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**HOMING A DEAD-END STREET: VULNERABILITY,
RESISTANCE AND HOPE IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S
*THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE***

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Barcelona, a 17 de juny de 2022

Signatura:

*Etta laughed softly to herself as she climbed the steps toward the light, and the love,
and the comfort that awaited her.*

(Naylor, 2019, p. 87)

For

*Rodrigo, who sparked my interest in
the wonders and mysteries within the
homey*

*Mom and Dad, my first and forever
home*

*And my friends, who taught me one
may find a haven that exists beyond
four walls*

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ABSTRACT (English)

Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* (1983) tells the story of a group of black women who have come to inhabit a block of apartments located in a dead-end street, sunk into stillness and hostility. As vulnerability and answerability struggle to be harbored within these women's dwellings, the notions of "home" and "private space" become problematic, both the consequence as well as the result of inhabiting a community that cannot but fail to be ethical. However, amid Brewster's precarity and loneliness, spaces and relations of resistance emerge, in the shape of bodily mobilizations, sheltering bonds and hopeful dreams. Therefore, this end-of-degree paper aims to reexamine Naylor's novel through ethical lenses while discussing both the *why* of these homes' failure as well as the *how* of their resistance, may that occur through the resurgence of a new home or the withdrawing rejection to Brewster Place.

Keywords: home, resistance, unhomely, vulnerability, dreams

RESUM (Català)

The Women of Brewster Place (1983), la primera novel·la de Gloria Naylor, explica la història d'un grup de dones negres que conviuen al bloc de pisos d'un carrer sense sortida, immòbil i hostil. A les cases on viuen no hi ha cabuda per a la vulnerabilitat i la capacitat de resposta i, per tant, les nocions de "llar" i "l'espai privat" esdevenen problemàtiques, tant en conseqüència com a resultat de ser part d'una comunitat que no aconsegueix ser ètica. Nogensmenys, entre la solitud i la precarietat de Brewster hi trobem espais i relacions de resistència, en forma de cossos mobilitzant-se, de connexions que esdevenen refugis i de somnis esperançadors. Així, aquest treball de fi de grau reexamina la novel·la de Naylor a través d'una òptica ètica, i investiga *perquè* fallen aquestes llars i/o *com* resisteixen, ja sigui a partir d'una nova llar o del refús absolut de Brewster Place.

Paraules clau: llar, resistència, hostilitat, vulnerabilitat, somnis

INTRODUCTION

The home—as both lived experience and as spatial imaginary—is a site of violence and alienation as well as comfort and security.

(Blunt & Dowling, p. 254, 2006)

Where there is no freedom to enter the square or take to the street, grounds for resistance certainly exist.

(Butler, 2014, p. 106-107)

When I came across Brewster Place for the first time, I found it to be as Naylor’s novel prologue describes it: grey, sultry, polluted, the only logical consequence of having been conceived “in a damp, smoke-filled room” (Naylor, 2019, p. 1). Nonetheless, above all, I was struck by its stillness. Its quietness. Brewster Place was inert, but as immobility had installed itself within almost each and every one of the apartments inside that blighted building—settled in a street with a wall that seemed to foster all its dead-endness and paralysis—, *women were moving*. These “colored daughters” Brewster was so fond of were desperately “trying to make it a home” (Naylor, 2019, p. 4), and in the midst of hostility, they found a way to move—to exist, with all the belongingness and togetherness that implies. And so, in the face of their resistance, my interest in Gloria Naylor’s *The Women of Brewster Place*—firstly published in 1983— and the many discussions it arises surrounding the concept of the home and the unhomely was conceived, too.

My initial question was born out of Naylor’s characters’ despair: why did all these homes in Brewster fail?—which, on the greater scheme of things, goes on to ask: why does *any home* fail? This was not the first time I had ever contemplated such an interrogation, and I found myself resorting to the answer I had once seen as a feasible response or, at least, a starting point of sorts: vulnerability. On the basis of Judith Butler’s thoughts on this notion, I worked on building a theory, one where home and vulnerability are an intrinsically conjoined dichotomy, the failure of one inevitably dooming the other. Of course, there is a lot to unpack here, especially regarding what I mean by “vulnerability” exactly. Though I would not like to dwell upon this topic in the prologue—as the first chapter of this paper will already do that—, I will now expound that, to me, it is essential—mandatory, even—that one accepts and

recognizes themselves as vulnerable, for the rejection of such status implies the rejection of vulnerability in others —and home, that “haven” that provides “security, safety and certainty” (McDowell, 2012, p. 54), needs to be a space where one can be vulnerable, even more so if we take into account its privacy and warmth in contrast to the “much harsher light of the public realm” (Arendt, 1998, p. 51). I initially observed such an occurrence —a failure in the acceptance of one’s vulnerable condition and the home’s consequent collapse, that is— in Theresa and Lorraine’s bond or, which is the same, in their apartment, as theirs was the first chapter I read from *The Women of Brewster Place*. Nonetheless, this soon proved to be a pattern, as other homes also presented this specific kind of hostility and unhomeliness. Thus, I decided to investigate the how and the why of the main question I stated previously, mainly focusing on the Two and Ciel and Eugene, though Cora Lee’s dim dwelling and Mattie’s house in the beginning of her journey were not, of course, completely overlooked.

As I wondered what was it that was absent within these homes —which inevitably meant that that which was present was somehow related to violence in one of its many shapes—, I pondered over the fact that I was focusing, mostly, on the apartments, on the individual settings that each character inhabited, and thus the private sphere. And although the public domain was out of this paper’s reach, it was evident that just as vulnerability and home are inseparable, both the private and the public worlds are “salient points on a continuum”, and since their link is “seen in principle as a relational one” (Wischermann, & Mueller, 2004, p.194), I could not discuss one whilst leaving the other out. Brewster Place as a whole, as a community, stands up in Naylor’s text almost as if it were a character itself —with even two chapters of its own, “Dawn” and “Dusk”—, and its failure, the one that has it become that “ghetto” Zygmunt Bauman (2001) warns us against, is closely linked with the breakdown of the homey at a “smaller” —embryonic, if you may— scale. Therefore, this research resonates too with the work of Hannah Arendt and Bauman, and their thoughts and reflections on what is —and what is *not*— a community. Furthermore, and perhaps most evident upon Lorraine and Theresa’s arrival to this dead-end street, Jacques Derrida’s “hostipitality” (2000) also found its place in this exploration —though, again, I confess I am rather more focused on Theresa’s unwillingness to answer Lorraine’s urgent call than on Sophie and the rest of those rumor “willing carrier(s)” (Naylor, 2019, p. 150), whose smelling senses seem to be faulty, perhaps affected by their fear of otherness and their patent homophobia.

However, lack of answerability and absence of togetherness were not the only things I encountered in these homes; resistance was there too, in the shape of mobilizations that set the body in action, that allowed the women of Brewster to step outside the enmity that was menacing their home —and, in consequence, their existence. These movements were key to understand how Mattie, Lorraine and Ciel were able to go forward, to fight stillness “back and forth” (Naylor, 2019, p. 120). As a result, the second chapter this paper contains was born, in order to account for the various ways in which women counteract violence within their home, and thus within themselves. Their blatant opposition to exist in hostility allowed me to elaborate one last chapter, for it permitted hope to also enter this discussion. I read not long ago in Jeanette Winterson’s novel *Written on the Body* that “love demands expression” (2021, p. 1), and where this love —and vulnerability— could not be voiced, Mattie, Ben and Kiswana intervened, as momentary vessels for the soreness and distress Ciel, Lorraine and Cora Lee’s homelessness had soaked them with. As the fight persisted, so did love, and thus to this day, the women of Brewster Place carry on moving —and, at the risk of repeating myself, “trying to make it a home” (Naylor, 2019, p. 4), in the everlasting process that is belonging.

“So Brewster Place still waits to die” (Naylor, 2019, p. 220).

And as long as women continue dreaming within, *it will keep on waiting.*

I. THE FAILURE OF THE HOME: ON VULNERABILITY AND MISSED CALLS

Home [...] may be a 'haven', a private, intimate space of comfort and safety; conversely, people may feel 'homeless-at-home', trapped in a space 'of tyranny, oppression, or persecution.'

(Robertson, 2012, p.315)

A home both *is* and it is *not*.

This was one of the first reflections that came to my mind when trying to understand the home, and as I strived to discover an answer that was universal enough, I found myself thinking about everything a home is not, and about how, despise not being all *that* —alienating, violent and both motion and emotionless— it sometimes, tragically so, was. It seems to me then that just as hospitality¹ does to Derrida, the home also, “in some way, does the opposite of what it pretends to do and immobilizes itself on the threshold of itself” (2000, p. 14), and hence emerges as this paradoxical, fluid conception, its attainment almost impossible on the basis that it cannot exist without being everything it is not. Brewster Place certainly appeared to hold numerous homes that simultaneously were and were not a home, and in the sight of their antagonistic realities, I asked myself: what then, is intrinsic to constructing a home? To which I rapidly answered: *belonging*. Belonging to somewhere, belonging to someone. And so, what is belonging? I believe it comes quite close to Butler’s thoughts on what an ethical relation is: “you call upon me, and I answer [...] only because I was already answerable” (Butler, 2012, p. 142). Belongingness —or rather the process of belonging— does have a lot in common with ethical responsibility, as it, too “presupposes ethical responsiveness” (Butler, 2012, p. 142) and, at a certain level, it makes us dispossess ourselves so that our home and whoever it encompasses are above our ego —so that, in the end, everyone within this space *does* feel at home.

Thus, and given that “if I possess myself too rigidly, I cannot be in an ethical relation” (Butler, 2012, p.142), if I am not answerable to yet-to-be-made calls, I cannot shelter a homey environment within the household I inhabit, as a home should, too, be ethical. I believe

¹ In this paper, I use Derrida’s thoughts on hospitality (as exposed in *Hostipitality*, 2001), which he understands as an utterly paradoxical idea; he believes hostility always exists in the welcome of that who lets the stranger trespass their home’s borders, and so something other than “hospitality” occurs, something he calls “*hostipitality*”.

empathy, that “chiasmic link” Butler talks about —where “I become somehow implicated in lives that are clearly not the same as my own” (Butler, 2012, p. 149)— needs to be there even when unasked for —perhaps even more so when that is the case— and so that happens, *vulnerability within the home is required*. It needs to be present, accepted, vocalized, and even *enacted*, but again, just as it happened with Derrida’s conception of hospitality, vulnerability is always there at the same time as it is *not*, for “although the denial of vulnerability is impossible, it happens all the time” (Butler, 2014, p. 113). Hence, we can extract the following aftermath: if I am not acceptant of my own vulnerable condition, then I must therefore reject being answerable for others’ vulnerability as well —since that would make *me* vulnerable toward their call, toward “claims that we cannot anticipate in advance and for which there is no adequate preparation” (Butler, 2012, p. 141). So, in order to avoid such status, I will have to deny not only my own defenselessness and dependency but that of the other who inhabits my surroundings *with* me. The outcome of such a situation inevitably implies the “confinement and immobilization” (Bauman, 2001, p. 120) of those who cohabit within such an unnatural — and unfeasible— state of constant vulnerability-suppression, and so a ghetto² of sorts —a concept we will get back to later— eventually *replaces* the home.

Now, after having presented these ideas, let us raise again the question this first chapter addresses; why do most of the homes of Brewster Place become inhospitable? If we observe Lorraine, Ciel and Mattie along with their distinct yet parallel circumstances, the answer becomes quite evident: both Theresa and Eugene disrupt the chance of constructing a homey atmosphere by seeking to install “others to a vulnerable position as well as [...] (they) seek to posit and maintain a position of invulnerability for themselves.” (Butler, 2014, p. 113), something Mattie’s stoic father, Sam, does too. The inevitable subjugation that emerges from such a desire and the unbalanced power dynamic that is consequently created makes those deemed vulnerable —in this case, Lorraine, Ciel and Mattie— feel precisely like that: subjugated. Trapped, even. And *that* is no basis to build a home.

Therefore, Theresa’s latent fear in her realization that “Lorraine was changing” (Naylor, 2019, p. 180) and Eugene’s misplaced recrimination when he shots at Ciel that he lost his job — “as if *she* had been the cause” (Naylor, 2019, p. 109; my italics)—are nothing but the result of them not wanting to acknowledge their own vulnerability. Equally, Sam’s horrifying attempt

² Despite the fact Bauman uses the term “ghetto” to refer to the ethical failure of a community as a whole, I have here applied the communal concept to the private sphere, as I believe the confinement the idea encompasses can also occur within the home.

“to stamp out” his daughter’s “disobedience” (Naylor, 2019, p. 26) goes on to denote this same rejection, for it is born, as Naylor stated herself, out of his belief that “love equals obedience. So, when he beats Mattie, he’s beating out the disobedience” (Carabí, 1991, p. 32), to thus conceal that the mere possibility his daughter may not love him incredibly distresses him. Even Cora Lee, who I had previously left outside the equation, appears to be unwilling to acknowledge the fact that her kids are vulnerable—that they do, indeed, need more than “just a crib and a little chest” (Naylor, 2019, p. 139)—, implying when she refuses Kiswana’s help and claims she will “manage alone” (Naylor, 2019, p. 139) to get the children ready for Abshu’s play that she refuses to consider herself vulnerable, too.

Nonetheless, no matter how hard they try, vulnerability “is in some sense undeniable” (Butler, 2014, p. 113). Theresa, just like Lorraine, is also scared that she will always have to endure the consequences and dangers of defying the compulsory heteronormativity that surrounds her, evident when she suddenly acknowledges after helping that little girl that the “they, they, they!” (Naylor, 2019, p. 155) she had deemed inexistent *is*, in fact, lurking out there, and that thus “it’s not me. It’s not me at all” (Naylor, 2019, p. 183); it is *them*. Eugene, just like Ciel, is terrified that same precarity that has “a round black roach [...] making its way from behind the couch” (Naylor, 2019, p. 114) will engulf him and confine him to Brewster’s hopelessness for eternity, since he is never able to save up enough money on his own to leave. And Sam refuses to ever talk about that one time he had cared and worried for his daughter “while the life was burning and sweating out of her pores” (Naylor, 2019, p. 22), so afraid of the degree of dispossession he is willing to accept for Mattie—so high that he went as far as to neglect his farm—that he makes sure nobody within his house “dared ask” (Naylor, 2019, p. 22). It is each and every one of these characters’ reticence to accept they too are susceptible creatures what bounds the spaces they inhabit unhomey and transforms the relations that take place within them into troublesome connections, all strained by an “unacceptably enforced dependency” (Butler, 2014, p. 113) that leads Lorraine, Ciel and Mattie toward a life based on enduring mere survival—and “survival must always be more than survival in order to be livable” (Butler, 2014, p. 105).

For this reason, just like vulnerability, answerability is also scarce in Brewster Place. So many of its inhabitants strive against the existence of a collective sense of empathy that the bricks of that condemning wall might as well be a missed call each, accounting for the many people who once called upon someone (Butler, 2012) and had to brace themselves for the

unresponsiveness that would follow. Only a few pages in, we already come across Brewster's first missed call, learning that although "if they cared to ask, he probably could have told them", nobody attends Ben's ethical demand, and "after a while the mailman stopped descending those steps; yet Ben still drank" (Naylor, 2019, p. 4). As much as I wish I could firmly state that if I ever was walking down Brewster's dead-end street, I would be more helpful than that mailman, there is something that makes my expectations on my own answerability falter. Obviously, if I heard Lorraine and Ciel's calls, I would respond. But that would not be the case. Their cries, coming from inside the one space where they should feel "sheltered against the world" (Arendt, 1998, p. 59), would collide against the very same walls that make it out to be that private sphere so usually assumed to be a haven. Also paradoxical —and much like the idea of "home"—, the private space *ought to* be a dwelling where, no matter how lost or excluded one felt from the outside world, they "could find a substitute in the warmth of the hearth" (Arendt, 1998, p. 59), but it *cannot* always be so. If it could, Lorraine would not have barely whispered "I can't go home" (Naylor, 2019, p. 170) to Ben, nor would she have decided to step outside her apartment that one horrible night —though we will talk about this more in depth when we discuss resistance.

What I do want to expose now is the problematization of the unhomely private, as its alienating nature threatens those within. If violence of any sort occurs in an enclosed home, then "bodies on the line are not registered elsewhere, there is no global response, and also, no global form of ethical recognition and connection, and so *something of the reality of the event is lost*" (Butler, 2012, p. 138; my italics). Therefore, the relationality and connectedness of it all —especially regarding Brewster as it is one single block of apartments— becomes faded, as even though everything does take place inside "of the established community bonds" (Butler, 2012, p. 138), there is no ethical recollection of the events, and hence empathy is shut off and opacated —and hostility is mostly either overlooked or, if reacted to at all, regarded with morbid curiosity. Therefore, as Duerre states whilst discussing domestic violence in *The Women of Brewster Place*:

[...] violence remains hidden because the private nature of the domestic sphere works to cover up the problem, at the same time as the supposedly 'private' setting discourages involvement by law enforcement or other members of the community. (2014, p. 77)

Had Kiswana not knocked on Cora Lee's door or Mattie not "surged into the room" and enfolded Ciel's body "in her huge ebony arms" (Naylor, 2019, p. 120), their stories would have

remained hidden, and so would have their painful precarity and sorrow. And perhaps, if Mattie had been aware of how much of “a need to talk to someone” Lorraine had, “so much it ached within her” (Naylor, 2019, p. 195), she would have intervened, with her “almost magical ability to save others” (Puhr, 1994, p. 519); but just as I would not be able to, she could not possibly *see* her, nor hear her call. Consequently, Lorraine’s loneliness remained private and unanswered, and the devastating consequences of that would, understandably so, replay in Theresa’s mind “a thousand times” (Naylor, 2019, p. 194) for as long as she lived.

Furthermore, the privatization of the body may not *only* deprive it from external aid. It might also result in an endangerment of the being, of its existence beyond tangible borders such as those a household possesses. “Freedom, for Arendt, is the ability to act in concert with others in a public realm” (Parekh 153), and so if the boundaries of my home become the end of my liberty, then I am actually not free, due to the impossibility the concept of a limited-freedom presents. When Theresa claims Brewster is “the end of the line for me” (Naylor, 2019, p. 156) and refuses to move anymore—representing yet another one of the many immobilizations that occur throughout the text—, she expects Lorraine to assume their neighbors “couldn’t even bring themselves to accept her good evenings” (Naylor, 2019, p. 157), hence demanding that she does not rely in existing on the outside and conforms instead to a certain confinement. Doing that, she dismisses the following statement Hannah Arendt includes in *The Human Condition*:

[...] even the greatest passions of intimate life [...] lead an uncertain, shadowy kind of existence unless and until they are transformed, deprivatized and deindividualized, as it were, into a shape to fit them for public appearance. (1998, p. 50)

In order for Lorraine to express and live her intimate desire to attain freedom, *she needs to make herself public*. She needs to speak up and *out* in a conversation that does not only belong to Theresa “inauthentically” in what would better be described as a “monologue” (Penta, 1996, p. 213), and this is precisely why after, meeting Ben, Theresa feels as if he has done “in a few weeks what she couldn’t do for the last five years” (Naylor, 2019, p. 181). Still, she fails to comprehend that what Ben has done is simply allowed Lorraine to *be*, that he has become a vessel for her to expand herself beyond that suffocating apartment. He has *listened* to her. And *that*, that is what Theresa has not been able to do in five years.

‘You and I don’t talk, Tee. You talk. I listen. You lecture —Lorraine takes notes about how to dress and act and have fun. If I don’t see things your way, then you shout — Lorraine cries. You seem to get a kick out of making me feel like a clumsy fool.’ (Naylor, 2019, p. 191)

Hence, if “our feeling for reality depends utterly upon appearance and therefore upon the existence of a public realm” (Arendt, 1998, p. 51) —and “even the twilight which illuminates our private and intimate lives is ultimately derived from” that same public sphere (Arendt, 1998, p. 51)—, then the hostility Brewster as a community directs toward the Two does, indeed, affect the private shelter they find themselves in the midst of constructing, and as much as Theresa would like Lorraine to ignore the aversion they encounter in that neighborhood, that is simply not possible. The fact “they weren’t *never* going to be accepted by these people” (Naylor, 2019, p.187; my italics) means acceptance was *always* going to struggle to be upon the foundations of their home, for there is no understanding of the individual without “those relations in which it lives and thrives” (Butler, 2014, p. 103) —and, again getting ahead of myself, I cannot help but to mention how this is essential to understand why Luciela and Lorraine *must* abandon Brewster. Had they stayed, the relations that bounded them to that place would have *explained* them, and so in order to reclaim their freedom, they must completely disconnect themselves from the community —the ghetto— which has transgressed both their homey and bodily margins.

Taking that into account, I would like to further navigate the breakdown of the private. After reading Homi Bhabha’s thoughts on the inseparable notion of “the world-in-the-home, the home-in-the-world” (1992, p. 141), I thought of the self, and wondered if, perhaps, a *home-in-the-body*, a *body-in-the-home* could also exist, as intrinsically united to and affected by the world as Bhabha thought the home to be —but simply from a microcosmic sort of perspective. I thought this conception feasible after agreeing with Lavon’s ideas on the home’s liquidity:

[...] a distinction between the metaphor of house, a construct bound with established ideas of time, space and identity, and that of a *home*, a fluid configuration relevant to the border subject’s ability to fashion a hybrid self-unencumbered by essentialist designations. (2007, p. 21; my italics)

Therefore, can the body not be argued to be a home of sorts? And if so, can it not foster, just as the home might do inherently, hostility within? What I mean to argue is that Lorraine and Ciel exemplify, to me, unhomeliness of the home-in-the-body, as violence creeps inside their safe space so profoundly it reaches their inner-self and goes beyond the partnership they cohabit their space with, beyond *themselves*. Unlike Cora Lee's home, which is comprised and shielded in "the world of her lap" (Naylor, 2019, p. 131), both Ciel's and Lorraine's bodies are trespassed by the brutality of rape and mourning. By, consequently, *pain*:

The most intense feeling we know of [...], the experience of great bodily pain, is at the same time the most private and least communicable of all. Not only is it perhaps the only experience which we are unable to transform into a shape fit for public appearance, it actually deprives us of our feeling for reality to such an extent we can forget it more quickly and easily than anything else. There seems to be no bridge from the most radical subjectivity, in which *I am no longer 'recognizable', to the outer world of life*. Pain, in other words, truly a borderline experience between life as 'being among men' (inter homines esse) and death, is so subjective and removed from the world of things and men that *it cannot assume an appearance at all*. (Arendt, 1998, p. 50-51; my italics)

When Luciela's "tissue-thin body" (Naylor, 2019, p. 120) lays in bed, she is immersed within this borderline experience that Arendt tells us pain is. "She was simply tired of hurting", and her suffering had inserted her in such a state of unhomeliness that she thought herself to be "forced to slowly give up the life that God had refused to take from her" (Naylor, 2019, p. 118). Similarly, after Lorraine's body has been put through hell, she "would have stayed there forever and have simply died from starvation or exposure if nothing around her had moved" (Naylor, 2019, p. 199) —but movement occurred. Pain had deemed them both unrecognizable, unbelonging and unanswerable to everything that had once defined their home, to the point where people "pushed themselves against the wall as if her (Luciela's) hurt was contagious" (Naylor, 2019, p. 119), and where Lorraine seems to disappear from the text after her last "Please" (Naylor, 2019, p. 201) —her pain so incommensurable that, citing Arendt once more, "it cannot assume an appearance at all" (1998, p. 51).

These homes fail because within them, both vulnerability and answerability are silenced. And though a discussion of Brewster as a whole would require an entire other paper, I have already assessed the relationality of the public and the private, and so evidently, the failure of one directly resonates with the disruption of the other. Brewster Place is inhabited by people who “weren’t gonna stick together no way” (Naylor, 2019, p. 134), which is why it embodies the latent precarity of all humans and their boundness to “unchosen cohabitation” (Butler 2012, p. 145). Hence failing to provide the individual with “certainty, security and safety” (Bauman, 2001, p. 72), hostipitality inserts itself in Brewster’s human and homey interactions, making it impossible for the block to become an ethical community. Strangeness finds its way even out of “the dimension of not-knowing” (Derrida, 2000, p. 8) Derrida considers necessary for hospitality to occur. Inside houses cohabited by people who *do* know each other, alienation is fostered, enough so that, for instance, Mattie’s father wishes to maintain “his own authority in *his own home*”, and “looks after himself and sees to and considers all that concerns him” (Derrida, 2000, p. 4), and so do Theresa and, despite his eagerness to just leave, Eugene. Unable to relinquish control, they all become “masters” of sorts, failing to dispossess themselves enough to enter an empathic and ethical relation, and thus they remain hospitable —and how could anyone feel at home while being treated as if they were just a *guest*? Therefore, when Sam says he might have been “keepin’ you too close to home” (Naylor, 2019, p. 23), he fails to see that *that* is precisely where he has kept Mattie: on the threshold of his home, closer than most, yet still not within.

Due to all this, Brewster Place stands as a ghetto, absorbed in “confinement and immobilization”, and “in a world in which mobility and the facility to be on the move have become principal factors of social stratification, this is (both physically and symbolically) a weapon of ultimate exclusion and degradation” (Bauman, 2001, p. 120). Its inhabitants’ reluctance to “row together” is, indeed, making them “sink together” (Naylor, 2019, p. 165), and so much separateness and lack of accountability has allowed loneliness —that “massphenomenon” where privacy “has assumed its most extreme and most antihuman form” (Arendt, p. 1998, p. 59)— to settle itself among Brewster’s greyness. Like an intruder, solitude has found its way into, for instance, Mattie’s home, “the patient and crouching stillness” of that failed community (Naylor, 2019, p. 63) weighing her down. Only when togetherness, may it be unchosen or not, is fully embraced will a change finally occur. And then, the “moral third” will rise as feasible:

The lived experience of the moral third is that of being able to depend on a lawful world, that is, a world in which, to which, you can safely be attached to others because ruptures are repaired through acknowledgement. Thus it fosters connection between the self and other. (Benjamin, 2016, p. 73)

However, until that happens, Brewster, just like Mattie, will remain immersed in solitude, and when it dies, “it will die alone” (Naylor, 2019, p. 219).

II. MOBILIZING RESISTANCE: ON DEFYING BREWSTER'S HOSTILITY AND STILLNESS

Home is 'here', or it is 'not here'. The question is not 'How?' nor 'Who?' nor 'When?' but 'Where is your home?'. It is always a localizable idea. Home is located in space, but it is not necessarily a fixed space. It does not need bricks and mortar, it can be a wagon, a caravan, a boat or a tent. [...] For a home neither the space nor its appurtenances have to be fixed.

(Douglas, 1991, p. 289)

So there lies Brewster Place. Immobile. As “silent” and “rigid” as Lorraine’s back when Theresa’s mean laughter bounced off of it, dying “in her throat” (Naylor, 2019, p. 159). And though almost everything I previously stated presents it as ever so desolating, it was *just* the first chapter for a reason. After all, “where there is no freedom to enter the square or take to the street, *grounds for resistance certainly exist*” (Butler, 2014, p. 106-107; my italics). And whether they create them or find themselves suddenly surrounded by their warmth and safety, the women of Brewster Place resist within them. The reason why I have very much insisted on this perception of mine that Brewster appears to be paralyzed is that I believe it is precisely mobilizations —just movement itself, too— what shapes these women’s opposition to the lonely unhomeliness the block of apartments has bounded them to, as I have observed them move in every instance of defiance. Moreover, the concept of the fluid home is what allows me to see such a resistance feasible, as home, too, ought to be in constant movement, for if it is, its collapse does not necessarily imply its annihilation, but just a bump in the way.

Therefore, just as Naylor’s novel does, we will begin this chapter’s journey with Mattie Michael. Ever since she leaves her dad’s “torturing silence” (Naylor, 2019, p. 21) and violent strikes behind, she starts relentlessly walking the streets, as “with the baby in one arm and her suitcase in the other, she went looking for another place to live” (Naylor, 2019, p. 34). Although Mattie’s initial household is undeniably hostile, I believe the peak of hostility within the home she experiences is embodied by Basil and his blatant abandonment. It is him who lets in the heaviness of isolation, and has Mattie dubiously wonder about his whereabouts, even though

“in a home there is no need to look for someone: it should be possible to work out where everyone is at any given times, that is, if it is functioning well” (Douglas, 1991, p. 301).

Where was he going? She truly didn't know, and it had come to be understood that she was not to ask. How long had it been that way? Surely it had happened within moments. It seemed that only hours ago he had been the child who could hug her neck [...]. So then, who was this stranger who had done away with her little boy and who had left her with no one and so alone? (Naylor, 2019, p. 49)

Nonetheless, Mattie keeps going. Indeed, she “is by nature a survivor whose decision to *move* reflects her refusal to accommodate to her bleak surroundings” (Lavon, 2007, p. 4; my italics)³. I believe that, perhaps, her strength lies in the self-awareness she embodies. She *knows* how vulnerable she is —how vulnerable Basil makes her, given that she concedes him a sort of responsiveness that resembles Butler's conception of sensibility, as it utterly “precedes the ego” (2012, p. 136). But she also understands that “vulnerability and resistance can, and do, and even must happen at the same time” (Butler, 2014, p. 110), and so without relinquishing the endless answerability motherhood has had her possess toward her son, she “got up from the couch stiffly and climbed the steps toward her bedroom” (Naylor, 2019, p. 51). Even as she continues to cook Basil's favorite meal, I agree with Lavon that that is but a portrayal “of her resolve to maintain a home even in the face of uncertainty and loss” (2007, p. 15), and so in order to escape hopelessness, she just *keeps going*.

And then, Etta Mae drives into Brewster. Despite the fact that she is different to her old friend Mattie, they both seem to never assume accountability on the other's behalf when entering certain relationships; just as Mattie “harbors no expectations that Butch will show responsibility for her or their baby” (Andrews, 1998, p. 5), Moreland is relieved he “hadn't been called upon” by Etta (Naylor, 2019, p. 86). Although only a home in her dreams, Etta's hopes that the reverend was going to finally be the man for her are shattered, their sexual encounter described as something rather hostile from which she chooses to detach herself — maybe in order to protect her home-in-the-body. However, she also moves toward freedom.

³ Though Lavon was making reference to Mattie moving to Brewster on the search of a safe home for Basil here, I extrapolated the quotation to describe how she enacts movement in order to avoid hopelessness many times after arriving to Eva's dwelling too, and not just that one time.

After yet another disappointment, she chooses to start “slowly down the street”, to climb “the steps toward the light and the love and the comfort that awaited her” (Naylor, 2019, p. 87), and so movement brings her closer to that truthful sense of belonging only Mattie could bestow her with.

We approach now the two most striking bodily mobilizations that occur in the text, before which I would like to briefly talk about Cora Lee. Strange Cora Lee’s universe —as in love as she is with her “motionless” toys (Naylor, 2019, p. 124)—seems to be permanently stuck, immobilized between piles of dirty clothes, dishes, and shadows. Kiswana’s knocks on her door and the following invitation to the play are truly what enables her to sort “feverishly through their clothes — washing, pressing, mending”, and hence what sets her in motion. Thus, when she and her children finally “trooped down the steps” (Naylor 2019, p. 142) out of that home that was no longer a home, she also exhibits what we have seen in Mattie and Etta’s cases: that movement is, in fact, intrinsic to resistance.

Nevertheless, there are two stories in Brewster that entail the breakdown of the home further than the rest, in pieces so small there is nothing left for them to build anything upon: Luciela and Lorraine. As we saw in the previous chapter, they both experience such a vast amount of bodily pain that they believe themselves “disposable” (Butler, 2014, p. 111). Serena’s death makes Luciela’s whole world shrink until it only “existed in the seven feet of space between herself and her child’s narrow coffin” (Naylor, 2019, p. 118), and as she lies prostrated to her bed, she appears to be “the embodied demand for a livable life” (Butler, 2014, p. 117) —or else, the embodied turndown of a life that is no longer livable. But just when she was about to give up on surviving, Mattie enters her room.

She sat on the edge of the bed and enfolded the tissue-thin body in her huge ebony arms. *And she rocked.* Ciel’s body was so hot it burned Mattie when she first touched her, but she held on and rocked. *Back and forth, back and forth* — she had Ciel so tightly she could feel her young breasts flatten against the buttons of her dress. The black mammoth gripped so firmly that the slightest increase of pressure would have cracked the girl’s spine. *But she rocked.* (Naylor, 2019, p. 120; my italics)

“Back and forth, back and forth”, until Mattie was “satisfied”, until she was sure “It would heal” (Naylor, 2019, p. 120-121). “In Mattie’s act of primal mothering”, these women come to share “their isolation, their burden of responsibility as mothers, and the loss of their children” (Andrews, 1989, p. 6), and only after they have moved together—after Ciel has been startled out of the stillness that had deemed the life within her body an antagonistic and unchosen cohabitation of sorts—, she is able to cry. To leave Brewster. And to do so alive. The silence of that scene—no words other than Ciel’s lamenting moans as she comes back to life—is different than that “painful” quietness Lorraine had to put up with during the block meeting, different than the muteness that had gloomily come to define Brewster. And after rocking Ciel, Mattie bathed her. Explaining what bathtime entailed to her in relation to blackness, Janaka Bowman Lewis tells us:

Baths represented *joy, connection with self, and a space away from the outside world*. They represented *resistance* to spaces where Black girlhood was public and could be disciplined and regulated, Baths [...] allowed me time and space to *dream*. (2018, p. 121; my italics)

There is no fixed nor clear definition of what a home is—nor would I want for such a thing to exist, as it would go against the inherent continuity of the concept—but it seems to me that a place that fosters “joy, connection with self”, “resistance” and the chance to “dream” could very well be one of its many descriptions. Hence, Mattie does not just bathe Ciel. She homes the unhomeliness that goes beyond her household. *She homes her body*. And she allows her to let her teary vulnerability loose, and thus to no longer be dead to her own suffering.

In the end, Luciela needs to abandon Brewster in order to absolutely reject what is no longer—and will never be again—her home, and her rejection, much like Lorraine’s, is shaped by withdrawal. Seemingly, Lorraine needs to be *break free* out of that dead-end street. When she “brushes a loose brick” and drags “it along the ground toward the movement on Brewster Place”, she does so “side to side” (Naylor, 2019, p. 200), pushing what is left inside of her to become the first woman who fractures that condemning wall, even before the whimsical block party. Those rapists might have destroyed her chances of Brewster ever becoming homey to her and lead her act of rejection and violence toward Ben, the one ounce of empathy that space was giving her. Yet though I could try and justify why Ben’s death is Lorraine’s last act of resistance

to that hostile place, I refuse to let that desperate sprout of agony have that meaning. No, Lorraine's rejection to the trembling home Theresa was (de)constructing around her, to Brewster's homophobia, that is her walking down the street. It is her leaving Theresa behind and choosing that "deliberate risk of exposure" (Butler, 2014, p. 109) over the confinement between four oppressing walls. Lorraine, in embracing that vulnerability Theresa seems to be so afraid of, demonstrates that women are, indeed, "at once vulnerable and capable of resistance," (Butler, 2014, p. 110), and to "walk out of this house without you (Theresa) tonight" (Naylor, 2019, p. 194), that is her rejection to a devastating unhomey reality. And *that* is what I wish to applaud.

Lorraine chooses to step into the perilous public realm only because, at that time, it poses less of a threat to her than the private sphere she inhabits, a home that is not a home no more with a companion who does not "feel up to" walk along her anymore (Naylor, 2019, p. 194). When she steps into the street, she incarnates "that small freedom [...] enacted by a kind of motion that is at once a movement in that double sense, bodily and political" (Butler, 2014, p. 108) and again, just like Ciel, she stands as "the embodied demand for a livable life" (Butler, 2014, p.117), one where she does not have to be alone in her suffering, nor in her loving. Furthermore, both Lorraine and Luciela understand the "communicative nature of power", and hence when this becomes limited—or else when it "relapses into dominative power" (Penta, 1996, p. 222)—, they both desperately *plead* to be heard. Consequently, in their "Please" (Naylor, 2019, p. 201) is inherent the corruption of the ethical relation we discussed before, given that they must literally call upon Theresa, upon C.C. Baker and the rest of rapists and upon Eugene only to find out they are not, in any way, "already answerable" (Butler, 2012, p. 142),

Despite the hopelessness Lorraine's final state of unbelongingness exudes, I conclude that in those who are unhomey, there is still hope. "The women of Brewster fight to create a home in the guetto" (Muñoz, 2013, p. 40), to live and to exist within freedom, and only because they do can the text end with "The Block Party" and the communal mobilization it depicts:

The only people who were dancing were those who lived on Brewster Place. They didn't look up at the rapidly darkening sky or stop moving when static would override the music. They danced from memory, until the measured beat caught up with them again. (Naylor, 2019, p. 212; my italics)

After all, “being human, we can neither fulfil the hope nor cease hoping” (Bauman, 2001, p. 5) —so, amid Brewster’s stillness, Mattie dreams they all *danced*. And I must admit, as a reader, I hope they can dance someday, too.

III. HOMING THE UNHOMELY: ON HOPE, DREAMS AND THE OTHER TWO

I should say the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.

(Bachelard, 2014, p. 28)

When any us are affected by the suffering of others, it is not only that we put ourselves in their place or that they usurp our own place; perhaps it is the moment in which a certain chiasmic link comes to the fore and I become somehow implicated in lives that are clearly not the same as my own.

(Butler, 2012, p. 149)

Yet not everything in Brewster was sunk into despair. In the previous chapter I addressed the movements through which all these women found a way to resist, but it appears to me to me that I have depicted their stories on an almost too tragic note. Do not get me wrong; I know such is their precarity and I do not wish to overlook it. Nevertheless, and again I must repeat myself, “where there is no freedom to enter the square or take to the street, *grounds for resistance certainly exist*” (Butler, 2014, p. 106-107; my italics). Hence, we shall now go into these “grounds for resistance”, these rescue spaces which come to stand as homes, the hostile side of their dichotomous nature unable to penetrate their door.

The day Lorraine meets Ben, her “frail body” is “bravely struggling for control” (Naylor, 2019, p. 170). She has just left the neighbors’ meeting, but she can still hear Sophie’s accusations inside her head; however, she “can’t go home” (Naylor, 2019, p. 170). Theresa’s “indifference, disengagement and indeed mental and moral exterritoriality” —present in “those who do not mind being left alone providing that the others, who think differently, don’t bid for them to care” (Bauman, 2001, p. 50)— has triggered the establishment of boundaries within their apartment so rigid she is now afraid of crossing them, even more so with her vulnerability on display. Nevertheless, Ben understands. There is no way in which he could have anticipated Lorraine’s desperate call, and yet he is vulnerable to her ethical demand; and so he answers. He is, thus, “alive [...] to the suffering of others” (Butler, 2012, p. 150), and although the pair truly

do not know each other, he chooses to be empathic —and hence goes beyond hospitality. He welcomes her to his dwelling, in that “intentional experience which proceeds beyond knowledge, toward the other as absolute stranger” (Derrida, 2000, p. 8), and in just that first encounter, a homey bond emerges, out of both their need for answerability and their “similar suffering”, which “makes them equal” (Andrews, 1989, p. 6)⁴:

They finished their tea in silence and Lorraine got up to go.

‘There’s no way to thank you, so I won’t try.’

‘I’d be hurt if you did.’ Ben patted her arm. ‘Now come back anytime you got a mind to. *I got nothing but you welcome to all of that.*’ (Naylor, 2019, p. 173)

Lorraine —who lost her father— finds a home in Ben —who lost his daughter—, essentially because he bestows her with the one place where she can simply exist, which is what she has so resiliently been striving for. His basement both shelters her from the evident hatred Brewster’s community aims toward her at the same time as it provides her with a getaway from Theresa’s growing estrangement, thus why it becomes truly that “experience of thirdness”, which, as explained by Jessica Benjamin, is that of “a co-created space of shared rhythms, attunement and collaboration, of *human cooperation*” (2016, p. 72; my italics). In fact, I believe what is key about Lorraine and Ben’s homey connection is, precisely, how *human* it comes to be, and how human it permits Lorraine to feel:

‘See, there you go again. Tee the teacher and Lorraine the student, who just can’t get the lesson right. Lorraine, who *just wants to be a human being* — a lousy human being who’s somebody’s daughter or somebody’s friend or even somebody’s enemy. But they make me feel like a freak out there, and you try to make me feel like one in here. That only place I’ve found some peace, Tee, is in that damp ugly basement, *where I’m not different.*’ (Naylor, 2019, p. 192; my italics)

Ben gives her “the possibility [...] to exercise her humanity” —and vulnerability, may I add— “through speech and action” (Parekh, 2011, p. 153), hence blindly accepting her

⁴ Andrews uses this quote to refer to Mattie and Ciel’s bond, as they share the bleak sorrow of losing a child, but I thought it fitting for Ben and Lorraine too, as I believe their loneliness does, also, make them equal.

existence as it is, with no hopes “she would harden eventually” (Naylor, 2019, p. 157), as those Theresa held. Lorraine and Ben’s home, even though it does end up being impermanent, is based on that one principle according to which “we can only be human when we recognize each other as human”, the “foundational principle of the relational entity” Benjamin calls “the moral third” (2016, p. 87). The horrid turn of events that takes place later does not change the fact that Lorraine did, in the end, find a home amid Brewster’s hostility, as did Ben when he welcomed her to his nothingness. And I will say that even though some, like Andrews, will read his eagerness to help her as something that occurs “only out of guilt for his impotence in letting his wife sell their daughter into concubinage with a white man” (1989, p. 10), I believe it is not merely culpability what makes their home bloom. It might have been in the very beginning, but how could guilt and sorrow solely have sheltered the freedom and care their bond emanates?

Nevertheless, the home’s epitome within Brewster Place belongs, undoubtedly so, to Mattie and Etta Mae. Indeed, “the two women achieve a profound sense of liberty in the safe harbor of each other’s company” (Lavon, 2007, p. 11), and through their friendship, they are able to ward “off loneliness and despair” (Andrews, 1989, p. 8). Their bond, that deep connection “superior to any relationship that seems possible with a man in the distorted world of black gender relations” (Andrews, 1989, p. 8) stands as the community’s most powerful connection, given that “power corresponds to the human ability not to just act but to act in concert” (Arendt, 1970, p. 44) —and no one embraces togetherness and collectivity like they do. However, it is not just power what we find in the foundations of their home; there is also *freedom*:

She breathed deeply of the freedom she found in Mattie’s presence. Here she had no choice but to be herself. [...] Etta and Mattie went way back, a singular term that claimed co-knowledge of all the important events in their lives and almost all of the unimportant ones. And by rights of this possession, it tolerated no secrets. (Naylor, 2019, p. 68)

As we have been able to observe, “freedom can only be exercised if there is a support for freedom” (Butler, 2014, p. 102), and just as Ben allowed Lorraine to be human, Mattie becomes a vessel for Etta to “be herself”, away from “the structures of passivity and victimization” (Lavon, 2007, p. 11) she has for so long been confined to. Therefore, in a place

where people “refused or where unable to leave” (Naylor, 2019, p. 3) —again, in that ghetto of unchosen and precarious cohabitation—, Etta *chooses to stay*, counteracting the unhomely dynamics that have come to define Brewster. Hence, the love they have for one another —that “friendship to other women” which is “not only a saving grace but a political necessity” (Andrews, 1989, p. 19)— is able to transgress the assumptions that the construction of a home in Brewster Place would not, permanently so, ever be possible, and has Mattie wondering if, in the end, friendship is “Maybe it’s not so different” (Naylor, 2019, p. 163) to romantic, lesbian love. For this reason, it seems to me that they turn out to be Lorraine and Theresa’s counterpart —or, as I shall call them, *the Other Two*.

Nonetheless, whether they do or do not have a home, Naylor claims that “in Brewster Place, each of the women has a dream of her own” (Carabí, 1991, p. 29), and I believe it is precisely that what allows them to keep on resisting. For instance, if we go back to Mattie’s prelude story, we will see how coming across Miss Eva’s haven allows her to sink “into a timeless sleep” (Naylor, 2019, p. 41) for she has provided her with a home “to see things grow” (Naylor, 2019, p. 50), and so from then on, she is able to not only rest, but also *dream*. Moreover, although some of these women’s dreams turn out to be unattainable, Naylor says that:

I guess they all have a dream they never quite realize. The idea was just to see them attempting, to see them going after their dreams. You see, life often tells you ‘hey!, this is not for you!’, but there’s still validity in the fact that you do dream and you do try. (Carabí, 1991, p. 29)

Indeed, the fact these women continue harboring hope despite inhabiting such hostility is intrinsic to the way they manage to carry on, which is why they become “a collective repository of dreams, a resilient source of strength for continuing survival if not yet conquest it” (Andrews, 1989, p. 3). When Mattie dreams of Brewster’s “bodies assembled on the street” together in a “cause for joy and even hope” (Butler, 2014, p. 99), she is imagining the community she one day wishes to inhabit, one where “people act purposively together” (Nixon, 2001, p. 225) —and hence one where power as Arendt understood it thrives against its authoritarian misconceptions. And just as she is able to dream of such a reality, the possibility of it coming true *exists*:

‘Get that thing out of here!’ She grabbed the brick and gave it to Etta, who took it over to the next table. And it was passed by the women from hand to hand, table to table, until the brick flew out of Brewster Place and went spinning out onto the avenue. (Naylor, 2019, p. 215)

Fluid and intangible, home and community find their way into existence through each and every one of these women’s dreams, which they pin “to wet laundry hung out to dry”, and which “ebb and flow, ebb and flow, *but never disappear*” (Naylor, 2019, p. 320; my italics). Just before writing *The Women of Brewster Place*, Naylor said she was walking the streets of Harlem when she “realized that there’s a lack of hope” (Carabí, 1991, p. 31), and so I think she might have chosen to infuse some of her stories with just a bit of it, enough so that Brewster can, on behalf of all the failed homes and communities of the world, keep on waiting to die.

Or, in other words, *keep on living*.

CONCLUSIONS

The corner bar did a record business that week, and electric bills rose sharply as portable heaters, televisions, and lamps stayed on night and day as Brewster Place tried desperately to bring any kind of warmth and light into their world.

(Naylor, 2019, p. 203)

When a street dies, “the odors of hope, despair, lust, and caring are wiped out by the seasonal wind” (Naylor, 2019, p. 219). Lorraine and Ciel’s despair alone could have created a gale of hopelessness strong enough to become murderous, but Naylor ends her novel on a rather optimistic note, as she lets her readers know that, at least for now, the confining dead-end street they have inhabited along with her characters is still alive. Now, after having read, lived, and cried its daughters’ stories, I find myself bound to finish this paper just as hopeful as Naylor did, for I believe Brewster has no choice but to live for as long as its “colored daughters [...] wake up with their dreams misted on the edge of a yawn” (Naylor, 2019, p. 220). And so, as they resiliently continue to home the unhomely, Brewster lingers.

Reading *The Women of Brewster Place* has allowed me to accompany these women on their journey of endurance and empathy toward belongingness. In the homes they inhabit I have been able to observe how much of an appalling threat the unwillingness to both be vulnerable and allow vulnerability in others poses, and how it eventually leads to the collapse of what ought to be a safe space —of that private sphere supposed to be a shelter but also perilously able to become a constraining and antagonistic place. Theresa and Eugene’s negligence in answering their partners’ calls permitted both solitude and unhomeliness to go beyond their apartments and enter their bodies, as did Basil’s lack of emotional accountability, and the boundaries that emerged from such a scarcity of answerability came to stand so rigid that the fluidness of the home was distorted.

Nevertheless, although the chance of an ethical community of sorts arising seemed to be out of the picture —as hostility had paralyzed that territory of unchosen cohabitation—, I could see there was resistance. “Back and forth”, “side to side” (Naylor, 2019, p. 120-200) the women of Brewster Place were moving, toward the construction of a home which harbored freedom and allowed them to exist *beyond* and *against* the pain and the desolation they once

thought inescapable. Figures like Mattie, Ben or even Kiswana embodied the alreadyness necessary to attend the ethical demands of Lorraine, Etta, Ciel and Cora Lee, and hence laid down the only foundation upon which a home can become permanent —thus fostering a place “which transcends and takes us out of the binary, the either/or, in which only one person is human, worthy of respect, deserving of living rather than dying” (Benjamin, 2016, p. 88). It is them who made me change my mind on the title of this paper —which once was “Escaping a dead-end street” and now, instead of escaping, stands as “Homing”—, for I initially understood their eagerness to counteract the home’s deep-rooted duality —both feasibly safe and/or hostile— as an imperious need to break free. And while this is true for both Lorraine and Ciel —whose rejection to the violence Brewster has put them through *requires* them to leave—, there are also others, like Etta, who choose to stay.

In the end, I conclude that although frequently denied, vulnerability must be embraced by all, at least if we are ever to experience true belongingness to both a home and a community —and, until then, we must continue to “feverishly seek the roads that may bring us there” (Bauman, 2001, p. 3). Thus, I can only hope that even those who believe themselves independent, who avoid the acceptance and loving of the human being’s “worldliness”⁵, can one day open their eyes to the beauty and fundamentality of living *with* and *within* —or rather close them, so they may dream of their very own block party. As for the Lorraines and Ciel whose home was shattered, I remain hopeful too. After all, my greatest realization was that “home is a process [...] lived as well as imagined” (Blunt & Dowling, 2006 p. 254), and those who have found themselves in the imperious necessity of rejecting what they once identified as their home still have room to imagine what the next step of this endless, livable, and unexpected process will look like.

They still have room to dream.

⁵ I use “worldliness” here in relation to Arendt’s understanding of the notion, which, as explained by Nixon’s essay, means “love and commitment to that human ‘world’ of fabrication, of commitment to that ‘worldliness’ — so conceived— at all costs: as the means by which humans eke out from the boundless unpredictability of action, a kind of permanence, a home” (2001, p. 233).

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