CHAPTER-VIII

FEMINIST THEORY OF DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS
IN BAILEY'S CAFE

To the black and female it is to suffer from the disadvantages of racial discrimination and pronounced gender bias. Possibly, no other social group has been subjected to such as unedifying spectacle of human debasement and depravity. In the annals of human history, perhaps, no other group of humanity has ever suffered form such a socio-economic, physical, cultural and sexual torment and agonies like the Afro-American woman with the exception of the sufferings of ex-untouchables of India.

Being black, these women suffered from racism; being females they were the victims of sexual atrocities at the hands of the white patriarchs as well as the blacks; and being former slaves, the white establishment forced them to live on meagre resources and were compelled to remain poor. The black women in Africa were made victims of triple jeopardy: racism, sexism and classicism.

The black women were subject to the worst kinds of exploitations and oppression. They were labelled as wild and savage creatures without souls. They were forced to give up their bodies like animals to white men at random. They were converted into "promiscuous and loose" character a mere toy or a plaything. They were used as sex pot not only by the whites but were also treated as breeding animals. They were discarded by both the white and black men. After the abolition of slavery, the blacks were able to form their community of Afro-Americans. The Afro-American women became
The victims of racial and sexual exploitation. Her life was as black and as a second class citizen of America. She was like a curse in the society. Simone de Beauvoir has beautifully said:

"Humanity is male and man defines women not in herself but as relative to him, she to not regarded as an autonomous being... He in the subject, he is the absolute -- she is the other."

Women in general are the "others", the object to the males. While the condition of the Afro-American is equally pathetic. They're Vanquished and defeated people. They feel they have become other if the other. Blacks develop their own consciousness: the awareness bout what it is to be as a black and female in the racist white america. As result they developed their own black feminist consciousness.

The word black is used for those Americans who are of African origin. It defines the ethnic traits to the erstwhile slaves. They were earlier called 'Niggers'. The word Nigger or Negro, is a pure product of America. Black has replaced Negro just as the word Negro had replaced Nigger. It is also used in the context of American civilization to describe a free man of colour: Leslie Fiedler says:

"To reject the image created by the white society they want to redefine their identity in the context of their special experience in the American society. They use the word black."

The term feminism is used to show, women struggle for social equality. It means the female struggle to liberate herself from the injustice they suffer in the society from male domination and in the field of sex.
Consciousness as a term of feminist thought according to De Lauretts is,

"The awareness of a woman having poised on the divide that joins and distinguishes the opposing term in a sense of conceptual sets central to contemporary theories of culture subject and object, self and other, private and public oppression and resistance, domination and agency hegemony and masoginity sameness and difference and so on."¹

Thus feminist conscious refers to reality, regarding women socio-sexual existence. It is the experience in a certain way of certain specific contradiction in the social order. So in the term black feminist consciousness, 'black' denotes the race, and 'feminist' means a person who knows the exploitation of woman is caused by patriarchal hegemony and that one is ready to end that hegemony to reconstruct the lives of women and to build a society based on no discrimination. To being racial, social, sexual and economic equality for black women. It means a kind of awareness of one's own destiny as a black female and poor in America.

"One even feels his twoness, --- an American a Negro, two souls, thought, two unreconciled striving; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder."²

N.E.B. Du Bois articulates the doubleness that pervades African-American literature, where characters and texts content with dual African American and western traditions. In the fourth novel, Bailey's Cafe Gloria Nayler employs this double perspective offered by women's "insider/outside status"³. Similarly, the ambiguous status of Afro-American inside but outside mainstream American culture has made
it necessary to use a “double consciousness” the famous term of W.E.B Du Bois the Black feminist theorist have emphasized the black women as the “other” in American culture, a perspective that especially enables them to see all other perspectives. Like Toni Morrison’s fiction Gloria Naylor’s novels are empowered by her ability to present the better sweet conditions of contemporary life. By depicting the complex and paradoxical mixtures of tragedy and joy in the lives of Afro-American characters. Naylor leads her characters into the ambiguous but strangely satisfying realm of the “difference”, into life not in avoidance of the abyss but at its edge.

Gloria Naylor uses this theory of double-consciousness in her novel that breaks perceived reality and it also attempts to heal those breaks. There are many characters such as a religious zealot, a penny whore, a self-mutilating nymphomaniac, and a black Ethiopian Jew who is “a little off in the head”. Bialey’s Cafe provides a refuge for social deviants whose suffering has led them to the cafe. Naylor’s characters exemplify black women’s suffering to the extent that even Stanley a black man, suffers as a woman when he wears ladies a dress to escape the tortures of the summer heat wave. Along with this portrayal of female suffering, Naylor’s characters embody Du Bois doubleness in their position. Naylor places her representative characters in a text that bridges the perceived gap between the European and Afro-American literary tradition by destabilizing the Eurocentric universalist and ethnocentric nationalist frames of reference.

In Bialey’s Cafe Naylor sets up a complex dynamic between the crushing stories of the character who have drifted into the mystical neighbourhood itself, presided over by “Bialey” and his wife Nadine who run the cafe: Eve, who manages the boarding house/
bordell; and Gabriel, who owns the pawn shop. The lives of these visitors to the neighbourhood of Bailey's Cafe have been marred by their terrible counters with racial and gender discrimination. That monocentric power has been inflicted implacably, brutally, without question or hesitation.

Gloria Naylor chooses to locate her fourth novel within a specifically cultured and gendered context where voice and all of its associations are directed towards subverting the myriad forms of authority patriarchy legal and constructing a new world order among partially dispossessed women world-wide. The novel is comprised of a series of loosely connected stories—each one from a different woman's point of view—and it culminates with a magically real, communal celebration of the birth of Mariam’s son George during the Christmas season.

The novel takes place in 1948 and 1949 a transitional period for Americans in general and Afro-Americans in particular on a global scale, Lerone Bernnett, Jr., states that,

"The end of World War II marked the end of the European (White) expansion that began in the fifteenth century with the slave trade and the appropriation of the land and bodies of Africans and Asains."5

It marked the end of the "age of Europe". The post World War II decades were an empowering period for the oppressed people. In the United States, this empowerment manifested itself in the development and implementation of integrationist policies. Such overt policy changes did not fundamentally alter the mentality that had justified and maintained racist policies. As Winston VanHorne states,
"...it cannot pass unnoticed a hard colour line of racial demarcation persists."  

Integration did not eradicate racial conflict and post World War II prosperity marked persistent racial problems which would erupt in the mid-fifties and escalate during the 1960s.

Gloria Naylor situates her novel Bailey's Cafe not only in this transitional American time period, but also presents conflict in her setting. Bailey’s Cafe, Eve’s boarding house and Gabes pawnshop are the main setting of the novel. They comprise a kind of transitory Bermuda triangle attracting the hopeless. Unlike the Bermuda Triangle, though, the cafe, boarding house, and pawnshop are just "way stations" (BC 159) through which people pass not in which people remain. The cafe itself stands,

"on the margin between the edge of the world and infinite possibility" (BC 76)

and appears only when and where people need it,

"You find yourself hanging on to the edge... There's some space, someplace to take a breathe for a while, the edge of the world" (BC 28).

The novel is presided over by the main narrator, who answers to the name Bailey. Actually that is not his name; he just does not want to change the cafe's sign --- and his wife Nadien, the cafe offers its patrons a place to "take a breathe for a while." (BC 28)

These customers arrive from all over the United States and from other parts of the world, but unlike with traditional eateries, the customers do not go to the cafe. The Cafe goes to the customer. Sadie finds the Cafe in Chicago, Jesse in New York, Stanley in
Pittsburg and Mariam in Addes Ababa Ethiopia in Even Bailey, Eve, and Gabe who are the constants in this Bermuda Triangel of suffering find themselves in the fluid universe which Bailey describes,

“When I walk out of this cafe and leave this street,
I’m still in San Francisco  Gabe is up in the Caucasus
Mountains and Eve is in New Orleans. You see, its
whatever life we’ve come from” (BC 222-23)

Bailey’s street is in a Zone in which time stands still and place loses its permanence. With this, Naylor portrays the dislocation her characters experience and the instability of the universalists and nationalist position these characters exemplify.

Sadie, is the regular visitor of Bailey’s Cafe. She was born of Negro parents who,

“fell through the cracks of the upswings and down
swing.” (BC 40)

Her parents had settled in Chicago her father was unsettled and mother was weak due to all those abortions so she was unable to do any hardwork. They always faced hardships and had to struggle for their living in the society Sadi, as a young girl had to face the rebukes from her mother because she resembled her father who was a failure in the eyes of her mother. She has a very pathetic childhood neglected and rebuked for petty things like spilling milk, forgetting to tiptoe in the morning or when she stroked the hair of the drunken woman (her mother) sprawled over the dirty dishes on the table. When Sadie compared her childhood experiences with those of others she found that the difference was due to her fault. And the only way to rectify was to be good. So she became very good and quiet and when very good did not satisfy her mother she still be-
came very very good. And she became a perfect lady before time waiting to be loved by her mother. She “dreams of love” but her mother made her a whore at the age of thirteen.

I’ve been selling my tail all this time to feed you till I’m sick and near death Now you better kick it too .” (BC 44)

She was dragged into this filthy world at a very young age with no desire and love. Poverty, helplessness and need made her do the dirty job of selling her body. Initially possessing a sense of beauty, “class” (BC 68) and elegance, she is driven deeper and deeper into her private sorrow by incorably harsh conditions. She tries to make a home with Daniel but his drinking and “trains thundering by” (BC 64) their shack drive her further inward. When all her dreams fail, liquor bottles become her only place of solace, as she finds peace in the “stars” printed on them (BC 65) Sadie worshiped the man Daniel for giving her the closest thing that that ever dreamed of. But he abused her “a white man’s mule”, he mistrusted her eyes, her habit of cleanliness irritat, her etiquettes, manners made him angry.

The result of her years of psychological deprivation is that she internalizes the well,

“the endless space of the black hole waiting to open in her heart.” (BC 64)

The pathos of Sadie’s story is that the brutality of her life has pushed her so deeply that her dreams of a house, a picket fence, geraniums, laughter, Waterford crystal and good meal are so discon- nected from reality that she cannot accept Iceman Jone’s offer of a shared life. Through out her life Sadie has to fight poverty. She does that by selling her body or picking up a man. She meets Icemen
the World War. Though the women have stepped forward and are behind the clutches of automobiles still the male view them to be in clutches as it becomes difficult for them to work those gears in high heels and straight skirts. They feel that the women are physically weak enough to do the jobs of men. It is during then Eve, the first customer of Bailey’s Cafe comes. She lives near the cafe and lets out rooms in her house to single women. Gloria Naylor describes Eve with an independent personality. She is straight-forward courageous to bear all strokes in life, free to think and take her decisions. She is not bounded or enclosed by guards or checkers. She is dry and emotionless hence does not get involved in controversies.

“Eve is not a charitable person. You can look into her eyes and see that. She wears small rimless glass that magnify those deep brown eyes. And it’s a plain brown face that does not scowl but doesn’t appear pleasant either. Cut and dried... She’s a stylish woman... though tailored silk suit Oxford heels. But if you look real close, there’s always a faint line of dirt just under her manicured nails” (BC 80-81)

It is through Eve, Gloria Naylor presents the double personality of woman in order to survive in the male dominating society. Eve, had to struggle for her life hence opens a guest house which is termed as a whorehouse. People feel that she runs a whorehouse. “She’d sell her own mama for a dine” but she doesn’t care like Sadie she too has had a pathetic childhood similar pain and torture. Instead of love and kisses she has received thrashing from her parents. This has made her emotionless, carefree and the blows of poverty urged the thirst to earn money by hook or by crook. She knows that to be in this world and to survive it is essential for her to hide the dirt of her life under artificial make-up. She has to have a double conscious-
ness, one what she is and the other what she has become due to circumstances. Lucy Strike is another visitor of Bailey’s Cafe who has been the victim of male torture. The name of the brand of cigarettes he took was spelled out on the inside of her thigh with a lit cigarette butt. A reminder to get the right brand when she went to the shop next time. She was used for sexual satisfaction and was made pregnant. But was later left as he had his first wife who was white and beautiful. He gave her the lesson that nobody loves you when you’re down and out (BC 82). She felt her black colour was like dirt on her fingerprints which could not be washed as,

"it was not a part of me — it was me.” (BC 97)

Naylor uses Bailey’s voice in establishing the time place, mood and character for each women’s story, except that of Marian a curiously virginal unwed mother whose touching account of antisemitism and sexism recreates a vital sisterhood among women of colour across the Diaspora who often find themselves at odds with notions of female sexuality prescribed by patriarchy. Ultimately, Naylor’s goal as a creator and a sovereign of the decidedly new fictive cosmology which emerges in the novel’s ambiguous climatic scene. It effect some sort of unity among the widely disparate voice of women, not only within but outside the text also.

Gloria Naylor’s particular triumph as contemporary Afro-American women writer has much to do with her success at moving beyond the one dimensional portrait of male figures that brought her criticism with the publication of *The Women of Brewster Place*. Bailey, unlike his fictional predecessors residing at the decaying Bewster, is no mere shadow of a man. He is endowed with a certain psychologically depth and complexity of character, despite the
ambiguities associated with his assumed name, it is Bailey whose veiled comments offer insight into close relationship between the written text and the distinctly black oral forms of expression from which it envolves.

"Anything really worth hearing in this greasy spon happens under the surface. You need to know that if you plan to stick around here and liten while we play it all out" (BC 35)

The other men of the novel perpetuate the oppression that the women face. This is very much evident in Eve’s song. One in a long line of larger-than-life central mother figures in Gloria Naylor’s Canon, Eve is the first customer to arrive at Bailey’s. Sexual escapades with Godfather, the stern dictorial preacher who rears her, and with the childish prankster Billy Boy, results in her ostracism from her small Louisiana deltagone. But it is in her highly symbolic trek form Pilottown to Arabi to Bailey’s Cafe that Eve, who emerges as a strong yet sensitive woman with an acute business sense and a love for well kept gardens, manages somehow to escape the tragic fate towards which she seems destined.

Godfather, a figure of male authority, is ubiquitous in his influence within the delta community. Perhaps the most definitive change in Eve’s evolving conciousness occurs when she comes to recognize his church as a social construct reflecting the hierarchies of a society which relegates women to the undesirable position of subservient “other”.

"To be thrown out his church was to be thrown out of the world” (BC 85)

Eve leave-taking occurs as Godfather strips her of her clothes and purges her of the food he has provided. Naked and hungry, she
is forced to provide for herself amidst dire economic circumstances. Eve successfully recreated herself, however, in preparation for her role among a community of outcast women. That she has no clear cut parental ties suggest that she is at once natural and supernatural more than a mere woman—and her song is replete with reference to organic matter, especially the rich delta soil. Godfather claims to have found her,

"in patch of ragweed, so new I was still tied to the birth sac, and I had to bite off the umbilical cord with my teeth and spit it out to save myself from being poisoned." (BC 83)

As she grows into womanhood, her burgeoning sexuality, given fullest expression during her earth-stomping with Billy Boy rekindels her awareness of a vital oneness with the rich earth. One of her many rendezvous with Billy Boy takes place under a juniper bush while Eve is,

"low to the ground trying to blend in with my brown hair, brown skin and brown sack dress.” (BC 86)

She has sexual game with Billy Boy and when caught by Godfather is forced to leave the house naked. He burns all her sack clothes and leaves her to wear a sack of flour to cover herself. Eve, whose name means mother of all living is essentially self-generated. The song sung by Eve refers to the Louisianna delta soil and suggests a dissolving of traditional historiography. It reveals a freedom from imposed gender specific labels,

"I had no choice but to walk into New Orleans neither male nor female — mud but I could right then and there choose what I was going to with when I walked back out” (BC 91)
Gloria Naylor fictionalized Eve with her biblical predecessors, who uses her feminine charms to entice a gullible Adam to eat of the forbidden fruit and thus defy the divine law. Similarly Gloria Naylor’s Eve encourages a creature revisioning of the space that traditionally have defined women’s lives. That Eve walks, she tells us, a thousand years before reaching Bailey’s, is an important allusion linking her role among a community of women to the millennial reign of Christ. On one level she redemptive figure for women such as the feisty Jesse Bell, who turns to heroin and female lovers when her marriage into the wealthy Sugar Hill king family ends in a bitter divorce. The newspaper misrepresents Jesse in its sensationized account of her divorce. Her lament that she,

“didn’t have no friends putting out the Herald Tribune suggests the exclusion of the experience of women of colour from the written word and the printed text” (BC 118)

Eve’s role in Jesse’s recovery is unquestionable at best. Eve relies upon magic or the power of conjure in curing Jesses addiction to heroin by engineering a series of wellcrafted illusions which allow Jesse to have unlimited access to the enslaving drug. During Eve’s unconventional treatment of Jesse, in a moment of exasperation, Jesse tells Eve to go to hell. Eve’s rather pointed response directs attention to the ambivalent fictional world that’s informs the novel “I think you’ve forgotten thats where we are” (BC 141)

Thus Naylor’s character Eve can be placed within the antithetic poles. Neither she is in the biblical sense nor strictly a Madonna, she resides somewhere between the two extremes. Her ability to mainpulate reality and her close affintly with the supernatural are qualities that invite a comparison with folk figures such as the shape-shifting trick-
ster or the revered conjure woman. Despite the ambiguities surrounding Eve’s character, her role has a double consciousness struggle to make her existance.

Esther, is another victim of male subjugation. She is driven even farther into the psychological well. Directed at the age of twelve by her older brother to have sex in the dark basement with a man who calls himself her husband. She develops a psychoises that allows her to exist only in the dark basement of Eve’s boarding house. It is poverty which forces Esther’s brother to do the sinful deed of selling his “only little sister.” She has full faith and trust on him and believes him blindly. She agrees to all what he says,

“This is your husband”, my brother said. “Do whatever he tells you, and you won’t be sent away like the others. Can you be married without a gown? Without the beautiful white flowers and the veil that sweeps the floor of the church? Without love? Even at twelve years old I doubt, but I believe in my older brother. He is kind to me and calls me only little sister there is much food here than at home.

My brother has the fat wife and eight children to feed. My new husband has four hundred acres and six men, along with my brother to help him plow.” (BC 95)

The man who calls her in the cell makes it very clear that they will not we give words to what they do in the cell. He tells false stories about his wife. That makes Esther scared that he may not treat her like his first wife. For him the sexual act in the cell is,

“having fun, playing games.” (BC 95)

She was neither physically developed to get involved in it nor was aware of its consequences. She was ignorant about sex. She lived in a world of fancy, dreams true and pure, emotional relationship be-
between a man and a woman. She lives in this hall for twelve years paying sexually for his brothers debts. Aside from the Johns who must bring her white roses and call her "little sister", her only companions are the spider and a radio hero called "The Shadow". Because her brother and the man cautioned her that,

"we won't speak about this, Esther"---- "no word
for what happens between us in the cellar." (BC 97)

She is isolated in the dark locking Willa Nedeed's contacts with any predecessors, and therefore unable like Willax to reclaim her life. The age when girls play with dolls she plays with sex. Brother who is like a father guardian, sells her sheepishly leads her on an evil path to a dark well from where no one can return. The white roses which are the symbol of chastity mocks at her reality.

Gloria Naylor's characterization of Mary extends Morrisons implicit nationalist call for a redefinition of black beauty. As Bailey describes her,

"Mary is more than pretty. She's one of those
woman you see and don't believe. The kind that live
just outside of your imagination." (BC 100)

Later, Sugarman a local pimp, describes Mary in less complimentary terms, "Born to be fucked" (BC 102). Through her reconciliation of external and internal images, Mary escapes the constraints of sexual objectification and she struggles with disparity between her external and internal images.

"The brown mirrors, hazel mirrors, blue mirrors, oval round and lashed mirrors of peoples eyes" reflecting Mary's external images as sexual object, to be savorads by men and envied and feared by women, and this image contrasts with the fact that she views
herself as an innocent child. Mary describes this disparity as her dual identity. "She was a whore and was Daddy's baby."

(MC 104)

Mary compartmentalizes these identities so completely that, she surrenders on constant persuasion,

"the whore" is any "any son of any man" [who has]
the power to drive away that demon in the mirror."

(MC 104)

At the same time, she ostensibly maintains a Puritanical distance from this other sexual self. This internal whore/virgin dichotomy disintegrates when Mary realizes that she actually looks forward to sleeping with men and feeling their touch. She becomes the whore-ific image she so despises that and must eventually over-come.

Mary confronts this seductive image after her lover, who has a clubfoot, discovers Mary's continuing sexual infidelity and threatens to kill, in front of her, the next man with whom she has had sex. Terrified, Mary spends two weeks in their apartment, her attention shifting from bookcases, linen closets, and kitchen cabinets to her lover's closet where she finds his many pairs of,

"custom-made boots for shriveled and twisted foot."

(MC 110)

She describes his willingness to discard boots with the least flow, and spends a week looking at those immaculate boots then staring at her own feet,

"But at the end of that second week, when she took the beer opener from the pantry drawer and went to the bathroom mirror, it was to stare at her face." (MC 110-11)
Mary gouges her cheek with that bear opener, modifying her external image in an attempt not only to take control of that image, but also to reconcile her appearance with her damaged self-concept. Like the Breedloves Mary becomes the ugly image that she sees reflected, her maiming epitomizing their externalization of self-image. When Mary reaches Bailey’s Cafe she transforms those damaged images into a beautiful unified whole. Eve’s eyes mirror the beginning of this process:

“Gently she removes my veil, and she lifted my chin in her hands to trace her thumb down along the path I had taken in front of the mirror I saw only the scar reflected in her rimless glasses as she felt each jagged curve, each section of twisted flesh. And it was only the scar that was reflected in her eyes when she murmured, beautiful.” (BC 112)

Mary signifies her reconciliation of external and internal images by etching her internal pain on her body, a literal act of defacement that liberates her from her previous image. Mary is a lost soul, though her father builds a wall around their house to keep the boys out and becomes the internal wall she builds between her repressed self and her whore self a wall that she reflected in the mains lustful eyes of man. She disfigures her face in a futile attempt to eliminate that lust and there by to integrate her two selves.

Gloria Naylor presents the general tendency of men folk. That they are less of human beings and more of animal like. Where sex is concerned they forget the relation and age. Mary’s mother is subdued by her husbands friend,

“She would set on their knees, touch the soft curls on her head, raise her dimpled arms” (BC 114)
The choirmaster breaks the relation between a teacher and a student,

"He puts his hand under Mary's blouse, his hand
sequencing and stroking his breath warm against the
top of my head." (BC 105)

Gloria Naylor shows that it is not only poverty or men whom
the women have to fight but is her own sex as her rival. In Bailey's
Cafe Mary's mother is responsible for dragging Mary into this dirty
game of chess. Whenever Mary asked her what promise has she com-
mitt ed to the guests she would point out at Mary. In order to be
safe, Mary gave herself anywhere to anyone. Since then she has not
turned back. The holy mother Mary is turned into a whore by her
own mother.

Mary's attempts to reconcile her external and internal images later
lead her to destructive selfmutilation, which paradoxically frees her from
the image that repels her, and Mary's paradox is parallel to Jesse's
problematic nationaliststances. While Jesse's drive to maintian cultural
difference liberate her from SugarHill expectations and imbues her with
a certain cultural power. Ultimately this nationaliststance causes Jesse's
paranoia, which alienates her family to the point that she is dead to
both her son and her husband.

Jesse Bell in another customer of Eve's whore house. She is a
good natured light-hearted loving and caring person. The apprecaible
quality of her is that Jesse has the quality of presenting as she has
recieved it. An old man drags Jesse into the dirty game of sex. Jesse
curses uncle Eli,

"But that horrible old man, he rot in hell, kept at
it untill he killed me He was a murderer - a cold
bloode murder. Hope devil is kicking his ash right
now from east hell to west hell and back again.”

(BC 118)

It is because of him she loses her husband, son Chastity, name
and reputation. A family which does not have any reputation has
menfolk like beasts. She goes into a society and family that is totally
different from that by Manhattan Islands. Though Bellmen there were
rough and worked hard, made a lot of money and spent a lot of
money on wrong females but Bellmen always married to the mother
of their children. Gave their wives sufficient money to manage her
needs. They knew their responsibilities and carried them truely. Unlike
the kings they respected the women. They did not humilate or abuse
them in public.

“Like having the girlfind and the wife at the same
dinner table. Like the wife knowing about it all the
while, and the husband knowing she knows, and him
going a thrill out of it all. Cause the wife’s not go-
ing to say a word. Cause this son of a bitch is a
doctor somebody or a lawyer somebody-- or may
be just a man somebody that she feels she’s no-
body without. Women up there look at other women
as nothing unless they’re attached to some man’s
name. And attached they stay, no matter what he
does.” (BC 122)

The women are physically and mentally tortured. They are emo-
tionless like stone camouflaged by the mannerism of soberness. Uncle
Eli blamed Jesse for doing some magic on her husband so as to
marry him. Uncle Eli was the head of the family, he was a very mean
selfish bachelor with dirty thoughts. A man who no woman would
give brith to. He did not respect women, spoke dirty words for them
and his books, "would send a chill up your spine." (BC 146)

Jesse Bell’s husband was not like uncle Eli. He was caring and innocent. He was deprived of many good eatables like baked biscuit, macaroni salad with home made myonnaise or oxtail soup by his uncle. Jesse wins her husband through the stomach. But uncle Eli calls her a ‘nasty bitch’ and remarks on her colour. After she comes home with her new born son. Uncle Eli manipulates in such a way that there was not much to exchange between Jesse and her husband. He poisons her sons brains about his maternal grandmother’s character and embarrasses Bell in front of every one on SugarHill. because of this negligence and shrewdness Jesse’s mother catches pneumonia and dies within a month. He drives Jesse to alcohol and heroin so that she may forget her history of mistreatment and loss. Her only sustaining hope is to return to her childhood bedroom, which becomes the image she dreams of Uncle Eli throws dirt on her name and highlights it in the paper and makes her a painted dummy.

"The name Jesse Bell came to mean that no-good slut from the docks and the nineteen years I’d put into my marriage didn’t amount to dog shit; the care I’d given my son dogshit; the clothes I wore, the music I liked, the school I went to, the family I came from everything that made me me-dog shit, cause no body was intersted in my side of the story, not the reporters, not the neighbourse not the divorce court, nobody,cause everybody standing around like vultures looking at me fall fall fall." (BC 131-132)

Ultimately she leaves every thing and takes shelter at Eve’s hostel. Where Eve is responsible to show her the path of drugs and drives the to hell. She suffers the blows from Uncle Eli for being
black and marrying a white and poor. Having matrimonial alliance with a king and ultimately leaving a happy family to a refined whore house.

Nadine and Eve narrate Mariam’s lifestory who at the age of fourteen becomes the victim of sexual relations consequently becoming pregnant. She is brought to Eve’s hostel by Gabriel the pawnshop owner. The new girl has redish black skin, and is very young. her thin physic tells her monitory background. She is mentally and psychologically distrubed and keeps on repeating “No man has ever touched me” (BC 146) Marian has a pathetic childhood, she belongs to a poor family born to a mother, Beta Israel who sells pottery in the market place. Child bearing is a fruitfull activity for her. Gloria Naylor presents that the girl from an early age is a victim of white skinned men and women of her own sex. When young they are expected to take care of their father, cook food, roast grains and bake the injerra and take the Sabbath offering.

“For while you are still young and unmarried, stand as close as possible to hear every utterance of the Torah. Listen well to the prayers and remember. Let your cries be loud and bend down low; low so your breasts touch this holy ground as your face east towards our beloved Jerusalem.” (BC 145)

A women since young age does not have the freedom to live as her desires. She can not lead a life as per her wishes, listen, speak, think or do what she wants to, but has to do what their mothers carry forward to them from their mothers and so on. Gloria Naylor relates the inhuman merciless activity of purification for girls. The girl is circumcised and the village midwives squat the naked girl on the hole dug in the hut. The village women sing and dance around her and the high priest’s wife comes form Addis Ababa where Beta Is-
rael girls are taught to read and write with a knife. They make a cut in the dark amber flesh. Acacia thorns and boiled thread is used to hold together the hanging skin. A lean straw is inserted to check that a very small opening is left for the menstrual blood to pass. All this is very painful in the raw flesh of the girl. This becomes a value of a virtuous woman. Even after marriage on the wedding night the sexual relations between a willing wife and a cautious husband appears to be a rape. Many a times it takes months for the self-made wound made by the man in the body of the woman to heal and it may also happen the women is fully opened only during child birth. This custom was to ensure the verinity of the women.

According to this Beta Israels custom, Marian is prepared for her future marriage by being circumcised, and the village midwives sew her up tighter than usual to raise, her value as as a wife. After Mariam leaves her village due to her suspicious pregnancy, she eventually reaches Eve’s boarding house where Eve discovers that “not man has even tried” to penetrate her” (BC 152). Mariam is still a virgin, and George is an immaculate conception. George not only serves as a Christ figure, but he also embodies the connection between African past and American future because of conceptual geographic history. Nadine describes George’s position on the cult, between Africa and America:

“maybe its ment for this baby to bring in a whole new era. Maybe when it gets here, it’ll be like an explosion of new hope or something, and will just fade away” (BC 160)

Between these unfortunate visitors to the neighbourhood and the four proprietors (Bailey Nadine, Eve and Gabe) is Miss Maple. He has experienced the well of prejudice which he encountered at Stanford
during his three years in prison for evading the draft, and then in the humiliation of his unsuccessful search for a job. Miss Maple is not a homosexual but a man who wears dresses. He wears light percale housedressess backless sun dress or a little cotton romper with a pair of flat canvas sandals. He does not use a wig or makeup or padded falsies. He stands like a man, had a deep voice and eat food as any normal man does and talkes in the very same manner with a cultured voice. He is spared the extreme brutality that the women experienced and perhaps as a result, develops a more integrated response characterized by his female persona, his job as Eve’s bouncer and janitor, his plans for his own company and his success in jingle contests. He is Stanley Beck Wourth Booker T.Washington Carver, representing the universalist position through his integrationist moves towards cultural homogenization. Stanleys name refer to prominent African-American in United States history : James Beckwourth, a frontier explorer Geogre Washington Carver, a renowned scientist and inventor. Stanley confronts and attempt to over come sometimes covertly--the nationalist concept of identity built upon difference. Stanley’s family history contextualizes his desire to transcend difference. According to Stanley,

"... I had aunts of all assortment : pure boled Yumas full blooded Negroes; full blooded Mexicans, Yuma-Mexicans; Mexican Irish, Negro-Mexican and even one pure-blooded African who still knew some phrases in Ashanti ..." Stanney’s family combines diverse individuals into a unit which overturns turn-of-the-century stereotypes about minorites in general, and African Americans in particular, through their financial success in Southern Californial cotton industry. In the face of this diversity and success, Stanley says “the Americans had no problems with

258
our identities; they imported one six-letter word to cut through all that tangled in our heritage." (BC 171)

Stanley confronts such reductivist notions of race and identity during his prison sentence and subsequent jobsearch. After the Red Cross’s refusal to take his blood donation during World War II, Stanley refuses to fight in that war and is imprisoned for three years as a conscientious objector. As he puts it,

“If my blood isn’t good enough to be spilled on the battlefield?" (BC 189)

While in prison, Stanley and the other Cos succeed in their attempt to desegregate the prison’s dining hall, transcending the penal system’s policy of foregrounding racial difference. This success comes at great cost, since the prison administration subsequently places Stanley in a cell with “a respect offender serving for three counts of murder who night after night for weeks says to Stanley,

“I’m gonna fuck you or kill you’. “I was never raped because I never resisted.” (BC 193)

Stanley’s role as rape victim in prison prefigures his role as victim of a racist corporate American.

During his search for a job Standley attempts to overcome the de facto segregation of corporate America, but his overt integration tactics fail to secure him a suitable position. Armed with a doctorate in mathematics from Stanford University, Stanley searches for a job during a summer heat wave, and his body responds as if he had been whipped?

"The wells ran across my back in diagonal lines, they ringed my neck after wrists where the collar band and shirt cuffs fastened. They were red and puffy and if I didn’t keep my body temperature
down they kept swelling until they burst.”

(BC 198-99)

Although mentally Stanley views universalist integration as a logical goal, physically his body displays the stigmata of black collective memory and rebels against Stanley’s attempts to transcend race.

After the mental and physical torture for the search of his job, Stanley contemplates suicide and this personal crisis leads him to Bailey’s Cafe. Once Eve offers him a job, “with terms that [he] couldn’t refuse” (BC 213). Stanley begins working as a house-keeper in Eve’s boarding house, a position which allows him covert access to many of the ninety-nine companies that rejected him as a marketing analyst. Ironically, Stanley ultimately achieves financial success at the expense of the white dominated business world. He enters the jungle contest sponsored by companies such as Chiffon, Fab Ajax and Colgate Palmolive-Peet and wins nearly $50,000 in cash and prizes. Stanley’s undermines the racism and sexism of the companies he targets since they expect American housewives code words for white women in the 1940’s-to enter their contests, and Stanley fits in neither of these categories. Beneath the racial and sexual liberation lurks the fact that Stanley must use covert methods to achieve his integrationist goals. Hence he dresses up like a woman and calls himself as Miss Mapel.

Though he is a male but outwardly gives the appearance as though he is a woman and suffers a lot of torture. Through him Gloria Naylor points out that the black female has to fight colour and sex for her standing and struggle to achieve something in life. She allows Miss Mample to find his identity to be “my own man” (BC 178) to
be secure in his gender "I am a man" (BC 212) and to be free And Eve has allowed Miss Maple to be "one of the freest men I know" (BC 216).

Miss Maple thus shares many of the characteristics of the four proprietors of the neighbourhoods business. They offer acceptance and solace based on a hardnosed acknowledgement of life's brutalities, on a relativistic incorporation of multiplicity and on a gritty compromise. Lastly He returns to regular pants and jacket and a new life.

Gloria Naylor, presents in Bailey's Cafe that women and those with black pigmentation have to suffer from poverty, mental and physical torture. Society does not permit them to earn a respectful living so for their survival they have to fight and keep dual consciousness. The black cultural nationalism encourages the view that blacks and white are essentially different and the loss of this essential difference equals a loss of cultural and spiritual identity. Like Toni Morrison Gloria Naylor is a universalist and argues that,

"the cultural homogenization and integration implied by universalism demand a hegemonic stamp of approval upon that which is different denying both cultural difference and identity" (BC 249)

Critics feel that she perpetuates not obliterates racial oppression.

In Bailey's Cafe, Naylor presents a literary version of Du Bois's synthesis and includes the universalist and nationalist perspectives. Her representative characters and canonical conversations combine the universalist and nationalist positions to create a liberting literary alternative. Bailey's Cafe speaks to Geoffrey Chaucer's The Canterbury Tales Shake espeares work and Toni Morrison's The Bluest Eye
to establish a universal and national background, ultimately aspiring to Ralph Ellison’s *Invisible Man*, which merges the universal and national. Gloria Naylor affirms the canonical nature of these author’s works by representing their structures, motifs, and characters. Gloria Naylor forges a universal national synthesis in which Afro-American cultural difference has a place. Like Morrison Gloria Naylor redefines black beauty so that they attain confidence and move forward for their survival.

The final section of the novel that follows Miss Maples story continues the focus on male identity and the relationship between blacks and Jews. Gloria Naylor bring the problems of black anti-Semitism and Jewish racism. The black male proprietor of Bailey’s Cafe, the Jewish owner of the pawnshop are brought together to bless the baby boy Mirim, an Ethiopian Jew. Though this cross cultural nurturant concern, the novel provides a final suggestion of a new male identity. Political and ceremonial discourse is made to seem a largely male affairs and it is Miriam’s mother who protests against this state. The finale of all the stories in not madness or darkness but light and birth. Gloria Naylor sees the future of America and hopes a day will come when the women will be given due respect, she will not require to struggle to make her identity There will be no sexual and racial discriminatio. There will be equality between male and female/ black and white they well be free from racial and sexual atrocities which will be helpful to uplaft their socio-economic status.
CHAPTER-VIII

REFERENCES


**********

263