PURPOSE SENSE

... I'm just a black poet, and I write about what I see, what interests me, and I'm seeing new things [My emphasis]....

Literature is a big sea full of many fish. I let down my nets and pulled. I'm still pulling [My emphasis]....

An artist models his art on the life-experiences he encounters, and his feelings and thoughts. His work is the product of the social forces which act on him, -- race, milieu and moment -- and a healthy response to his historical and social environment. In brief, these three factors are the shaping elements of his art.

The Black American creationists Brooks and Hughes are great artists who are at once exposed to the rich and varied American life and the Black life within the vast American experience. As Brooks herself states, "He [the Black writer] has the American experience and he also has the black experience; so he's very rich." As American literators, Brooks and Hughes examine the major American themes like identity crisis, sense of the past, freedom, liberation, equality, birth, growth, decay, mutability, death, rebirth, quest for an ideal, search for self and self discovery. As Black artists, both are committed to the


935 Hughes, The Big Sea, p.335.

936 Brooks, RPO, p.166.
purpose and mission of producing Black Consciousness among the oppressed Blacks. Moreover, they place the stress on Black individuality and redefine the Black lives, without giving up their racial uniqueness or sacrificing their rich and varied culture. George E. Kent detects the common quality of responding to the Blacks' lives in America, in both Brooks and Hughes:

Gwendolyn Brooks shares with Langston Hughes the achievement of being responsive to turbulent changes in the black community's vision of itself and to the changing forms of its vibrations during decades of rapid change....

As such, these two artists function both as American poets and Black poets. Brooks calls this a "double dedication" and "a two-headed responsibility." The racial experience in America impinges on an artist so much that he cannot help being "race-fed":

Few have favored a trek without flags or emblems of any racial kind; and even those few, in their deliberate "renunciation," have in effect spoken racially, have offered race-fed testimony of several sorts....

In this context, one finds that Brooks' poems are coloured by her race-consciousness. Anything that she casually observes passes through the medium of

937 George E. Kent, Blackness and the Adventure of Western Culture, p.104.
939 Idem.
940 Idem.
their race, be it a common sight of a running boy or a thing as ordinary as a tree:

A black poet may be involved in a concern for trees, if only because when he looks at one he thinks of how his ancestors have been lynched thereon....

In Brooks' view, the Black poets "are likely to find significances in those subjects not instantly obvious to the Whites. The rain drop may seem to them to represent racial tears ... The golden sun might remind them that they are burning." In her interview with Gloria T.Hull, Brooks explains this further:

... I don't sit down and say, "I am now going to write a poem by, about and to blacks." I am myself. I am consumed with the passion of ideas that I came to believe in the late sixties. They are now built into myself. I am THAT -- so anything that I write is going to issue from a concern with and interest in blackness and its progress. Now that can include a funny poem, an entertaining poem, a love poem, a joy of living poem....

In a similar vein, Hughes weaves his poems around the central theme of race. His alter-ego Simple's replies to Boyd exemplify this. When Boyd complains, "You bring race into everything," Simple promptly replies, "It is in everything." Again, when Boyd talks of problems which have nothing to do with colour or race, Simple's answer is spontaneous: "But when you add a black

941 Brooks, RPO, p.166.
943 Brooks, in UPO, p.25.
944 Hughes, "Bop," in Simple Takes a Wife, p.56.
Yet again, Simple feels justified in having the colour problems on his mind always:

Facts is ... my problem is ME. I am colored, AfroAmerican, black, sepia, jet, ebony, whatever you want to call me. Until I am right in this world, and this world is right by me, I got to talk about my problems. Is there anything wrong with that?...  

It is in such a background that Brooks and Hughes project and capture the feelings, sentiments, hopes and aspirations of the Blacks. They are the intellectual spokespersons of their race. They undertake the task of creating a right image of the Black in the eyes of both the prejudiced Whites and the resigned Blacks.

Brooks and Hughes have clear-stated objectives behind their art. Brooks expresses her aim in definitive words:

My aim, in my next future, is to write poems that will somehow successfully "call" ... all black people: black people in taverns, black people in alleys, black people in gutters, schools, offices, factories, prisons, the consulat; I wish to reach black people in pulpits, black people in mines, on farms, on thrones; not always to "teach" -- I shall wish often to entertain, to illumine....

One finds that Brooks' vision is all encompassing, including people from the gutters to the thrones. Her wish to entertain and illumine concurs with Hughes'
aim to "explain and illuminate the Negro condition in America." In substance, both Brooks and Hughes aim at influencing the thinking of the Blacks and thereby regulating their actions. Again, both intend to sketch the soul-beauty of their people -- Brooks, by "evoking the diamonds / of you" and Hughes by projecting "their own soul-world" and catching "a glimmer of their own beauty."

With such clarified goals, Brooks and Hughes write contextually relevant poems, which deal with the present problems encountered by the American society. Anything they write about, be it a myth or legend, or spiritual concept, is related to the present day life-situations. Each poem is a social document about the plights and predicaments of the Blacks. The body of their poetry serves as a social history of the Blacks, offering enough knowledge about the Blacks' slave past, emancipation, segregation and so on. Again, they write on themes which are particularly related to the Blacks -- ignorance, poverty, death, violence, alienation, misery and sex. As such, their poems are related to the Blacks' lives on a superficial level, and are used to interpret and reinterpret the Blacks' lives and mankind in general.

Apart from being contextually relevant, the poetry of Brooks and Hughes serve to create a three-dimensional awareness -- a sense of time, a sense of locale and a

948 Hughes, quoted in James A. Emanuel, Langston Hughes, p.68.
949 Brooks, "To the Diaspora," in To Disembark, p.41.
951 Ibid., p.229.
sense of the suffering Black who becomes the type of the human sufferer -- through meaningful presentations.

Brooks creates a sense of time -- zeitgeist -- to suggest a preparedness, a readiness and an urgency on the part of the Black. An awareness of the past is given to help the Black retain his ethnic identity and culture, as in "Riders to the Blood-Red Wrath" and "The Sundays of Satin-Legs Smith." The slavepast which "thinned / My blood and blood-line"\(^952\) is focussed upon to draw the contrast between a bitter past and the present prospects.

A sense of the present is wrought by Brooks, by which she expects the Blacks to rise and act immediately. One should make the best use of the present as in the following lines:

Exhaust the little moment. Soon it dies.
And be it gash or gold it will not come
Again in this identical disguise….\(^953\)

Brooks exhorts the Black sisters and brothers to "Build now your Church."\(^954\) The same urgency is continued in "The Second Sermon on the Warpland," when she urges the Blacks to have their blooming amidst the noise of the whirlwind and to be time-conscious, since it is the ripe time for action:

What must our Season be, which starts from Fear?
Live and go out,
Define and
medicate the whirlwind.

\(^952\) Brooks, "Riders to the Blood-Red Wrath," in SP, p.117.

\(^953\) Brooks, "Exhaust the little moment," in WGB, p.115.

The time cracks into furious flower. Lifts its face all unashamed. And sways in wicked grace...

Brooks' comment on the above lines is worth recording:

The world is a whirlwind ... we don't know when things are going to quotes "get better" -- and we don't seem inclined to force them to be better. So we see to it that we bloom, that we attend to our growth inspite of the awful things that are happening....

For Brooks, the present is "the time of the Tall-Walkers" and the Black boys' "heads hold clocks that strike the new time of day." Again, "The Wall" depicts the hour of action and celebration:

It is the Hour of tribe and of vibration, the day-long Hour. It is the Hour of ringing, rouse, of ferment-festival....

Brooks does not stop with merely inculcating a sense of the past and the present; she propels the Blacks towards a better tomorrow. The preparedness for meeting the health or hell together is to be seen in "The Sermon on the Warpland." Again, Medgar Evers realizes the ripeness of the time and holds an optimistic vision of tomorrow:

... The raw intoxicated time was time for better birth or a final death.

956 Brooks, in UPO, p.39.
Roaring no rapt arise-ye to the dead, he
leaned across tomorrow, People said that
he was holding clean globes in his hands...  

In her foreword to *New Negro Poets U.S.A.*, Brooks introduces the Black poets as "some of the prevailing stars of an early tomorrow."  

In a similar vein, Hughes creates an awareness of time in his poems. "The Negro Speaks of Rivers," "Trumpet Player," "Aunt Sue's Stories," and "Negro" are some examples where Hughes brings the past to create a sense of pride and identification with a rich, historical past. In "Negro," pride and pain coexist, as the speaker juxtaposes his past and the present:

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa.

I've been a slave:
Caesar told me to keep his door-steps clean.
I brushed the boots of Washington.

I've been a worker:
Under my hand the pyramids arose.
I made mortar for the Woolworth Building.

I've been a singer:
All the way from Africa to Georgia
I carried my sorrow songs.
I made ragtime.

I've been a victim
The Belgians cut off my hand in the Congo.
They lynch me still in Mississippi.

I am a Negro:
Black as the night is black,
Black like the depths of my Africa....  

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With Hughes, the terms "now" and "today" gain significance in poems like "Democracy," "In Explanation of Our Times," "Africa," "Consider Me" and "Pride." It is either "Once nobody, / Now me '"963 or "It's time to talk back now!"964 or "...my fist is clenched -- / Today -- / To strike your face."965 In fact, as Brooks herself acknowledges, Hughes is "One restless in the exotic time! and ever, / Till the air is cured of its fever."966

Again, like Brooks, Hughes underscores the value of the word "tomorrow." In "I, Too," he is sure of sharing the table with his White brother. Like "tomorrow," Hughes uses "Someday" to prepare the Blacks for a brighter morrow.

The poem "Note on Commercial theatre" has no place for doubt or defeat when the Black speaker is assured that someday somebody will stand up and talk and sing and put on plays about him. Again, in "A Toast to Harlem," Simple declares:

"When everybody else keeps me on the bottom, I don't see why I shouldn't be on top. I will, too, someday."967

In Ask Your Mama, Hughes envisions the "COLORED HOUR" when there will be a reversal of roles:

DREAMING THAT THE NEGROES OF THE SOUTH HAVE TAKEN OVER -- VOTED ALL THE DIXIECRATS

963 Hughes, "Consider Me," in SPLH, p.286.
964 Hughes, "In Explanation of Our Times," in SPLH, p.282.
965 Hughes, "Pride," in A New Song, p.16.
967 Hughes, "A Toast to Harlem," in Simple Speaks His Mind, p.34.
RIGHT OUT OF POWER --
COMES THE COLORED HOUR:
MARTIN LUTHER KING IS GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA,
Dr. RUFUS CLEMENT HIS CHIEF ADVISOR.
ZELMA WATSON GEORGE THE HIGH GRAND WORTHY.
IN WHITE PILLARED MANSIONS
SITTING ON THEIR WIDE VERANDAS,
WEALTHY NEGROES HAVE WHITE SERVANTS,
WHITE SHARE CROPPERS WORK THE BLACK PLANTATIONS,
AND COLORED CHILDREN HAVE WHITE MAMMIES:
MAMMY FAUBUS
MAMMY EASTLAND
MAMMY PATTERSON.

DEAR, DEAR DARLING OLD WHITE MAMMIES --
SOMETIMES EVEN BURIED WITH OUR FAMILY!
DEAR OLD
MAMMY FAUBUS!
CULTURE, THEY SAY, IS A TWO-WAY STREET:
HAND ME MY MINT JULEP, MAMMY,
MAKE HASTE!...

Along with the time-consciousness, Brooks and Hughes develop a sense of locale in the Blacks. An abiding identification with one's locality gives one a sense of belonging, a fellow-feeling, identity, rootedness and security. Brooks bases her poems on Chicago and Hughes makes Harlem serve as the setting for his poems.

Brooks, in her autobiography Report from Part One, narrates how the Chicagoan surroundings and life contributed to her writing:

..... when I wrote a good deal of my better-known poetry I lived on 63rd Street ... and there was a good deal of life in the raw all about me... It contributed to my writing progress.
I wrote about what I saw and heard in the street....

968 Hughes, AYM, pp.8-9.
969 Brooks, RPO, p.133.
Brooks pictures the Chicagoan slums and ghettos and overcrowded tenements as in her poems, "The Lovers of the Poor" and "In the Mecca." She also portrays the roach-infested and rat-ridden kitchenette buildings where the people live amidst dreams that "fight with fried potatoes" and the stark reality of waiting for their turn to get into the bathroom:

We wonder. But not well! not for a minute!  
Since Number Five is out of the bathroom now,  
We think of lukewarm water, hope to get in it....

A variety of characters -- maids, clergymen, housewives, old people, mothers, hair-dressers, plain girls and boys -- are seen in Brooks' poems, based in kitchenette apartments, taverns, clubs, beauty parlours, streets, backyards and frontyards. The city supplies her with an infinite variety of observation about people:

It was better for me to have grown up in Chicago because in my writing I am proud to feature people and their concerns -- their troubles as well as their joys. The city is the place to observe man en masse and in his infinite variety....

Incidentally, it is by capturing the people's joys and sorrows, ambitions and aspirations, which are common to all human beings, that Brooks transcends race and region and attains universality. While on one hand, the cross-section of Black life presented through the Black ghettos stands for Blacks' unity and solidarity, on

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971 Idem.
972 Brooks, RPO, p.135.
the other hand, the pooling of Blacks in slums and ghettos represents segregation and prohibition from entry into the American mainstream. In this context, Brooks undertakes to do two things simultaneously. She wants to show to the outer world that the Chicagoan Blacks "are people like everywhere" with common hopes and predicaments; next, she resolves to encourage the Blacks themselves by showing that "the grimmest of these (a large variety of personalities) is likely to have a streak or two streaks of sun." Thus, Brooks holds Chicago as a mini model of a world by which she serves not only the Black world but the whole mankind.

Hughes establishes a sense of place in his poems like Brooks. His Harlem, which is "a profitable colony for landlords and merchants, but a swollen, aching slum for the people who lived there" is "his own habitat, his workshop and his playground, his forte and his dish of tea." Being a typical Harlemite himself, Hughes finds its problems to be his own:

I live in the heart of Harlem.... The people of Harlem seem not very different from others, except in language. I love the color of their language: and, being a Harlemite myself, their problems and interests are my problems and interests....

974 Brooks, RPO, p.189.
976 Carl Van Vechten, "In the Heart of Harlem," in CELH, p.82.
As a result, Hughes has written many a poem based on Harlem, some of which being "Harlem," "Harlem Call," "Harlem Dance Hall," "Harlem Sweeties," "Harlem Night Song," and "Death in Harlem." It is the place where the Blacks find hope, relief, joy and security. In other words, Hughes' characters find Harlem a dreamland, a place of refuge and relief. Harlem, at the same time, is a place where the Black man's dream is deferred long, where the Black man's life is filled with poverty, loneliness, frustration and violence. In this way, Hughes presents the beauty and bitterness of their lives simultaneously.

Like Brooks, Hughes treats Harlem as a symbol to represent the world. The basic aspirations and ambitions which are shared by humanity in general do find a place in his poems. As Jean Wagner observes, "...in his [Hughes'] work Harlem is symbol as much as reality."\textsuperscript{978} He further testifies to the fact that Hughes attains universal stature:

\begin{quote}
... there can be no doubt that, beneath the poet's magic wand, Harlem miraculously overflows its boundaries and takes on the dimensions of all Black America.
   But \textbf{neither Harlem nor the race to which he belonged can claim to possess Langston Hughes entirely, for he voiced, beyond any frontier of color, the eternal aspirations of all men whose love is freedom} [My emphasis]...\textsuperscript{979}
\end{quote}

Along with a sense of time and locale, Brooks and Hughes develop a sense of the suffering Black through the dialects, gospels, spirituals, blues, jazz, ballads and sermons. All their writings converge to point the suffering Black, who becomes

\begin{footnotes}
\item[978] Jean Wagner, \textit{Black Poets of the Unites States}, p.474.
\item[979] Idem.
\end{footnotes}
the type of the human sufferer just as Saul Bellow's "Jew" becomes the type of a universal sufferer.

In this context, Brooks and Hughes have a cosmic vision. They are primarily interested and concerned about the Black man's suffering, but through him they are able to view the affliction of humanity in general. As such, they are not narrow minded or confined to their own people's harrowing experiences, but they transcend their confines to extend their vision far and wide.

This world view -- weltanschauung -- is all comprehensive and all inclusive. Though the themes handled by Brooks and Hughes are based on American experience and soil, they can be related to any human being. Moreover, Brooks and Hughes have the proper perspectivism suggested by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren in their Theory of Literature:

"Perspectivism " means that we recognize that there is one poetry, one literature, comparable in all ages, developing, changing, full of possibilities...."Perspectivism ... does not mean an anarchy of values, a glorification of individual caprice, but a process of getting to know the object from different points of view which may be defined and criticized in their turn....

Concurring with this foregoing definition, Brooks and Hughes have written enduring poetry.

It is because of her broad vision that Brooks gives more importance to "people" than her art. She never lets "Negro-ness limit her humanity." Her intention is

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980 Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, Theory of Literature, pp.43, 156.
981 Harvey Curtis Webster, quoted in George E.Kent, A Life of Gwendolyn Brooks, p.156.
to portray Blacks as human beings and not as "curios." Harry B. Shaw calls her poetry "cassette" poetry which can be fitted into a larger context:

Miss Brooks's poetry can be thought of as "cassette" poetry that, when fitted into a larger familiar and complementary context, enlivens the whole scene, producing a heightened sense of unity and coherence about the black experience in particular and a better perspective of human nature in general....

This observation agrees with Brooks' own statement that "the universal wears contemporary clothing very well." In the same manner of Brooks, Hughes' cosmic vision is not obliterated by his racial vision. His racial experience is a stepping stone to a better perspective of human life. Race is but a channel through which his artistic vision flows. His Black mother's exhortation is not only for the dark oppressed children but for "All you dark children in the world out there." Again, the composer in "Daybreak in Alabama" wishes to touch "everybody with kind fingers... natural as dew." "Freedom's Plow" begins in a racial atmosphere and ends in a universal tone:

A long time ago,
An enslaved people heading toward freedom
Made up a song:
  Keep Your Hand On the Plow!  Hold on!
That plow plowed a new furrow
Across the field of history.
Into that furrow the freedom seed was dropped.

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982 Harry B. Shaw, Gwendolyn Brooks, p.42.
983 Brooks, RPO, p.146.
From that seed a tree grew, is growing, will ever grow.  
That tree is for everybody,  
For all America, for all the world.  
May its branches spread and its shelter grow  
Until all races and all peoples know its shade....  

This progress from one level to another agrees with Brooks' own view when she remarks that she starts in a private manner and ends in a public tone:

So I, starting out, usually in the grip of a high and private suffusion, may find by the time I have arrived at a last line that there is quite some public clamor in my product...  

Hughes is thus able to create a sense of the suffering Black with a world-view.  

Wallace Thurman's observation sums up this argument:

When Langston Hughes writes of specific Negro types he manages to make them more than just ordinary Negro types. They are actually dark-skinned symbols of universal characters....  

Neither of these artists -- Brooks and Hughes -- is a "poor knower of himself."  

They know and understand their call and mission. Endowed with a sense and understanding of Black Identity, Black Consciousness and Negritude, they have dedicated their art to help their oppressed and suppressed fellowmen to discover their innate capacities and potentialities and actualize themselves. Moreover, they advise them to take heart and press on, laying specific emphasis on the symbols

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987 Brooks, quoted in Harry B.Shaw, Gwendolyn Brooks, p.33.  
988 Wallace Thurman, quoted in Modern Black Writers, Ed. Michael Popkin, p.231.  
like star, sun, rainbow and dawn more than on the cross and the Passion of Christ. They offer directives specifically to the youth of the race, to creatively involve in building up their Black nation and their Black world and not to waste their bubbling vigour on destructive purposes. They must recognize that their enemy is not the White man’s person, but his ageold prejudiced conception against the Black man. Again, they must not turn against each other and against their own women but feel proud of their heritage and develop a feeling of oneness. Moreover, they must materialize their dreams by culturing their mental abilities and gaining intellectual strength to battle to the court and not on the streets. This is precisely the concept of Black power which Tom Skinner also defines:

The Black power concept in its moderate context simply says that the Negro should establish his own stores, build his own banks, establish his own supermarkets, restaurants, sporting good stores and clothing stores... thus keeping economic power in the Negro community ... There are those who, by the term "Black Power," mean a total, violent overthrow of the white community. But in the moderate context, it means simply to produce economic power in and for the Negro community; to urge Negroes to run for political office; to urge Negroes to vote for Negroes, send Negroes to the Senate, send Negroes to the City Council as Legislators of their own cities. In other words, get Negroes who can represent Negroes in the Houses of law and legislation in the country. . . .

Being Christian poets essentially, Brooks and Hughes believe in the liberating power of Christ. They empathize with the Blacks and sympathize with the Whites. They inculcate the Christian concepts and virtues like love, faith, courage and steadfastness in the Blacks and advocate wise, healthy and farsighted attitudes.

990 Tom Skinner, Black and Free, p.138.
Again, Brooks and Hughes have understood that the Black man has become an integral part of the American soil. His rise or fall will affect and determine the progress of the whole nation. As such, these poets feel that they are in a "lost" condition. The White man seeks his own doom by keeping his feet on the Black neck or flogging his own dark one. In "A Bronzeville Mother Loiters in Mississippi. Meanwhile, a Mississippi Mother Burns Bacon," the White man who tries to keep the Black man in subjugation brings guilt, shame and bondage upon himself. The "red ooze (of the dark boy he killed) was seeping, spreading darkly, thickly, slowly, /... over all of Earth and Mars." 991 Again, as in Hughes' "Lynching Song," though it is the Black boy's body which spins, it is "the White folks (who) die." 992 Hughes wants the Whites and Blacks to accept each other as sons of the American soil. It is the truth, whether they like it or not. He addresses the Whites thus:

Sometimes perhaps you don't want to be a part of me.
Nor do I often want to be a part of you.
But we are, that's true!... 993

Having understood this significant truth, Brooks and Hughes suggest that the Whites and Blacks must combine and "must / wizard a track through our own screaming weed" 994 and learn from each other: "As I learn from you, / I guess

992 Hughes, "Lynching Song," in One Way Ticket, p.58.
993 Hughes, "Theme for English B," in SPLH, p. 248.
you learn from me." By the word "combine" they don't mean "integration" anymore but an united effort for their good. The road to recognition is hard; it might take three or four generations to fully actualize their dreams. As Brooks states, "Success is not the reward of every effort. But there is enough magic, enough sure flight, enough meaningful strength to inspire a happy surmise." 

Brooks and Hughes have many things in common. Both love and take pride in their colour and heritage. Both are optimists. They write about the ordinary common Black and his interests. They adopt common speech in most of their poems. They feature reality in all simplicity. Both are neither bitter nor biased. Lastly, they are Christian humanists with universal trends.

The similarities between these artists outweigh the few variations that exist. The subtle distinctions that can be traced are not in their ideas and themes but in their way and mode of expression. The shade of discrimination is precisely due to their individual differences which spring from the difference in their gender, temperament, background, family life right from their childhood, the age and the time of the flowering of their art and their unique talents of writing.

Brooks and Hughes belong to different times. Brooks is the product of the second half of this century, especially, of the 1960s and 1970s, when the "New Black" came to be in vogue. Hughes belongs to the Harlem Renaissance. It is in 1967

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when Hughes' poetic career ended by his death, that Brooks' career began to take a new dimension, and made her say, "It frightens me to realize that, if I had died before the age of fifty, I would have died a 'Negro' fraction." She dares to be consciously raw thereafter, as opposed to her previous idea of "polished" technique:

Dare to be raw sometimes, Poet! Dare to extend, with something more of clangor. Dare -- sometimes -- to concern yourself with seeable, feelable, hearable people. Again: sometimes. Not all the time, but sometimes....

There is no such remarkable turn in Hughes' career, except for a temporary phase of Marxist influence in the 1930s, during which period his works lack his natural touch and tend to be humourless and protesting.

Apart from the historical and social backgrounds, the respective family backgrounds of these two literators have had a telling influence on their art. While Brooks has enjoyed a loving home-life with affectionate parents highly supportive of her poetic career, Hughes' life has been marked by poverty, joblessness, lack of security, separated parents and wanderings. This is reflected in the choice and treatment of their subjects.

Brooks, being a woman, has written more poems on women and their problems. Her later poetry, as she acknowledges in her interview with Gloria T. Hull, has

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998 Brooks, RPO, p.199.
more of male heroes. While Brooks' women mostly suffer from rejection and dejection, Hughes' characters, whether men or women, are victims of poverty, who have to "scuffle for their bread."\textsuperscript{999} He also gives a special niche to the "tragic mulatto" in his poems.

Regarding the treatment of the colour-issue, Brooks has had to undergo a transition "from an almost angry rejection of my dark skin... to a surprised queenhood in the new Black sun"\textsuperscript{1000} before she could openly feel proud of her colour -- "The veils of the darkness."\textsuperscript{1001} But Hughes' view on colour as "Black and beautiful" has been consistently the same throughout his career.

The concept of Black power is more pronounced in Brooks than in Hughes. Brooks, belonging to a generation which is neither Hughes' nor the new Black artists', is "the most direct link"\textsuperscript{1002} between the two, according to Onwuchekwa Jemie. So, she advocates this concept in the moderate sense of the term. In keeping with the younger generation of artists, her voice is more assertive and defiant, but she does not have the "sting" which is prevalent in the new generation of poets. Her angry voice cannot be mistaken for a militant attitude in the trend and manner of the new Black poets of the 1960s and 1970s. Her "newish voice

\textsuperscript{999} Richard Wright, quoted in \textit{Modern Black Writers}, Ed. Michael Popkin, p.232.


\textsuperscript{1001} Brooks, "intermission," in \textit{WGB}, p.121.

will not be an imitation of the contemporary young black voice, which I [Brooks] so admire, but an extending adaptation of today's G.B. voice. What Brooks specially and specifically emphasizes is "love," which must exist among Blacks with various shades of "Blackness":

You are black. You see the black people. You love them... you must accept each other ... And Blackness -- the red of it, the milk and cream of it, the tan and yellow tan of it, the deep-brown middle-brown high-brown of it, the "olive" and ochre of it -- Blackness marches on...

She filters and presents the essence of this message of love to the Blacks in "The Wall":

I mount the rattling wood. Walter says, "She is good." Says, "She our Sister is," In front of me hundreds of faces, red-brown, brown, black, ivory, yield me hot trust, their yea and their Announcement that they are ready to rile the high-flung ground....

There is variation in the technical realms of Brooks and Hughes. Brooks' poems are more innovative technically. She is noted for her clever manipulation of words and technical devices. She can make sound and sense go together in a lucid flow of diction. There is a rare metaphysical depth and richness in her poems.

Hughes, on the other hand, is adept at writing short and simple poems which quickly register in one's mind and make a lasting impact. It is the laughter

\[1003\] Brooks, RPO, p.183.

\[1004\] Ibid., pp.213-214.

mingled with sorrow -- black humour -- which binds one's heart with Hughes'. Hughes has even received letters addressed to his character, Simple.\textsuperscript{1006}

Brooks has written less of blues in keeping with the younger artists' view that art should not display resignation. She writes more of sonnets and free verse which are suitable forms for protest, assertions, interrogations and imperatives. Hughes, who belongs to the previous generation of artists, writes more blues and gets closer to the soul-world of the Blacks. Beyond the mood of resignation and despair, there is always a note of hope and optimism. For instance, in "The Weary Blues," though the speaker sings in a melancholic voice far into the night, he resolves to come out of his despair inspite of his death-wish:

\begin{quote}
"Ain't got nobody in all this world,
Ain't got nobody but ma self.
I's gwine to quit ma frownin'
And put ma troubles on the shelf."...\textsuperscript{1007}
\end{quote}

Both Brooks and Hughes have encouraged and inspired many budding artists. Brooks has conducted many teaching programmes and poetry workshops to create and mould Black artists. In this regard, Hughes is a greater inspirer, pioneer and trend-setter. He has inspired artists who later turned out to be great poets, who are proud recipients of famous awards. The outstanding among them are Gwendolyn Brooks and Lorraine Hansberry. Brooks' biographer George Kent observes the influence of Hughes on Brooks in regard to writing about ordinary

\textsuperscript{1006} James A.Emanuel, \textit{Langston Hughes}, p.177.

\textsuperscript{1007} Hughes, "The Weary Blues," in SPLH, p.33.
life, and a new sense of language.¹⁰⁰⁸ Brooks, encouraged by Hughes right from the beginning of her career, acknowledges his capacity to create artists:

Langston Hughes loved literature. He loved it not fearfully, not with awe. His respect for it was never stiff or cold. His respect for it was gaily deferential. He considered literature not his private inch, but great acreage. The plantings of others he not only welcomed but busily enriched.

He had an affectionate interest in the young. He was intent, he was careful. The young manuscript-bearing applicant never felt himself an intruder, never went away with Oak turned ashes in the hand.... ¹⁰⁰⁹

To sum up, one detects that these two artists Brooks and Hughes have been two of the best poets produced by this century. They can be ranked among the few who have been faithful to their call and mission. They are dedicated to their art, devoted to their race and committed to humanity. They best fulfil the notion of John Henrik Clarke about a Black artist’s mission:

It is singularly the mission of the Black writer to tell his people what they have been, in order for them to understand what they are. And from this the people will clearly understand what they still must be.... ¹⁰¹⁰

Having maximally served their community to the best of their efforts and capacities, Brooks and Hughes exist as guiding stars in the literary sky for the oppressed people all over the world, precisely because of their universals and humanistic concerns.

¹⁰¹⁰ John Henrik Clarke, quoted in George E.Kent,A Life of Gwendolyn Brooks, p.197.