakim joined the gang and whenever he sees the mirror, he sees only himself because he trusts only himself. Further, the policeman asks C.C. about Royal but he refuses to speak. The detectives do not believe him, pressurize him by various ways and say, “Makes us all proud to be black”(125) but all effort go in vain. The Detectives warn C.C. because they still suspect that Royal used C.C. to set-up Hakim, while he had so many lieutenants. Abruptly, C.C.
claims that he did not kill anybody. Ironically, the policeman says, “We said, set–up– we don’t say, kill”(126). C.C. declines about the Royals’ identity while he too works under him. Though the detectives do not trust C.C. and once again interrogate him but he, time and again, makes them confused and finding his perplexed condition they make him responsible for the death of Hakim. Although it exasperates him and in frustration he demands to call his lawyer yet they do not take any interest in the demand of C.C. because they only want to clear more things and get enough success. As a result, being baffled C.C. screams and says, “Not another fucking word without a lawyer” (128). In C.C.’s story, Naylor uses italicized segments and, “Through the italicized paragraphs, Naylor indicates C.C.’s all – powerful lure of the streets.”14 At this time C.C. confesses about the murder of Hakim. When C.C. murders that time he thinks, “First time in his life, he begins to pray, Please, God, let me do this right. Give me a chance – for once – to be a real winner…. He aims for the face so he won’t have to see his brother’s eyes as he dies”(129).

The last but not least character of the novel is ‘Abshu’. He is the most positive and the best role model for the generation that follows. He is a completely changed and unique person with all the men of Brewster Place. First of all we meet Abshu in The Women of Brewster Place as a supportive boyfriend of Kiswana and, “In this novel Naylor enhances the earlier portrayal by supplying the background that establishes Abshu’s heartfelt connection to Brewster Place and its community center.”15 Here, Ben introduces him with his birth name, Clifford Montgomery Jackson and calls him according to his
own desirable name ‘Abshu’. Abshu alias Cliff Jackson continues the battle against injustice from, “... plotting the assassination of the Reverend Moreland Woods” (134). Abshu is a playwright and throughout his life he encourages youngsters by using the plays of Shakespearean impact. He is the head of the community centre and by his puppet – shows, he gives message, “... to avoid drugs and stay in school; and play in the park such as actors rapping their way through Shakespeare’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*” (135). Abshu is very attached to his family. He has two younger sisters and a baby brother and he yearns that his family could have stayed together. His father was a very brutal man, who insults and beats his wife i.e. Abshu’s mother. Meanwhile, Abshu recollects his childhood days when he was eight years old and listened to his mother’s crying and sobbing. Though he was very young but he conscientiously promised that as soon as he is grown up, he will take all care and responsibility of his family. His father was alcoholic and at the dinner table he would not come without taking a drink. This was the main tragedy of Abshu’s family. The ‘Child’s Protection Agency’ comes to the house and sends the four children in different homes for fostering. Abshu’s mother tries to get all the children together in one place and in one family but it was tough to keep all of them in a single family because there was no such decent family who could take the responsibility of all the four children.

The Mason family takes the responsibility of Abshu and lives in a small wooden bungalow near the Linden Hills. Abshu starts his routine work and lives according to the Mason. The mother Mason looks after them very well
but she is too talkative like a bird’s twittering and always interrupts Abshu demanding some more meals, “Shame. Shame. Are you trying to say we mistreat you here? Don't be a piggy – piggy”(139). Concurrently, Abshu’s mother writes a letter to Abshu but he does not disclose anything bad to his mother. Abshu lives with these people for nine years and after winning a scholarship to the local college, he starts working in doughnut shop. Now, Abshu is ready to take care of his family. He is still waiting to be a graduate in social work and after it; he will be able to give ample monetary support to his mother. Abshu thanks the Masons, although he was not very happy with them but for the sake of surviving he compromises even with their rigid family rules. During his struggle, he never forgets his determination against Moreland T. Woods. His first and last task is to eliminate Moreland at any cost. What Abshu wants, is also known to Moreland. He knows very well that Abshu is a great competitor and an intelligent person but however, he spreads a trap to ensnare him. Abshu knows that Woods is not interested to meet him because:

...he couldn’t look him in the eye and get what he needed for his own self – respect: a mutual agreement for them both to operate as if they believed that the next promises would not be broken; and the next, and the next...(145).

Consequently, Abshu being aggravated thinks about the assassination of Woods. He desperately wants to hang or to shoot or even to poison him.

Meanwhile, Abshu meets his old friend, B.B. Rey, who knows very well the intentions of Abshu against Woods. As a benefactor, Rey gives a suggestion, “There are other ways to go about this, man; you could make him wish he was dead and them you save yourself all that prison time”(145-146).
B.B. is a ‘civil rights lawyer’ and always gives a passionate and methodical defense to his clients. So, at this time, he gives appropriate suggestion to Abshu, “Everybody’s got a vice, Abshu; some little secret thing around in the closet at home. From what I’ve heard about Woods it’s probably women. As a matter of fact, I can almost bet it’s women”(148). B.B. has a great knowledge about women’s psychology and he starts finding the relations between Woods and the women. Finally in the city, the council organizes the meeting with the help of B.B. and Abshu. B.B. invites more than fifty women, among whom some are with baby carriages and some are pregnant, holding posters against Woods. They form a small army and a protest rally towards City Hall. In the council meeting, there are near about hundred people, ninety percent of them are women. Their slogan is, “WE WANT JUSTICE – NOT REVENGE read one placard. DADDY, WHEN ARE YOU COMING HOME? read another” (151). The chairman of the council tries to stop the womenfolk but these determined women do not stop for the sake of justice. At the same time, Moreland Woods feels as if he is in bad dreams. Afterward, the chairman asks Woods about these women and he very shrewdly refuses to recognize them and blames them that they all are lying and want to stamp him out. Being exasperated, the chairman shouts upon Woods and warns, “One more word and I’ll have the marshals drag you out!”(152). Looking at all episodes and finding outstanding result of womenfolk against Woods, B.B. and Abshu feel enough relief. The entire womenfolk come together to seek justice against Woods. Moreland had got entangled in the trap because the womenfolk one by one and vis–a–vis asks him about their pregnancy and his flirt with them.
As a result under pressure, he resigns. Ultimately, B.B. and Abshu get success to drive out Moreland from the ministership of Sinai Baptist Church. B.B. and Abshu someway and sometimes face the negative response of people but however, Abshu continues his fight against injustice and discrimination. In spite of the negative attitude of people; Abshu with the complete support of the womenfolk, succeeds in ousting Woods from the power and finally, accomplishes his objective and dreams. Thus, the men of Brewster Place face the atrocities and molestations from their own black community but walking on the right path they eventually get their proper places in the society.

In addition to it, although the novel’s short stories end but the conclusive part of the novel begins with ‘The Barbershop’ which shows the picture gallery of men’s ill-fated. The Max’s barbershop where the men get together to socialize and to solve out the problems of world as well as blacks, who are passing their life under the influence of slavery. Exactly, in the conclusion of The Women of Brewster Place, Mattie dreams about the ‘Block Party’ which precedes the event itself. In the dreams, the women collectively take control of the problem given by both blacks and whites. Forming an association, the women come together in a venturesome spirit to stamp out the wall i.e. the wall of stereotype myth and triple jeopardy. In The Men of Brewster Place, the problems they focus on, however, are never local or personal; rather, “…they are global and generic: White men, black men, and women.”16
Henry, brother of Max and others are disappointed with the conduct of whites as well as with their minor black society. They resent the white men because Henry and his friends do believe that white men make their girls pregnant and afterwards they run off leaving them alone. Meanwhile, a lunatic Greasy, one of the inhabitants of Brewster Place, comes into the shop and all of a sudden gets silent as a tomb. Max and the other locals know very well about the past life of Greasy. Sometime back, Greasy had a job, a home with wife, two kids and also a safe future but unexpectedly, he goes insane and loses it all in just the same planned order. In frenzy, he knows and keeps one thing in his mind that he should cut his hair at least in a month regularly. So, “... he comes in, smelling to high heaven, the seat of his pants slick as mud, and dropping the nickels and dimes that he gets from begging as he tries to count out the cost of his haircut”(160). His pitiful looks get the attention of Max and as usual, Max greets and invites him in his saloon to cut his hair free of cost. On the other hand, Greasy is so crazy that nobody knows that when Greasy will do some crazy things. Whenever Greasy comes into the shop with his stinky self and unwashed body all the men get up and leave that place, saying that they can not tolerate such a kind of person. Although as a sympathizer Max always makes Greasy understand about his filthiness yet he in a normal way always says, “I’m trying, Max. I’m trying”(160).

Max admits that if the shop’s seats can talk then they could talk about Mattie’s son. Max knows Basil, because he usually came to get his hair cut. One day, Max goes to meet Mattie. At Mattie’s home, he looks at the wall which is full of Basil’s pictures. He then recalls Eugene, who came to him on
the day of his baby’s funeral. Max knows very well that Eugene was unable to attend that funeral, so he stops in the barbershop to shave and cut. Eugene had a sad expression in his eyes and his state is so miserable and pitiful that:

I [Max] prayed for him to get a grip of things. Just let the pain and the regrets wash over you; you won’t drown although you’ll feel like you will. No, the one fact about regrets is that they do ebb in time and you’re faced with the hard decision to let your life go on or not”(162).

Max reveals that mostly a man’s grief is entirely different from a woman’s grief and man too cries as much as woman but usually he cries just from inside. In the case of Greasy, he was assaulted by time and he was bleeding from inside. It is much after, Max recalls the incident of Greasy that once he comes for a hair cut and Henry takes charge of Greasy’s hair cutting. There was no commotion in the shop; all were silent because of Greasy. Greasy darts toward Henry’s chair picking up the razor on the counter seizes Henry from behind and holds the razor to his neck. Everyone was shocked to look this scene. Greasy starts saying, time and again, “I’m a man” … “I’m a man” (165). In fact, Max too accepts that he is a man therefore; he could put down the razor to Henry’s neck. Greasy became so wild and violent that he more tightens his hold on Henry’s neck. Henry’s condition is so awful; he could not move an inch or even breathe too. All were there trying their best to cool down Greasy saying, time and again, that he is a man but all efforts go futile.

Finally, Max takes responsibility and mollifies Greasy, saying that he will cut his hair as he always did. Greasy leaves Henry and a circle of men stand about three feet far from him. Abruptly, Greasy again takes the straight razor and slits his own throat. Now:
Blood from the artery in his neck gushed so forcibly that it is sprayed all along the mirrors and on every man in the shop. And the fall that Greasy took, hitting his head against the floor almost tore his head from his neck”(166).

Looking at this ghastly scene, Max becomes shocked and feels dismayed. Greasy’s suicide safely opens the black’s maladjusted position in the society. Naylor is of opinion that the blacks all over are living in discrimination and responsible to make themselves backward and compel themselves to commit suicide or crime. Later on, Max’s shop is closed for a week and when it opens the entire residents of Brewster Place make themselves responsible for the Greasy’s death but somehow, they do not accept that they are slaughters. They however, realize if they regularly treated Greasy their brother and did not mind his filthiness and stinky ass, perhaps he lives longer, “After Greasy’s death, though, the barbershop becomes even more important. As Ben claims, it is the place to look into each other’s eyes and see what we need to see … we thrive and are alive.”17 Ben hates Max’s shop and only one thing he accepts that he will fight till the end of his life against injustice.

This is the crux of the novel and these are the principal causes behind the torn down people of Brewster Place. Brewster Place’s down fall is not entirely relayed upon one particular person; it was caused by the entire inmates of Brewster Place, “Language, so important in the community of women; appears to diminish men’s lives. What Ben has learned early in his life still holds as Brewster Place moves toward “Dawn” – silence is survival.”18 Besides it, the epilogue of the novel ‘Dawn’ is a very important chapter because it is a scenario of Brewster Place’s destruction. Brewster Place has
consummately been orphaned. It has faced and undergone so many calamities and passed from the life of women to men but now, “Brewster Place watched its last generation of children torn away from it by court orders and eviction notices, and it had become too tired and sick to help them”(171). Brewster Place, being a protege, gives proper preservation to women tenants, by which they live a secure life and then once again it too gives conservation to those, who annihilate the life of their partners and family members i.e. their own male partners. But now, it is enough and Brewster Place has surmised everything and every planning which is against the society.

In the climax of the novel, Abshu reaches on the vacant street and goes towards that building where he grew up. As Abshu sits down on the stoop, he hears music which is played by Brother Jeroma. He thinks that battle has given over and the street deserves peace but Brother Jeroma, who is ignored from anything evermore plays on and on. Certainly, Abshu as a son of Brewster Place wants to renovate the very face of Brewster Place. In the street of Brewster Place Abshu, “…embodies a hope that will be found in language, a million voices raised to a roar to say, No, this should not be”19 but however, he believes that, “…even the voices of a million men, a million soldiers, cannot hold back the down”(172). Abshu is against the crack of dawn; symbol of battle’s end. He believes that it is the end of battle but the other side; he also believes that it is not the end of war. Abshu is only one who has tired and being a tired warrior; done his best to alter Brewster Place and wants to offer even the world to the Brewster Place:
Abshu walks out of this metaphorical day toward dawn, “as the music plays on ... and on...” with the promise that the man of tomorrow will be redefined through articulate spoken language. The men are not a community, but as long as there is on Abshu, the dreams can live on.23

_The Women of Brewster Place_ is a novel of victory of women power upon male chauvinism and, on the other hand, _The Men of Brewster Place_ is a novel of male repentance and conciliation towards their women who are the mothers, wives, daughters and beloved ones.

In _THE MEN OF BREWSTER PLACE_, the other side of the story of the residents of this decaying urban housing project is told, with the same rich grace, humor, and compassion that Naylor brought to _THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE_.21

Simultaneously, the novel also depicts the male retribution against whites as well as persecution of society. In this novel, all the seven male characters strive for their rights and somehow they contend with each other for justice. The novel is a representative of Black menfolk because they are governed by their own rules and dominated by their own traditions. Seldom, do they get success to establish their authority in the society. Although each male character in the novel has his own story reflecting the incidents and events yet they fight against the injustice and atrocities in the society. Gloria Naylor not only highlights the issues and affairs of women but she also highlights the same concerns of men. Her male and female characters are black and
invariably poor. In this novel, her male characters are slaves likewise; Ben, somewhere superior powers likewise; Moreland Woods, Deacon Bennett and Abshu and somewhere they are nothing except common folk of Brewster Place likewise; Brother Jeroma, Basil, Eugene and they all are being black, face racial harassment and exploitation in a white community as well as black community. Gloria Naylor, very successfully, tries to highlight the incidents and events relating to women because being a female, she can very well understand the psychological state of women but at the same time, she also tries to portray the male psychology in *The Men of Brewster Place*. She portrays the men’s failure as well as success and seldom has she showed the black men’s conflicts within their own community. Gloria Naylor’s male protagonists do strive in the society and with this struggle if they find why they have caused harm to their female partners; in repentance they choose punishment for themselves likewise Eugene and Basil. Although Gloria Naylor herself being a black too undergoes the problems and hindrances faced in white and black society yet in spite of it, she very positively reflects the community rules and traditions through her male characters. It is her enormous attempt that she has valiantly attempted to place the predicament of her race and gender male in its historical experience. She tries to highlight the issues pertaining to the life of these hapless and unfortunate men.

Gloria Naylor, though primarily depicts the atrocities and exploitations relating to the black women and their protests against the community and society. Naylor represents herself as black feminist writer for the whole black community in a polemical sense and tries to show black men’s miserable
condition, maladjusted position and most probably conflict against injustice and white society. In this process Ben and Basil are exploited at the hands of their wives and as a result they find themselves unsupportive and compelled to leave their family at some time. She has even highlighted the protests against the injustice and persecutions faced by the black men in the society either in the hands of their womenfolk or whites. Abshu and Deacon Bennett are dominated by their seniors and finding enough oppression they, eventually, break the wall of suppression and protest to win against injustice. One can discern this new theme and technique in Gloria Naylor’s recent novel which comes out from the rumor of controversy and becomes the representative novel of black menfolk. Naylor’s male protagonists although, desert their female partners, sometime for a moment they neglect them for another woman, sometime they commit crimes but ultimately, their aim remains to support their family. Eugene is one who does just like this but finding himself in the wrong track where he can entirely lose his remaining existence at once collects himself and chooses punishment in the form of lashings to show his regret in front of his loving wife Ciel. So, one can monitor that the men project their male chauvinistic attitude towards their women but in The Men of Brewster Place, Naylor reflects the other side of men’s psychology in the form of remorse.

In the African–American literature most of the black as well as white men and women writers have generally written about the black women and about their woes, sufferings and exploitations. There are very few black women writers who, besides projecting the predicament of their own race and
gender, have also written about the black men’s problems because from the beginning of the slavery and since ancient times males whether white or black have always remained superior to women. Gloria Naylor is one of such black feminist writers, who has amply written about the black women in her novels and at the same time, very ably scried about the black men in her other novel *The Men of Brewster Place*. Naylor, one of the eminent and distinguished writers, not only depicts the black women’s experiences, sufferings and struggles but also depicts the black men’s wretchedness and conflict against the diversity and plundering in the black as well as white society. *The Men of Brewster Place* is a classic example and her effort to bring forward the conditions of black men before the world. She very perfectly launches her seven male characters with their negative and positive shades. The black community, as a matter of facts, faces slavery and various genres of atrocities in the hands of white society and remains dominated for centuries yet they continue their search of identity and self–respect.

Naylor has attempted to find out the self-identity and self–respect of black men in the novel. Her black male characters though behave in a barbaric manner with their female partners but however, they are also kind and loving. Eugene, one of the protagonists, tortures his wife mentally and finally, deserts her but after some time he concludes and finds himself wrong and is sorry for his misdeeds. The males consistently try to reconcile with their females. Though black males face acute economic and social depression and are discriminated against every field of society, sometimes they become outrageous and behave like criminals but ultimately they regret and try to find
solace with their family and community. Thus, the black men, on one hand, try to find their ‘identity’ under the pressing and volatile circumstances and, on the other, they are very loving and caring towards their Indigent families and proud of their community.

In this sequence there are few characters which are exemplary and play their unique role in the society. Ben, a soul, narrates his story and shows his deep concern and affection towards his family and community. Ben’s grandfather too was a very affectionate person towards his family and community and it has a deep impact on the character of his grandson, Ben. It was his chauvinism that he ever remained ready to fight the white domination and hated them throughout his life. Ben is a father of a daughter whom, he loves too much and for the sake of his daughter, he even separates himself from his cruel wife, who always hates her daughter because she is lame. Ben becomes upset when his loving handicapped daughter has to leave home to earn more money. He also leaves his home and wife but being isolated, he never gets peace mentally because he has lost his wife and daughter. He continues his search for his identity. Although he shrinks from his responsibility towards his family, he is a doting father and a caring husband. But due to his wife’s abusive behavior and his daughter’s exit from home, he is compelled to remain alone and isolated. Ben remains a soul – searching man for the remaining life. Quasi, Ben could not be termed as an irresponsible person but he was a victim of compelling and unforeseen circumstances, even then, he continues his struggle towards his life.
One more instance to this effect is Brother Jeroma, who is a very unique and a prodigy. He has a great sense to play piano but unfortunately he does not know about his own ability while “… his blues speak for everyone on Brewster Place.” He is a simple and an innocent person. And as a child, he was of such type of that wherever, he sits to play the piano, he wets himself and chair also. His piano playing was so blissful that everyone gets silent and feels solace in his music. He becomes the hero of society and his mother even starts charging high-fees in the parties which are organized for the play of Jeroma’s piano. The parties are organized every weekend and Jeroma earn enough money for livelihood. Jeroma, an innocent boy does not know about his identity and ability, and unconsciously completes his duties towards his family and community. Naylor, somewhere, in the novel tries to expose the male protagonist, in a glimpse, where they become such a role model for their family and community. And another example is Basil, who is a victim of his own mother. Although, in his young age, he leaves his mother alone and runs away yet on maturity wants to find out the identity of himself as well as his father. Although he succeeds to find out his father yet his search for his own identity continues. He loves Helen but in the meantime, his cousin sister Keisha meets him with her two kids and this meeting consummately changes the life of Basil. He becomes the father of both the children and completes his duties towards his new family. But anyhow, Keisha is not satisfied with him and eventually, both separate and sustain their life on their own. Basil, once again becomes isolated and being aloof tries to find out his identity and lift up his life with certain possibilities.
The next character is Eugene. Though he is very faithful husband but under the pressing economic conditions he has to leave his wife in frustration. He is aware about his priorities towards his family very well but someway, he miserably fails to stand by the difficulties and shortcomings in the family. Finally, Ciel leaves him and both spouses become alone. Thus, Eugene for the sake of redemption chooses to lash himself. Black man’s responsibility towards the family and community is shattered when he faces the malice and distress in white dominated society in the form of joblessness. As a result, the frustration forces them to leave family and community. Once more, being isolated, Eugene starts his search for identity.

The novel's another example is Moreland Woods, who is a minister of Sinai Baptist. He is an over–ambitious person and for the sake of his success he has done some unpleasant and unlawful works which were against the rule and law. Here, Naylor portrays such a character, which is not under domination of whites but under pressure of his own black community because of his illicit conducts which are unbearable for the society. Woods searches and builds his own identity as well as believers, who only believe him. So, after winning the loyalty of people, he deludes the Deacon Bennett but Bennett is too prudent and shrewd, and with the help of his nephew he makes a plan to expose Woods. His plan is successful but Woods is clever enough and does not come in the trap of Bennett and, on the other hand, he also makes a counter plan to subjugate Bennett by stratagem and finally he wins. So, one can analyze that Moreland, a black but a high profile person, exhibits his illegitimacy towards his family and community and being subjugated, he
swindles everyone. Naylor’s character is different from others. In fact, he has an identity but nevertheless, he is unsatisfied and having some identity crisis becomes completely irresponsible towards his family as well as his community.

Another example is C.C. Baker, a criminal and most violent rapist. He never thinks about family and community. It was his male chauvinism that he very heinously and brutally rapes Lorraine along with his hooligan friends and as a result of which, she dies. Other instance of his cruelty is his stepbrother Hakim, who has been killed by him too. Naylor’s black protagonists exhibit their over–possessiveness towards their family and community but for a while, some of them show their disdain and abomination towards their family as well as their community. Characters like Eugene, Baker and Moreland Woods are self-centered and being selfish, ignore their family value. When, Baker admits the murder of his stepbrother, he does not think about its consequences because he only wants to kill his brother. Finally, “...C.C. runs and runs until he’s crying from the cold wind whipping his face as he thanks God for giving him the courage to do it. The courage to be a man”(129).

Abshu, is a very positive, supportive character and very loyal to his girlfriend, Kiswana. Kiswana is one of the finest characters of Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place*. Abshu fights against injustice and discrimination. He is much attached to his family and very chauvinistic towards his community. Abshu is openly against Moreland Woods and wants to remove him from the minister’s post. He gathers womenfolk who are the victims of illegal relationships with Woods and now want retribution to terminate him
from the ministership at any cost. Abshu as a grim and fervent symbol of chauvinism plays a significant role towards his family and community to remove Woods’ fake identity. Although his childhood was not so smooth yet he fights against those gloomy days and adversity, and finally gets enough success which he deserves. Abshu eventually proves himself a winner with great abilities who loves his family and community equally. Finally, he gains his identity and proper place in society.

The end of the novel is about ‘The Barbershop’ where each and every man sits and tries to resolve their problems before the shop closes each day. Max, the owner of this shop and others, gathering in the shop wants to search their own invisible identity. They all belong to the black community who are victims, in one or the other way at the hands of whites. They face atrocities and exploitation in the white dominated society. They are aware about their shortcomings, poverty and powerlessness, so they try to be united against the injustice, as to mitigate this discrimination by unanimity, and presenting their identity in the community. However, the unity and identity of blacks suffers a set back with certain shortcomings, as Greasy a mentally retarded person of their own community who is very close to Max, commits suicide by slitting his throat, as he could not digest the insults and harsh comments of his fellow black men. This incident amply shows that the black men try to be associated with their self-respect and identity but at the same time, they are intolerant to their own men, such as Greasy who rather deserved sympathetic behavior from his fellow men. With a vast diversity and inner conflicts faced by the black community vis–a–vis the white community, Naylor very successfully
brings forward all these pros and cons in the novel and depicts all these contradictions very excellently. She has also proved, beyond doubt that black men not only fight against the injustice and indiscrimination but also try to remain united and stand by their own identity which is quaint and unparalleled. The conflicts and diversity would remain in the society but the black community will always endeavor to search their self–respect and unique identity. The novel thus, revolves around these issues relating to the black community, consisting of both the black men and women.

The study of lives of African–American society shows that the black women as well as men ever remain under oppression, contempt and humiliation, due to the pressure of slavery. Under the strong persuasion of slavery they become helpless and sometimes they are compelled to go against their family. Sometimes such force becomes so acute that they even commit murder or suicide. These tragedies are generally part of black men’s life. African–American black society is symbol of triviality, backwardness and those poor people, who are traditionally, economically and socially dominated by their white masters. And, on the other hand, whites even remain superior, powerful and dominant from the world over, especially from the African continent. They bring black people as slaves. These people are oppressed not because these are unperfected, indolent or slow witted but just because they are black and innocent and so, the white community very easily succeeds in persecuting and dominating them.

The blacks are used as manual labor or as domestic workers without being paying sufficient remuneration by the white masters. As an outcome of
slavery, the black people remain socially, economically backward for centuries. Under the domination of the whites, the black slaves remain without basic human rights, which keep them isolated in the society and they consider their plight as God's wish. This keeps them aloof from performing their social responsibilities, caring their families and even they were deprived of their right of living with dignity in the society. Domestically, they face double jeopardy; their wives too have to work as slaves and are raped or molested by the landlord. Their children remain without proper education, care or nurture and ultimately become employees as slaves. Their children too face various genre of child abuse which compels them to become criminals and ultimately land in prison. Therefore, these unfortunate tragedies become the part of their life. Under such circumstances, where the chief of family is helpless to protect their children from child abuse and their wives from injustice and rape, in such hapless conditions they blame themselves for their woes. Being powerless, they consider themselves wretched creatures in society. So, in these circumstances, a black man considering his powerlessness and under the pressure of certain domestic problems either becomes a criminal or is forced to leave his family high and dry. The powerlessness hurts his conscience and individuality to survive with dignity and honor in the society and unable to sustain the strong persuasion, occasionally commits suicide.

Gloria Naylor very effectively highlights these issues in *The Men of Brewster Place* and depicts how in the white dominated society, the black men namely Ben, Eugene, Moreland, Basil, C.C. Baker and others being helpless, either commit suicide, leave their family and wives or mostly some of
them become criminals. Gloria Naylor also portrays the other side of coin, in which she describes the female partners are not supportive to their male partners. Even in some cases, they ignore and dominate their male partners, forcing them to leave the family. Hence, in this procedure one can observe such examples which come under this issue. Ben loves his family and daughter very much. He is very inspired by his grandfather because his grandfather throughout his life stood firmly against white community. But his grandfather too was powerless because when his sister was raped by a senior white citizen then the minister does not protect her and his protest against injustice and also the rapist go in vain. Ben considering his earlier life grows up and marries Elvira. The beginning of their life goes on very smoothly but soon, the affairs become bitter and the harsh and dominating attitude of Elvira shatters the domestic affairs of Ben’s family. Ultimately, Ben has to leave his dearest wife and affectionate daughter coming under the force of opposite circumstances and shows his inability and egoism.

Eugene also loves his wife Ciel and daughter Serena. His tragedy is that he has to forfeit his family and loving wife. Eugene even remains jobless and is unable to look after his family. He can not sustain the frustration and deserts his family. This instance of Eugene is perfect to engrave the fact that acute poverty, unemployment, and being powerless in society to sustain the very pressures, the black man is forced to be separated even from his family and remain an individual, lonely and isolated.

Another character, Moreland T. Woods is the minister of Sinai Baptist. Throughout the life, he tries hard to achieve such a place where he would be
 paramount over other blacks. He was a promising character but unfortunately he makes some illicit relationships with women and even some of them become pregnant or mother of one or two children. An agitation is organized against him and as a powerful minister of Sinai Baptist he is rendered helpless and powerless due to his misdeeds and is compelled to live alone and be lonely, since his wife had already died. The prevailing conditions, thus, makes a mighty man helpless, powerless and individually alone.

Besides it, Basil is one, who has left his doting and caring mother. But he starts the search for his father, who has in fact, raped his mother Mattie. Basil has lost his mother. He has an affair with Helen but because of Keisha, he could not marry Helen. Keisha has two children and for the sake of the kids, Basil and Keisha get married but soon their marriage disintegrates and finally, Keisha along with her children starts to live with her first husband leaving Basil lonely. So, Basil faces the distress, dismay and acute powerless by himself. These are the chief and main tragedies of black men that they are unable to live happily with their family in the society. They face and experience the inferiority complex, disgust, and beggary in the white dominated society and in disdain, anguish and helplessness have to leave their family, forcing them to remain individually alone and powerless. Although when we study deeply the bonding factors of the black community, we do find that they are loving people, who nurture their family with their culture and traditions but the circumstances prevailed under the white dominated society, their family lives are shattered under the compelling influence of socio-political and economic backwardness and they become a prey of such circumstances.
C.C. Baker, who is a negative and a stone-hearted character of this novel, rapes an innocent Lorraine and along side, slays his own step-brother Hakim. He commits the crime because, somewhere he feels insecure by Lorraine as well as Hakim. He is very injudicious person and to guard off from his own fears he commits crimes in the form of rape and slaughter. It was his powerlessness and individualistic attitude that compels him to commit heinous and unauthentic crimes. African – American black men are the prey of white male chauvinism and unable to sustain the compelling influence of predicament, they fail to live with dignity and honor in the socio–political society. Now, C.C. Baker, by committing such crimes eventually remains a hapless victim of powerlessness and individualism. Abshu is a very gentle, positive and also very supportive character for his girlfriend as well as other menfolk. He is always at war with Moreland Woods because he knows that he does not deserve the post of minister and to terminate him from this post, he wants to even assassinate Woods. But Abshu’s plans fail in front of Wood’s shrewd tactics. Even then, he consistently does try to dislodge Woods from the post of minister, though he considers himself helpless and restless. But, he once more hopes and imagines, “...he would continue to hope that somehow, in some way, his work was making a difference”(154). Ultimately, Abshu via his immense efforts terminate the fake existence of Woods and makes himself most trustworthy wall of Brewster Place. In this novel, Naylor portrays black men’s lives in different shades and colors. She very successfully and effectively presents the difficult life span of blacks rendered by them. They have lack of prosperity, no happiness and even no
concordance between the spouses. They always pass their lives fighting for human rights in the society. *The Men of Brewster Place* projects a scenario and glimpse of such circumstances beneath which the black men have to live in the society. Naylor’s efforts guide us to see the predicament and discrimination, the black men face and simultaneously, one can also see their battle against injustice and the circumstances caused by the white community. In addition to it, one can find that how conspicuously, Naylor expounds the portrayal of powerlessness and individualism of African–American men beneath the quiet opposite circumstances.
REFERENCES


2 Gloria Naylor, *The Men of Brewster Place* (New York: Hyperion, 1998) 6. All textual references from this novel have been given parenthetically with that very reference.

3 Whitt, *op.cit.*, 208.

4 *ibid.*, 210.

5 *ibid.*, 212.

6 *ibid.*

7 *ibid.*, 213.

8 *ibid.*

9 *ibid.*

10 *ibid.*, 214.

11 *ibid.*, 215.

12 *ibid.*

14 Whitt, *op.cit.*, 216.

15 *ibid.*, 217.

16 *ibid.*, 220.

17 *ibid.*, 221.

18 *ibid.*

19 *ibid.*

20 *ibid.*


22 *ibid.*