CONCLUSION
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This thesis is an attempt to study the foremost Afro-American poet, Gwendolyn Brooks, with special emphasis on her themes and forms. It is an indepth study of both the themes and the forms she uses to bring out her subject matter. It tries to provide a new insight for better understanding of her growth as a poet. It also helps us trace her transition from an integrationist poet to a militant one; a transformation of a Negro poet to a Black poet.

Eversince the Black man unwillingly set his foot on the American soil; his life had been fraught with pain and suffering. Firstly, brought as a slave from the far shores of Africa, he found the new land very strange and alien in all aspects. Added to this was his pitiable condition as a slave. He did not come to America on his own will; he was whipped and dragged into it. The freedom he enjoyed in his native land was lost when he was bound and dumped like “black pudding” into the ship’s hold America bound.

The history of Black slaves is a saga of unlimited agony, suffering and humiliation. Any other weaker race, under these excruciatingly painful suffering, would have perished. But the Black
race strong, sturdy, and abundantly blessed with the instinct for survival, withstood the ravages of bondage. The Black man not only survived, but, after a relentless struggle against all odds, managed to live with honour and pride. A number of economic, political and socio-cultural factors have been responsible for this emancipation from slavery and bondage. But the one that is of fascinating interest to the students of literature is the learning and mastering the language of his masters. Sheer instinct for survival must have made him learn the language of his master, and the same instinct must have made the enlightened among them to realize the potency of it as means of winning freedom to live with dignity and decorum.

As more and more Blacks got education, there arose in their minds questions regarding their position in America. With the Civil War, a part of this question was answered, by making the Black man more aware of his self. This quest for self identity gained strength as time passed, kindling in him the spirit of enquiry as to who he was, wherefrom he came, where were his race and colour taking him to. Now armed with education, combined with awareness of his identity, he set out to change the image forced upon him and his race by the whites.
Before the Black man became aware of himself and before his quest for identity, and even before the Civil War, there were many Blacks who had dared to pick up their pens to voice their protest against the inhuman treatment meted out to them. Lucy Terry, Phyllis Wheatly made use of poetry as a means of protest. Working under the constant threat of suppression, these pioneer writers had to take special care to camouflage their protest. They used the same method that was followed in their traditional folk songs, seculars and spirituals where the songs contained two meanings, and moved on exactly two levels, one for the whites and another for their own people. For instance, in the poem “The Sea-turtle and the Shark”, Melvin Tolson, brings out the oppression of the Blacks in America without hinting at the race. With his poetic imagination he makes a toothless sea-turtle gnaw its way out of the shark’s stomach. Thereby, presenting the helpless Blacks swallowed by the mighty whites, crawling their way out from the vice-like grip. Presence of covert protest literature of this kind can be seen in the works of many Black writers.

At this time there came on the Black scene the Harlem Renaissance. This was a literary movement which was the result of various social, economic and political factors. It proved to be an appropriate spring board from where the Black man launched his quest
for his identity and established himself on the American literary scene. Of the many distinguished literary artists of the Harlem Renaissance, the names of W.E.B. DuBois, Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, James Weldon Johnson, and Jessie Fauset stand out.

The Harlem Renaissance provided the right platform through various journals of the times like The Crisis and Opportunity. These journals gave the Black man a perfect medium through which he could voice himself without fear. They were also instrumental in raising the Black man into the spotlight, to receive national and international recognition. Various organizations like NAACP, Universal Negro Improvement Association, were instrumental in not only developing a sense of self respect but also a pride in his race and his native homeland. This in turn was mirrored in his literature. By now, with more and more Blacks getting education, the horizon of the community as a whole began broadening. Education wrought in him a new sense of being and dignity.

One can never underestimate the immense contribution of the Harlem Renaissance to the growth of Black literature. Unfortunately, the Harlem Renaissance had a very short life span. Yet during that short time, many writers found their calling and contributed immensely
in raising the pride and consciousness of their people. Women writers too contributed to this movement. The literature of women writers is unique, in that, it was not just a search for Black identity, but also a search for their position in the society which was always male oriented. This quest led them to different avenues and gave Afro-American literature a richer, a newer substance and meaning.

From the 1920's to the 1960's, Black man lived a life on the margin of the white American society. He was always looked with suspicion. If by chance he achieved some distinction and made a name for himself, he was looked as a curio.

For a long time, the Black man had the overriding desire to belong. He, who had been uprooted from his native land, was not allowed to send down his roots in his 'Karma Bhoomi' (Field of actions). He longed for the sense of security that comes with belonging. Every attempt he made to belong was thwarted. He was barred with segregation at all levels; bad housing, confinement to the ghetto, lack of opportunity for upper mobility.

During the 1960's, there blew the winds of change. The Black man who had so long been marginalized and relegated to the back of the society felt it was high time he asserted himself. Thus started various action movements like the sit-ins, bus-boycott, freedom rides,
marches and riots demanding desegregation not only on paper but in reality. Under the able leadership of Martin Luther King Jr., desegregation came into effect. As did the Civil Rights Act, an Act passed by the American Supreme Court calling for desegregation on all fronts, in all walks of life. The literary manifestation of the civil rights movement was the Black Arts Movement which gave a definite directive to the Afro-American literature of the time. Gwendolyn Brooks is studied in the context of these two Black literary movements because she drew inspiration from both, contributing mightily to the second.

The main focus of this study, Gwendolyn Brooks, is a poet who has left an indelible mark on the literary scene of America. She is not only celebrated as the most outstanding of Afro-American writers, but also as one of the most prominent literary figures of America.

This study concentrates on the transformation of Gwendolyn Brooks from a Negro poet into a Black poet. To understand the kind of Afro-American poet that Gwendolyn Brooks was, it was found necessary to see her against the backdrop of the two Black literary traditions from the earliest writers, through the Harlem Renaissance of the 1920's and the Black Arts Movement of the late 1960's which was
militant in its approach. Gwendolyn Brooks comes out as an artist for whom life experiences get translated into art.

The first chapter is an attempt to look at Gwendolyn Brooks and her life in the context of the two Black literary movements, the Harlem Renaissance and the Black Arts Movement. This perspective is valid and important because of immense influence Harlem Renaissance and its artists had on Gwendolyn Brooks’s life as well as her works. It is not without reason that critics point out that Gwendolyn Brooks’s poetry is a sensitive barometer of the society of her times. In fact, her poetry affords a sociological insight into the changing fortunes of the Negro race and its resultant effect which is transferred onto her poetry. The study of Gwendolyn Brooks and her life in the context of the Harlem Renaissance helps us in focusing clearly on her poetry and the various themes she wrote upon. The various social events, riots of the 1960’s also played a significant role in awakening Gwendolyn Brooks’s conscience as a Black writer and her duty towards the society. It was during the late 1960’s that Gwendolyn Brooks awakened to the cause of her people and more specifically her race. She now showed her allegiance to the Black Arts Movement. It was then that Gwendolyn Brooks’s art underwent a drastic transformation. Her focus shifted from the universality to the specific. Earlier, she
concentrated on individual portrayal having universal ramifications; she now addressed the community specifically. This change in stance was noticed both in the presentation of her themes as well as the forms she used to portray them. It was during this time that she celebrated her Blackness with full throated fortitude.

Some critics have identified that Gwendolyn Brooks’s works fall into three phases, which Gwendolyn Brooks herself admitted to in a 1976 interview at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. The three phases were identified as the integrationist phase, the twilight zone of transition and the militant phase. Yet in a much later interview, in the early 1980’s, with Claudia Tate, Gwendolyn Brooks seemed to agree with Tate that her work can be categorized into two distinct parts, the pre-1967 and the post-1967 era.

What needs to be considered here is that a careful study of her works does not allow for the second stage of twilight zone of transition. The metamorphosis of Gwendolyn Brooks from an integrationist to a militant one, as George Kent, her biographer points out, was neither as sudden nor as dramatic as the conversion of Saul into St. Paul on the road to Damascus. Yet, a parallel of a sort could be drawn between the two, St. Paul and Gwendolyn Brooks. Though her awareness of Black was dawning slowly upon her, it was the Fisk
Conference which jolted her into a sudden wakefulness. The only difference was, where the militant persecutionist Saul metamorphosised into an apostle of peace, love and compassion, Gwendolyn Brooks the mild integrationist turned into a militant Black poet. Hence, classifying her works into two distinct phases the pre 1967 phase before the Fisk University Conference and the post 1967 era, as a militant poet seems to be justified.

In this context of categorizing Gwendolyn Brooks’s career into phases, yet another point worthy of notice comes up for deliberation. In the career of a writer, a period must be marked by definitive boundaries. The period should not only be long enough, but have sizeable amount of work to be identified as the work turned out during that particular period. What one notices regarding Gwendolyn Brooks’s transformation from a Negro poet to a Black one is that the works turned out during this short transitional period do not possess the demarcating qualities. The twilight zone between the two phases was too short to be called a ‘phase’. The works “New Poems” section of Selected Poems and two uncollected poems – belong to this period. Therefore, we can at the most say that it was a twilight zone of transition and definitely not a phase. Thus, the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks can be studied as belonging to two distinct phases.
The second chapter therefore deals with the two distinct phases in the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks. In the first phase it was seen that while Gwendolyn Brooks wrote about her people, there was not much commitment on her part. She wrote as a mere observer, chronicling the lives of the poor Blacks. This chapter traces her growing consciousness as a Black artist and the various factors that brought the change in her and her attitude towards her subject. The second phase saw Gwendolyn Brooks as a confirmed Black artist, completely committed to her people, Black solidarity and pride in the race. To bring out the marked difference in these two phases of her career one needs to study the poetry of these two phases. It also chronicles her movement from ego-centric themes to ethno-centric deliberation. It is here that one can trace the transformation of the artist from a mere Negro poet into confirmed Black poet, that too a Black poet who exalted in her Blackness.

This chapter also focuses on the poetry she wrote during these two phases to convey the changes in her poetic vision. One could trace the slow yet steady transformation of the poet. The poems that Gwendolyn Brooks penned during the integrationist period, where people mattered more than her race or her community, was much appreciated and applauded by the whites. The appreciation took the
shape of a Pulitzer Prize, which elevated her as the first Black ever to be so honoured with this distinction.

However, this thunderous appreciation died down abruptly when Gwendolyn Brooks changed her stance from a Negro poet to a Black militant. The whites now termed her work as having lost its universal aspect and becoming more racist. As the journey took her deeper and deeper into the Black solidarity and the commitment to the Blacks cause grew, the silence from the white critics and white audience became more and more eloquent. This indicated that she was on the right path, treading the chosen path of arousing Black consciousness and racial pride amongst her people, but at a price of stepping on the toes of the whites.

The third and the fourth chapter deal with the main concerns in the poetry of Gwendolyn Brooks. The themes, that Gwendolyn Brooks dealt with span over a large spectrum. An effort is made to study the main concerns under two broad heading, as major themes and minor themes. The major themes, women and children, are dealt with at great length in the third chapter. While Gwendolyn Brooks's poems tell of the poor, the downtrodden Blacks of the Black Belt Chicago, "Bronzeville", her main focus of study has been the Black woman. Unlike the Black men writers, Gwendolyn Brooks has tried to present
the Black woman in a new light as only a woman can do. We see the women characters of Gwendolyn Brooks evolving. From being mere shadows, relegated to the back of the society, more involved in their problems of day-to-day life of poverty, desertion, quest for beauty and dignity, they come to the forefront in the second phase of Gwendolyn Brooks's poetic career.

The same is true of her children characters too. They are ready to face the responsibility of the society; they long to be equal contributors to the art of nation building, towards Black solidarity. Gwendolyn Brooks portrays the children of the Black ghettos with equal emphasis on their innocence and their entrapment. What is revealed through an indepth study was that the characters that Gwendolyn Brooks presents in her works are not static but have the same vibrant dynamism as their creator. As Gwendolyn Brooks moves from being a Negro poet to a confirmed Black poet, her characters move too. They move from being mere shadows to full-fledged human beings celebrating their race, their colour and their very lives.

Another important facet of Gwendolyn Brooks unearthed through the study is her transformation from a mere observer to that of a doer. Whereas in the first phase of her poetic career she found satisfaction in presenting her people in their miserable state, hounded
by poverty, desertion, lack of opportunities and racism, in the second phase, we see Gwendolyn Brooks donning the mantle of a doer, a prophet. She now no longer merely observed but took an active part towards building up racial pride and solidarity of Blacks not only in America but throughout the world. This can be well witnessed in her recent poems. With the metamorphosis from a Negro to a Black poet there has been a definite shift in the focus from the individual to the community as a whole. Gwendolyn Brooks in the second phase is no longer just a "Watchful Eye, a Tuned Ear, and Super-Reporter", she claimed she was, she is more than that. She is the prophetic voice, cheering, sometimes chastising, her people and goading them to march ahead.

The fourth chapter has concentrated on the minor themes as they present themselves in her works, youth, men and colour. Colour is given special attention because it was the colour of the skin which made the Black man face the brunt of humiliating existence for a long time. Colour has been the cross he has had to carry. Gwendolyn Brooks deals with colour at length, analysing it from two points of view - the colour conflict on interracial level and intraracial. While the first one was, though humiliating, yet understandable, Gwendolyn Brooks has presented the intraracial colour conflict which is labeled as
the Black-and-Tan-motif with more subtlety and care. Rejection by members of their own race because of the shade of the colour of the skin brought immeasurable pain and humiliation to the Blacks. This pain is brought out by Gwendolyn Brooks with great sensitivity. However, what is noticeable is with the growing unity among Blacks and pride in the race, this intraracial colour conflict vapourizing and vanishing. The race comes out as one, as a whole with dignity, celebrating the colour Black.

Gwendolyn Brooks handles the theme of men and youth with the same sensitivity as she extended to her women characters. While one does not find many poems on youth in the first phase, the second phase abounds with them. Gwendolyn Brooks sees the youth as nation builders, the hope for future. She therefore addresses them not as a preacher or a teacher, but as a friend with unlimited patience and love. The second phase sees the young Blacks as "tall walkers", assertive and sure of what they want. They are no longer subscribing to the white standards of the society, but evolving standards by which they would like to be judged. Gwendolyn Brooks pictures them as human beings trying to make a decent living in a racist society that is filled with pain and prejudice. With sure, deft strokes, she is able to present the real person. The study also brings out the change in the content of
the theme, how the same themes undergo a change with her commitment to the Black cause. Her characters, while being mute or soft spoken in the first phase, transform into strong and self assured persons in the second.

The fifth chapter draws attention to the various forms that Gwendolyn Brooks has used to bring out the essence of her themes. The study shows the progress that Gwendolyn Brooks made from the first phase where she used the European traditional sonnet along with the ballads, to her use of ballads, folk traditions, the blues, the spirituals and the jazz in the second phase.

The study has tried to highlight Gwendolyn Brooks's adroit handling of the traditional sonnet form, emerging as one of the most prominent sonneteers of America by the end of 1960's. Very much influenced by Wordsworth, Shakespeare, Keats, Frost and Emily Dickinson, Gwendolyn Brooks studied their style, not to imitate them, but draw inspiration from them. She chiseled out a distinct style, very much her own. She borrowed heavily, ideas from the Harlem Renaissance masters who were the perennial source of inspiration for her. Gwendolyn Brooks used the ballad form, another traditional European form like the sonnet with equal ease and felicity and established her name as a poet who knew how to use language to make
her finer sensibilities known to the world. Gwendolyn Brooks was duly recognized by the white audience and critics who honoured her with America's most prestigious literary award, the Pulitzer Prize. This popularity as one of America's most prominent voices came with a price. She was neither read nor understood by her own people whose cause she had so arduously championed in her poetry.

In the late 1960's, with Gwendolyn Brooks awakening to the Black cause and with her allegiance, to the Black Arts Movement, her association with Black radical writers, filled her with a burning desire to reach out to the common Black man. This made her abandon her favourite tool of the trade, the sonnet, and turn to the established traditional Black forms like the folklores, the blues, the spirituals and the sermon chants.

Like the earlier chapter which tries to trace the transformation of Gwendolyn Brooks from a Negro to a Black poet, this chapter too has attempted to trace her shift from the European forms to the Black forms. Therefore one sees the sonnets few and far between than one does in the earlier phase of Gwendolyn Brooks's poetic career. In the process of change and transformation, she has contributed uniquely to the field of poetry, the "Sonnet-Ballad" and "Verse Journalism".
Another important revelation worthy of notice during the study regarding Gwendolyn Brooks's life experience was her two visits to Africa. The first visit was driven by a desire to know more about the land of her ancestors and forebears. A sense of curiosity, to know and to experience Africa first hand took her there. She was filled with the desire to know her roots; a desire to feel at-home hounded her. This visit was the result of heightened sense of Blackness generated by the close association with the Black radicals, fueled by Alex Haley's *Roots*. But when she landed in Africa, there was no such feeling. What hit her during her visit was her awareness that she was an American, though of African origin; that she did not belong to Africa anymore. The transplantation of the Black was total; there was no question of re-transplantation, lest the plant died. Her second visit, which is recorded in detail in her *Report from Part Two*, was very much similar to her first visit.

Going back to Africa was no solution for the Blacks in America, as had been suggested in the 1920's by Marcus Garvey. The only option left was neither going back to Africa, nor seeking separation in America but for integration – with dignity and decorum with the people of America. For, as Monroe Sharp, an Afro-American from Chicago, settled in Tanzania, seeking his roots had bitter experiences
that their African relatives looked at Afro-Americans with suspicion — "you're not going to come over here and take our own country!" The natives of Africa did not mind Afro-Americans coming to their native land as visitors but positively objected to their idea of settling down with a desire of finding roots. They insisted that they were Africans, and the Blacks from America were definitely Afro-Americans.

The study has attempted to trace the emergence of a Black poet hidden under layers of desire to attain universality, the desire to be appreciated by whites, the desire to achieve distinction with the use of established European forms. The emergence of a poet from a darkened or rather a "whitened" phase into the bright glorious sun to find her rightful place therein and lead her people towards racial pride and solidarity. A prophet, a leader!

Finally, a moot question, diabolical in its undertones, that crops up in the minds of the students of Afro-American literature, the soul stirring sonnets and ballads of Gwendolyn Brooks, the inspiring "If We Must Die" of Claude McKay, the fiery "Up Against the Wall, White Man" of LeRoi Jones is, was the massive uprooting of the Blacks from their native continent of Africa, and replanting them in an alien continent of far off America, after all — was all this a blessing in disguise? Has not this historic demographic phenomenon, ultimately
benefited not only the Blacks themselves but also enriched the material and non-material culture of the entire world in general and America in particular?

A humble attempt is made to answer this question by the researcher. Before answering the question the researcher hastens to say that there is absolutely no intention to justify slavery of any form, no covert attempt to condone the inhuman cruelty handed out by the whites to the Black slaves, no attempt to turn a blind eye to the excruciating suffering that the Blacks underwent. It is only an attempt to look at dispassionately an historic demographic event that took place in 17 century.

Demographers and sociologists have opined that such “massive migration” voluntary or otherwise, has a positive side to it. Some people, like the paddy saplings, thrive and prosper, only when they are transplanted. Could this be the case with the Blacks of America? Would they have excelled in various fields like music, song, sports, athletics, if they were not transplanted from Africa to America?

How one wishes this transplantation had taken place more voluntarily, under more humane condition, without all those untold miseries!