

ABSTRACT

Gwendolyn Brooks: A Critical Assessment

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Gwendolyn Brooks - poet, novelist and Pulitzer prize winner, has spanned four decades of writing some of the most emotionally moving, politically and socially revealing, psychologically complex and sometimes militant poetry. This study attempts to trace the poet's development through these decades. Four major works will be considered: Selected Poems (1963) contains selections from A Street in Bronzeville (1945), Annie Allen (1949) and The Bean Eaters (1960); Maud Martha (1953), the poet's only novel; In The Mecca (1968) stands on the threshold of her more politically assertive stance; while to disembark (1981), containing selections from Riot (1969), Family Pictures (1970), and Beckonings (1975), sees the poet's unabashed assertion of Black pride and Black consciousness.

The analysis will reveal the important concepts, concerns, themes and motifs in the poet's work. The study will also explore how these elements have developed and expanded and how her poetic techniques have been honed throughout the years. Brooks' characteristic density of image and rich suggestiveness will be shown to evolve into a more direct, racially flavoured verse first consistently present in In The Mecca, although occasionally implied in isolated poems in her early period.