
The oeuvres of Brooks and Hughes have been subjected to a close critical analysis, in the light of psychological, sociological, structural and formalistic approaches. Their poems are examined and evaluated individually and collectively on thematic and technical planes.

Brooks and Hughes are representative Black poets who understand the plights and predicaments of Blacks in America. The Blacks are ignored and suppressed in the various fields like art, literature, politics and law. These poets decreate and explode the stereotypes of the Blacks and strive to create the right image of the Blacks in both the minds of the Blacks and the Whites. With clarified vision and definitive goals, they have committed themselves to the upliftment of their race.

In this context, Brooks and Hughes voice the aspirations and feelings of the Blacks. They investigate the problems peculiar to the Black race in particular -- their sturm und drang and angst -- which are shared by humanity in general. Thus, by giving expression to the sentiments of the oppressed and exploited mankind, their works gain enduring value.
Chapter One aims at examining the poets' age, background and influences. It introduces these artists as two great Black American literators who are at once representative of their race and America. Brooks enjoyed a home of love, warmth and security which provided a conducive atmosphere to write poetry. Her mother, Keziah Brooks' constant motivation and encouragement coupled with her father's assertive character, had a shaping influence on her. Her literary models were the modern imagists Ezra Pound and Thomas Stearns Eliot. She inherited a love of life and an interest in ordinary things from her model and mentor Langston Hughes. In the late sixties, her poetry became streamlined and to the point in the manner and trend of the younger Black artists.

Unlike Brooks, Hughes had a lonesome childhood. The separation of his parents and his early exposure to poverty conditioned his mind to identify himself with the poor and the ordinary, and introduce the blues. His grandmother, in whose care Hughes grew up as a child, played a definitive role in moulding his character and attitudes towards life. Writers like Amy Lowell, Robert Frost and Edgar Lee Masters had a subtle influence on him. Vachel Lindsay opened the world of letters to him and Carl Sandburg's *vers libre* instilled in Hughes a love of life and imagination. In this context, Hughes made a signal contribution to the world of poetry in the literary climate of Harlem Renaissance.

Brooks and Hughes have the double advantage of being at once Americans and Blacks. Being American poets, they think innovatively and concentrate on themes which are exclusively American: love, loss of identity, search for self, quest for freedom, liberty etc. As Black geniuses, they couple their American
ingenuity with their Black experience and evolve into powerful artists. They present the right perspectives related to Black Consciousness and Black Identity. Their poetry gives the right definition for the concept of Negritude.

Black Consciousness is multifaceted in character. It delineates Blacks as victims of cultural divide, which results in a yearning for Africa. They are still suffused with Black culture and trends. They suffer from exploitation and deprivation in an alien climate. As a result, they live in a state of angst, colour-consciousness and inferior feelings.

The works of Brooks and Hughes view Black Identity in the right perspective. The Black man has to redefine his present identity in the American society. The Black man is different but not inferior. In fact, he is more talented in various fields like art, sports and music than his White counterpart. Brooks and Hughes project the Black male and female as unique human beings endowed with innate capacities of endurance, courage and strength.

The concept of Negritude is perceived in the right spirit by Brooks and Hughes. It asserts and celebrates the humanism of the Blacks as against the cold impersonality of the Whites. It advocates that Black is beautiful and recommends that the Black man must be proud of his colour. Negritude accepts the Black man's dignity as a human being and portrays the Blacks healthier, happier and stronger in an indigenous environment unpolluted by Western influences.

The age-old stereotypes of the Black man and Africa are exploded by Brooks and Hughes. They vitalize their literature by making clear to the Blacks their
strengths and weaknesses, and bringing to light the Black man's contribution to the development of America.

One detects running parallels between Brooks and Hughes on thematic and personal levels. There are variables and dissimilarities in the treatment of the themes, subjects and in the way of giving expression to the Blacks' sentiments. As a female writer, Brooks' personae include more of women than of men. She is able to explore the psyche of women of various age groups. As a male artist, Hughes views the plight and struggle of the Black man in general.

Chapter Two focusses on the oppressions experienced by the Blacks and the several constraints which they carry with them. The oppressions are traced to the slave past when the poor Africans were wrenched from their land, language and families and sold away like animals in an alien land. Their miserable slavery in America where they were kept chained, whipped, lynched, underfed and underpaid is brought to focus. With no exposure to education, they were kept in a state of continued ignorance and poverty. With their women abused, children separated, and their cooperated efforts to improve thwarted, the Black men were at a loss. Christianity offered a spark of hope. Even after Emancipation Proclamation in 1865, the martyrdom continued in the guise of segregation and deliberate neglect from politics and public life. Any attempt to merge with the American mainstream was discouraged and they were expected to be satisfied with the marginal privileges offered and allowed by the Whites.

There are several racial determinants which act as constraints on the Blacks restricting their progress. They are their intrinsic longing for Africa, the several
complexes about their colour and inferiority, their meek, servile and humble nature, the provocative and rebellious nature of the youth and the consciousness of the cultural divide in which they are caught. Brooks and Hughes suggest ways and means to overcome these constraints and view them from positive angles. They advise the Blacks to retain their ethnic identity, take pride in them and channelize their vigour in right paths. In this way Brooks and Hughes offer directives to the Blacks to turn their trials into triumphs.

Chapter Three closely examines the importance of self-discovery as the means for the Blacks in their upward mobility. It attempts to define "self" in the light of the transcendental question "Who am I?" The importance of self perception and spiritual insight is studied with reference to the Black authors, Brooks and Hughes.

The Black self is a unique self, multidimensional in character. It is an alienatee self, suffering, downtrodden, rejected and exploited self. This prismatic self is led by these Black artists to discover its innate capacities and strengths. Self-discovery, which otherwise is termed self-actualization, is a process by which an individual finds his true worth and becomes that which he really is. It is a consequential step which a Black individual must pass through to reach the final stage of transcendence -- transcendence of the fate defined for him by the Whites. This can be achieved only by growing to the maximum limits of possibilities; in other words, by becoming more than one ever thought possible. Again, the various barriers to this self-discovery are being studied and Brooks and Hughes give guidelines to confront them.
There are four steps involved in the process of self-discovery -- self-knowledge, self-acceptance, self-esteem and self-trust. Knowing one's potentialities and one's rights and position in America is the fundamental step which leads to acceptance of one's own colour, beauty and culture, which in turn results in an estimation and celebration of their singular endowments and achievements. Self-trust is the final and significant stage which bespeaks faith, courage and determination to confront any situation in life. It is this faith which propelled Martin Luther King Jr. towards action.

Brooks and Hughes create models worthy of emulation and offer "dreams" for the Blacks to nourish and hold on to with optimistic attitudes. They give practical advice and counsel in terms of action words and imperatives to constructively activate the Blacks. Having discovered their true self, the Blacks no longer view the Whites as their enemies.

Chapter Four analyses the concept of fate and records the Blacks' various reactions to their existential life-situations. Fate is considered a divine decree which cannot be altered by men. Brooks and Hughes argue for maturation and maintain that the man-made designs should not deter their progress and turn them into defeatists. They must endeavour to rewrite their fate and redefine their lives.

In such a context, Brooks and Hughes subject the existential philosophy to poetic treatment. The Blacks' life is one of struggle, suffering, lonesomeness and dread. These existential perils are approached by atheists and theists. Life is a puzzle with many unanswered and irresolvables. Man becomes an enigma to himself
and is left in a state of nausea. He has the free will to choose. While the atheists like Jean Paul Sartre, Heidegger and Simone de Beauvoir think of life as a void and nullity, the theists like Soren Aabye Kierkegaard, Paul Tillich, Thomas Acquinas and St. Augustine believe in God, accept life with all its irresolvables and consider angst as a basic quality to appreciate one’s existence. Kierkegaard suggests the Leap of Faith. Brooks and Hughes are optimists and confirmed theists. They believe in God and inject faith in the Blacks. They stress that faith and human efforts go together to gain achievement.

The various reactions of the Blacks to their lot vary according to their age and status in the society. The elderly are more resigned and the youth more rebellious. The responses of the women are brought to the fore and the mulatto youth’s reactions are specifically brought to light by Hughes. Light is thrown on children’s responses too. Again, reactions of the intellectual and well-to-do Blacks are studied against those of the low, ghetto-born, poor Blacks. The reactions of the Blacks are examined at two levels, the synchronic and the diachronic. At the synchronic level, one detects various kinds of passive reactions like meek submission, laziness, envy, dejection, a tendency to commit suicide, addiction to drugs and immoral living. At the diachronic level, the revolting tendency keeps mounting from a mild, unobtrusive gesture of non-cooperation or a tactful avoidance or a sarcastic smile, through a seething level to a hot outburst of temper.

The idea of militance as perceived by these artists is studied in the right perspective. Militance is not a solution to the problems of America. Power comes only from one’s awareness of his strengths and from love which exists
among the Blacks. A special appeal to the youth of the race to channelize their reactions in right directions is made.

Chapter Five establishes Brooks and Hughes as essentially Christian humanists. Their poetry is charged with Christian virtues and ideals. The religious worship of the Blacks is characterized by heavy music, clapping and steady singing as opposed to the Whites' solemn and mild music. It is reminiscent of their African rhythms, tom-toms and drum beats and again, it offers them a hope of joy and justice in the world beyond.

Brooks and Hughes find the teachings of Christ meaningful and practicable. They identify the Black sufferer with Christ on the level of the indignities experienced by Christ. They view Christ as a Black Christ. The Cross and Calvary are symbols of suffering. Brooks and Hughes imbue their poetry with the Christian virtues like justice, love, hope, faith, forgiveness, tolerance and endurance. Hughes views God on a more personal and intimate level as the Saviour and Friend. Both have had phases of religious crises but they have always retained their basic faith. The personal faith of Brooks and Hughes are closely examined.

Religion is viewed with a fresh perspective. God is the liberator on the side of the oppressed. Brooks and Hughes relate religious problems to social problems and understand the teachings of Christ in the new political dimension of liberation.

Liberation must occur at all levels. The Emancipation is but a beginning. It must continue through mental, social and spiritual levels. The Blacks must be liberated in their minds, enjoy equality and wield "love" which is a powerful weapon, that
can free them from bondage and bind them together. The poets' vision of love extends far and near and they envision a community free from racism and based on love and not on colour.

Chapter Six highlights the skill of Brooks and Hughes in producing crafted and concealed art. They are established as post-modern artists because of the high level of cerebration put in by them. They demand adequate reader-participation in order to understand the underlying sense of their poems. Again, they measure up to the definition of an American Scholar promulgated by Emerson.

The œuvres of Brooks and Hughes are marked by definitive form, close structure and prefect organization -- gestalt. As good works of art, they are governed by a core message, apt diction, and by the qualities of clarity, brevity and plausibility.

Brooks pours her artistic vision into various forms of poetry such as sonnets, ballads, epic and free verse. She is a skilled sonneteer and breaks the rigidity of the sonnet form. She experiments with Black folk forms like ballads and blues employing folk diction and Black vernacular. Her long poem "The Anniad" achieves epic dimensions. The poems are well structured and woven around a textuality. Her ideas flow coherently with a felicity of diction and cadence. Brooks is fascinated with what words can do. She is a stylist noted for her rare coinages, incongruous comparisons, melodious verses, finely turned phrases and cleverly employed punctuations. Her language is suggestive, symbolic and condensed. She wields symbols ingeniously and uses colours suggestively. With all schemes and tropes couched and concealed in her artistic works, she fuses form and content and achieves artistic unity.
While Brooks is more gifted in writing complex poems with metaphysical depth, Hughes is more talented in writing simple and direct poems. He tries his hand at various forms like lyrics, ballads, blues and jazz. What Brooks does with sonnets, Hughes does with blues with its ironic humour and understatement. He introduces the conventional charms of poetry very naturally. Like Brooks, he has written a number of ballads based on the usual ballad themes. *Ask Your Mama* is a unique artistic experiment of jazz. In its complexity and variety it resembles Brooks' works. Hughes' poems have good structure and organization. Hughes is especially noted for his short epigrammatic and crisp poems. His diction is unique. He manipulates words as well as Brooks, but that is not his chief concern. He masterfully handles symbols, figures of speech, imagery, satire and humour. His humour is inborn, with which he sees the seamy side of life with sympathy and lightheartedness. He deploys black humour by which a suffering human being conceals his sorrow, swallows his pain and gives an appearance of being gay. As in Brooks, there is a fine blend of form and content.

The works of Brooks and Hughes have intrinsic artistic value and hence yield to an analytic approach. Again, they are marked by a definitive purpose-sense, without which they will become flat. With a superb mastery of art and delineation of human predicaments they evolve from being racial poets to universal artists.

*Chapter Seven* which is in the form of summation and argumentation throws light on the purpose-sense behind their artistic endeavours and establishes them a humanists who champion the cause of the oppressed all over the world. The exposure to American experience and Black experience makes the artists Brooks and Hughes rich. They deal with exclusively American themes and are
simultaneously committed to the mission of producing Black consciousness and redefining the Blacks' lives. A Black artist cannot help being racial in his approach to art. Any common sight is coloured by his race. As such, Brooks and Hughes project the sentiments of the Blacks and serve as intellectual spokespersons of their race.

They have clear-stated and clarified goals and objectives. Both wish to illuminate the Blacks' condition in America through the vehicles of their art. They intend to influence the thinking of the Blacks and thereby regulate their actions and reactions.

The poetry of these creationists serve as social documents about the miserable tale of the Blacks in America. Moreover, their works create a three dimensional awareness: a sense of time -- zeitgeist, a sense of locale and a sense of the suffering Black who becomes the type of the human sufferer. The time-sense is created to inculcate a preparedness on the part of the Blacks; the place-sense is to create a sense of belonging, oneness and security; an awareness of the suffering Black is to project him as a universal sufferer. It is with a world view -- Weltanschauung -- that Brooks and Hughes view the harrowing experience of their race. In this regard, they have the proper perspectivism suggested by Rene Wellek and Austin Warren.

Racial experience is but a stepping stone to a better perspective of human life. Blacks are advised to work for Blacks and not against Whites. Brooks and Hughes point out to the White man's rise or fall in conjunction with that of the Black man in America.