



Book Review

The Women of Brewster Place

The Women of Brewster Place, by Gloria Naylor, published by Penguin Books. \$5.95

The Women of Brewster Place is a novel which deals with the elasticity of the human spirit. The novel is written in the form of seven short stories, each of which contains loss and pain in varying degrees. At the end of each story there is a sense of recovery, a spirit renewed.

Such acts of renewal do not begin without catalysts though. There must be something that tells us that life cannot continue status quo. In these moments, in the The Women of Brewster Place, each woman must make her way back to a road of hope. Mattie, who appears in almost every story, is a woman whose courage and humor are support for, if not actual salvation of, others.

Gloria Naylor is the book's lyrical voice of confidence. She portrays a world littered with mindless violence, abasement and dejection, but a world balanced by a spirit of kindness and stamina.

There is an almost liquid quality to these stories, with each woman's life flowing into the others. Men in this novel are generally placed at various moments to portray real failure, violence, and dereliction. There is no man in this novel who takes responsibility for his actions or attempt to change. This is a novel devoted to women and their ability to survive with spirit intact, in defiance of their circumstances.

These women survive by not giving in. They are determined to make all they are able to out of their lives. No single

character carries the weight of any story, and there is a spiritual quality to every woman in this novel; every life is important, and each woman is bound to save herself.

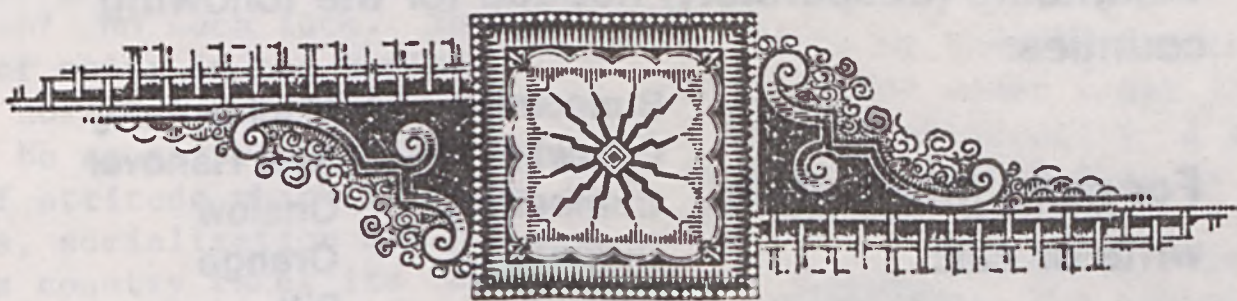
But what makes this novel compelling is that it becomes equally important to the reader that these characters make something better of their lives.

One of the crucial scenes in the novel is a gang rape of a lesbian named Lorraine. The leader of this gang felt his existence threatened by a woman who did not need him sexually. It is in the face of this unprovoked brutality that the women's spirits are severely tested. They must survive Lorraine's destruction, and they do. There is no selfish strength in this book; each character must make a contribution to the independence of others.

Perhaps, then, independence is an almost palpable essence in this book. Men, husbands, children, or parents cannot live our lives for us or be our substitutes. Each woman has a life that must endure, and she must live her own life. What the The Women of Brewster Place is that in spite of life's tragedies and setbacks, one's spirit can transcend and somehow persevere.

The Women of Brewster Place is perhaps one of the most poignant novels you'll ever read. It is certainly not a happy one, but for each horror there is a restoration. The Women of Brewster Place is the affirmation of the women's inner strength that we are, because of our oppression, all too often called upon to use.

-Diane Smith



If you would like to be part of a gay/lesbian support group next semester, plan to attend a meeting of CGLA members and counselors from Student Mental Health on Monday, Jan. 15, 1986 at 8 p.m.

For more information, call the CGLA office at 962-4401 or come by Room 230 of the Carolina Union.

NGIT

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