Some Aspects of Present Black English in New York

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We may apply the term *dialect* to the speech of any group, limitted socially or geographically, which has certain language habits in common, enough so that there is an appearance of homogeneity within the group and an appearance of difference from other groups.① When we study the English language in America, we may find the language habits of many minority group——including most blacks, Indians, Chinese, Mexicans and Puerto Ricans. The reason is that they have remained more or less socially ostracized and formed their own comunities. It is said that the most interesting and important division within American English is what separats the speech of many blacks from the speech of most whites.② Therefore it is interesting and useful for us to know the particular features that often set the language of black citizens apart from that of their white fellow ones. Black English, the English language used by many black people in the United States, is difined in Dictionary of New English (1973) as follows:

> Black English, a dialect of English spoken by many American Blacks. Black English originated in the south but is now also used in northern cities. It is distinguished by special pronunciation, intonations, vocabulary and also grammatical or syntactic structure (as by the use of additional present-tense forms: I work, I am working, I be working, I a working, I be a-working). Also called Afro-Americanese.

In what respects is black English different from general standard English? This report is an attempt to describe some of the outstanding features of the present black English or some of the ways in which the speech of many black Americans differs from that of their white fellows. It is desirable and ideal that the linguistic data should be the living black English of the present day. But we do not have any chance to hear English of black people who acquired it in their childhood and have used it in their everyday life. Only literary works are available as the linguistic data. In this survey naturally we must use the literary work which represents the living black English as it is. The novel *Manchild in the Promised Land* written by Claude Brown in 1965 is used as the linguistic data. In the novel the following comments from *The New York Times Book Review* and *Atlantic Journal* can be found respectively: "It is written with brutal and unvanished honesty in the plain talk of people, in language that is fierce, uproarious, obscene and tender...." and "He

writes about his life——and Harlem——with frank, brutal and beautiful power." This novel is the autobiography of the young black who grew in Harlem. The characters are sons and daughters of former Southern share croppers. Thus this novel seems to be suitable to investigate the black speech in northern cities. The typical black English may be found in the portion of the conversation.

The author hardly uses 'eye-dialect' devices, such quasi-phonetic respellings as *fether* for *feather*, *bin* for *been*, *tho'* for *through* and so on. 'Eye-dialect' devices, the frequent use of which causes difficulties to general readers, are often used to exagerate the rustic speech of the characters by many authors. For example Joel Chandler Harris used 'eye-dialect' in his novels to identify the characters as members of different social groups. The best known of all dialects which Harris used is the dialect of black people in the Uncle Remus stories. Summer Ives criticized Harris's use of neglo dialect in the paper, 'Dialect Differenciation in the Stories of Joel Chander Harris.'③

> Actually the field records of the Linguistic Atlas, aside from a very few Gullah records, show hardly any usages in Negro speech which cannot also be found in rustic white speech. And there are many similarities in usage as Harris wrote the dialects. However, the peculiarity of his Negro speech.... consists in the greater density of nonstandard forms, and in the fact that the nonstandard items include, in greater number, features which are associated with Southern plantation speech rather than with Southern mountain speech. Since the same features can actually be found in the speech of both Negro and rustic white, Harris could more justly be accused of exaggerating the actual difference than of failing to indicate it.

The novel, *Manchild in the Promised Land*, can be said the record of the lively negro speech. There is no doubt whether the language used in the literary work is represented as it is. Using the novel as the linguistic data, we try to describe some of the outstanding features of black English. For howerer greatly the pronunciation of black English speakers may diverge from that of standard English speaker, it is grammar rather than pronunciation that seems to distinguish the dialect most sharply.④

The expressions quoted as the linguistic data are taken from Signet Book edition of *Manchild in the Promised Land* published from the New American Library. The number in parenthesis after each example indicates that of the page in the novel. The following abbrebiations indicate the authorities which we use to present an account of grammar and usage.

CAU……*Current American Usage* by M. Bryant, 1962

EBW……*English in Black and White* by R. Burling, 1973

Evans……*A Dictionary of Contemporary American Usage* by B. Evans and C. Evans, 1957

GCE……*A Grammar of Contemporary English* by R. Quirk, S. Greenbaum, G. Leech and J. Svartvik, 1972

Gendai……*Gendai Beigo Bumpo* by M. Onoue, 1957

Glossary……*A Glossary for College English* by M. Stevens and C. Kegel, 1966
Index……*Writer's Guide and Index to English* by P. Perrin, 1965
Long……*The Sentence and its Part* by R. Long, 1961
Syntax……*Syntax* by G. Curme, 1931

1. Noun and Pronoun

1-1 *Y'll* as *you all*

You all, often run together as one word and pronounced ⟨jɔl⟩, is an accepted and respectable plural of *you*, using by the educated and uneducated throughout the South and the South Midland. *You all* may be addressed to one person, but includes the idea of others, as '*You all* come over together', meaning the person and his family are invited. (CAU) But in literary English the plural cannot be shown except by adding some other words, as in *you ladies, you people*. (Evans) The form, *yawl*, is used in black English of William Faulkner's works.

Son, people was gittin' tired-a *y'll* stealin' all dey sheets and spreads. (11)
I want all-a *y'all*——I want every livin' ass here——to hear it. (140)
Y'all just keep him around here and keep listenin' to all that bull shit. (388)

1-2 Redundant use of nominative

It is quite common in speech and occasionally appears in writing for emphasis. But it should be avoided in writing but for very good reason. (Index) Many black speakers made frequent use of a "double subject": '*John, he* lives in New York.' Standard speakers often use this construction, but usually only when the first subject is very long: '*The lady* I saw yesterday carrying things up the stairs for the man, *she* is going now.' (EBW)

All of us, believe it or not, *we* were nice guys. (371)
Lou, *anyone* who wears a turned-around collar, *they* make me kind of skeptical. (391)
I feel if there's one nigger out here on the street who I owe somethin' to, *one nigger* I should give my life for, man, *it's* you. (77)

1-3 Use of objective case for nominative

The nominative case should be used when the word is standing in a position appropriate to the subject of a verb. '*Him* and *me* were there' is accordingly unacceptable. But in unusual construction, where the subject is out of its natural place, the objective case is acceptable, as *him* in 'there will only be *him* left.' (Evans)

Then Butch and *me* can get in it. (14)

Like, my father too, and *me* and this cat can't make it. (126)

Me and this cat have got something going, something strong going. (172)

1-4 Omission of subject

The subjects, *I*, *you* and *it* are often omitted when they need not be refferred.

The next time she say it, (*I*) punch huh in huh mont' real hard and she won't say it no more. (43)

If you just want to die, why (do *you*) bother to go out here and do it in the name of freedom? (341)

(*It*) Seem like nobody can't make him understand. (40)

1-5 Use of *theirselves*

A possessive pronoun is often heard, as in *hisself* and *theirselves*. These were once acceptable forms but they have not been standard for more than five hundred years. (Evans) These are in nonstandard usages (CAU)

Somebody had to kill them, if they didn't kill *theirselves*. (288)

I suppose they just might as well go ahead and use too much of that stuff and kill *theirselves*.... (288)

1-6 Agreement

1-6-1 *People* with singular verb

The word, *people*, is often used with a singular form of a verb.

All those sanctified *people is* just a bunch of old hypocrites and none of *'em* ain't a bit more saved nobody else. (25)

They got some West Indian *people* around here who *is* evil enough to do anything to anybody. (40)

I know that, but some white *people is* crackers and some a dens is Jews, and Mr. Goldman is a Jew. (44)

1-6-2 *We, you, they* with singujar verb

The personal pronouns, *we*, *you* and *they*, are often used with a singular form of a verb.

All those years, man, *we was* down on the plantation in those shacks, eating just potatoes and fatback and chitterlin's and greens, and look at what happened. (171)

You wasn' home for last Christmas. (61)

They ain't the kinda crackers you buy in the candy store, *is they*? (44)

I'll tell you what *they is.* (44)

2. Verb

2-1 Inflection of verb

2-1-1 Final *t* and *d* weakened or lost

Final *t* and *d* are sometimes weakened or lost in the speech of black people. (EBW)

What I *tole* you about sassin' ole people? (27)

2-1-2 Irregular verbs changed into regular verbs

Such strong verbs as *grow, throw, teach* have become weak verbs.

It looks like you *growed* a little bit. (54)

Well, they *throwed* him outta that school right after that. (42)

Sonny, who *teached* you how to work roots? (43)

2-2 Dative of interest

The old short form, that is, the personal pronoun instead of the reflexive, is still, especially in colloquial speech, often used in the first and second persons instead of the long literary form: 'I bought *me* (or *myself*) a new hat.' (Syntax) The use of dative of interest is somewhat dialectal. (Gendai)

……and I have to get *me* a piano because I want to play like that. (226)

I want to find *me* a place too. (246)

I want to have *me* a refrigerater that's always full of food, you know ? (247)

2-3 Present tense

2-3-1 Omission of third person singular-*s*

According to EBW, many black speakers lack the third person singular suffix entirely. And Syntax tells us that this usage is common in American Negro dialect, exemplifying 'Gawd always *lub* (for *loves*) de righteous" (Du Bose Heyward. *Porgy*)

Sumpin gotta be wrong with the boy, 'cause nobody in my family *steal* and *lie* the way he *do.* (40)

His daddy *preach* to him, he *yell* at him, he *beat* so bad sometimes.... (40)

About the use of *don't* instead of *doesn't* EBW tells us that many nonstandard speakers, black and white, use *don't* rather than *doesn't* with third person singular subjects.

It wasn't no stroke that makes Grandpa walk the way he *do.* (50)

Why *don't* he take some of that religion and use it himself, to make himself less mean and stop killing all those people.... (332)

2-3-2 Use of *got*

In colloquial English *have* and *has* are omitted. This is the example of obscuration to the point of inaudibility. That is, children and others learning the language fail to hear the slight *'ve* and therefore do not pronounce it. For instance, in 'you *'ve got* powers' ⟨juv got 'pauə⟩, the ⟨v⟩ is likely to be so reduced that it remains unheard. Therefore 'You *got* powers' results. (CAU) This is acceptable spoken English in America, though it is not acceptable written English. That is, 'we *got* time' and 'we *got* to go now' may be heard, but they should not be seen. (Evans)

a) *Got* is used as *have got* or *has got*

That man *got* the devil in him. (25)

They *got* some West Indian people around here who is evil enough to do anything to anybody. (40)

b) *Gotta* is used as *have got to* or *has got to*

Child, you just *gotta* pray, you just *gotta* pray and trust in the Lord. (25)

Sumpin *gotta* be wrong with the boy, 'cause nobody in my family steal and lie the way he do. (40)

2-3-3 Use of zero copula

Few English speakers hesitate to say 'where you going' or 'what you doing' (or even 'whatcha doin") when speaking rapidly and under the informal situation. The difference between standard and nonstandard English is that nonstandard speakers delete more often and under a much wider range of circumstances. As a result such as 'he going now,' 'they a little late,' and 'you a man' are common among nonstandard black speakers. (EBM) The omission of *be* verb occurs almost in the present tense.

Full	Contracted	Deleted
(Standard formal)	(Standard informal)	(Nonstandard)
You are a man.	You're a man.	You a man.
They are a little late.	They're a little late.	They a little late.

Look here, you simple-actin' nigger, you better try to be cool, 'cause you (*are*) wit me. (96)

I'm glad you (*are*) here. (129)

Yeah, just tell 'em all I said (*is*) good-bye. (132)

I don't even want to know where they (*are*) at, nothin'. (247)

2-4 Past tense: Use of *done* as an intensifier

The use of *done*, which may mean *already* or may simply add emphasis, is generally excluded from standard speech. (EBW) One example is found in the novel.

She use to buy his lunch for him when he went lyin' to her about bein' hungry after he *done spend* his lunch money on some ole foolishness. (42)

But Syntax tells us that the attraction of the infinitive into the past tense takes place after the past tense *done*. It shows the quotation from *Nights with Uncle Remus* by Joel chandler Harris: 'Tain't so might long sence I *done tole* (instead of *tell*) you 'bout ole Mr. Benjermin Ram.' More examples are found in the novel. Also see 2-5-2

May he *done did* sumpin to one a those kids and they people found out about it.... (40)

I came to find out this Negro *done took* some little high-yaller girl in the closet one day. (41)

Man, how many times I *done told* you it ain't no boogeyman. (43)

2-5 Perfect tense

2-5-1 Omission of *have, has* (Aux. *have, has*→ϕ)

Auxiliary, *have*, is often omitted.

....that boy must (*have*) been born with the devil in him. (21)

Look, K. B., I (*have*) been tellin' you ever since I came here, if you want to git outta this place. (150)

How (*have*) you been, man? Okay. How (*have*) you been? (243)

2-5-2 Use of redundant *done*

In nonstandard speech, the past participle *done* occurs as a supperfluous auxiliary: 'I *'ve done told* you all I'm goin to tell you.' (CAU) The following account in Syntax is available.

The *do*-form of the verb is now used only in the present and the past tense, but in early Modern English it was sometimes employed also in the present perfect and the past perfect, especially in Scotland: 'as I afore *have done discus*' (Lauder, *Tractate*, 340, A. D. 1556)=*have discussed*. The infinitive following the past participle *done* was sometimes attracted into the form of the past participle:...., 'Thay ar Wolfis and Toddis, quha.... *have* violentlie *done brokin* (instead of *break*) the dyk of the Scheipfald' (Burne, *Disput.*, 78, V, A. D. 1581)='They are wolves and foxes who *have* violently *broken* the wall of the sheepfield.' Both form of this construction are still found in popular southern American English: 'I [*have*] *done tell* you 'bout Brer Rabbit makin' 'im a steeple' (Joel Chandler Harrls, *Nights with Uncle Remus*, p. 97).... 'I' *ve done found* (instead of *find*) it' (Margaret Prescott Montague, *Up Eel River*, p. 182) The past participle resulting from attraction is now much more common than the older infinitive form.

We have one example using more common form, '*have*+*done*+past participle.'

....'cause my poor child would*a* *done been* lynched, right up here in New York. (41)

2-5-3 Use of *done gone*

We can find the example of *done gone*. This construction should be *have done gone*, as we have examined in 2-5-1 and 2-5-2. In the example *done gone* may imply *be silly enough to do*. According to Index, *go and* is spoken form of emphasis: '*Go and* try it yourself' (no actual movement meant), 'She *went and* shot the bear herself.' These are primarily oral expressions, but they are appropriate in some informal and general writing.

The next day, or even the next minute, that lyin' Negro *done gone* and did it again——and got a mouthful——a lie when he git caught. (40)

2-6 Future tense

2-6-1 Omission of *will, shall* (Aux. *will, shall*→ϕ)

Will and *shall* are contracted to *'ll*, and many black people can go further and omit the remaining——*'ll* as well. (BEW) *Gon* and *gonna* are mainly used in the novel when indicating the future tense.

We go downtown come Friday and Saturday night. (330)

I keep telling you, he's a minister, not a preacher. (392)

2-6-2 Use of *gon* (or *gonna*) for *going to*

Phrases based upon *going to* are very common among black nonstandard speakers, but they are often pronounced in an abbriviated way. (EBW)

a) *Gon* for *going to*

Boy, sometimes, I git the feelin' you ain't *gon* never staying home no more. (61)

Sonny, if I ever agam, as long as I live, hear about you usin' drugs, I'm *gon* kill you. (112)

b) *Gonna* for *going to*

If they don' let me outta this place, I'm *gonna* go crazy. (105)

I don't think anybody is *gonna* make it farther than Floyd Patterson has made it. (174)

2-6-3 Use of *gon* (or *gonna*) for *be going to*

Black nonstandard speakers use some of the abbreviation. 'He *is going to* go' can be abbreviated in various way until it may finally sound something like 'he *gon*' go.' (EBW)

a) *gon* for *be going to*

He got one more time to kick my ass and we *gon* go to war, and somebody in

that house is gonna die. (126)

....if you *gon* be a good hustler, man, you got to know somethin' about arithmetic and business. (179)

b) *gonna* for *be going to*

I know one thing if I don't git that boy outta New York soon, my hair *gonna* be gray before I get thirty years old. (40)

When you *gonna* work some on somebody? (43)

we can find an example using *m'a* instead of *gon* or *gonna*. EBW gives account of the use of *m'a* as follows:

White speakers who think of their own speech as standard often abbreviate this expression a good deal when they speak in a relaxed manner. They may say such things as *I'm goin' to go*, *I'm gonna go*, or even *Ingna go*, in which all that remains of *am going to* are two brief nasal consonants. Black nonstandard speakers use some of these same abbreviations, but they sometimes use others as well: *I'mana go*, *I'mna go*, or, at its simplest, *I'm-a go*.

The following is the example.

Be good or *I'm'a* kill you. (45)

2-7 Progressive tense

2-7-1 Omission of *be* verb (*Am*, *is*, *are*→ϕ)

Black nonstandard speakers use progressive tense freely, but since they tend to omit *be* verb, this tense may take on a superficial appearance some what different from that of standard English. Even when *is* or *are* is omitted, the-*ing* suffix (often pronounced *in'*) indicates the progressive tense. (EBW)

Man, you not givin' us another chance. You givin' us the same chance we had before. (123)

Sonny, you got to stay away from them gray boys and them gray teachers, because, like, they stealin' your soul, man. (232)

2-7-2 Forms of *be being* and *be having*.

The following account is seen in GCE:

When verbs either habitually or in certain case will not admit the progressive, they are called STATIVE. When they will admit it, they are called DYNAMIC. It is normal for verbs to be dynamic and even the minority that are almost always stative can usually be given a dynamic use on occassion. HAVE and BE can be used either way.

John { *is having* / ** is having* / *has* } a good car. ('possesses')

John *is having* a good time. ('is experiencing')

Mary { *is being* a good girl today. ('is behaving well')
{ *is* a good girl. ('is by nature a good girl')

(An asterisk indicates an unacceptable structure.)

We can find the following unacceptable sentences in the novel.

Claude, oh, you'*re* just *being* too pessimistic about it. (128)

Yeah, Mama you always *havin'* some kinda feelin's. (129)

They'*re having* Goldie's funeral Tuesday night. (212)

2-8 Tense system

A part of the tense system of black English can be summerized as follows. These forms are seen in the linguistic data of this survey. Of course many forms on this chart are identical to standard English. Anyone who, in characterizing black English, eliminates the sentences that happen to be identical to standard, makes great mistakes on black English. Many of nonstandard forms in this chart are used among whites, too. We find that the tense system of black English is not so much different from that of white one. The forms in parenthses are not seen in the novol but according to EBW they are used among black people.

	Positive	Negative	Question
Present	You work	You { don't / don' / (ain't) } work	{ Do / — } you work
	He { work / works }	He { doesn't / don't / don' / (ain't) } work	Does he work? He { works / work }?
Present progressive	You { are / 're / — } workin'	You { ain't / not } workin'	{ Are / — } you workin'?
Past	You { — / done } worked	You { didn't / didn' / ain't } work	Did you work? You worked?
Present perfect	You { 've / 've done / — } worked	You { haven't / ain't } worked	{ Have / — } you worked?
Will future	You { 'll / — } work	You won't work	——
Going to future	You { 've gon / gonna to / gonna / gon to / gon } work	You ain't { gonna / gon } work	You gonna work? Are you { gonna / gon } work?

2-9 Interrogative sentence

2-9-1 *Yes-no* question

An interrogative sentence is made in rapid colloquial conversation simply by changing the intonation of the sentence. In very colloquial speech both standard and nonstandard speakers sometimes omit the auxiliary entirely: 'You going?' 'We done enough?' Black nonstandard English hardly differs from standard informal English in its formation of simple questions except that it omits auxiliaries more easily and more often. (EBW)

Soldier, you interested in some nice young girls? (161)
You tryin' to commit suicide or somethin'? (272)
You really sold on that thing, huh? (301)

2-9-2 *Wh*-question

The omission of auxiliaries in *wh*-question is often seen in the novel. We can find that black speakes often omit auxiliaries in the question. The following account is given from EBW.

> Many black English speakers, moreover, are able to omit the *do* or *did* that is often required in standard English questions as a way of marking the flip-flop. As a result, these black English speakers not only produce sentences identical to those of standard English, but also others of the same meaning which deviate from standard.
>
> Why do they listen to me? Why they listen to me?
> Where did they go? Where they go?
>
> In this case, where the standard English rules are relatively rigid (they always required the flip-flop and sometimes require the introduction of *do*), black English allows more freedom.

Yeah. So, what you want to ask me, Danny? (170)
What you got in the briefcase, man? (301)
Now how many times somebedy got to tear his ass to show you that he's not gon to? (386)

2-10 Negation

2-10-1 Use of *ain't*

Ain't is the contraction of *am not, are not, is not, has not* and *have not* (present tense in all three persons, singular and plural) in nonstandard speech. But most standard speakers avoid it except in very informal situation, that is, in their family or among their intimate friends. CAU gives us an interesting account of *ain't* which is used for *am not.*

> According to one study of Linguistic Atlas (Malmoston), in the context "I *am not* going to hurt him," *ain't* practically never occurs in the speech of type III (usually with four years of college education) informants in the East. *I'm not*

is the preferred form. In type II (those with at least some secondary education) speech, however, *ain't* occurs often, from 25% of time in the Upper Midwest to about 80% in North Carolina and Virginia.

Thus *ain's* is less used among people who have recieved higher education. *Ain't* is used by the writers of fiction or drama to mark a character as uneducated or self-made. For many nonstandard speakers, both black and white, constructions with *not* often result in *ain't.*

So you *ain't* been goin' to school, huh? (68)

The boy *ain't* no good; he *ain't* never been no good, and he *ain't* never gonna be no good. (152)

2-10-2 Use of *ain't* for *there is* (or *are*) *not*

Ain't is often used for *there is* (or *are*) *not*, following a negative pronoun.

Shit, *ain't* nobody gon be sendin' no damn snowplows up to Eighth Avenue and 145th street. (199)

Mama, *ain't* nobody talkin' about him goin' out of here gettin' into some trouble. (288)

Lord, I sure don't know where that boy could be, but I sure hope *ain't* nothin happened to him. (407)

2-10-3 Use of *ain't* for *didn't*

Did is more often contracted to *ain't* by black speakers than white ones. (EBW)

Lord, I sho hope nobody *ain't* work no roots on my child. (40)

2-10-4 Double negative

The combination of a negative verb (*is not*, *do not*, *have not*, etc.) with a negative pronoun (*nobody*, *none*, etc.), a negative adverb (*hardly*, *scarecely*, etc.) or a negative connective (*neither*, *nor.* etc.) is a double negative. A double negative construction, 'I do*n't* do *nothing*' is an emphatic denial and no one who speaks English can misunderstand it. (Evans) But this construction is one of the most severely despised ones of English. After hearing a double negative construction, many Americans conclude that the speaker lacks educatiou and refinement. (EBW) According to CAU the combination of a negative verb with a negative pronoun or with a negative connective, such a sentence as 'I could*n't* see *nothing*,' is nonstandard, but a pseudo-double negative contractions, that is, the combination of a negative verb with a negative adverb, such as 'I could*n't scarcely* see it,' is standard usage in speech and writing.

I *never* gave a man *no* money in my life. (38)

Some of his teachers even said he was smart in doing his school work and when he was*n't* botherin' *nobody.* (42)

2-10-5 Triple and quadrople negatives

In the past, (double), triple, quadrople negatives were acceptable. But these are nonstandard English. Many examples are seen in the novel.

.... *nobody* do*n't* see 'em *no* more. (43)

I do*n't* want to know *nothin' no* more (317)

I *ain't* got *no* time to be goin' *no* place complainin' about *nothin.*' (=I don't have any time and any place to go to and anything to complain about.) (282)

2-11 Omission of *to*

2-11-1 Adverbial infinitive without *to*

An infinitive without *to* is often used, espeially after *go* and *let.*

The next tlme somebody tell you the boogeyman is some place, git you a big stick and go see him. (44)

According to Long, bare infinitive, occurs after *let's* in standard informal style. He shows us the following examples: 'Let's *do go* to see him,' 'Let's *don't* say nothing.'

C'mon, man, let's *go steal* somethin'! (127)

Come on, Turk, let's *go git* some sheets, git some money and... (130)

2-11-2 Predicate infinitive without *to*

A prepositional infinitive used after the copula is often omitted.

All I want you is just leave me alone. (132)

If you really think you're free, man, all you got to do is go to jail one time. (329)

Man, the first thing we got to do is stop buying anything but the necessities from the white man (331)

2-12 Agreement of tense indirect speech

When a verb of a main clause is in the past or past perfect tense, a verb in a dependent clause should be also past. But this rule is infringed when one wants to make the dependent clause emphasized or conspicuous. Many sentences which infringe the rule are found in the novel. Therefore it may be characteristic of black English that the tense shift is disregarded.

It mighta been that he just *don'* know how to talk regular people. (42)

Sonny, Maggie said they *got* snakes down South and they *bite* people and people *die* when snakes *bite* 'em. (43)

Mama said the boogeyman *comes* around at night wit a big burlap sack and *gits* all bad kids and *put* in that burlap suck and nobody *don't* see 'em no more. (43)

2-13 Auxiliary verb : Omission of *had* in *had better*

The assimilation of the *d* of *you'd* by the *b* of *better* has resulted in the informal construction without *had*. (Index) Both forms, *'d better* and *better* occur in informal English. (CAU)

> ....it looks like it's a white baby....I know one thing that baby *better* start lookin' colored before your husband see him. (39)
>
> Man, you *better* not come down here any more, 'cause I'm gon kick your ass. (268)
>
> You just *better* stay away from those white girls. (355)

3. Adjective and Adverb

3-1 Form of comparative form

Such nonstandard forms as *gooder* and *badder*, which were used from 14th to 18th century, are seen in the novel.

> I didn't git no *gooder*; I even got *baddar* than I was then. (44)
>
> Yeah, he's gotten bigger and *baddar*. (254)

3-2 Use of adjective for adverb

Adjectives are often used for adverbs in informal or nonstandard English when sentences are short and somewhat emotional. According to Index, the levels of adverbial use of *sure*, *real*, *easy* are following. *Sure* instead of *surely* is informal and would not ordinarily be written. *Real* for *really* occurs in nonstandard usage; easy for *easily* in speech and informal writing.

> White people *sure* do some damned fool things. (93)
>
> Yeah, man. Niggers must be *real* strong people who just can't be kept down. (171)
>
> Young people don't die that *easy*, Mama. (414)
>
> He's doin' *fine*, man, as far as I know. (306)

3-3 Use of *this, that* and *dead* as intensifiers

According to Index, adverbial *that* is general English. We can say that such intensifiers as *this*, *that*, *dead* are used in the informal situation.

> If you gon start runnin' *this* early, you better be good at it, 'cause you probably gon be runnin' all your life. (268)
>
> Cigarettes aren't *that* expensive. (368)
>
> Carole said God gon strike Daddy *dead* if he don't stop being so mean to us. (43)

We have surveyed the present speech of black people in New York, using the literary work. We can not find that their speech is so much difterent from that of white fellow citizens and that we can call their speech 'neglo dialect.' Many features of their speech can be seen among white people and are labelled 'colloquialism' or 'slang' in the grammars and dictionaries. The difference of Black English from general standard English seems to be often too exagerated as W. Edward criticizes. He pinpoints a number of misconceptions which have persisted among educated people as follows. ⑤

> Other misconceptions concerning so-called Negro dialect pertain especially to vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation. The differences between the vocabulary and the grammar of this dialect and those of general American English have long been much more imaginary than real. Ever so many of the words and locutions and most of the substandard grammar which have been said to be characteristic of Negro dialect have been current at one time or another in almost every section of the United States, including areas in which the number of Negroes has always been incomparably small. This fact is supported by the numerous word lists which have been published in *Dialect Notes* since 1900 and by many articles which have appeared in *American Speech* since its beginning in 1925.

Black English which is seen in the novel *Man child in the Promised Land* may be heard everywheve among black people who have received education. This may be what is called 'remedial English,' which black children learn in the school to remedy their language habits that they acquired before reaching school age and to speak and write proper English. Remedial English has many features that are not only characteristic of black English, but also found in the speech of their white fellows. If the characters in the novel used what Stewart calls 'basilect'⑥ (which is remedial English and used among black families and friends), we could find true black English which black people have brought with them from the Southern States. As Stewart tells us, black people use the two language forms, that is, 'acrolect' and 'basilect.'⑦ The former is spoken among people who have received education and when they speak to white people. The latter is not touched by school instruction and used in dialogues among black people. This considerably preserves pure black English which is heard in Southern States.

The difference between the speech of blacks and that of whites has been gradually diminishing owing to the improvement of the social position of black people, the spread of education among them and especially the influence of the speech of whites on black English and vice versa. According to our survey we may say that black English in New York is made up with words and expressions, most of which are labelled 'colloquial' and 'slang' in grammars and dictionaries. And those labelled 'black English' in the authorities are less than we expected.

Notes

① Summer Ives "Dialect Difterence in the Stories of Joel Chandler Harris," in *A Various Language*, ed. Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 223.

② Robbins Burling, *English in Black and White* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1973), p. 3.

③ Williamson and Burke, *op. cit.*, p. 226.

④ Burling, *op. cit.*, p. 48.

⑤ W. Edward Farrison "Dialectory Versus Negro Dialect," in *A Various Language*, ed. Juanita V. Williamson and Virginia M. Burke (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1971), p. 191.

⑥ A. Ota, A. Ikeya and Y. Murata, *Grammar I*, Vol. 3 of *Outline of English Linguistics*, ed. Akira Ota (Tokyo: Taishukan Publishing Company, 1972), p. 508.

⑦ acrolect $<$ acro $-$ 'apex' $+$ $-$ lect as in 'dialect,'
basilect $<$ basi $-$ 'bottom' $+$ $-$ lect