



## THE WOMEN'S BREWSTER PLACE IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE

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### Abstract:

Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* is a perfect example of the multi-perspective cycle. The seven stories focus on the African-American women who live of Brewster place, an urban housing unit. Two brief, lyrical descriptions of the neighborhood frame the narratives; their title including to the cycles of hope and despair that characterize the lives of the residents. Unlike the Tunnet landing villagers, Naylor's characters have little sense of community or support. They come to Brewster place for different reasons some because of economic necessity, some to hide, and some to find ethnic solidarity. Like the buildings themselves, which have seen tenanted and abandoned by generations of immigrants who earn their prosperity and move on, their lives are marked by abuse, betrayal, and isolation. Mattie Michael moves onto the block when her son Jumbs bail, her house to the bondsman. Kiswana Brown takes a studio-apartment to organize the residents into a political force, yet she must reconcile her revolutionary rhetoric with the comforts of her middle-class upbringing.

**Key Words:** Gloria Naylor, The Women of Brewster Place, Mattie Michael & Kiswana

### Introduction:

In the cycle's most harrowing story, the bigotry of some residents against a lesbian couple, Theresa and Lorraine, escalates into a brutal assault. Brewster place does contain flashes of communal hope: Church services, Community plays, tenant's association meetings and block parties bring the neighborhood together; but the connections are tenuous and momentary. In Tunnet Landing, Life Stories are community property, but of Brewster place, they remain tangled in misunderstandings and confusions. When a street gang rapes Lorraine, she mistakenly kills the only tenant who be trended her, the building Landsman Ben. None of the other women learns the truth.

Since race is a cultural construct, racial identity is the construction of a self which respect to the elements of race. In African-American women's writing, the construction of blackness gradually shifts from being primarily external to internal as writers begin to claim and reclaim a racial identity since the two are interconnected throughout history.

*The Women of Brewster Place* is composed of inter related tales of seven African-American women living on a dead end street in a Northern Ghetto. Besieged end betrayed by men-one character has been stripped of her home and money, one completely deprived of the ability to form her own identity because of her reliance on men, one forced into an abortion that makes her neglect her living child, who then dies of electrocution, and one gang-raped by a group of men who are threatened by her lesbian relationship and feel to need to teach her a lesson, these women, who range in age from their twenties to their fifties, rely on each other for the support they need to get through their devastating experiences.

Readers studying Naylor's work cannot ignore the influence of Christian theology on her characters and on the courses they choose to take. From symbolic names such as Eve and Esther to the circular pattern of *Linden Hills* downward to Luther Nedeed's house, her work is lush with biblical influence. Her stories often borrow from, parody and reinvent the stories of the Christian Bible.

In *The Women of Brewster Place* Naylor focuses on seven black women, residents of Brewster place. She concerned with the distance between their dreams and realities, problems and solutions. These women are of different ages, come from different backgrounds, react differently to their blackness and to men, and have different notions of personal accomplishment, but all are burdened by being both black and female. Naylor is not angry; she writes with conviction and beautiful language but spares the reader any bitterness. "Characters are not puppets but exist and function as well as rounded personalities"

This is the tradition in which Gloria Naylor has placed herself with *The Women of Brewster Place*. The success of her novel is in her rendering in rich, sensuous, rhythmic language, a sense of the reality of Afro-American women's lives while including serious examination of racial and sexual politics without being overly critical of the racism of America. Naylor manages to make the reader understand how the economic and social situation of black people becomes one with personal lives, with the relationships between men and women,

women and women and parents and children, without diminishing the humanity of the individuals involved. She makes it clear that the socio-economic reality of black people create black men's tendency to leave their lovers and children. She knows that black children need special training to survive in a society which holds blacks in feeling. But Naylor is also certain that black men are capable of taking more responsibility that they do and that mothers of any color can try to do their best for their children.

Brewster place is separated from the rest of the city by a brick wall erected to control traffic in the major part of the town. Disconnected from the business of the city by a wall, Brewster place has become a dead end, literally and figuratively, for the black people who finally come to inhabit it. By setting Brewster place of, she is able to write of Afro-American untouched by whites in their daily, domestic lives.

Naylor is a successful as she is presenting the complexity of black lives without reducing the people to types simply because she is an accomplished author. She is especially good of describing the sensuous and at evoking the sounds, smells and feelings of any given situation. Her talent for creating rich, emotional characters makes her failings particularly disappointing. Kiswana, the Black power activist and the two lesbians are flat characters, especially Kiswana. The only time Kiswana seems to come alive is in few lines when she is thinking of her lover. The lesbians also fail because Naylor does not invest them with the sensuousness and fullness of feeling that characterizes the other women. This chapter is also the only one in which Naylor fails to show the seamless inter mingling of the political and the personal and resorts to a lecture from her middle class and bourgeois. Naylor seems to have difficulty portraying women whose life choices and circumstances have separated them from the pain of love of her characters lives carries through her thought. At the end of the novel the people leave a dying Brewster Place with their dreams still deferred there is a sense of hope. The women have the very least, respect and then own.

Mattie Michael, a strong, elderly, unmarried black woman who reared a son before moving to Brewster Place. Mattie is the pivotal character in the novel. Her own personal tragedies her father's shame and rejection when he learns she is pregnant; the loss of her son, Basil, whom she loves dearly, the loss of her worldly possessions make her sensitive to the tragedies of others. She breathes life and hope into the dismal atmosphere of Brewster Place. At the end of the novel, Mattie is the first to begin tearing down the wall that makes Brewster Place a literal and figurative dead end its residents.

In Brewster Place a friendship based on the shared experience of black women hood exists sometimes in the form of the mother daughter relationship. One of the problems several women face is that in their isolation they come to focus all their needs on their children and define themselves exclusively as mothers, thus enacting a made-defined, exploitive role. This tendency has both negative and positive consequences. The novel is dominated by Mattie Michael whose presence is felt in all of the individual character studies. The female connection her participants in a whole history of mother sorrow, black and white. But the bond is not just that of mother and daughter, even though Mattie had helped raise Ciel years earlier. It is woman to woman their similar suffering makes them equal. Lucielia had come to look on her own daughter Serena as "the only thing I have ever loved without pain."

Barbara describes, the role of matter for this black woman is conflict with her role as wife, because of the racism of her community, and *The Women of Brewster Place* provides a perfect model for exploring some of the concepts of feminist theory and criticism. In every chapter, Naylor addresses women's sexuality and questions the role of this sexuality in defining the woman. Mattie snuffs out her sexuality and is defined by sexual politics. Etta Mae is defined by sexual pursuit, Eva has enjoyed many men, is a healthy regard for sexuality, because she has always retained sexual control over her life. Cora Lee abuses sex, accepting little bit end no responsibility for introducing more babies into the world. Kiswana's in the hero of sexual awakening in her relationship with somebody, she also begins to see her mother as a woman. Lorraine and Theresa are defined only by their sexuality, as though society can define them only as the dimensional characters because they are lesbians. Even Ben's unnamed; daughter learns early on that as a woman, she might be victimized because she belongs to feminine gender. Naylor explained in Brewster Place it is a not place black women by the power execute their desires of other community.

For every character, a series of reversals resulting in the loss of something of value identify or social statuses for instance proceed entry into Brewster Place. Ben is the subject the whims of Mr. Clyde, the rich landowner for whom Ben and his family work and is to protect his daughter from the land owner's sexual abuses. As an eloquent spokesman for a system in which men hood is synonymous with social, political and economic power. All the men on Brewster Place to a state of perpetual boyhood: If you was half a man, you could a given me more babies and we would a had some help work in this land instead of a half-grown woman we Gotta. Carry the load for. And if you was even quarter a man; we would not be a bunch of miserable sharecroppers on someone else's land-but we is, Ben.

The women suffer losses that are no less dehumanizing then those which the men experience. Thus the reality that those in the community face on a day-to-day basis contradicts of socio-economic progress implicit in the novel's the ultimate decent which the characters enact is one that is psychological in nature for Naylor's novel explores the character's unconscious.

**Conclusion:**

Naylor is a successful writer as she is presenting the complexity of black lives without reducing the people to types simply because she is an accomplished author. She is especially good of describing the sensuous and at evoking the sounds, smells and feelings of any given situation. Her talent for creating rich, emotional characters makes her failings particularly disappointing. Kiswana, the Black power activist and the two lesbians are flat characters, especially Kiswana. The only time Kiswana seems to come alive is in few lines when she is thinking of her lover. The lesbians also fail because Naylor does not invest them with the sensuousness and fullness of feeling that characterizes the other women. This paper is also the only one in which Naylor fails to show the seamless inter mingling of the political and the personal and resorts to a lecture from her middle class and bourgeois. Naylor seems to have difficulty portraying women whose life choices and circumstances have separated them from the pain of love of her characters lives carries through her thought. At the end of the novel the people leave a dying Brewster Place with their dreams still deferred there is a sense of hope. The women have the very least, respect and then own.

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